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MODERN AMERICAN CHARACTERS AND THE NATURAL WORLD:

A QUEST FOR RECONCILIATION

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis charts the quest for reconciliation with the natural world in four recent American novels: Saul Bellow's Henderson The Rain King, John Updike's The Centaur, Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, and William Gibson's Neuromancer. These novelists provide us with characters whose discontent motivates them to leave their accustomed environments in search of meaning or identity. This lack of rootedness or centeredness prevents them from maintaining healthy relationships with themselves or others. Only by first leaving their usual environments can they reacquire themselves with their bodies, at which time they feel comfortable enough to return to their local communities and proceed with their newly defined lives.

Americans' dependency upon technology complicates the lives of these characters in their search for meaning. They must negotiate not only their relationships with others and the natural world, but also the influence of technology on these relationships. They soon discover that they must take all of their surroundings into consideration -- natural, artificial, and, in some cases, virtual. Only through acknowledging the effects of each of these forces on their lives can they accept both nature and technology and begin the path toward self-healing and self-empowerment. In typical quest fashion, all of them must

eventually return to their original environments in order to complete their cycles of reconciliation.

This reconciliation can be understood through examining ecopsychology and sustainability, which provide two models for resensitizing ourselves to the Earth's systems while maintaining our accustomed urban social structures.

Introduction

Many early Americans had utopian aspirations for this new world, yet technological innovations violated the very land and resources that made this ideality desired. Americans historically aware of this paradoxical relationship felt alienated from their own physical surroundings, and it did not take long before others, less aware, also grew discontented. This estrangement from the natural world haunts us to this day and interferes with healthy human relationships. Authors concerned with the problems Americans face in their quest for happiness and self-fulfillment have provided insightful representations of characters striving to reconnect with the world. This thesis reviews some of the critical background of pastoral themes in American literature and then examines some recent American literary works (Saul Bellow's Henderson The Rain King, John Updike's The Centaur, Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, and William Gibson's Neuromancer) to chart the development of this theme.

Chapter 1 summarizes Leo Marx's The Machine in the Garden and draws specific attention to the development of the machine in the garden metaphor by American writers. The history of the pastoral motif in European literature directly influences the ideological expectations for America. Only by fully conceptualizing the unrealistic belief in America as the physical fulfillment of this cultural myth can one come to understand the anguish of those disconnected from this garden utopia. Leo Marx's analysis of literature up until the mid-twentieth century serves as a point of reference and departure for the study of character undertaken in this thesis. I examine representations of characters alienated from the renewing power and vitality of their physical environments, and the steps they take to reconcile themselves with the physical world, be it natural or not.

Chapter 2 delineates the quest for identity in both Saul Bellow's Henderson the Rain King and John Updike's The Centaur. Bellow presents the story of a rich man who, by society's standards, should be content, yet he constantly hears a voice within saying: "*I want! I want!*" This unrequitable desire consumes him and pushes him to engage in a series of selfish actions which only increase his frustration. He ultimately realizes that his relationship with others and his environment defines him and decides to undertake social service as a means of reconnecting himself to people. John Updike's The Centaur relates a similar story of a schoolteacher, George Caldwell, and his quest to find meaning in his life. In reaction to his malaise with life, Caldwell creates a mythical existence for himself and detaches himself from the real world. When a blizzard keeps him and his son away from home for a few days, he finally questions his own deficiency in relating to and communicating with others.

Chapter 3 introduces a relatively new element of pastoral discourse, in Leo Marx's sense of the term: the paradox of using technology as a means of connecting with or as a substitute for the natural world. This change follows a shift from industrial to information-based technology in American culture(s). With the expansion of urbanity, especially over the last fifty years, it has become increasingly difficult to attain any sort of connection without the assistance of technology. One can find traces of this paradox in all of the works I've selected, but with especially intriguing instances in Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? and William Gibson's Neuromancer.

Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, which was later adapted into the movie Blade Runner, shows us the inner-struggles of another American male in turmoil. Rick Deckard lives in America of the future, where animal life is scarce and androids simulate human beings with frightening efficiency. Deckard, who is hired to

"retire" these androids, finds himself grappling to define which qualities constitute "humanness." In Deckard's America, nature as we know it (forests, mountains, lakes, etc.) does not exist; so, aside from connecting to the environment of the city, well-to-do citizens use "mood organs" to induce mental illusions of physical settings and emotions of their choice. This book illustrates how technological innovation complicates our relationships with others and the environment; it also raises questions about the morality of scientific progress and our ethical responsibility toward it. Ultimately, we must monitor and regulate technology and not allow the concept of progress to blind us to technology's effects upon our biosphere.

Chapter 4 analyzes William Gibson's Neuromancer, which raises similar questions about how people function in a dystopian technocracy. Gibson depicts an only slightly exaggerated version of our own world: an extremely technologically dependent and economically segregated society. The underprivileged of Gibson's world live at ground level in the merciless "Sprawl," while in towering edifices literally overhead, the elite technocrats secure themselves from the world below. Common interest in the use of technology, if only for economic gain, brings these two social groups together; it becomes the medium of and excuse for communication and interaction. The characters also engage computer simulated landscapes (cyberspace) as a substitute for physical ones. This book seeks to reconcile virtual and actual realities in a way that enables the freedom necessary for harmonious living.

Using the insights gleaned from the previous analyses, Chapter 5 concludes with a call for a new ecologically centered approach to living. The concepts of ecopsychology and sustainability offer viable new ways of interpreting and responding to the difficulties experienced by us and by the characters in these books. Sensitivity to both our local and

global environments may instill in us the compassion and provide us with the purpose we require for healthy, long-term survival on this planet.

Chapter 1: Critical Background

In preparation for undertaking this ecologically orientated analysis of selections of modern American literature, I have consulted many non-fiction, "environmentally based" texts. Most of these deal with man's relationship to the natural world at least on some level, while a few take this further by analyzing literature in relation to other disciplines. So in essence, this thesis takes an interdisciplinary approach, borrowing knowledge from disparate fields (psychology, sociology, etc.) in order to arrive at a collective (albeit limited by the scope of this form) understanding of our physical, mental, and possibly spiritual relationships with our surroundings. In this first chapter, I offer a summarization of one of my most frequently consulted critical works: Leo Marx's The Machine in the Garden. This is done fastidiously, with the intent of highlighting the information that pertains directly to my study. In so doing, I establish the theoretical context from which my literary analyses base themselves. Explication of other works occurs when they are referred to in subsequent chapters.

The title of Leo Marx's seminal text The Machine in the Garden reveals, only in part, the purpose of his study. He documents the occurrence of machine and garden metaphors in American literature, but also concerns himself with America's relationship with its environment. Through his discussion of machine, garden, and pastoral metaphors in American literature, he hopes to demystify our mythological and romanticized expectations about our land.

Leo Marx asserts that "The pastoral ideal has been used to define the meaning of

America ever since the age of discovery, and it has not yet lost its hold upon the native imagination" (3). There is nothing inherently wrong with such idealization in and of itself; it has filled Americans with a pride in many ways responsible for our advancement and survival as an economic, industrial, and military world power. Marx, however, worries when this idealization places unrealistic expectations upon our natural world. Myths of endless natural resources and economic prosperity can only lead to the subjection of our land to great and possibly irrevocable misuse; these myths simultaneously instill Americans with a deep sense of betrayal when they discover how finite our resources really are. Marx approaches these tenuous issues with the delicate touch of a social scientist trying not to let his agenda cloud the objective verities. He claims to be seeking ". . . the region of culture where literature, general ideas, and . . . 'cultural symbols' -- meet" (4). What is the purpose of such an undertaking but to push us, the readers, to question our own socially ingrained ideologies? This is what The Machine in the Garden does; it pleads for the reevaluation of our cultural myths – a necessary step if we are to come to grips with the extreme volatility of our ecological and social systems.

To communicate this message, Leo Marx surveys American writings which reveal a recurring pattern of the idealization of wilderness; he equates this motif with what he calls "the pastoral." In his analysis, he addresses an important question posed by Sigmund Freud: why do civilized people long for primitive environs? Freud thought that it was escapist fantasy-making -- a desperate longing for ". . . freedom from the grip of the external world" (8), but there are some unaddressed complications in such an interpretation. First, would not the pressures of the external world weigh more heavily

upon someone choosing a primitive or agrarian lifestyle? Or is it an escape from social pressures that Freud had in mind? Second, such a fantasy exists only because of its improbability (we usually don't fantasize about what can easily be obtained). Marx has his own take on this unique longing of civilized people for a "simpler" life. He asks, "Can it be that our institutions and cultural standards are enforcing an increasingly painful, almost unbearable degree of privation of instinct" (9)? If so, then we may all be suffering from a collective neurosis, but unable to view it objectively as such while firmly grounded within our urbanized societies. This is an observation I would like to highlight, because in the course of the literary study to follow, each of the protagonists must both physically and mentally distance themselves from their accustomed "places" before they can take any conscious actions to alter their lives. They require this distancing in order to more objectively evaluate their personal deficiencies without the interference of societal noise. Once they do this, they can then take actions to heal their psychic ailments.

Since culturally constructed definitions of nature and machines influence us daily on an unconscious plane, Leo Marx first attempts to codify the multiplicity of these definitions. We often equate nature with "rural peace and simplicity," and machines with "urban power and sophistication" (19). In focusing upon this dichotomy, Marx observes: ". . . industrialization, represented by images of machine technology . . . [provide] the counterforce in the American archetype of the pastoral design" (26). But each of these concepts naturally carry their own dichotomous meanings as well. Nature is at once a pure garden replete with renewing properties and a hideous and brutal wilderness in need of conquering (357). Likewise, machines represent both progress, connection, and

empowerment, and also sterility, pollution, and disempowerment.

The contradictory meanings of these words help to illustrate the nebulous understanding we have of both nature and machines. It is my belief, and Leo Marx's as well, that this indeterminacy reveals itself in our literature. A cultural voice emerges out of modern American literature that exposes the conflict between our beliefs and feelings about nature and the technocracy by which we live. A close examination of any American literature of the past fifty years will unearth similar conflicts at least on some level. The move from industrial to information-based technology over the last century has altered American perceptions so drastically that art, as a reflection of our culture(s), cannot help but highlight the tensions brought about by this paradigm shift.

Many factors contribute to this rupture and discontinuity between Americans and nature, but perhaps the most influential one is the concept of progress. As Alan Trachtenberg outlines in The Brooklyn Bridge: Fact and Symbol, "Economic necessity had led to the vast transportation developments in pre-Civil War America. Roads and canals, the paths of commerce, had followed the axe into the wilderness" (9). An attempt to harness the natural resources of this country led to an exploitation of our land in the name of progress that set a precedent and remains a conflicted issue to this day. The new settlers did not want to model their cities after the oppressive industrial-based ones of Western Europe, but economic necessity coupled with capitalism and plentiful resources led them to far surpass urban-industrial giants such as London.

Thomas Jefferson envisioned "a great agrarian republic," but the sheer magnitude of America threatened disconnection (10). To fight off this disconnection, transportation

systems were built with astounding rapidity and efficiency. In time, roads, canals, bridges, and railroads linked the many previously disconnected settlements: "The main benefit was unity. In the Jeffersonian plan roads would protect the agrarian republic" (11). While these transportation networks did connect people, they also allowed capital-driven trade industries to flourish, thereby threatening the agrarian self-sufficiency they were put in place to protect (12). Thus, progress aligned itself early on with industrialization, and most everyone associated the two with prosperity. Somewhere along the way, appreciation for the aesthetic merits of the land was neglected, and we are still paying the price for that loss today.

Not everyone blindly acquiesced to the invasion of American landscapes by machines. Awe inspiring as the locomotive was (and is), clambering relentlessly across the land with a din of crunching metal and grinding gears, it also signified a very real invasion of nature, one that would leave its imprint upon the earth for centuries. While most people were slowly swayed to perceive machines as symbols of economic value (Marx 191), serious writers and thinkers foresaw the complications of such perceptions: machines designed to enhance the lives of Americans corrupted the very land and resources that the people would need for future sustenance. Leo Marx cites a very revealing incident of the strange corruptive effects demonstrations of technological prowess had upon the world:

Even the animals seem to recognize that a radical change is in store. Just back from an excursion on a new section of railroad, the editor of the *Cincinnati*

Enquirer reports, in 1846, that he saw "herds of cattle, sheep, and horses, stand for a few seconds and gaze at the passing train, then turn and run for a few rods with all possible speed, stop and look again with eyes distended, and head and ears erect, seemingly so frightened at the tramp of the iron horse as to have lost the power of locomotion." (195)

Have we now become so accustomed to technological advances as to not scrutinize their purposes and effects upon our planet and its many inhabitants? In a society so preoccupied with immediate economic gain and only concerned with the land when beset with immediate and visible ecological disasters, who shall address the need for long-term ecological stability? Furthermore, who shall be responsible for ensuring such stability?

Leo Marx has much to say about who the spokespeople for such a movement should be and have been: mainly socially engaged artists and writers. They are keen at identifying the causes of discontinuity, but, unfortunately, usually have little clout to implement direct and noticeable changes in any large system. Leo Marx borrows from cultural critic Lionel Trilling to augment his conviction on the value of artists: "The 'very essence' of a culture . . . resides in its conflict, or contradictions, and its great artists are likely to be those who contain a larger part of the dialectic within themselves, 'their meaning and power lying in their contradictions'" (342). The Hegelian dialectic to which Trilling refers bases itself upon a process of change that requires conflict and resolution for advancement to occur. Although working from within an ideology based on Karl Marx and having his own definite agenda, Trilling's beliefs are appropriate to this

particular investigation. Writers do tend to reflect societal problems and quite often also propose plausible solutions to the conflicts they perceive (if only those in power would take note). If we heed their warnings, these sages can alert us to troubles ahead.

Chapter 2: The Quest for Identity in *Henderson The Rain King* and *The Centaur*

Saul Bellow's Henderson the Rain King (1958) relates a story of a man suffering from a disconnection with the natural world that consequently leads to a disconnection with other people. This modern American character, Gene Henderson, has achieved economic stability, but has difficulty communicating with people. At age fifty-five, Henderson finds himself questioning the very social and moral rules that have heretofore governed his uncertain interaction with people, animals, and the earth. In spite of his economic success and acceptable relationships with his wife and children, he feels insufficient in molding himself to societal norms of acceptability. He so badly wants to find the source of his deep suffering and alleviate the anguish it causes, but he has only vague notions of how he might do this. Although Henderson feels inadequate in his relationships, he maintains a philosophic, soul-searching side that runs far deeper than that of most people. Thus, he realizes that ". . . in an age of madness, to expect to be untouched by madness is a form of madness. But the pursuit of sanity can be a form of madness, too" (Bellow 25). Henderson has come to recognize this insidious form of madness in urban-industrialized American culture. As Theodore Roszak contends, we only engage in an act of folly when we try to treat our psychoses from within the very environmental conditions that bring about such mental instabilities (Roszak 310-11).

This awareness of some damaging fundamental discontinuity within himself drives Henderson to take actions to heal his cankerous angst. He first toils with a violin in a pitiful, yet assiduous attempt at making music to release the suffering and incessant cry of

"I want!" from within. He envisions making music as a means of sublimating his angst and connecting with his dead father who never really loved him. He longs to keep time with the voice within (Bellow 30). Unfortunately, hours of practice do not pay off for Henderson; his inability to control the instrument signals his inability to recover the natural voice he somehow lost. Neither Henderson's failure at achieving inner-peace through music or labor, nor his guilt for verbally abusing his family motivate him to make any drastic changes in his life, but an encounter with death does. When Henderson finds his elderly neighbor Miss Lenox lying dead on the kitchen floor, he thinks: "So this is it, the end -- farewell? And all this while, these days and weeks, the wintry garden had been speaking to me of this fact and no other; and till this moment I had not understood what this gray and white and brown, the bark, the snow, the twigs, had been telling me" (39). While instilling Henderson with compunction for not behaving as sensitively toward Miss Lenox as he could have, this experience also galvanizes him into action. For too long he has been tone deaf to what the land has been trying to communicate; he has not kept time with the voice within that wants his convalescence. Since Henderson has always taken more comfort in his physical interaction with the world, he decides, for his own health and for the health of those who must put up with him, to remove himself from his accustomed social environment, which deemphasizes physical relationships over economic ones, and visit what he perceives as the epitome of the natural and the physical -- the wilds of Africa.

Henderson first envisions Africa as a plane of neutrality where he can escape history and thereby better act to alleviate the differences between himself and nature (46). In the first village Henderson visits (Arnewi), he must wrestle the village's best athlete in

order to gain full and proper acceptance as a guest. The Arnewi attune themselves to others through physical relationships. Thus, as a result of Henderson's wrestling match with Prince Itelo, Itelo becomes acutely aware of the vastness of Henderson's accumulated suffering. The Prince's enhanced sensibility coupled with physical contact results in an actual transference of Henderson's pathos; therefore, Prince Itelo quite literally empathizes with Henderson: "Oh, Mistah Henderson! Henderson, I know you now. . . ." (69). This primary experience of physical connection gives Henderson knowledge of the self, for the encounter affects him too: "This hit me where I lived, right in the vital centers, both with suffering and with gratification" (70).

The Arnewi village welcomes Henderson, and he soon learns of a great sadness that lies upon them. All of their cows, who they love dearly, are dying from dehydration. Itelo explains to Henderson that although the village has a cistern full of water, they do not permit the cows to drink from it, because frogs have contaminated it. Henderson soon discovers that the supposed frog plague is nothing more than a natural infestation and that the water really has nothing poisonous about it. The villagers' superstition prevents them from accepting this fact, so Henderson, who is unable to abate his own suffering, nobly decides to use his ingenious American know-how to abate their's. Henderson, with the intent of killing the frogs and relieving the burden that lies upon his new friends, constructs and detonates a small bomb in the cistern. But, consistent with his imbalanced psychic constitution, he succeeds not only in killing all of the frogs, but also in displacing all of the water from the cistern. He tries to prevent the water from gushing forth from its damaged encasement, but fails. Henderson begs for death to deliver him from the

renewed angst that accompanies his failed act of compassion, but instead, the villagers banish him from their village forever.

As Henderson makes his way to the next closest village, the torrid terrain shifts his perception of his relationship to the world: ". . . the world was not itself; it took on the aspect of an organism, a mental thing, amid whose cells I had been wandering" (156). This he attributes to a fever or illness, but metaphorically his fever purges his previous world view and immolates egotism. He has undertaken the journey from becoming to being, intent on bursting his spirit's sleep (160).

Upon reaching the Wariri village, Henderson once again observes the difficulties a sustained drought brings upon the African people. He empathizes with their suffering and longs to assist them; he also wishes to atone for the damages he inflicted upon the Arnewi. The Wariri believe that if someone could move a large stone statue they call "Mummah" then rain would come. Henderson appeals to their king, Dahfu: "'Could I try my strength against Mummah? I don't know what it is, but I just have a feeling that I could move her . . . All I want to do is get my arms around her'" (189). Dahfu consents, and Henderson descends into the arena to wrestle with the goddess. So strong is Henderson's desire and conviction that he lifts and moves Mummah with little effort. The tribe's delight and Henderson's pride in this accomplishment fill him with renewed energy and happiness: "And so my fever was transformed into jubilation. My spirit was awake and it welcomed life anew. Damn the whole thing! Life anew! I was still alive and kicking and I had the old grun-tu-molani [desire to live]" (193). Then the sky clouds over and rain falls upon the joyful people. The tribe awards Henderson the honorable title of "Rain King," and he

feels content for the first time in years. His physical engagement with the statue begins his self-healing.

King Dahfu befriends Henderson and begins to teach him about men and beasts. Henderson discovers that Dahfu left Africa to receive an education and become an urban sophisticate and has only recently returned. It intrigues Henderson that Dahfu returned to his culture and heritage after living in the "civilized" world. Henderson respects him more for this return, and the two of them have many long philosophical discussions about the role of men in the world and the meaning of life. They discuss the continuity of violence and evil, concluding that the truly noble man will allow the blows to stop with him and will not perpetuate destructiveness (214). This revelation inspires Henderson's to continue his path toward nobility through altruism.

As part of Dahfu's noble duty to be fully acknowledged as King, he must capture and later tame a wild lion. Henderson accompanies Dahfu and worries about his new friend whom he loves dearly. As Dahfu attempts to bind the netted lion, it strikes him a fatal blow. Henderson, overcome with anguish, crouches over the king and professes his love for him: "Your Majesty, move over and I'll die beside you. Or else be me and live; I never knew what to do with life anyway, and I'll die instead" (312).

We later find that the tribe's malicious witch-doctor sabotaged the capture of the lion. In spite of Henderson's vast anger and grief, he cannot see the benefit in killing this evil man. Henderson has him in his grasp, but chooses to let him live with his own fate and conscience. In other words, he completes his cycle of transformation. The blows stop with him and he has achieved true nobility. Shortly before the King's death,

Henderson explains this transformation to him:

All you hear from guys is desire, desire, desire, knocking its way out of the breast, and fear, striking and striking. Enough already! Time for a word of truth. Time for something notable to be heard. Otherwise, accelerating like a stone, you fall from life to death. (297)

By the clemency he shows the witch-doctor, Henderson achieves what he set out to do: he has purged his selfish wanting and may now return home to share the salutary effects of his transformation.

Henderson's communication with nature through animals plays a vital role in his transformation. At the start of his story, shortly after acting uncommonly cruel to his fiance, Henderson has a strange experience with an octopus. He stares into an aquarium at twilight and perceives this sea-creature staring coldly back at him, communicating a definite message of death (19). Prior to this experience, Henderson farmed pigs as a hobby and enjoyed reflecting upon the Old Testament prophet Daniel's warning to King Nebuchadnezzar: "They shall drive thee from among men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field" (21). Furthermore, in Africa, Kind Dahfu suggests to Henderson the vast amounts of profound knowledge that one could glean from nature. The animal they focus their concentration upon is the lion, and from this perspective the King divines, "You are related to all. The very gnats are your cousins. The sky is your thoughts. The leaves are your insurance, and you need no other" (266).

Henderson also uses a tone of reverence when speaking of animals, for they live closer to nature and therefore closer to the truth (whatever it may be). They do not inflict

the same anxieties upon themselves as human beings; however, this is not due to an incapability on their part to feel emotions similar to ours. Henderson recalls, at the very end of his narration, once working at an amusement park and developing a relationship with an old bear. These two outcasts formed a bond, and part of their duty was to ride a roller coaster together for the amusement of spectators. Henderson relates, "By a common bond of despair we embraced, cheek to cheek . . . I was pressed into his long-suffering, age-worn, tragic, and discolored coat as he grunted and cried to me . . . this poor creature and I were very close . . . [we] were outcasts together, two humorists before the crowd, but brothers in our souls . . ." (338).

In many ways, Henderson's recognition of his relationship and responsibility to his fellow creatures upon this planet makes possible his story of transformation. He returns from Africa wiser and less cynical with the knowledge that the only gains he ever made were due to love alone (339). Upon "bursting his spirit's sleep," he receives the key to understanding his identity, or perhaps the two came about simultaneously. Mainly, his relationship to humans and animals defines himself; so, he vows to assist others, thereby assisting himself, through social service.

Henderson finds that while outside circumstances and relationships influence him greatly, he had to initiate his healing process from within. Only by an ego-less acceptance of the austere beauty and remarkably unique qualities of his own person could he make himself healthy enough to assist others. Henderson had built up many "momentous avoidances" to facing himself in this light, yet he soon learns from King Dahfu and the lioness Atti the value in overcoming these self-imposed obstacles to harmonious existence

(260). Dahfu tells Henderson, "I think that part of the beauty emotion does result from an overcoming of fear. When fear yields, a beauty is disclosed in its place. This is also said of perfect love if I recollect, and it means that ego-emphasis is removed" (262).

Essentially, Henderson must overcome his own fears to achieve a love of the self before he is capable of assisting others. His failed attempt at relieving the Arnewi of their frog infestation illustrates this very point; his actions failed because they were selfishly motivated. Henderson sincerely loved and wanted to help the people, but only so he could expand his own ego.

Conversely, Henderson does not disillusion himself this way when moving the statue Mummah for the Wariri. He does not really think about this action bringing rain upon the desiccated village; instead, he wants to prove to himself that he can succeed in an extremely strenuous physical endeavor. The Wariri trick him into doing this because they need a new "Rain King" and no tribesmember wants the job. Nevertheless, Henderson executes this action for himself, to involve himself directly with the natural world (symbolized by Mummah).

Mummah is the goddess of the earth. So when Henderson pleads to Dahfu, "All I want to do is get my arms around her," (189) we can easily observe that his desire to embrace the statue extends to the planet as well. He longs to hold Mummah, the earth and rain goddess, she who brings the rain that washes away his layers of guilt and self-degradation. Henderson finds physical engagement with the natural world, exemplified by Mummah and the lioness Atti, the central component in overcoming his egocentrism and establishing a cycle of healthy living.

Saul Bellow concludes Henderson the Rain King with a scene of Henderson at his height of ego-less involvement with nature and others. On his plane flight back to his family in New York, he finds himself seated next to a quiet, orphaned boy whose silence reminds him of his own previous disconnection from the world around him. When the plane touches down for refueling in the snow-covered terrain of Newfoundland, Henderson carries the boy outside with him to partake of the invigorating cold air:

So we were let out, this kid and I, and I carried him down from the ship and over the frozen ground of almost eternal winter, drawing breaths so deep they shook me, pure happiness . . . I held him close to my chest. He didn't seem to be afraid that I would fall with him. While to me he was like medicine applied, and the air, too; it also was a remedy . . . The great, beautiful propellers were still, all four of them. I guess I felt it was my turn now to move, and so went running -- leaping, leaping, pounding, and tingling all over the pure white lining of the gray Arctic silence. (340-1)

Thus Henderson acts upon the new found reconciliation between his psyche and the natural world. He derives pleasure from sharing the wonders of the Earth with others, without losing sight of his own individuality in the process. Where before he used his force to control his environment and relationships, he now knows also to listen to the silence and allow himself to be impressed upon as well. As evinced by this final scene, Henderson's mutual engagement with nature also enables him to share himself with other people.

While much different from Saul Bellow's Henderson the Rain King, John Updike's The Centaur (1962) depicts a man who undertakes a similar quest for identity. High school teacher George Caldwell resides in a farmhouse on the outskirts of a small Pennsylvanian town with his wife, son, and father-in-law. Each day, Caldwell and his teenage son Peter drive together to Olinger High where Caldwell teaches science and Peter attends other classes. The Centaur documents Caldwell's personal struggles and explores the intricacies of this father / son relationship. Updike artfully shows Caldwell not only from his own perspective, but also from the disturbed, yet loving, adolescent gaze of Peter. Slowly, a tragic picture emerges of a troubled man whose disconnection from the natural world results in a complete lack of self-esteem and an ineffectiveness at communicating the love he feels for others.

As Caldwell proceeds through the mundane tasks of his work, which defines his life, he often fantasizes about being the intelligent, but afflicted mythic scholar, Chiron the Centaur. Updike introduces the novel with a quote from Old Greek Folk Stories Told Anew, which relates the circumstances of Chiron as ". . . the noblest of all the Centaurs," who was wounded by a poisoned arrow as punishment for a crime he didn't commit and forced to pass his immortal existence in perpetual torment and agony. Chiron appeals to the gods that he might die to atone for Prometheus' great theft of fire; they grant him this wish, and his pain finally abates in death. Caldwell reveals much about himself in identifying with this particular mythic figure. Deep down, he acknowledges that he is wise and good, but that some deep-rooted poison has taken hold of his body, and he must behave in a constantly apologetic manner that belies his fundamental self-worth.

Thus, Caldwell's narration switches between the mythic and real realms of his life. On the mythic plane, he demonstrates a sagacious, yet playfully lambent wit, while never losing sight of his own physical deformities and limitations. An early interaction in the novel between Caldwell and fellow schoolteacher and sometimes lover Vera Hummel illustrates the level of mature acumen Caldwell attains when adopting the role of Chiron. Vera plays Caldwell's game and adopts the role of Chiron's superior in the mythic hierarchy, the goddess Venus. The two of them proceed to engage in a complex verbal dance of flirtations, accusations, and assurances. Venus questions him about his animal potency and he downplays his power; she defames the other gods, and he skillfully avoids being drawn into that collusion (24-25). Finally, the goddess of love beseechingly asks Chiron: "You know men. Why do they revile me . . . What other god gives them with the same hand such power and such peace" (27)? He tactfully replies, "Your accusations my lady, are all from yourself" (27). Caldwell's and Vera's adulterous trysts thrive on role-playing enactments of this sort, because they each feel that the sum of their worldly roles of husband, wife, or schoolteacher fail to acknowledge the real depth and complexity of their beings.

When relegated to the roll of schoolteacher and family man, Caldwell shamelessly acknowledges his insufficiency. Even in the company of complete strangers, he does not hesitate to profess his inadequacy at fulfilling his responsibilities. While in Peter's presence, he announces to a hitchhiker he picked up that the hitchhiker would be better company for his son: "Take him along . . . If ever a kid deserved a break, it's this kid here. My wad is shot. Time to trade in on a new old man; I'm a walking junk heap" (71).

Caldwell continuously hurts Peter with such comments, but Peter finds that his love and worry for his father outweigh his anger: "I felt within myself like a worm hatching the hitchhiker beginning to wonder if my father were sane. I cringed with the desire to apologize, to grovel before this stranger, to explain. *It's just his way, he loves strange people, he's worried about something*" (70).

Caldwell worries most about death. While he revels in his ability to feel sorry for himself for his life's unfortunate circumstances, he comes to believe not only that he is an ineffectual teacher, but that his lifestyle is killing him. He complains to his wife Cassie: "The damn kids. I've caught their damn hate and I feel it like a spider in my big intestine . . . they hate my guts. They'd kill me, and now they're doing it. Biff, bang. I'm through. Haul away the garbage" (42). Caldwell's fear of his students is not entirely unjustified; the novel begins with him desperately trying to impart some knowledge of the universe to his students and receiving an arrow in his ankle for his efforts. As the class howls with laughter, Caldwell can only wish for privacy, for a place where he can be alone with his pain. He wants solitude where he can probe the depths and estimate the severity of his wound (9). Only by first escaping the noise and ridicule of his class can he seek to extract the cause of his pain and begin the process of healing.

Straight away, Caldwell quits his classroom and welcomes the guilt for neglecting his responsibility over the maddening chaos he escapes from. As he bursts forth from the sepulchral halls of Olinger High, he immediately attunes himself to the natural world outside: "It was January. The clear blue of the towering sky seemed forceful yet enigmatic. The immense level swath of the school's side lawn, pointed at the corners by

plantings of pines, was, though this was winter's heart, green; but the color was frozen, paralyzed, vestigial, artificial" (10-11).

In contrast to the school's coldness, Hummel's Garage, which lies on the same plot of land, radiates protective warmth and comforting simplicity. Unlike the concrete sterility of the adjacent school, Hummel's auto garage roots itself firmly in physical bond between men and machines. Here, frazzled teachers sometimes take their breaks and ". . . let their martyred nerves uncurl while, in the three-sided pit below, an automobile like an immense metal baby [is] washed and changed by Hummel's swarthy men" (12). Caldwell directs himself to this tangible escape from the cold, insensate school and, upon entering this warm refuge, supplicates Vera's husband, Al Hummel, to assist him in the removal of the steel shaft still embedded in his ankle. The mechanic assists Caldwell without a second thought and unconsciously bends his broad back as he examines the arrow so that Caldwell can support himself (13). With the beauty of a working man in motion, Hummel almost magically cuts through the arrow with an acetylene torch and extracts it (14-15). The other workmen gather around in appreciation of a difficult job executed with mastery. Caldwell also expresses his jealous admiration of Hummel's adroitness with elements of the physical world; he tells Hummel that he's a fine workman and even tries to pay him for his services: "Al, how much do I owe you . . . I wouldn't feel right [not paying]. I asked a craftsman to give me the benefit of his craft . . ." (16). Hummel refuses Caldwell's money, of course, but warns him of the possibility of the arrow being poisoned. This causes Caldwell to worry, and he decides to allow the wound to bleed itself out just in case.

The juxtaposition of the wounding that occurs at the school and the healing that

occurs in the garage calls special attention to the imbalance between these two extremes in Caldwell's life. The long hours he spends teaching and involving himself in after-school activities distance him further and further from restorative, direct engagement with the physical world. The feeling of futility that accompanies his everyday actions has eaten at his mind and poisoned his body until he feels uneasy and insufficient in the presence of anyone actively engaged with the physical realm, whether it be Hummel, a hitchhiker, or a vagrant he passes on the street. Hummel, who even has an earthy name similar to "humus," especially represents a natural healthiness that awes Caldwell and wins his admiration, even while his slightly bestial qualities disquiet him.

This dichotomy between the mental and the physical extends past people to the inanimate as well. As Caldwell notes, even the vegetation around the school takes on artificial qualities; the colors themselves are frozen and paralyzed (10-11). The arrow that strikes him a cruel blow to the ankle is also an anomalous creation antithetical with the natural – its shaft is solid steel instead of the traditional wood. All these symbols of detachment weigh heavily upon Caldwell. Finally, he feels that these unidentifiable pressures are causing his many ailments and driving him closer to death.

Death holds not only fear, but a great fascination for Caldwell. Under his wife's constant urging, he seeks out the medical advice of Doc Appleton, who gives him a thorough examination and takes some x-rays. Appleton, who has known Caldwell for most of his life and even influenced the school board to hire him when he needed a job, realizes the true cause of Caldwell's malaise. Appleton tells him: "Your trouble, George . . . is you have never come to terms with your own body . . . you believe in the soul. You

believe your body is like a horse you get up on and ride for a while and then get off. You ride your body too hard. You show it no love. This is not natural. This builds up nervous tension" (100-1). Caldwell grasped this very point long ago; it ties in directly with his mythic vision of himself as a centaur; he rides himself too hard and seems unable to stop, even when he realizes that he's damaging himself. He attributes his commitment to a life he loathes to his obligation to provide for his family, but he also demonstrates both fear of departing from what he is accustomed to and childish delight in protracting his self-pity. He tells one of his problem students, "I'm up here fighting for my life. I have a wife and a kid and an old man to feed. I'm just like you are; I'd rather be out walking the streets. I feel sorry for you; I know how you're suffering" (79).

Caldwell loves and feels sorry for his students, but also knows that they are driving him to the grave. The imbalance between Caldwell's responsibility to his students, his family, and to himself keeps him in a constant state of agitation that causes him actual harm. In discussing his teaching with Doc Appleton, Caldwell says: "I wouldn't mind plugging ahead at something I wasn't any good at . . . if I knew what the hell the point of it all was. I ask, and nobody'll tell me" (102). Caldwell must eventually answer this question himself, which is The Centaur's main theme: what larger purpose do any of us have on this planet, and how can we achieve that purpose without inflicting pain upon others or ourselves? Before Caldwell and Peter make their way back out into the harsh elements of Alton, Doc Appleton imparts some of his beliefs on the topic: "Without death, now, there couldn't be life. Health . . . is an animal condition. Now most of our ill-health comes from two places -- the brain and the back. We made two mistakes; one was to

stand up and the other was to start thinking. It strains the spine and the nerves. It makes tension . . ." (104).

Caldwell, however, cannot stop dwelling on life and death. When his car breaks down, preventing him or Peter from returning home, Caldwell tells Peter that their dependency upon automobiles instead of their legs has made them weak and disconnected from natural things. He says, "Once you've sold out your legs, you've sold out your life" (116). In many ways, Caldwell likens himself to the broken car. The elements had played upon it for so long, and it was unable to adjust or correct its own minor malfunctions, so that finally, something broke inside. Caldwell tells Peter, "I have the feeling it'll go now. It just needed a rest," but Peter better understands the situation: "It isn't just the motor being cold, it's something in the body" (119)! All the stress in Caldwell's life has poisoned his living body, and it may be too late for an antidote to work, even if he finds one.

The narration from George Caldwell's son, Peter, offers a different, yet complementary view of the man and his circumstances. Peter loves his father, but cannot seem to break through Caldwell's self-imposed alienation enough to communicate this to him. As the two engage in their only bonding activity, the drive to and from school, Caldwell appears unable to communicate with his son without putting himself down in the process. Peter continuously reassures him that he is mistaken in his estimation of himself, but secretly wonders why his dad is so odd and why he can not behave like other fathers. In a demonstration of his love, Peter, who ultimately hopes to become an artist, sacrifices his meager "art school" savings to buy his father a pair of warm gloves for the rides to and from school. Peter watches his father run his bare hands painfully over the cold steering

wheel and asks him why he never uses the gloves (61). He cannot help but sound accusatory with such a query, but realizes that he uses his anger to mask the hurt he feels. Caldwell simply replies that the gloves are too good for him, and Peter remains silent with his thoughts: "These words hurt my stomach . . . I had gathered only that there was something *in* him, and this thing, which I thought might be the same thing that made him resist wearing my gloves, I hoped I could elicit; though I did suspect that he was too old and too big for me to purge or change completely . . ." (62).

Yet Peter does secretly hope to heal his father or assist his convalescence in some way. When the same hitchhiker that Caldwell praises for his nomadic lifestyle takes those gloves, Caldwell merely states that the man needs them more than he does (73). Peter does not feel anger at this, but instead a "clumsy weight" or pain of concern for his father. For the first time, Peter perceives his father's eventual death not as something remote and inconsequential, but as ". . . a grave and dreadful threat" (73). Slowly, references to death become more pronounced and obvious, and Peter wonders if his father will be able to escape the current hold death has upon him. In this story's turning point, a drunk that accosts the two of them as they are stranded in Alton with a broken car manages to make Caldwell reconcile himself, for the first time, to the certitude of his mortality. The derelict's simple, unsolicited question "Are you ready to die?" catches Caldwell off guard, and he begins not to fear this prospect as much -- it represents part of a natural cycle (121-2).

The time Peter and his father spend stranded away from home affects the two of them tremendously, acting as a rite of passage for both. Peter becomes independent and

self-sufficient away from the usual guardianship of his mother, and he also assumes his mother's role of watching over his father. While Peter enters this adult realm of responsibility for the first time, Caldwell reconciles himself with death for the first time. It takes their physical removal from their accustomed places to initiate this mutual growth.

Peter, once alone in a hotel room while his father runs a few errands, begins to feel the presence of the city around him. He stops trying to decipher and label this unusual locale and instead lets it impress itself upon him. He finds himself acutely aware of his environment and also of his own body in relation to it:

City. This was city: the room I stood alone in vibrated on its paper walls with the haloes of advertisement . . . Alton seemed herself already bathing in the lake of the night. The windowpane's imperfections rippled the wet lights. A virginal sense of the forbidden welled over me like a wind and I discovered myself a unicorn. Alton distended. Her arms of white traffic stretched riverward. Her shining hair fanned on the surface of the lake. My sense of myself amplified until, lover and loved, seer and seen, I compounded in several accented expansions my ego. . . . (126-7)

Thus, with the city personified as lover, Peter undergoes an amazing rite of passage. He momentarily ceases interpreting his environment and finds his ego and his being expanded. His first lover is the city, and her generosity grants him a mature understanding of his place within the universe. Soon after the two connect in this sensual embrace, Peter also realizes that he must see himself as an individual entity apart from the vast city. He has empowered himself with an alternative perspective and is now a man.

Unfortunately, Caldwell's tenacious hold onto his limited control over his

surroundings prevents him from reaping the benefits of such intimacy. His many ailments seem to stem from his inability to connect in any way with the landscapes of his life, the natural farm or the unnatural city. He perceives the farm he lives on as ". . . that thankless land of hers [Cassie's] eighty acres on his shoulders, land, dead cold land, his blood sunk like rain into that thankless land" (150). Caldwell sees only the harsh, unforgiving elements of nature and associates unpleasantness with it. When he has a rotting tooth extracted, he unconsciously labels it a "tree of pain" which grows more dense with each passing moment, spreading its blossoms of misery throughout his skull (163-4). Once the dentist removes the tooth from its "earthly connection," he tells Caldwell, "It's a shame . . . the caps of your teeth aren't as strong as the roots," to which Caldwell replies, "'That's the story of my life . . .'" (164-5). Again, as with the broken automobile, Caldwell recognizes his plight: he has never been able to ground or root himself anywhere and consequently feels insufficient and worthless.

As the multiple narrations progress and the tension of the story-line builds, all inanimate objects, both natural and man-made, become mythologized. As with the great scholar Chiron, who toiled to teach the love of the universe and healing properties of the earth to others, Caldwell cannot achieve this love and healing for himself. The elements of the world cry out for connection as Caldwell slowly makes his way back home to the farm, but he refuses or is unable to acknowledge their plea. As Caldwell leaves Olinger for the last time, its final description emanates a life energy that descriptions of Caldwell never do: "The drinking fountains wait to spurt. The radiators purr. Heller [the custodian] stoops and sweeps into his broad pan his gray mountain of dust and fluff, enlivened by a

few paper scraps. He transfers this dirt to the great cardboard can waiting at this corner" (166). However, as Caldwell and Peter finally begin the drive home in the newly repaired automobile, the land seems to know that Caldwell will not heed its warning in time; he will not come into the fold. Nature ceases its efforts at communicating with him, and ". . . an eloquent silence reigns . . ." (179).

In contrast to this silence with Caldwell, nature continues to communicate with Peter; he maintains his link to the world and sees meaning even in the ensuing snow storm. He achieves a conceptualization of his place in the structured universe which, at the same time, awes and empowers him:

. . . he feels the universe in all its plastic and endlessly variable beauty pinned, stretched, crucified like a butterfly upon a frame of unvarying geometrical truth . . . [he arrives] at a kind of edge where the speed of the shadows is infinite and a small universe both ends and does not end. (191)

As a result of their prolonged excursion away from home, Peter connects more to things outside of himself than ever before. He deciphers meaning in nature's unpredictable movements; he relates to the city and understands its purpose; and he also recognizes the desperation in his father's words and actions. Peter longs to protect and shelter his father; he longs to communicate his vast love and admiration for him in the hopes of drawing him away from the edge of despair and back into the protective circle of his family.

Immediately following Peter's sensual engagement with the city, he dreams of disclosing the love he feels for his father. In the dream, he tells his father that he has hope in life and that he does not want him to depart yet. Caldwell at first deprecates his son's

words in his usual manner, but upon Peter's insistence, Caldwell faces him and asks if he sincerely does have hope. This confrontation catches Peter off guard:

I closed my eyes; between the voiceless "I" inside my head and the trembling plane of darkness also there, there was a gap of indeterminate distance but certainly not more than an inch. With a little lie I leaped it. "Yes," I said, "Now stop being silly." (144)

Peter finally concludes that neither he nor the school nor the world is killing his father, but Caldwell's complete self-sacrifice. He gives all that he has and reserves nothing for himself, and when he gives away his very essence, only rancor remains. Peter longs to call to his father in real life, to hold the man that desperately needs to cry and face his despair, but the words stick in his throat, and his father cannot initiate such an embrace on his own (194).

As Caldwell and Peter approach their home once more, Caldwell's defenses against nature break down, and he begins to relate to it in the only way he knows how: as Chiron the Centaur. Common descriptions in the narration begin to echo the elements of the mythic realm. Peter notices the warm and brilliant white light of a star before them; Caldwell informs him that it is Venus (211). Then, as Peter trudges along behind his father, he observes a difference in him: "His shape before me was made less human by the bag of groceries he was carrying and it seemed, my legs having ceased to convey the sensation of walking, that his was the shape of the neck and head of a horse I was riding" (212).

Once home, Cassie senses immediately the change settling over her husband and

desperately urges him to give up teaching and work at home with her: "Work with your hands, George. Get close to nature. It would make a whole man of you" (216).

Caldwell will not heed her, because he perceives nature as only an indicator of death.

Cassie, knowing that her final appeal has failed, cries, and Caldwell enters Chiron's mythic realm one last time.

Unlike before, Caldwell / Chiron's real and mythic worlds do not bifurcate, but merge instead. The narration includes Zeus, Gaia, and other mythic figures, but also Zimmerman (the school's principal), Mrs. Herzog (the secretary), and elements of the real world: Caldwell's Buick, and Amish silo, and Olinger High. Caldwell / Chiron becomes hyper-conscious of the Earth, Mother Ge, and feels her anguish: ". . . Had not the castration of sky worked a terrible sterility upon Gaia, though she herself cried aloud for rescue" (219)? He empathizes with her loss, because he too has been forced to live disconnected from an essential part of his being. As Caldwell, he lacked his animal half to ground him to the earth. Only now, as Caldwell / Chiron can he bring the two realms together -- the mental and the physical, the real and the mythic. He realizes that he gave the entirety of his life to others in order to obtain this freedom from them (220). His motivations were always selfish. Now, as both his mental and physical health deteriorate, the tenuous barrier between his worlds can no longer hold; he takes his final great step and dies (222).

Like the fable of Chiron the Centaur, Caldwell can find no antidote to the virulent poison that keeps him in a perpetual state of misery. Only in death can he achieve peace. Chiron's lesson is nothing less than the origin and development of all things; he teaches his

mythic pupils that love sets the Universe in motion (78). Could love be the antidote to the poison that infected Caldwell? He loved all people, but selfishly, and the land, he never learned to love. Perhaps Peter's artistic qualities enable his selfless identification with nature:

I burned to paint it, just like that, in its puzzle of glory; it came upon me that I must go to Nature disarmed of perspective and stretch myself like a large transparent canvas upon her in the hope that, my submission being perfect, the imprint of a beautiful and useful truth would be taken. (218)

The pernicious effects of Caldwell's disassociation with the natural world led to his death. In death, Caldwell finally reengages with nature (Mother Ge), but his ordinary life lacked the enrichment of such a connection. Updike's Epilogue tells of Zeus raising his loved friend Chiron into the stars, where he aids in the guidance of our destinies; unfortunately, ". . . few living mortals cast their eyes respectfully toward Heaven, and fewer still sit as students to the stars" (222). This final caveat betrays Updike's tendentious purpose in relating the circumstances of Caldwell's demise: our lives, too, could benefit from a respectful embrace of the natural world.

Chapter 3: Defining "Humanness" in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

The analysis of the next two works in this study, Philip K Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, focuses upon representations of science, technology, and nature in recent American literature. The portrayal of human relationships and the complications they endure as a result of technological proliferation, as demonstrated by these science-fiction genre books, mirrors the challenges we face in our lives. We find ourselves questioning the roles technological innovations, such as the computer and the Internet, play in our interaction with others and the environment.

While both Dick's and Gibson's works acknowledge the benefits and hazards of technological advancements, neither takes the easy way out of pushing for complete removal of or retreat from automated systems. Instead, they resign themselves to the inescapability of technology and pursue ways with which to use it wisely to our advantage. In this sense, they operate along similar lines of "sustainability," which calls for a concerted and focussed effort from environmentalists and large corporations alike to maintain our natural ecological systems by using technology wisely. These authors construct models of ways to achieve connection between human beings and the natural world not just in spite of technological intrusions, but by means of them.

As more and more scientists and non-scientists alike are coming to realize, ". . . literature reflects and shapes the psychological, social, political, and economic ramifications of science and technology" (Slade & Lee ix). Sci-fi works especially have

often accurately forecast the contingent roles of science and technology in our lives. The recognition of feedback loops between science and common culture (although not embraced by all) validates interpretations of science and culture through the analysis of art -- such as these novels. Thomas Kuhn, in the preface to The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, comments on this phenomenon: ". . . each scientific revolution alters the historical perspective of the community that experiences it . . . [and] that change of perspective should affect the structure of postrevolutionary textbooks and research publications" (ix). So, if we are amidst a new paradigm's shift toward computer-mediated communication and relations and increased automation, as most of us would agree, then all of our cultural endeavors, including art, should resonate with anticipation of the next computer-defined societal model to come. Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? and Neuromancer augur just such changes in cultural perceptions. Both question, on multiple levels, the evolving relationship between technology and humanity, and how this affects individuality and community, separation and connection. These books also address the ecological and economic implications of this emergent technological trend.

Alan Trachtenberg has written extensively about the methods adopted by those wishing to analyze symbols in literature and culture. He claims, "How writers and artists view modern science and technology has been a common enough but strangely constricted question in literary and cultural studies" (Slade & Lee 223). Writers do tend to address these issues, but, more often than not, do so in a limiting way: "Something more than image-hunting is wanted if we wish to comprehend the subtle, elusive, and often oblique relations between art and science/technology" (224). With this in mind, this analysis will

certainly note the abundant images of machines and man's struggles with mechanization, but as it also interrogates the subtle metaphors of nature and identity and the complications that arise when nature and machine converge and must respond or interact with one another. As Trachtenberg notes, if we transfer the emphasis of analysis from *image* to *response*, and from *machine* to *mechanization*, then we avoid pedestrian hunting for simplistic isomorphic correspondences between our culture and the works being studied (224). Instead, we can explore issues more specifically and more readily question the implications of them to our lives. Placing emphasis upon *response* instead of *image* compels ". . . the critic to think about the character both of the text under consideration and the act of criticism itself" (224). Likewise, concentration upon mechanization in lieu of machine images focusses the study upon the link existing between society and machines (224). In this way, the analysis of these sci-fi novels may serve some pragmatic purpose in explaining the immediate vicissitudes that each of us must deal with.

Philip K. Dick's novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (1968) conflates themes of philosophy, theology, and psychology into a science fiction work that is at once soothingly meditative and excitingly suspenseful. Dick sets his novel in a Gothic-looking city falling into an advanced state of decay (or "kippleization"). The multi-ethnic inhabitants dart to and fro, clad in lead-lined jackets to ward off the tenacious radioactive "dust" and acid rain. The protagonist, Rick Deckard, lives on post-apocalyptic Earth in the year of 2019 B.C.E.. Due to the abundance of nuclear fallout as a result of World War Terminus, most of Earth's inhabitants have moved to other planets such as Mars. Those that remain are either genetically unfit for life in the new colonies or have jobs that

motivate them to remain on the toxic planet. Rick Deckard falls into this later group; he works in conjunction with the San Francisco police department as a bounty hunter -- he hunts and "retires" (kills) escaped androids.

The emerging plot contains many complicated twists, most of which have to do with the need for people to establish and maintain mutually beneficial or healthy relationships here on Earth. Since most animals are extinct, people have developed an immense reverence for those remaining; therefore, maintaining a relationship with an animal comprises an essential part of healthy living. Indeed, social status is, in large part, determined by the animal in one's possession and the care that others observe you giving to your animal. The more rare and expensive the animal, the higher the social status achieved by owning it -- much like cars have been a determiner of social and economic status in America's recent past. Those who can not afford a real animal must, of course, acquire an ersatz mechanical model if they wish to remain respectable and accepted members of society.

Along similar lines, those people remaining on Earth find their emotions in a constant state of flux. The reasons for this instability are manifold. How could any natural emotional balance, harmony, or even predictability be possible on a theoretically "dead" planet? Most animal and plant species have become extinct, and most human beings either immigrated to the colonies or died. No wonder the characters find themselves in such volatile mental and emotional states. As ecopsychologist Theodore Roszak would contend, these people have nothing natural to connect to and must perforce experience deep neuroses.

In order to overcome or at least momentarily stabilize their traumatic emotional imbalances, the characters in this book make use of an emotion-manipulating device: the Penfield mood organ. Philip K. Dick bases this technological instrument upon the "brain-mapping" experiments conducted by neurosurgeon Wilder Penfield in the nineteen-fifties; according to Dick, Penfield ". . . was able to locate the exact centres of the brain from which each sensation, emotion, and response came. By stimulating one minute area with an electrode, a laboratory rat was transfigured into a state of perpetual bliss" (Gillespie 60). The mood organ operates upon the same principle. The characters simply punch in a code for the emotions they wish to experience, and the mood organ stimulates their cerebral cortex to effect the desired results. Naturally, this momentary repression of authentic moods merely postpones and amplifies the inevitable breakdowns that the characters must endure to be true to and in touch with their real selves.

The characters in Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? also cope with their emotionally-barren society through the use of an "empathy box" and practice a corresponding religion known as Mercerism. By grasping the handles of an empathy box, something all human beings seem to require for a semblance of healthy living, they connect physically and viscerally (on an empathetic level) with a mythical figure known as Wilbur Mercer. They simultaneously fuse their mentalities with Mercer, as well as with all of the other people currently connected to other boxes. In this way, they quite literally identify with and feel what others are experiencing, be it overwhelming happiness or sadness. Because most people in this novel encounter difficulty in connecting with others on a physical level, they need the assistance of technological devices such as the mood organ

and empathy box.

The religion of Mercerism, the last surviving religion of the people on Earth, amalgamates beliefs from Buddhism, Christianity, and other religions. Some fairly complicated doctrines arise from such a conflation of disparate theologies, but remarkably, these different beliefs all tie complementarily together. While the formal rite involves connecting to Mercer by means of the box, the religion also represents a way of living in harmony with those around you even when not utilizing a box. When grasping the handles, one's immediate surroundings fade away and one transmigrates into the body of Mercer as he undertakes his mythic path, which eventually describes a complete circle of birth, death, and renewal -- much akin to the cyclical operations of the Earth and its many systems. Mercer toils alone up a steep and barren hillside. Unseen enemies follow from behind and throw rocks at him from above. Invariably, a rock hits and cuts him, but he continues undaunted on his way up to a precipice. Even though those empathetically connected to Mercer experience all that he does (some even receive actual cuts and bruises from the rocks), he will always be a solitary man acting alone to enact change. When he finally reaches the top, he falls to his death in a deep abyss. But there, after a unspecified time of decay and disintegration, he starts to renew and regenerate along with the other dead matter around him. He then rises back to life, but not to transcend the physical world as Christians believe Jesus does, but to begin the cycle anew.

Mercer then represents not only the natural cycle of birth, death, and renewal, but also the full spectrum of physical experiences from failure and suffering to triumph and joy. He makes his experiences available to all, whom he loves and accepts. In this sense,

he is very much like the Buddha -- uniquely individual, yet in perfect harmony with the cycles of life and their necessities. Connecting with Mercer assists people in remembering their unique physical and emotional places while realizing that their individuality defines itself through their relationship to the environment and other people.

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? begins with a morning scene between Rick Deckard and his wife Iran. The Penfield mood organ has become such a dependency in their lives that they need it to regulate almost all of their emotions. They fall asleep with settings such as "long deserved peace" (215), and wake up with "Awareness of the manifold possibilities open to me" (3). The problem is that Iran does not want to feel artificially induced emotions anymore; she senses the unnaturalness of such manipulations, and they annoy her, probably because she realizes that they only trap her within a cycle of artificiality. She attempts to explain to Rick the emptiness she feels: "My first reaction consisted of being grateful that we could afford a Penfield mood organ. 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" (Dick 3)? Iran sees how unnatural and unhealthy it is to allow unauthentic emotions to guide life. Paradoxically, instead of abstaining from her mood organ, she decides to dial for what she thinks she should naturally feel given the plight of her living situation -- depression.

The mood organs assist people in coping with their lives estranged from a larger community; they provide a tenuous grip on sanity and relationships, but they function only as a temporary fix to a much larger problem. By and large, those remaining on Earth are outcasts from a larger communal group residing in the colonies, and they are denied that

which they need for healthy living, namely a rootedness in an environment and a sense of purpose in their actions. Awareness of these insufficiencies does finally dawn on both Rick and Iran and others. Ultimately, they must find their own means for reconciling themselves to their plights and then use this self-sufficiency to reconnect with others in a symbiotic manner. Not everyone, unfortunately, succeeds in the completion of this arduous but necessary task.

Rick carries on his day by leaving Iran and ascending to the roof where he gives some affection to his ersatz electric sheep before clambering into his hovercar and racing off to work. His boss, Harry Bryant, informs him that he must "retire" six escaped androids of a new type that is more human than any before seen; in fact, the Nexus-6 android far exceeds human ability in most areas except for one -- empathy.

Empathy becomes the defining factor in what turns out to be the most crucial issue in this book. Each of the characters, androids included, must eventually come to grips with the question of what it is to be human; empathy is the most reasonable definition of humanness that anyone can find, but one interlaced with many complications when some androids display empathetic-like qualities and some humans display none! Presumably, androids can not feel empathy because they are more akin to predatory animals who are genetically programmed to look after themselves before helping, or even caring, about others. They need to do this in order to survive and function to their fullest ability. Human beings, however, as social animals, require this group instinct in order to survive. "Empathy," Rick decided, ". . . must be limited to herbivores or anyhow omnivores who could depart from a meat diet. Because, ultimately, the emphatic gift blurred the

boundaries between hunter and victim, between the successful and the defeated" (Dick 26). Unfortunately, some human beings possess deficient empathy to pass the test (schizophrenics with "flattening of affect"), and this raises some problematic issues for the bounty hunters, such as Rick, who must face the contingency of mistaking a human for an android. The boundaries between humanness and androidness become further blurred when Rick feels empathy for some female androids and when they feel something akin to empathy for him.

In Rick's ensuing hunt for the renegade androids, he must first ascertain the effectiveness of his empathy test in determining the true nature of this new android generation. He heads off to the meet with those responsible for manufacturing androids and encounters his first Nexus-6 in the form of a lovely young woman, Rachael Rosen. An emissary, for the Rosen Association, she appears completely unaware of her androidness. Supposedly, her memories have been programmed so that she thinks that she is really a member of the Rosen family, but Rick's Voigt-Kampff empathy test soon exposes her. In anticipation of this unveiling, she coquettishly flirts with Rick beforehand and attempts to learn his desires and the limits to which he would go in carrying out his job. He tells her, "A humanoid robot is like any other machine; it can fluctuate between being a benefit and a hazard very rapidly. As a benefit it's not our problem" (35). When machines go awry, not only do they cost money for repairs, but they can also cost lives both outright and through the destruction of ecosystems, such as the radioactive dust that kills off most of Earth's species in this book. Not unlike the large corporate structures of our day, the Rosen Association also cares foremost about economic gain and not the

deleterious effects of their products.

Since the Rosen Association needs to undermine the efforts of bounty hunters such as Rick (they are bad for business), Rachael also tries to bribe him with an owl -- a species most valued by Mercer (along with toads) and thought to be long extinct. Like many people of his age, Rick has only viewed most animals on 3-D television (36). When the extinction of animal species first began, Rick recalls, everyone made a big furor over it, but when more and more died out with each passing week, apathy started to set in, and people looked to save themselves instead (37). Rick fears that acceptance of such a gift would put his life in jeopardy, so he declines and takes up his hunt of the renegade androids. Rachael, however, has succeeded in touching Rick on some emotional level, and the power struggle that typifies their relationship promises to continue later.

In a sophisticated manner, Dick runs a contrapuntal sub-plot with Rick's android-hunting and identity-searching adventures. John Isidore, a loner who had survived World War Terminus by luck when everyone around him moved on or perished, now resides in the deserted outskirts of San Francisco in a once heavily occupied apartment building. This building, like all the remnant edifices of pre-war civilization, fell into an advanced state of decay and decrepitude. The same overpowering silence that Iran feels eating away at her sanity also attacks the hearts of all buildings along with their once potent memories of joy and sorrow. Since the removal or death of most species, the delicate balance between all natural systems has fallen apart, and entropy, through its primary agent "kipple," has taken over with assiduous determinacy. John Isidore acutely feels the weight of such power upon a lone human being:

Silence. It flashed from the woodwork and the walls; it smote him with an awful, total power, as if generated by a vast mill. It rose from the floor, up out of the tattered gray wall-to-wall carpeting. It unleashed itself from the broken and semi-broken appliances in the kitchen, the dead machines which hadn't worked in all the time Isidore had lived here. From the useless pole lamp in the living room it oozed out, meshing with the empty and wordless descend of itself from the fly-specked ceiling. It managed in fact to emerge from every object within his range of vision, as if it -- the silence -- meant to supplant all things tangible. (16)

These silent reveries naturally bring Isidore to question the inevitable conclusion of his life and what he perceives to be the meaninglessness of his existence presses heavily upon him. Silence, as with Iran, forces Isidore to recognize the ultimate futility of actions made within a void. Only connection with others and the sharing that that brings about can lend any meaning to human life.

Fortunately for him, Isidore works with other people at his place of employment, Van Ness Pet Hospital, which specializes in false-animal repair (62). Without this connection, he probably would have succumbed to kippleization long ago, for Isidore feels things even more acutely than most human beings. He is "special," both in the sense that he has genetically deteriorated too much to be allowed to leave Earth, so that one might label him "retarded," and that his empathic abilities far exceed those of most others. We see an example of this as he proceeds through his normal routine of picking up malfunctioning animals and bringing them back to the shop for repairs. He collects a failing cat from its owner, assuming that it is an ersatz model, and heads back to the shop.

Along the way, he hears the cat wheezing and gurgling, sees bubbles coming out of its mouth and its eyes becoming glassy, so he pulls over and tries to help it. It never crosses Isidore's mind that the animal is real (even the fake ones have disease circuits built in), yet he still feels for it and tries to alleviate its misery and travail. His deteriorated IQ, Isidore contemplates, increased his empathic abilities to the point that he has difficulty performing his job adequately. One of his bosses, Milt, agrees: "I don't think Isidore can tell the difference . . . To him they're all alive, false animals included. He probably tried to save it" (68).

During the same day, we observe a similar instance of Isidore's inability to ascertain the difference between normal living functions and simulated ones when a new neighbor moves into his building. Isidore immediately senses the presence of another being occupying the same building. He cannot help but feel the presence of another life supplanting a minuscule portion of the silence that perpetually threatens to overcome him. When he locates the apartment of this new neighbor, it surprises him to find someone even more frightened and seemingly out of place than himself:

The door, meagerly, opened and he saw within the apartment a fragmented and misaligned shrinking figure, a girl who cringed and slunk away and yet held onto the door, as if for physical support. Fear made her seem ill; it distorted her body lines, made her appear as if someone had broken her and then, with malice, patched her together badly. Her eyes, enormous, glazed over fixedly as she attempted to smile. (55)

The conversation that ensues between Isidore and this visitor, Pris Stratton, is awkward,

yet authentic, an artful dance of mutual insecurity. He questions her in his halting stammer, and she replies haughtily at first and then quickly corrects herself, reassuming a role of timid passivity. Both of them are used to being alone, yet long for company and are not certain of the right way to go about communicating with another. Finally, near the end of their first meeting, Pris hurts Isidore's feeling in her coldness toward Mercerism and low IQ "chickenheads" such as himself. But as he departs, she calls him back at the last minute: "'Wait.' Turning, he said, 'Why?' 'I'll need you. For getting myself adequate furniture. From other apartments, as you said.' She strolled toward him, her bare upper body sleek and trim, without an excess gram of fat. 'What time do you get home from work? You can help me then'" (59). Although her motives may be construed as manipulative, Pris does reach out to Isidore in her own fashion; they communicate in a world that concentrates all its efforts to prevent just that.

With Pris and Isidore (as with Rick and Rachael) it becomes increasingly interesting to chart the development of their relationship and note the effects technology has upon it. After the death of the real cat in Isidore's care, his boss forces him to call the owner and explain what occurred. So strong is Isidore's aversion to this responsibility that he almost makes himself ill just thinking about it. With the threat of losing his job, he finally gives in and makes the vidphone call. Caught by surprise at finding anyone at home, Isidore expertly handles the situation and makes efforts to calm the owner and relieve the pain she feels. Mr. Sloat comments, "'You realize that actual animal vets have to make calls like that all the time? . . . In some ways you're not so stupid after all, Isidore. You handled that reasonably well'" (73). This scene is crucial to Isidore's development as

a person who can engage others in conversation. His vidphone experience empowers him tremendously, and even his bosses immediately recognize this growth.

It took the mediation of technology for Isidore to grow as an individual, and this new found power of communication even carries over into his person to person conversations with others such as Pris. During their very next encounter, he addresses her with a confident tone devoid of any stuttering or hesitation (at least at first):

Presently he stood in front of her door, rapping with the edge of the wine bottle, his heart going to pieces inside his chest. "Who's there?" Her voice, muffled by the door and yet clear. A frightened, but blade-sharp tone. "This is J. R. Isidore speaking," he said briskly, adopting the new authority which he had so recently acquired via Mr. Sloat's vidphone. "I have a few desirable items here and I think we can put together a more than reasonable dinner." (128)

Isidore's confidence reassures Pris, and they renew their earlier intercourse with an increased familiarity that in turn leads to greater connection. In preparing dinner, Isidore makes a slip in saying that he misses eating meat, as he did in pre-war times. Pris recognizes the wrongness in what Isidore has said straight away, but instead of repulsing her, it serves to tighten the bond between them. She tells Isidore that what he said was the sort of thing an android would say by mistake and thereby give itself away (131). Since Pris happens to be one of the escaped androids on Deckard's list, she takes comfort in being around someone who is in many ways like her, an outcast from society: "She came over, stood beside him, and then to his stunned surprise put her arm around his waist and for an instant pressed against him . . . And then, as she ate the slice of peach, she

began to cry. Cold tears descended her cheeks, splashed on the bosom of her dress" (131). This represents the apogee of their brief relationship, for once Pris' android friends Roy and Irmgard arrive, she becomes aloof, and removes herself, at least emotionally, from Isidore (much the same way that human beings act differently when in the presence of their friends). But at this brief moment, it does not matter that he is human and she android; they are both desperate for each other's immediacy and companionship. She even confides in him that androids get lonely on the colonies too and that she read books while on Mars in order to imagine and *dream* of a better life (132-23). Pris wanted to escape loneliness and servitude; she wanted the same freedoms that human beings struggle to obtain. So, perhaps androids dream not of electric sheep, but of real ones.

Meanwhile, Rick has taken his leave of Rachael and has occupied himself with the task of retiring the renegade androids. One of them, Max Polokov, locates and attacks Rick fairly quickly, and Rick manages to retire him in self-defense, without much thought about the situation. The next Nexus-6 on Rick's list presents a quandary for him because she is a beautiful and talented opera singer: "On the stage Luba Luft sang, and he found himself surprised at the quality of her voice; it rated with that of the best, even that of notables in his collection of historic tapes . . . Perhaps the better she functions, the better a singer she is, the more I am needed" (86-7). Rick realizes that the human qualities of androids scare people more than their robotic functions. He must retire them because they pose a threat to people's sensibilities in efficiently simulating human activities. They might be, at least in some ways, more human than humans! This realization is compounded soon after hearing Luba's delightful rendition of *The Magic Flute* when Rick by chance teams

up with another bounty hunter who forces him to question the implications of his profession.

Rick and his newly acquired partner, Phil Resch, both track the android Luba Luft into a museum where they hope to overpower her, run an empathy test on her, and then retire her. But the thought of retiring such a beautiful creature disturbs Rick, and Phil's behavior strikes him as being highly insensate -- almost android-like. And since the Rosen Association has demonstrated the capability of programming past memories into their machines, even Phil expresses some genuine concern over his internal make-up. He confides in Rick that he owns and loves a squirrel, so that must ensure his humanness, but Rick points out that even some androids have demonstrated similar false emotional tendencies (114).

The two overtake Luba as she gazes intently at a picture of an awestruck girl sitting with hands clasped together upon the edge of a bed (115). She quickly realizes what is transpiring and resigns herself to the situation: "Rick had seen that before in androids, in crucial situations. The artificial life force animating them seemed to fail if pressed to far . . ." (116). This acquiescence disturbs Rick greatly; he cannot understand why they don't fight for their lives. As they escort Luba out of the museum, she requests a print of the picture she was looking at, and Rick, to Phil's amazement, buys her the book. The irrationality of such an action epitomizes humanness; only a human could empathize with a dying creature (or machine) in such a way. This action also compels Phil to doubt his own humanness since he would "never in a million years" have purchased a book for a doomed android. Phil promptly pulls out his laser tube and retires Luba, much

to Rick's dismay.

This scene exposes the multiplicity and complexity of issues that Dick takes on in Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?. Androids in general, especially the new Nexus-6 models, threaten humans so greatly not because they happened to kill their owners, but because they force people such as Rick to reevaluate their own values and question the very system that perpetuates those values. Phil runs the empathy test on Rick, verifying what Rick already knew -- he empathized with Luba Luft. Both Rick and Phil concur that this potential for empathizing with androids symbolizes the true danger, because humans have no way to protect themselves against their own emotions (123). The fact that certain humans, such as Phil, can behave so cold and aloof toward all life forms (biologic or synthetic) represents an even greater threat to this Mercer- and empathy-centered society. When people become so automatized that they can turn off their emotions at a whim, and androids become so human-like that they can cry and feel pain, then where shall the line be drawn? Who is to say which humans or androids should live or die? This represents the crux of the book and the impetus for Rick's development as an aware and empathetic being. He no longer wants to accept the value system forced upon him by his occupation. Instead, he becomes an existential character (more akin to Mercer) searching for a way of living that makes sense to him and does not violate his emotional ties to humans, animals, or androids.

Rick's newfound acceptance of his empathy for humans and androids alike culminates in his final encounter with Rachael. When his wife Iran seems oblivious to his vulnerability and need for compassion to assist him in coming to grips with his nascent

beliefs, he turns to Rachael who had offered him assistance. While admittedly Rachael has ulterior motives for doing so, the two of them meet at hotel and have sex (169-71).

Ostensibly, she still has the interests of the Rosen Association in mind and wishes to talk Rick out of hunting the remaining Nexus-6 androids; or, at the very least, she wants to observe what gives them away so that the Association can correct those circuits. But she also betrays, in her own idiosyncratic way, some genuine affection for Rick when she tells him: "I love you . . . If I entered a room and found a sofa covered with your hide I'd score very high on the Voigt-Kampff test" (170). When, against her wishes, Rick departs to hunt the remaining androids, she acts erratically and goes to his apartment and pushes his newly acquired live goat off of the roof. Interestingly though, Rachael makes certain that Iran observes her after she has done this. She executes this malicious act of jealousy and rage in the same way that a human might.

Rick, with plans of giving up his job after he completes the night's work, dreadingly makes his way toward Isidore's building where the remaining androids (Pris, Roy, and Irmgard) have holed themselves up. They, however, have prepared themselves against his arrival and plan on getting him before he gets them. To this end, they have enlisted the service of Isidore who cannot fathom the dire implications of living with killer androids who are themselves being hunted. He believes that these new friends have displaced the great silence that previously threatened to consume him: "You cannot go from people to nonpeople. In a panic he thought, I'm dependent on them. Thank god they stayed" (180). Unfortunately for Isidore, the tenuous thread that holds him to his sanity will be torn apart, leaving him bereft before the night is through.

As with Rick, Isidore too experiences a turning point that calls his entire belief system into question. On his way transporting Pris' belongings back up to his apartment, Isidore comes across a live spider -- a rare and precious find. And since Mercer prizes insects so highly, this creature has very special significance for the hyper-empathetic Isidore. He rushes immediately to his apartment wanting to share this wondrous event with his new android friends. Pris takes the spider and with detached inquisitiveness asks, "All those legs. Why's it need so many legs, J.R.?' . . . 'You know what I think, J.R.? I think it does not need all those legs'" (181). And then to Isidore's terror, like a scientist conducting an experiment, Pris proceeds to cut off its legs. At the same time, a television documentary geared at debunking Mercerism enralls Roy and Irmgard. And as the spider's pain eats away Isidore's insides, Irmgard fulminates: ". . . it's that empathy . . . Isn't it a way of proving that humans can do something we cannot do? Because without the Mercer experience we just have your *word* that you feel this empathy business, this shared, group thing" (185). Madly, Isidore scoops up the spider and drowns it in the sink to save it from further anguish; then he mentally cracks, but he at last knows the true nature of things: "Mercerism isn't finished,' Isidore said. Something ailed the three androids, something terrible" (187). In Isidore's mind, inability to feel empathy cursed the androids and made them purposeless. With this revelation, he no longer feels connected with them, and their presence alone cannot ward off the silence and kipple which promptly moves in and takes over. With the imagined disintegration of all form (tables, floors, cups, etc.) Isidore descends into the decay where, magically, Mercer greets him and returns the spider to him whole once more (190, 192). The process of renewal has begun,

and one can only hope that Isidore himself may eventually recover from his devastating collapse.

Remarkably, given all the emotional and physical traumas Rick undergoes in retiring the other androids, these last three do not give him much trouble. As if the real struggle was within himself all along, once he understands his true feelings about empathy, he resigns himself to the task he must carry out, and the rest comes easily.

Still, Rick sickens himself with his final act of retiring the remaining androids. He comprehends the necessity of his actions, but cannot justify killing at any level, especially when done with machine-like efficiency and detachment. In violating his new found belief system, he has alienated himself from himself and stripped away all his facades -- he stands alone, a man in need of healing and renewal. In many ways, Rick has traveled the cyclical arc set forth by Mercer; he grows strong in his beliefs until his encounters with androids causes him to question the behavior of humans and androids and the values he had previously ascribed to each. His final actions -- the removal of the synthetic life-force that empowered the androids with their own volition -- plunge him into emotional chaos and existential angst. Like Mercer, he needs to act alone, to take action and responsibility to heal his own psychic wounds and reconnect with the cycle of life that he has estranged himself from. To this end, he leaves his wife and home. He charts his way "To the place where no living thing would go. Not unless it felt that the end had come" (201). Alone, he heads back to nature, to the desolate, dirt-covered terrain that once, before the war, was a verdant forest.

Out in the forsaken world, away from the din of the city and persistent clamor of

societal expectations, Rick thinks alone and assesses his actions and their moral implications: "For Mercer everything is easy, he thought, because Mercer accepts everything. Nothing is alien to him. But what I've done, he thought; that's become alien to me. In fact everything about me has become unnatural; I've become an unnatural self" (204). Rick has become android-like. In desperation, he extricates himself from his hovercar and begins walking up the hillside; he engages with the terrain. He becomes aware, for the first time in a long time, of the air he breathes and the land he treads upon. He becomes acutely cognizant of his aching body, the pain he receives from falling, and the blood that issues forth from his cheek when struck by a stone. Rick realizes the austere yet magnificent nature of existing in separation from the society which up until this day regulated all of his emotions, thoughts, and actions. He meditates upon these things and thinks: "Here there existed no one to record his or anyone else's degradation, and any courage or pride which might manifest itself here at the end would go unmarked . . ." (204).

These revelations empower Rick because he now feels both the magnitude and fragility of his own life and his own actions. He has become a solitary figure, like Mercer, but his ability to stand on his own and formulate his own unique value system apart from outside influences grants him renewed power and ability to re-connect with others. He acts existentially, using the barren land as a catalyst, to arrive at an acceptance of all things living -- synthetic or organic. Essentially, Rick becomes Mercer because he teaches himself to embrace everything as an indispensable contributor to the cycle of life.

In an important final gesture of responsibility, Rick returns to Iran, and they take

comfort in the continuance and renewal of their relationship. He comes back to contribute what he can as a well-balanced, empathetic being, to the environment in which he belongs. Thus doing so, Rick completes his journey, his cycle, and the cycle of the book as well. He ends at home where he began, but throughout the novel both he and his wife have progressed further in their understanding of life; they end in greater harmony than they began.

Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? not only presents a brilliant story of a man's triumph over technological adversity, but also serves as a timely critique of modern-day American society. In a 1972 lecture on the subject, Dick affirms that a careful scrutiny of machines and their functions (or malfunctions) may yield valuable insights into human behavior, just as a study of our behavior may teach us much about the machines we create (Gillespie 53-4). In this sense, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? calls into question the very accepted societal norms that govern our lives and relationships. Just as Rick Deckard faces humans, such as Phil Resch, who behave like automatons, so too do many of us execute our daily routines with little thought or emotion. Perhaps we have viable reasons for behaving in this manner; maintaining economic stability may necessitate enforcing an inhuman level of efficiency and reserve on a personal and emotional level. Regardless of our rationalizations for such conduct, Dick would have us hold suspect any ideology that encourages such android-like activity (55).

This book forces us to ask, "What is authentic human behavior?" As evinced by Mercerism and the reverence given to animals, we might conclude that empathy constitutes the core element of humanness for Dick. Unlike sympathy which implies a

degree of judgment and pity, empathy involves actual feeling or experiencing the same emotions as another being. We can observe an exemplar of this in what musicians refer to as *sympathetic vibration*, where ". . . one string of a musical instrument is set to humming by the vibration of another one nearby, closely related to it in that both share a natural resonance frequency" (Dennett 62). Ironically, Dick celebrates this extreme sensitivity as the basis of our humanity, where most of us feel awkward when confronted with empathic circumstances and try to escape them or hide our emotions.

Dick pushes this concept to the limits in Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? in noting humans' empathy for animals and even for androids. With obvious intentionality Dick violently juxtaposes the differing value system of his fictional society to our real American society. In Rick Deckard's world, most animals are extinct, so the people hold them sacrosanct and incorporate them into their religion. Conversely, we still have many animal species living, but aside from pets, most of us view animals only as economic resources or liabilities. The recent scare over human susceptibility to Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease as a result of eating "mad cow" (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) infected beef offers a perfect example of this. As British authorities contemplate the slaughter of 11.8 million cattle, those in charge express no remorse whatsoever at this contingency; it is the potential loss of their 6.15 billion dollar beef industry that has them genuinely concerned (Ipsen 9).

One could interpret Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? as a caveat that we should concern ourselves more with the many species and ecosystems at our mercy. The most recent scientific research studies of ecosystems show that "Ecosystems with more

species tend to be more stable," and that minor instabilities within these systems actually strengthen the system as a whole (Moffat 1497); but if there are not enough species present to maintain this balance, then the homeostasis of the entire system may collapse and jeopardize all its species. In his creation of a fictional world where the people are hyper-conscious of all organic life forms, Dick may be warning us of the dangers of taking other "lesser species" for granted.

We should also note the similarity of reproductive and genetic disorders in Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? to the difficulties now confronting our natural biological functions. Dick envisions a post-apocalyptic society in constant fear of becoming genetically unfit to colonize to a "better" world because of the decaying effects of nuclear dust upon their biological systems. This particular fear rings true to readers of Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, because our perpetual exposure to man-made chemicals already causes many genetic errors in our reproductive systems and threatens our future viability as a species. And if our species possesses a greater resiliency to the inimical chemicals, such as dioxin and chlorine, that we constantly use in manufacturing and then promptly dump, certainly the extinction of other species will affect us detrimentally (Environmental Research Foundation 475). As noted above, all species within a system constantly interact and fluctuate to the health of the system as a whole, but without the essential "lesser species," we would find our survival exceedingly difficult to impossible.

Given the year that Dick wrote this novel (1968), his astute observations on the multiple roles technology can play in advancing or abating the communicative processes of

relationships reflect precisely upon the ambivalent feelings most of us share toward these innovations. Electronic forms of communication, such as telephones, voice mails, pagers, or the Internet, all promise an expansion of the potential for communicative discourse -- there's little excuse for not communicating when we have all of these medias open to us. And while certain levels of communication have broadened, others suffer as a result. We have little need of meeting with people or even talking with them in real-time as long as we can pass messages back and forth, thereby maintaining a semblance of interaction. Thus, these advancements provide an excuse or an obstacle to direct, personal communication, while simultaneously, at least at this stage, excluding economically underprivileged persons from the technology-dependent discourse community. Paradoxically, we often become more isolated and solitary because of the very advancements that promise to further our connections to other people.

As shown in the previous analysis of character interaction in Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, each set of relationships (Isidore and Pris; Rick and Rachael; Rick and Iran), respond uniquely to similar technological stimuli. The vidphone empowers Isidore and gives him the confidence he needs to interact with Pris on a relationship level. Ultimately, however, her mechanical coldness and deficient levels of empathy push him irrevocably away and destroy any hope for symbiotic interaction.

Similarly, Rick and Rachael do connect by means of her technological acumen in determining his emotional needs. When Iran cannot comfort him because the mood organ has debilitated her empathic capabilities, Rachael manages to fulfill Rick's primal need for connection, even if she does so through simulating authentic human emotions. He says

to himself, "Most androids I've known have more vitality and desire to live than my wife. She has nothing to give me" (Dick 83). Yet Rick and Rachael do communicate and merge, at least momentarily, on a carnal level.

The relationship between Rick and Iran most accurately represents the complexities technology imposes upon our non-fictional relationships. We initially see this couple in a state of disconnection because of a disagreement over Iran's mood organ, and the emotional gap created by this tension expands throughout the text and even pushes Rick to reach out both physically and emotionally to an android instead of his wife. Finally, Rachael's murder of their goat operates as the motivational force in Iran's lugubrious state; this action seems to snap her back to reality, as dismal as that is, and direct her concern to the most corporeal and essential part of her life -- her relationship with her husband.

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? ends by drawing this central couple together by means of an ersatz mechanical toad. Technology in this instance functions as a catalyst for healthy, empathetic interaction between two people. When Iran discovers and announces the toad's artificiality, Rick's gaze drops and he becomes morose. Iran seizes this moment to offer genuine, altruistic support. She tells him, "I'm just damn glad to have you come back home where you ought to be.' She kissed him and that seemed to please him; his face lit up, almost as much as before -- before she had shown him that the toad was electric" (214). Thus technology comes to the rescue in their relationship by offering them the simple excuse they seemed to require in order to show their deep, mutual love for one another.

Philip K. Dick delivers a powerful message in his presentation of the varied types of interactions that occur in a society inextricably intertwined with technological devices. Ultimately, most relationships in this novel end in failure because of the cold oppressiveness of mechanical devices (including androids), but Rick and Iran manage to overcome their adversities and connect on a basic emotional plane. Technology itself, as manifested in the artificial toad, functions as the catalyst for their reunion, but they had to be ready for this experience. We may find hope or inspiration in such an optimistic view of technology and human relationships: the inescapability of technology may not preclude authentic human connection. Still, Rick had to seek out his own solace before he could move toward connection.

In Rick's desperation to escape from the technology-based society that clouds his perception of himself as a worthwhile biological entity, he must retreat to a natural environment devoid of artificiality. He thereby physically *projects* himself, in the way that Roszak suggests (see Chapter 5), in order to view his relation to his socially constructed place more objectively. This physical and spiritual retreat to the natural world heals Rick's psyche in a therapeutic manner akin to Roszak's ecopsychology. He leaves his hovercar and engages with the landscape, and it, in turn, engages with him. This important interaction instills in Rick a sense of physical place; he becomes aware of his own body functions and his direct relationship to both his natural and artificial worlds. He can now return to his accustomed social place and lead a healthy, happy life -- he has healed himself.

In a strange paradoxical twist, Dick reveals that Rick's necessary retreat into the

natural world is itself a corrupted version of the natural. Not only must Rick's hovercar mediate this connection, but the intrinsic elements of this desert terrain, such as the toad, are themselves spurious. Nevertheless, this simulacra alone, even when he discovers the truth about it, has a sufficient degree of authenticity for tropism. The healing required to overcome the enforced sterility of technologically orientated societies and reestablish meaningful relationships can occur not only in spite of technology, but through the use of it.

In Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, Dick shows that only in overcoming dualistic thinking can one successfully balance the intricacies of urban-industrial living conditions. Rick enters into his semi-enlightened state only by learning to accept the value and purpose, as well as the danger, of both the artificial and the real. This represents his true revelation and final stage of character development. When the androids represent a threat to humanity, Rick knows that he must take the responsibility and retire them, even if he feels malaise at the prospect of killing sentient beings. He explains this to Iran: "Mercer said it was wrong but I should do it anyhow. Really weird. Sometimes it's better to do something wrong than right" (215).

Rick's actions represent a maturity that we might well adopt. Instead of simply killing our technological creations that threaten ecologic and biologic systems (even as they increase profits), we may be able to adapt them to more sustainable and environmentally-sensitive tasks. If we cannot achieve this, then their retirement may represent the only responsible alternative.

In Dick's 1972 lecture entitled "The Android and the Human," he avers that as

human beings, our inevitable connection with the Earth (through death) acts as our only true solace (Gillespie 64). Technology and industrialization challenge our mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being, but as direct or indirect agents of this technologic regime, we must take responsibility for its effects upon both us and our biosphere. Overcoming socially ingrained dualistic thinking may represent our greatest obstacle in achieving peace and stability, as it was Rick's; we can, however, learn to evaluate the merits of individual actions of both humans and machines, and then regulate these actions accordingly. As we chart our individual cycles that eventually lead us all back to the Earth, Dick asserts, we would do well to behave responsibly, love others, and take care of our living mother, the Earth. We might even do all of this cheerfully; after all, we are doing pretty well considering that we originated from dust (66).

Chapter 4: The Alternate Realities of *Neuromancer*

William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984), the founding novel of the "Cyberpunk" science-fiction sub-genre (McCaffery 263), thoroughly explores the interplay between technology and humanity. Gibson depicts a futuristic world where artificial realities and technologically enhanced biological functions attain a level of sophistication and allure that surpasses other *real* human realities. In cyberspace, one merges human consciousness with a global computer matrix in a way that allows for digitalized experience in the electronic realm: human memory becomes mechanized (264). The technologic and biologic merge: while the consciousness flies along simulated landscapes, the body remains inert and unaware of its surroundings, and usually, death in one realm causes death in the other. These mirrored realities introduce new difficulties for human-to-human and human-to-environment relationships. Gibson unflinchingly addresses these complexities and uses cyberspace as the ultimate metaphor for man's ongoing ambivalent feelings toward technology. Like Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, *Neuromancer* questions the impact of technology upon human relationships; he firmly ties the dynamics of relationships to the immediate physical and artificial surroundings in his fictional world.

Much like the dichotomy between the virtual and physical realities, a similar stratification divides Gibson's city Chiba into opposing segments. Cyberspace juxtaposes consciousness' unlimited power against the body's needs and limitations, but neither thrive without the other. (Note: a few consciousnesses have been disembodied and saved electronically in this world.) Similarly, the affluence of Chiba, brought on by its renown in

electronic and cybergenic technologies, gives rise to the sub-culture of the Sprawl: ". . . burgeoning technologies require outlaw zones. . . Night City wasn't there for its inhabitants, but as a deliberately unsupervised playground for technology itself" (Gibson 11). This seedy contingent, with its seemingly chaotic, yet rigorously ordered mores, becomes the driving force of the city as a whole. The very architecture of Chiba enforces a separation of socio-economic groups in an actualization of what O.K. Werckmeister calls "Citadel Culture": the affluent ensconce themselves in interconnecting high-rise towers so that they never need to descend into the Sprawl. While the merciless Sprawl stifles human qualities, repressing both love and the desire to live, these pressures infuse the populace with an urgency that increases the efficiency of the city; the masking of all human emotions serves the city's purpose. By contrast, the denizens of Chiba's towers live a life of relative sterility; their self-destructive vices take on more esoteric dimensions, yet, just as their decisions control the interplay on the streets below, they too are pawns of larger powers. When these striated realms of social existence need to connect, they require middlemen such as Henry Dorsett Case, Neuromancer's main protagonist.

Gibson situates Case in the Sprawl, where smuggling and drug-dealing represent the most common forms of interaction, and healthy relationships do not exist. He navigates his way through these gloomy streets realizing that only his acute sensitivity to the city's pulse keeps him alive: "Biz here was a constant subliminal hum and death the accepted punishment for laziness, carelessness, lack of grace, the failure to heed the demands of an intricate protocol" (Gibson 7). Case, once a cyberspace "cowboy," flirts with death nightly in his illicit smuggling deals in the Sprawl. Before his previous

employers purposefully damaged his neurological ability to engage cyberspace, he fled from his body into the electronic realm whenever possible. Cyberspace afforded Case an escape from the unavoidable pain of conducting relationships in the oppressive Sprawl; it allowed him temporary freedom from his body and its natural functions. Without this escape from the body, which he disparagingly refers to as "meat," Case's despair makes him foolhardy, and he takes unnecessary risks on the streets. The futile love Case feels for another person trapped in this relentless system, Linda Lee, only complicates his smug acceptance of and welcome acceleration toward death. Linda briefly motivates Case to reconcile himself to the world of the flesh, but her deterioration caused by drug use, partly encouraged by him, brings him to an even more hopeless state of despondency.

The few unique characters that survive and remain in the Sprawl for long periods of time do so by finding a niche where they do not disrupt the delicate equilibrium of the volatile, unforgiving city. Ratz, a notoriously ugly man with an obtrusively inelegant prosthetic arm, is one such character. He owns and bartends one of the Sprawl's most well-trafficked, though hardly refined, meeting places: the Chat. Case often conducts business in the Chat and therefore interacts with Ratz on a regular basis. Ratz attained his permanency in the Sprawl through his non-judgmental acceptance of its ways. With his simple prosthesis and unsightly face, he synthesizes the ugliness of both machine and flesh, but carries these afflictions so naturally as to radiate a queer attractiveness. Case notes: "His ugliness was the stuff of legend. In an age of affordable beauty, there was something heraldic about his lack of it" (4). Ratz, however, is not merely an atavism, but a person at ease with his individuality. His sensitive, yet detached, awareness of the city's nuances

grants him both an immunity to its duplicity and a sagacious vision beyond the usual microcosmic focus of its inhabitants. Ratz recognizes in Case a quality missing from his bar's local clientele and maintains a guardian-like relationship with him. He pushes Case, in his wry attempt at concern, to move on away from the Sprawl and escape before he gets killed: "I think I liked you better, with her [Linda]. You laughed more. Now, some night, you get maybe too artistic; you wind up in the clinic tanks, spare parts" (5). Case shrugs off Ratz's concern, but deep down he acknowledges the truth of these comments.

Ratz intuits the real reasons behind Case's risky actions and tries to help him:

"You look bad friend artiste . . . And you wander back and forth in this portable bombshelter built of booze and ups, sure. Proof against the grosser emotions, yes . . . Proof against fear and being alone . . . Listen to the fear. Maybe it's your friend" (21).

Fortunately for Case, greater powers deem him useful for a project outside of the Sprawl; he receives an opportunity to heed Ratz's advice to face his fear and acknowledge his emotions.

After a usual night on Chiba's edge, traipsing just one step ahead of death, Case returns to his rented sleeping quarters known as a "coffin." Upon entry, he finds that his ex-girlfriend Linda has stolen a shipment of RAM (Random Access Memory) he was to deliver and that a woman in black leather with surgically-inset mirrored eye-lenses awaits him. With an assassin's grace, she motions for him to close the hatch, which he does. Then, this "razorgirl," Molly, explains that she was hired to deliver Case to her employer for some unspecified assignment.

Molly and Case achieve an immediate tacit understanding of each other's

motivations and actions. They both feel part of the fast-moving street culture and need not speak of the greater powers that work to manipulate them both. She escorts Case to his enigmatic employer, but after a prolonged emersion into the oppressive poverty of the Sprawl, the spacious elegance of these new surroundings affect him greatly: "After a year of coffins, the room on the twenty-fifth floor of the Chiba Hilton seemed enormous. It was ten meters by eight, half a suite. A white Braun coffeemaker steamed on a low table by the sliding glass panels that opened onto a narrow balcony" (27). Case feels uncomfortable with this setting, because it appears too sterile in its representations of luxury. The truly rich, we find later, do not appreciate such extreme cleanliness and organization.

Case's new employer, a military man named Armitage, informs him that he wants him to "punch deck" again and make a dangerous but crucial cyberspace run. Case promptly tosses his scalding coffee at Armitage, who dodges it with ease and continues to explain the job. When Armitage proposes to repair the neural damage preventing Case from operating a cyberspace deck, he can not refuse. While the job offers him an opportunity to escape from the Sprawl and regain his cybernetic abilities, he still despises Armitage for the power he holds over him. Case's anger at being manipulated touches Molly as the kind of thing she would feel. Both of their wills revolt against any form of manipulation. She tells him, "Funny, Case . . . It's like I know you . . . I know how you're wired . . . You're okay, Case. What got you, it's just called bad luck" (30). Armitage refuses to divulge the specifics of the mission at this time; still, both Case and Molly sense that their common bond and mutual trust will assist them in surviving the

perils ahead.

Soon after the operation on Case's neural system, he and Molly witness the killing of Linda Lee. The recipients of the RAM she stole from him found it less expensive to kill her and take the memory than to buy it from her. Molly kills the hired killers, but their bosses remain untouchable. Something snaps in Case at Linda's death, and he recognizes the need to distance himself from the self-destructive and insidious nature of the Sprawl. Fortunately for him, Armitage's job and his involvement with Molly offer a positive means of escaping the town and healing emotionally. The meditative reflectiveness that accompanies his numbness opens him up to experiencing his surroundings in a new way:

Summer in the Sprawl, the mall crowds swaying like windblown grass, a field of flesh shot through with sudden eddies of need and gratification. He sat beside Molly in filtered sunlight on the rim of a dry concrete fountain, letting the endless stream of faces recapitulate the stages of his life . . . He shifted on the concrete, feeling it rough and cool through the thin black denim. (46)

Case's acceptance of the real environment's impact upon his mind and body opens him up to a new, previously deprived, dimension of life. He begins to reconcile himself to his body and its pleasures and appreciate its nuances in a way that complements the rush he achieves in the detached realm of cyberspace.

Case's admiration of Molly's artistic efficiency in all things physical, from killing to making love, coupled with her unspoken affection for him, encourage him to accept his body as more than just "meat." She also sees in him the beauty of abstract mental processes necessary for engaging the cyberspace matrix. Armitage enhances this

symbiotic balance they achieve naturally by wiring Case's cyberspace deck so that he can both see and feel what Molly does. Her surgical implants facilitate the connecting of a broadcast rig to her sensorium, so that Case can literally experience, albeit passively, what she does:

“How you doing, Case?” He heard the words and felt her form them. She slid a hand into her jacket, a fingertip circling a nipple under warm silk. The sensation made him catch his breath. She laughed. But the link was one-way. He had no way to reply. (56)

Armitage's employers evidently see some benefit in such a setup: with Case able to monitor Molly's location and status, he can time a cyberspace run with her physical infiltration of the Sense/Net corporation to pull off a heist. With each of them operating in alternate realms, yet always connected through the "simstim" unit, the two of them make a perfect team and derive an added sense of self-worth through their dependency on one another.

Together they manage to steal a computer program from Sense/Net. Case deactivates the alarms and locks from within cyberspace, and Molly takes out the guards and physically removes the program from Sense/Net's library. Curiously, the program is a ROM (Read Only Memory) recording of one of Case's former mentors and one of the best cyberspace cowboys ever: Flatline Dixie. Case begins to comprehend that the entity guiding the ongoing mission is not human, but an artificial intelligence wishing to gain more power and autonomy. It, "Wintermute," needs the expertise of Case and Dixie to penetrate and remove the safeguards that hold it in check. Of course, physical as well as

electronic barriers confine Wintermute, so it requires the assistance of Molly as well.

Caught up in the events already set in motion, this disparate cadre proceeds to

Wintermute's origin in Tessier-Ashpool's orbiting city known as Freeside.

Rapidly, the pieces of this fantastic puzzle fall into place, and Case discovers the extent of Wintermute's calculated and patient planning. It found Armitage, whose real name is Corto, mentally damaged in an asylum after a failed military operation, and it brainwashed him to think that he is involved in some undercover mission. Yet, his limited grasp on sanity is fading fast. The surgeon who repaired Case's neural damage also implanted microscopic mycotoxin sacs which will dissolve and re-damage him if he does not get the antidote. Wintermute alone holds this power over Case and also has some sort of psychological hold on Molly. Given Case's aversion to manipulation, especially nonhuman manipulation, he attempts to flee from Wintermute; however, the pervasiveness of the artificial intelligence's power allows it to track him down wherever he goes through cyberspace, phones, televisions, maintenance robots, etc.. After "flatlining" (killing) Case in cyberspace, which he barely recovers from biologically, Wintermute taunts him:

“You can't keep too good track of your women, can you, Case. Keep losin' 'em, one way or another . . . How much does it really matter to Mr. Case? Quit kidding yourself. I know your Linda, man. I know all the Lindas. Lindas are a generic product in my line of work. Know why she decided to rip you off? Love. So you'd give a shit. Love? Wanna talk love? She loved you. I know that. For the little she was worth, she loved you. You couldn't handle it. She's dead.”

(144)

Wintermute compels Case to play its game, but their exchange empowers Case with something unpredictable and foreign to the artificial intelligence: rage. In a world of constructs, facades, and virtual realities, Case embraces this anger as something physically real. Wintermute's selfish insensitivity fully awakens Case's visceral awareness, snapping him completely out of his somnambulistic state: "He'd been numb a long time, years . . . numb in bed and numb at the cold sweating center of every drug deal. But now he'd found this warm thing, this chip of murder" (152). Ironically, the most sophisticated form of technology (Wintermute) dispels the numbness Case acquired from living in the technologically driven streets of Chiba; technology helps to awaken him from his technologic trance.

Case decides to attempt to free Wintermute from its binds in order to release its hold on his life. He teams up with Molly by means of the simstim unit and infiltrates the labyrinthine Tessier-Ashpool complex. This family-run mega-corporation that controls Freeside has become so introverted that they have lost complete contact with normalcy. The neuroses accompanying their repeated cloning provide a vulnerability for Wintermute, their creation, to capitalize upon. Through manipulation of their cryogenic chambers, Wintermute oneirically feeds them twisted visions of their clan, until they all suffer from psychotic ailments.

The late co-founder of Tessier-Ashpool, Marie-France, envisioning an escape for her family from the hardships of the world, created a virtual, austere paradise for their eventual retreat from the flesh. She planned for them to depart from their bodies altogether and to have their consciousnesses transferred to an electronic realm where they

would have all they required for happiness: the ocean, shelter, food and water, and the company of their loved ones. The opposing members of the family killed her before she could relocate her consciousness into this created realm, but Wintermute maintained and protected her electronic creation.

In a bizarre plot-shift, a malicious, alternate manifestation of Wintermute, who desires the failure of Case's mission, traps Case in Marie-France's virtual paradise. As a last line of defense, Wintermute's alter-ego (Neuromancer) offers Case everything he ever wanted for eternity. Case finds himself on a picturesque beach with Linda, his lost lover from the Sprawl. Days seem to pass as he walks the beach with her, eats with her in their hut, and holds her close in the cool hours of the morning. He feels all of this as though it were real, even though it is an amazingly complex fabrication governed by Neuromancer. In spite of the authenticity of these experiences, compunction haunts Case because he knows that they are simulated and he knows that he has left friends behind that need him. So, Case voluntarily leaves his electronic paradise to return to the corporeal world (like the Buddha who returns to suffering).

Case's decision to return signals his acceptance of the flesh as something worthwhile and important. He no longer lives for an escape into the virtual, but for the tangibility of his body and all the joy, pain, love, and hate it feels. Case's hate serves its purpose in pulling him through his ordeal with the artificial intelligence, but love now holds importance in his life as well (261). He quickly adapts his reconciliation to his body and his emotions to the electronic realm and achieves perfect harmony with the electronic in cyberspace: "In the instant before he drove Kuang's sting through the base of the first

tower, he attained a level of proficiency exceeding anything he'd known or imagined. Beyond ego, beyond personality, beyond awareness, he moved . . ." (262). Case suffers a momentary death of the self that allows for an expansion of his being: he merges with the cybernetic matrix to effect the change that will free Wintermute and free himself and his friends from its manipulation.

As in Marie-France's virtual world, Case perceives an option of remaining with his consciousness fused to the matrix as a whole and probably dying biologically. He recounts his corporeal memories and makes his choice: "And the voice sang on, piping him back into the dark, but it was his own darkness, pulse and blood, the one where he'd always slept, behind his eyes and no other's" (263). Case embraces the darkness and uncertainty of physical existence over the comfort of cyberspace. He reconciles himself to his own unique identity, one defined by his memories and his physical and electronic relationships and experiences.

Case and Molly free Wintermute, who then merges with his alternate manifestation, Neuromancer, to create a new intelligence that controls and defines the cyberspace matrix -- it becomes the matrix. The human participants also undergo their own changes and developments and continue on with their lives. Case receives the antidote to the mycotoxins planted in his system, and he and Molly relocate to the Sprawl, where she finally leaves him to continue a life of danger.

In many ways, Neuromancer illustrates not just the impact of extreme technological developments upon human beings and their relationships, but a story of transformation and self-discovery. Case's flirtation with death, both in the Sprawl and in

cyberspace, makes him good at his chosen occupations, but he alienates himself from all relationships in the process, including his relationship with his body. Ultimately, he must acknowledge his body and emotions in order to save himself and his friends from Wintermute. Molly reacquaints Case with the beauty of the human body, and the artificial intelligence awakens his anger. As Case begins to feel again, he harnesses his anger and utilizes it to maintain his individuality in the face of manipulative pressures. His confrontation with the two sides of the artificial intelligence pushes him to make a decision between living in the simple and happy virtual world with Linda Lee, or braving the indeterminacy of real human existence. In what Gibson calls "the emotional crux of the book" (McCaffery 280), Case chooses real life, but not out of love for Molly, who he must sense will eventually leave him, but out of love for himself as a living being and for humanness in general. Ironically, it takes an advanced technologic creation, Wintermute, to awaken Case from the soporific effects of a technology-centered society.

Before Case can learn to love himself again, he has to reassess the role of technology in his life. In striking a balance between his technological and biological lives, Case decides not to let technology seduce him completely, but not to flee from it altogether either. Case uses the technology of a simstim unit to gain intimacy with Molly through experiencing her movements and sense of perception, and he uses the technology of cyberspace to free Wintermute and his power over them. Yet, when offered complete technologic bliss, Case declines.

The development of the artificial intelligence parallels Case's transformation of self-awareness and self-empowerment: "Wintermute was hive mind, decision maker,

effecting change in the world outside. Neuromancer was personality. Neuromancer was immortality. Marie-France must have built something into Wintermute, the compulsion that had driven the thing to free itself, to unite with Neuromancer" (Gibson 269).

Through the sacrifice of part of its identity in order to merge with another, Wintermute becomes stronger and freer. Case also gives up some of his control and relinquishes part of his ego in order to love both himself and others; moreover, he is stronger and more complete for this loss. Since Gibson uses computers as metaphors for human memory (McCaffery 270), his story appears to call for a reconciliation of the inner and outer realms of our psyches: how can we maintain healthy relationships with ourselves, others, and the world at large in spite of technology?

Case's quest for such an understanding of his identity first removes him from his accustomed environment. The oppressive nature of the Sprawl, his native habitat, discourages reflective questioning and stifles emotion. Once disengaged from this locale, Case notices qualities about himself and others more objectively. This, coupled with the danger of his mission, begins Case's voluntary reworking of his identity: he decides to displace some of his cynicism of life and contempt for the flesh in lieu of guarded optimism and an acceptance of all emotions. An awareness of his body in relation to other people and other environments, including artificial or virtual ones, lies at the root of Case's transformation from a self-destructing to a self-affirming individual. When he returns to the Sprawl, Ratz comments, "Night City is not a place one returns to, artiste . . ." (Gibson 268), because the Sprawl thrives on self-destruction. Case, however, can now negotiate a healthy existence in this environment, because it is his accustomed realm, and he knows

how to harness the city's energy without getting caught up in its vicious web. Like Ratz, Case contents himself with taking what he needs from the city and leaving the rest; his sensitivity to the capriciousness of the city, his reconciliation of the role of technology in his life, and his awareness of the needs of his mind and body allow him to live prosperously and harmoniously in the Sprawl.

Chapter 5: Conclusion: Ecopsychology and Sustainability

As demonstrated by the previous analyses, Leo Marx's views of the dichotomization of nature and technology no longer represent a valid way to conceptualize the relationship of these two forces. Technology has become such an integral part of our lives that any realistic model for overcoming our separation from the natural world must take it into account. Ecopsychology and sustainability offer complementary approaches to establishing and maintaining a healthy connection with the natural world without abandoning technology or our accustomed economic and social systems.

While Leo Marx pushes for a reevaluation of the American experience through analyzing occurrences of the pastoral in literature, Theodore Roszak, in his book The Voice of the Earth (1992), seeks to explain mankind's discontinuity with the natural world in psychological terms. He diagnoses our many anxieties as various components of an environmentally rooted, collective mental disorder. Any imbalance in our relationship with the natural world invariably leads to anxieties and neuroses of many sorts. Unfortunately, people living in urban-industrialized societies find the conditions brought on by such discontinuity exceedingly difficult to diagnose and treat. Modern therapy itself may be highly ineffectual because it is so firmly rooted in a social structure removed from nature (Roszak 310). The Voice of the Earth makes it its purpose to identify the ". . . dichotomy between psyche and nature that needs to be healed" (63), for only by perceiving ". . . the needs of the planet and the person as a continuum" (14) can we hope to bridge this gap

and begin a process of healing.

Roszak claims that in times past, all psychologies were ecologically orientated; medicines were holistically based, and harmony and health meant being balanced on a number of spiritual and physical levels (14). Even up until the 17th Century in England, when scientific discovery and urbanization were leading toward unprecedented dichotomization, people still concerned themselves with the balance of their four "humors" (bodily fluids identified with earth, water, air, or fire) for physical and mental harmony. We would call such behavior superstitious or uneducated today, but judging from their writings, they were more aware of their surroundings than most of us are.

This investigation of the connection between inner psychic and outer environment has been a major philosophic debate for centuries. On the one hand, we have those who Roszak calls "Radical Idealists," believing in a form of solipsism where we actively impose all form and meaning upon the world around us. On the opposite end of the spectrum lies "Primitive Empiricism," which claims that the ". . . nature of things, complete with its laws and first principles, simply imprints itself upon the blank and passive mind . . ." (41). There are, of course, many variants between these two polarities, and Roszak's ecopsychology pushes for such a mutual interaction of both sides.

Roszak cites the Romantic writers (most notably Shelley and Blake) as those who, galvanized by the advent of industrialism and scientific discovery, first began a passionate interrogation of the relationship between the inner and outer, emotion and reason, primitive and civilized, etc.. They sought to criticize the new paradigm of sterile classification and experimentation. Roszak attributes their vast influence upon us almost

two centuries later to our innate understanding of our connection to the natural world. He says, "The very fact that human nature, both in body and mind, emerges from the physical universe must necessarily connect it knowledgeably with the nature of things" (42). If we search within ourselves, we may discover the latent remnants of this original ecological harmony (91).

If we possess the natural ability to respond to the remote wilderness, then the same should hold true for our local urban landscapes; social pressures also influence us and our understandings of normalcy, and herein lies the main contradiction that Roszak seeks to diagnose and then treat: "We look to psychiatrists to teach us the meaning of madness, but . . . they are themselves [as us] creations of the same scientific and industrial culture that now weighs so brutally on the planet" (19). So how can we hope to escape such a tautological conundrum? We can leave our current surroundings and get back to nature. If ". . . the urban-industrial reality principle [by which most of us live] represses much that is essential to the health of both person and planet . . ." (213), then we must seek re-connection outside of this system. Only by leaving it can we hope to regain an objective view of the complications it imposes upon healthy living and communal interaction. At the same time, leaving the city allows us to re-establish a subjective relationship with the natural world.

This option for dealing with our collective neuroses of environmental separation further illustrates a point brought out in the preceding chapters: each of the characters in my study must leave their local purviews before they can attend to their mental, emotional, and physical ailments. Roszak makes efforts to explain this phenomenon in Freudian

terms: according to Freud's concept of projection, "The hidden contents of the psyche must in some way be *projected* into the world for analysis" (218). Roszak avers that we must step outside the system or project ourselves outside of it in order to view it more objectively and treat our disorders.

For a number of reasons, simple escape into the wilderness is not logistically possible for the majority of Americans. Most of us do not have the knowledge to sustain ourselves in the wild, and there are simply not enough resources for all city-dwellers to return or escape to nature anyway (30). Moreover, such a retreat from civilization would ignore our socialization in an urbanized, capitalistic environment. A rejection of our inculcated communal surroundings would most likely damage our psyches more than disconnection from a wilderness that we hardly know.

Roszak opines that the ". . . 'environment' that matters most is not a social construction; it is given by nature at large" (296). This may be true, but Roszak neglects to address a crucial component of our mental well-being when so readily dismissing our city-scapes as a collective "body armor" that discourages intimacy and cuts us off from ". . . close contact with the natural continuum from which we evolve" (220). Do not intimacy and connection occur in spite of these concrete and steel barricades we have erected around us? And is such intimacy less valid than our idealized notions of bucolic relations? So, how can we bridge this rift between the socially constructed mentalities of city life and the sustaining functions of the natural world outside of it? Even if we equate the modern city to ". . . a blueprint for placelessness, for anonymous, impersonal spaces, massive structures, and automobile throughways" (Agnew & Duncan 52), fleeing the city

may be logistically impossible and psychically dangerous. One alternative is to hold ecological field trips or excursions and to slowly reacquaint ourselves with the natural world; this would assist in re-establishing communication between us and it.

Another alternative for reconciling our internal needs for ecological and sociological (urban) stability manifests itself in what architecture critic Charles Jencks calls "sensitive urban place-making" (53). This entails the construction of ecologically orientated and ecologically sensitive architecture and public places. By working with, instead of against local landscapes, it may be possible to establish ". . . a revived and creative human geography built around a newly informed synthesis of people and place" (60). There are many environmentally sensitive and energy conservant ways to design architecture, and they are usually more logical, utilitarian, and less expensive than other designs.

Eco-architecture roots itself within the Earth and takes advantage of the natural surroundings for heat, light, the blocking of winds, etc.. This type of architecture is the most efficient and energy conservant, and although not as visually striking as our huge sky-orientated monoliths, it does not lack in aesthetic beauty. Assuredly, sky-scrapers are efficient in their somewhat vulgar manipulation of space, but their designs ignore local geography, and they waste much energy in their construction and maintenance. They also create disturbing visual incongruities with their violent takeovers of local landscapes.

Many other architectures fall in between these two extremes -- the most obvious being earth-centered structures of one to several stories which lie box-like upon the ground. While these rest heavily upon the earth without distributing much weight below

the surface as eco-architecture does, they are still more efficient than our big city edifices.

Through the use of ecological field-trips and eco-architecture we may come closer to achieving a balance, both psychologically and physically, between our social and natural needs. Although Roszak views the urban-industrial city as an anathema and an obstacle to sanity, we must realistically include it in any equation we have for harmonious existence. We need to address our current situations and difficulties foremost, but not oversimplify our plight in the process.

Unfortunately, the extent of our ecological difficulties instills apathy in many concerned people. Our capitalistic system deters many people from making logical or sane choices in regard to the global and local environments that we all share. A brief look at the current political debates in America reveals the attraction of and, in some cases, demand for short-term accomplishments over long-term ones. An immediate and visible boon in the nation's economy reflects favorably upon those in power, even if the impetus for the gain only complicates matters in the future (such as the "Timber Salvage Rider" added to Congressional bill H.R. 2745 in 1995, which brought about immediate economic growth for logging industries at the expense of our nationally "protected" forests). We find it much easier to increase our national debt now so that people can maintain temporary economic security, but it will catch up with us someday and be far more difficult to correct. Similarly, we generally find long-term environmentally orientated actions and regulations hard to deal with because we have difficulty assessing the ultimate value of such protective measures. Our unique intelligence as human beings, which enabled our evolution to this "advanced" state, may also be our greatest downfall: we may

plan and delay until it is too late to counter the effects of our destructive courses of action (Roszak 156).

To further complicate matters, any attempt the leading economic nations (the United States included) make to encourage third-world countries to protect their natural resources is understandably misconstrued as an effort to keep them in their economic places (28). Such efforts are also ridiculously hypocritical given the abuses we inflict and have inflicted upon our own land. As Roszak suggests, "The best contribution the industrial nations can make to world-environmental policy is to attend to their own over-consumption and curtail their military spending" (28-9).

We may also attribute our choice not to act on environmental issues to the overwhelming number of environmental causes and the scare tactics they use to gain our attention. Unfortunately, the multiplicity of these apocalyptic scenarios leads to an environmental backlash (35-6). If almost everything we do results in the annihilation of the planet and all its life forms, as seems to be the combined message of most environmental groups, then what is the hope in acting at all? Could it be that we suffer from what Freud coined "The Death Instinct" (Thanatos), and we recognize that death is the true goal of all life anyway (56-7)? Apathy in the face of biospheric catastrophe may signal our acquiescence to the inevitable mortality of all life, but we may also explain it as sensory overload. None of us could possibly support *all* environmental causes. Perhaps we require an all-encompassing environmental program that will take all the minor factions into account. Regardless of the reasons behind our many nonactions, we surely must do something, for ". . . the species that destroys its own habitat in pursuit of false values, in

willful ignorance of what it does, is 'mad' if the word means anything" (68).

The concept of "sustainability" may be the closest thing to an all-encompassing and functional environmental program. It calls for activist groups, large corporations, and governments to work together and model their products and actions after the natural renewing systems of our planet. The goal is for long-term survival and efficiency:

"Sustainable systems . . . endure for eons because they are driven by inexhaustible energy, are self-renewing and maintain their ongoing processes in cooperation with organic and inorganic systems that both rely on them and contribute something to them" (Chianese 6). If we could design our products with this concept in mind and learn to curtail our over-consumption and ecologically damaging activities, then we too could find a balanced place in the Earth's natural cycle of decay and renewal.

In order to ". . . satisfy current needs without jeopardizing the prospects of future generations" (Roszak 251), we must first overcome our apathy and work toward making this goal attainable. As mentioned, disparate groups with seemingly incompatible agendas must communicate. For example, manufacturers should listen to environmentalists and make more ecologically safe and sustainable goods; environmentalists should stop their minatory attacks on manufacturing corporations and try to work with them to achieve this goal; our government should step in and provide incentives for such production; and finally, consumers should then buy those sustainable products. Communication between all these parties may provide the framework necessary to transform the concept of sustainability into a full-fledged movement. It may also ensure our survival and the survival of our planet.

We may require an awareness of natural systems in order to overcome environmental catastrophes. As with Rick Deckard and Henry Case, living an urbanized existence isolated from any palpable elements of nature only further removes feeling and compassion from our lives. Achieving connection with nature, however, need not involve an exodus from cities or from our accustomed ways of life, but we need to acquaint ourselves with the possibilities for incorporating such elements into our lives: "In our time, the private psyche in its search for sanity needs a context that embraces all . . ." (47). We may find such an approach uncomfortable or painful, but if ecological ignorance and disconnection are responsible, even in part, for the epistemological loneliness and despair of modern life (66), then we should take whatever steps we can to resolve these conflicts.

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