THE ART OF HETEROTOPIAN RHETORIC: A THEORY OF SCIENCE FICTION AS RHETORICAL DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

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This study builds a theory or vocabulary that explains science fiction (SF) as a form of persuasion, called Heterotopian Rhetoric. This rhetoric utilizes a cognitively estranged scientific heterotopia (an other place: a utopia, eutopia, or dystopia) as a proof and appeal that persuasively demonstrates to dynaton, what is possible. The vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric is built through the contextual re-vision and synthesis of SF critical theory, classic rhetoric, sophistic rhetoric, feminist rhetoric, and several relevant philosophical and scientific vocabularies. The use of a cognitively estranged scientific heterotopia (CESH) as a proof and an appeal is particularly useful when the rhetor/author wants to critique readers' hegemonies and privileged cognitive paradigms, especially those with which they identify. The CESH proof provides a psychological projection situated within the realm of potentiality that absorbs direct criticism and subverts the readers' defense mechanisms. Numerous feminist SF novels can be read as utilizing the CESH proof to critique and persuade their traditionally white, male audiences by “educating” their cognitive paradigms or “ways of seeing”. So after building the vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric in chapters one through three, Chapter Four applies and exemplifies the vocabulary through a case study of Octavia E. Butler's Lilith’s Brood trilogy. The study concludes by suggesting further study of Butler’s Parables novels and their embedded Earthseed text as not only Heterotopian Rhetoric, but rhetorical theory.
For my parents, Robert L. Graves and Charolette Graves Angelo, and my grandparents,
Richard Graves, Francis Graves, Clifford Foster, and Shirley Foster.
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Chapter One:  

*Perception, Paradigms, and Persuasion*

What I intended to do when I began the *Lilith’s Brood* novels, what I wanted to do, was change males enough so that the hierarchical behavior would no longer be a big problem. So, yes, I did have a perception-altering idea in mind.  

- Octavia E. Butler

When science fiction novelist Octavia Butler speaks of “perception-altering,” she is saying something of great interest and importance to rhetoricians because perceptions or “ways of seeing” can be a major stumbling block to communication and thus persuasion. Therefore, this study is devoted to articulating a theory that explains Butler’s strategy to alter perceptions through dystopian story telling as a form of rhetoric called Heterotopian Rhetoric. And this first chapter provides both a beginning to and an overview of that articulation.

This chapter also provides a brief overview of the purpose of the study. The study articulates a vocabulary to describe a form of rhetoric that is concerned with the perceptions or world views of intended audiences. Thus, following the overview of the study’s purpose, this chapter focuses on explaining the concept of perception or world view as cognitive paradigm. The concept of cognitive paradigms is illustrated through a comparison with scientific paradigms and, in particular, several paradigms of physics—classical, quantum, and relativity. This discussion also illustrates the problems to rhetoric and even science raised by cognitive paradigms. The chapter then ties those problems to
Kenneth Burke’s concept of terministic screens and the concept of hegemony. With the meaning of cognitive paradigms and the rhetorical value of addressing them made clear through these discussions, the chapter concludes by looking ahead to subsequent chapters.

This Study’s Purpose: The Art of Heterotopian Rhetoric

The purpose of this study is to build a theory or vocabulary that explains Science Fiction (SF) as a form of persuasion, called Heterotopian Rhetoric, and identifies some of its defining characteristics. As discussed at length in Chapters Two and Three, these defining characteristics align Heterotopian Rhetoric with both sophistic rhetoric and feminist rhetoric. And as posited in Chapter Three, it works well within the “branches” of classical rhetoric while offering its own unique form of proof and appeal. The methodology for creating this new vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric is contextual re-vision, discussed at length in Chapter Two, which enables the synthesis of multiple relevant vocabularies without theoretical double-binds.

This study uses the terms heterotopian narratives and Heterotopian Rhetoric generically to refer to all the variants of literary dystopias, eutopias, and utopias. While utopia is sometimes used to generically refer to all these types of narratives, it is too often confused with and used in place of eutopia—a perfect place. And as Maria Varsam writes, “one writer’s eutopia is another writer’s dystopia, an issue that remains problematic in the history of interpretation of texts ranging from Plato’s The Republic to modern-day works” (204-05). Thus, to
avoid confusion, this study uses heterotopia to indicate all cognitively estranged places: “placeless places” that are possible and “exert a sort of counteraction on the position” of real world places and/or societies (Foucault, “Of Other,” 24).

*Cognitive estrangement* is further discussed in Chapters Two and Three; for now, however, it is important to make clear that this usage of heterotopia is a variation of Michel Foucault’s use. Etymologically utopia is Greek for “no place,” and Foucault unpacks this as meaning:

sites with no real place. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society. They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal places.

Foucault thus contrasts heterotopias (etymologically, “other places”) from utopias as “simultaneously real and mythic” (“Of Other,” 24-25). Examples of Foucaultian heterotopias include sacred and forbidden lands, asylums, cemeteries, and gardens.

However, while Foucault uses heterotopia to contrast the real space of certain reflective places to the “no place” of utopias, this study applies a counter usage of the term to insist that literary heterotopias are also “simultaneously real and mythic.” As books, literary heterotopias are material artifacts with space within “the real space of society.” But more importantly, as creative and critical constructions they are the loci of powerful “real world” rhetoric that has the capacity to alter and/or subvert perceptions or cognitive paradigms and turn the
tides of hegemony. The purpose of this study is to create a way of talking about how heterotopian narratives do this.

**Perception as Cognitive Paradigms**

Because this study is concerned with SF’s rhetorical power to alter perceptions or “cognitive paradigms,” it is important in this chapter to sketch a functional way to discuss just what it is that SF narratives have the power to alter: What are perceptions or cognitive paradigms like? As the old adage of the glass that is half full or half empty reminds its audience, perception is the key to our experiences of reality as individuals. The idea that life is all about how one looks at it is both a deeply held cultural maxim and something that we all apparently need to be reminded of from time to time as the clichés conveying the idea are numerous and old. Some examples of these clichés include: *one person’s trash is another’s treasure; the grass is always greener on the other side; attitude is everything.* The concept that perception creates reality is deeply woven into our “common sense” ideas about the human experience.

So despite what philosophers and logicians have claimed since the time of Thales¹, logic or reason is no match for perception. Indeed, logic is more often than not a product of perception. Of course, *perception* here does not mean *sensation*. *Perception* here means the cognitive paradigms by which individuals

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¹ Thales of Miletus (b. circa 625 BC) has the distinction of being known as “the first philosopher and the first scientist.” He is credited as the progenitor of the “hypothesis[,] that the totality of the things in the world, which is the world itself, is intelligible as a whole. The world is ordered, framed, and constructed in a manner that can be understood by human minds.” Thales and his Greek predecessors called this process of understanding, “reason,” and over 2000 years later the thinkers of the Enlightenment championed Thales’ assumptions and ushered in the *Age of Reason* (Van Doren 31, 33, 216-17).
and societies sort sensations and create understanding. These paradigms are basically ways of “seeing” or conceiving the world. That is, cognitive paradigms are what ultimately lead one to consider the glass half full or half empty. And because cognitive paradigms are so fundamental to our understanding of experience, they shape thought and frame logic.

To help readers understand what this means and what cognitive paradigms are like, we can think of these conceptual frameworks as being analogous to scientific paradigms. Thomas Kuhn revolutionized science’s understanding of itself by arguing that scientific paradigms are not functions of logic and scientific methodologies, but rather, logic and scientific methodologies are functions of paradigms. George Reisch explains,

The reputation of Kuhn as a watershed in the philosophy of science stems from [his] largely provocative thesis that competing theories can be “incommensurable”. As “paradigms”, theories are not only sets of propositions about nature, but rather ways of conceiving nature and natural phenomena. These different conceptual frameworks carry within them standards of what is to be explained, the very form explanation may take, and the sense and meaning of words. On this account, comparisons of theories have no recourse to paradigm-independent criteria of goodness. (267)

Kuhn understands paradigms in science as ways of conceiving or constructing reality. This means that the “logical methodologies” of scientists are subject to the standards or values established by their patron paradigms. And
cognitive paradigms work the same way scientific paradigms do: as frameworks for standards, form, sense, and meaning. As Kuhn argues, scientific or logical "methodological directives" are insufficient "to dictate a unique substantive conclusion to many sorts of scientific questions. [. . .] Instead, normal scientific research is directed to the articulation of the phenomena and theories that the paradigm already supplies" (3, 24). In effect, scientific paradigms are cognitive paradigms—"ways of seeing the world" (Kuhn 4). And it is important to note that like scientific paradigms, as frameworks for thought and/or organizing and interpreting sensation and experience, cognitive paradigms can be difficult to overcome, even incommensurable. And incommensurability boils down to a fundamental problem for the arts of both rhetoric and science.

To further illustrate how cognitive paradigms shape individual experiences of reality through comparison to scientific paradigms, some of the paradigms of physics can serve as examples of both cognitive paradigms and Kuhnian incommensurability. Readers probably know of Sir Isaac Newton and how his "laws" of classical physics very accurately describe the way things work in quotidian experience. However, as reliable as Newton is, quantum theory tells physicists that the laws of classical physics are rendered mute in the bizarre world of subatomic physics. That is, at the smallest and almost unimaginably fundamental levels, our world is nonsensical and bizarre according to our macro-based paradigms. For example, quantum theory tells physicists, "to renounce the objectivity of the world, the idea that the world exists independently of our observing it" (Pagels, "Schrödinger's Cat," 112).
This quantum view of reality is expressed in Werner Heisenberg’s “The Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Theory” (1958), a brief essay explaining and synthesizing Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle along with Niels Bohr’s description of complementarity. The Copenhagen Interpretation “convinced most physicists of the correctness of the new quantum theory[. . .]” (Pagels, “Uncertainty,” 99). As noted physicist Stephen Hawking writes, “Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle is a fundamental, inescapable property of the world” (55). Yet this realization comes “at the price of renouncing the determinism and objectivity of the natural world” (Pagels, “Uncertainty,” 99). In “The Copenhagen Interpretation,” Heisenberg tells physicists:

we have to remember that what we observe is not nature itself but nature exposed to our method of questioning. Our scientific work in physics consists in asking questions about nature in the language that we possess and trying to get an answer by experiment by the means that are at our disposal. In this way quantum theory reminds us, as Bohr has put it, of the old wisdom that when searching for harmony in life one must never forget that in the drama of existence we are ourselves both players and spectators.

(96)

Such a doctrine of subjectivity would have smacked of nothing more than absurdist atheist metaphysics to any good Newtonian of the Nineteenth Century. This is because “[a]ccording to classical physics the laws of nature completely specify the past and the future down to the finest detail. The universe was like a
clock[. . .]” (Pagels, “Uncertainty,” 99). That is, the laws and workings of the universe as described by classical physics are fixed in such a way that nothing could be undetermined in the way described by Heisenberg’s famous uncertainty principle.

Thus, classical physics and quantum mechanics lead to startling different ideas about what is real. For the classical physicist, the universe is most certainly a clockwork operation ruled by objective laws: God runs the universe using clear, orderly rules which predetermine everything. But for the quantum physicist, the universe is not certain at all—rather it’s subjective and ultimately unpredictable: if there is a god, s/he plays dice with reality.

Albert Einstein’s theories of special and general relativity offer yet another “genre” of physics. And by Newtonian standards, Einstein’s claims are just plain weird. But far more disconcerting for physicists is the fact that Einstein’s theories of relativity are incommensurable with quantum theory. In fact, this incommensurability between quantum mechanics and relativity has often been called, the “fundamental problem of modern physics.” Brian Greene explains,

The problem is this: There are two foundational pillars upon which modern physics rests. One is Albert Einstein’s general relativity[. . .]. The other is quantum mechanics[. . .]. Through years of research, physicists have experimentally confirmed[. . .]virtually all predictions made by each of these theories. But these same theoretical tools lead to another disturbing conclusion: As they are currently formulated, general relativity and quantum mechanics
cannot both be right. The two theories[. . .]are mutually incompatible. (3)

These paradigms of physics, from Newton to Einstein to Heisenberg, can be thought of as an analogy for cognitive paradigms. Cognitive paradigms, like scientific paradigms, are useful and logical, but only according to their own standards, forms, and meanings. Furthermore, contrary to what might seem intuitive, usefulness is not tantamount to correctness. For example, nightmares of doomsday weapons aside, the laws of relativity and quantum mechanics are mostly superfluous to dealing with the quotidian realities of life. Meanwhile, Newtonian physics is of unequivocally high pragmatic value in dealing with quotidian reality, no matter what it may bring. Yet it is Newtonian physics that can be said to be “just a refinement of the concepts of daily life” and the paradigm least in correspondence to the realities of the physical universe (Heisenberg 94-95). Meanwhile, the two theories that physicists tell us best describe physical reality are, as Greene puts it, “at loggerheads” (6). Thus, we see that different paradigms for understanding and describing the world can lead to equally “logical” but inimical views of reality, even in what noted medical doctor and biologist Lewis Thomas calls, “the hardest of our sciences,” physics (50).

Cognitive Paradigms and Persuasion

As the work of Kuhn, Heisenberg, and many others suggests, there really is no such thing as an objective point of view, not even in science. There are only different paradigms. And because paradigms often exclude as they create
standards, forms, and meanings, they also create serious blocks to communication. This phenomenon is nicely articulated by Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Mars* trilogy with the copiously articulated scientific conflict between biophysicist Saxifrage Russell and geologist Ann Clayborne. For example, Robinson writes,

It was a kind of cognitive vision, and he could not help but remember Ann saying angrily to him, *Mars is the place you’ve never seen.*

He had taken it as a figure of speech. But now he recalled Kuhn asserting that scientists who used different paradigms existed literally in different worlds, epistemology being such an integral component of reality. Thus, [. . .]in general, scientists debating the relative merits of competing paradigms simply talked right through each other, using the same words to discuss different realities.

(*Green Mars*, 189-90)

The challenges to communication presented by cognitive paradigms remind us, as rhetoricians, of Kenneth Burke’s notion of *terministic screens*. Burke likens these linguistic constructions to “*different* photographs of the *same* object.” He argues that any particular terministic screen will be not only a “*reflection* of reality” but also “by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality” (“From Language,” 1341). So just as cognitive and scientific paradigms shape and filter knowledge, terministic screens do the same through linguistic
selection and deflection. Thus, terministic screens could be thought of as the sense-and-meaning-making modus operandi of any cognitive or scientific paradigm.

This discussion might also remind us, as rhetoricians, of a term often discussed in feminist critiques of society: *hegemony*. As we shall see in chapters two and three, Karen Foss, Sonja Foss, and Cynthia Griffin build their *Feminist Rhetorical Traditions* in part by focusing on how women’s rhetorics (including science fiction) critique hegemony by positing other worlds or world views. They tell us that hegemony is “the authority or power of any particular perspective over others[. . .]” (233). In other words, hegemony is the overt or, most often, implied institutionalization of a particular cognitive paradigm or “way of seeing.” And as Trihn T. Minh-ha points out, the privileged paradigms of hegemony are often “confused with what is natural” and become “the only way people can think about something” (Moon, 149). Hegemony, therefore, can be thought of as a set of paradigms for what is to be taken for granted as natural, innate, or common sense. And if hegemony dictates what is taken for granted, then it also dictates what is viewed as reason and decorum.

The paradigmatic contingency of logic and decorum create a real problem if we want to persuade people to consider ideas that counter hegemony or other privileged cognitive paradigms. A rhetoric that focuses on making logical arguments and using ornamental language will provide no grounds for critiquing existing paradigms. In order to enable such a critique, our rhetoric must be primarily concerned with altering the cognitive paradigms of our audiences.
Without addressing the audience’s paradigmatic ways of “seeing,” our best arguments and our most eloquent turns of phrase against hegemonic or otherwise entrenched models are all for naught. Thus, when Butler tells us, in the quote opening the chapter, that she intended to change perceptions with her critical dystopian science fiction (SF), she raises a number of questions of interest to rhetoricians.

The foremost of these questions must be how does one go about writing a dystopian novel to change or at least attempt to change the very paradigms by which individuals understand reality? This question seems fundamental to both Rhetoric and Science Fiction Studies. Rhetoricians like Burke, Wayne C. Booth, and others have done much to blur the Aristotelian divide between rhetoric and poetics (Bizzell and Herzberg 1193-94). But as discussed in Chapter Three, heterotopian SF is different from other forms of fiction in a way that is of great rhetorical significance because SF narratives can help rhetors account for and address their audiences' cognitive paradigms. SF has been considered as rhetoric before in Foss, Foss, and Griffin's study in their study of Sally Miller Gearhart’s *The Wanderground* (1978). And while Foss, Foss, and Griffin revision Gearhart’s SF as “a challenge to the very definition of rhetoric,” the question of how SF persuades has gone mostly unstudied by rhetoricians (286).

On the other hand, SF fans and theorists have been quick to point out that the genre can change the way people understand themselves and others. They even argue that SF has plotted the course for scientific and social discoveries. But these same proponents of SF seem to miss or ignore the significance of SF’s
power to persuade at a deep level by subverting or reinforcing perceptions as paradigms.

Indeed, the word *rhetoric* seems to be on the tips of the tongues of many dystopian and utopian (heterotopian) SF theorists. Frederic Jameson writes, “what uniquely characterizes this genre is its explicit intertextuality: few other literary forms have so brazenly affirmed themselves as argument or counterargument,” yet he does not connect this realization with rhetorical theory (2). Varsam writes that in Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985) “religious rhetoric and its emphasis on sacrifice is often utilized to indoctrinate as well as justify the new state of affairs, especially for new ‘recruits’ who have little choice in their ‘assignments’” (213). Yet despite quite accurately describing the objective of the dystopian project as “the education of perception,” she seems to completely ignore that Atwood’s tale is itself a sophisticated rhetoric arguing against the hegemonic paradigms it presents as “religious” (212). So while many thinkers in both Rhetoric and SF Studies seem to be on the verge of considering these narratives in light of rhetorical theory as this study hopes to, no one has examined exactly where heterotopian SF’s argumentative power comes from. That is, until now no one has approached heterotopian SF as a distinctive mode of rhetoric.

**Looking Ahead to Later Chapters**

This study is divided into five chapters. While this first chapter serves to introduce both the notion of perception as paradigm and the study itself, Chapter
Two examines the study’s methodology, contextual re-vision, as a unifying paradigm. To do this, Chapter Two ties together the conceptual frameworks that underpin this study and its process of theory building. Chapter Three then applies the study’s methodology to explain how heterotopian narratives are different from other genres of fiction and how they function rhetorically. This discussion will re-vision the work of several SF critical theorists, including Darko Suvin, along with the rhetorical theories attributed to the sophists and feminist thinkers like Donna Haraway and Mary Daly. In light of the synthesis presented in Chapter Three, Chapter Four explains how Butler’s Lilith’s Brood functions as rhetoric by re-visioning both the narrative and its literary criticism. Chapter Five ends the study with a few conclusions and a discussion of opportunities for further study.
Chapter Two:

Revision as Methodology and Metaparadigm

Attention (of the sort fostered by intellectual historians like Thomas Kuhn and Quentin Skinner) to the vocabularies in which sentences are formulated, rather than to individual sentences, makes us realize, for example, that the fact that Newton’s vocabulary lets us predict the world more easily than Aristotle’s does not mean that the world speaks Newtonian [emphasis mine].

- Richard Rorty (Contingency, 5)

In order to develop a methodology for understanding the art of Heterotopian Rhetoric, this second chapter builds on the concepts discussed in Chapter One, including Kuhnian paradigms, while incorporating other germane theoretical language, like that of Rorty’s above. Because this study deals specifically with texts that persuade (or “educate”) paradigms towards shift or entrenchment, this chapter begins by distinguishing between paradigms and the vocabularies that represent them. This distinction also serves to introduce the study’s methodology as the development of re-vision within the contexts of multiple relevant vocabularies. The reason for developing a methodology for the articulation of this study’s theory of Heterotopian Rhetoric is to create a paradigm for synthetic vocabulary creation—a way to select, reflect, and deflect vocabularies in order to synthesize a new vocabulary that has theoretical confluence, valence, or relevance with its subject matter (e.g., rhetoric and SF).

In order to develop and explain this study’s methodology, this chapter discusses multiple vocabularies as a methodological directive that allows the
study to remain open and inclusive. Because Cindy Johanek’s *Contextualist Paradigm for Research in Rhetoric* is a rhetoric-specific methodology that is both similar and different from this study’s methodology in key ways, this chapter uses it as a mirror to further show or illustrate what the methodological directive of multiple relevant vocabularies means. Then, in order to ground this study’s methodology in the humanities in general, re-vision is discussed as a common postmodern move in theory-building. This is followed by a review of the major vocabularies contextualized and synthesized throughout this study in order to build a theory that describes the art of Heterotopian Rhetoric. Finally, the chapter discusses what physicists might call the “elegance” and artists might call the “concinnity” of this study and its theory. Here, re-vision is posited as a description of SF itself and described as a theoretically binding metaparadigm between sophism, feminism, SF, and the study itself. A brief summary concludes the chapter.

**Paradigms, Vocabularies, and Contextual Re-vision**

Chapter one discusses perceptions as cognitive paradigms that are like scientific paradigms. These cognitive paradigms are like Burke’s terministic screens, busily reflecting, selecting, and deflecting reality into forms, standards, senses and meanings. In fact, terministic screens can be thought of as the sense-and-meaning-making modus operandi of any cognitive or scientific paradigm. And when cognitive paradigms and their screens are taken for granted or privileged by society, they can be considered hegemony.
Because this study theorizes about a specific kind of text that persuades or educates paradigms towards shift or entrenchment, in this chapter it is important that a distinction be made between paradigms and the discourses they inform. Such a distinction is useful to the theoretical integrity of this study as well as its theory-building methodology. Thus, from here on out, readers should think of the sundry discourses that arise from cognitive paradigms and hegemony as what Rorty calls *vocabularies*.

When Rorty speaks of Newton’s and Aristotle’s *vocabularies* in the quote that opens this chapter, what he is referring to is the functional or discursive application of cognitive paradigms. That is, he is referring to functional manifestations beyond the level of paradigm, praxis of all kinds including textual or otherwise verbal articulations. Rorty fashions his use of *vocabulary* after the analytic language philosophers Donald Davidson and Ludwig Wittgenstein because they avoid “both reductionism and expansionism” by “treat[ing] vocabularies more like alternative tools than bits of a jigsaw puzzle” (11). In other words, what is important about vocabularies is that they are functional applications of paradigms, not candidates for apotheoses or a reductive definition of truth (Rorty 11). Thus, for the purpose of this study, *vocabulary* is defined as the *textual*2 manifestation of a cognitive paradigm or way of seeing. And this means that the existence of any given vocabulary ipso facto entails the existence of a paradigm represented by the vocabulary.

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2 *Texts*, of course, need not be limited to the written kind. Texts may well be visual, musical, multimedia, etc. However, this study is focused on the written texts and subtexts of heterotopian SF.
Using *vocabulary* in this way marks the otherwise implied illusion that discourses can be held to paradigm-independent standards. Because this study’s subject is the use of heterotopian narratives to persuade through the altering of cognitive paradigms, its theoretical integrity requires some foregrounding of the paradigmatic subjectivity of logic and concepts such as decorum, potentiality, and kairos. Furthermore, as mentioned above, using *vocabulary* in this way is useful to this study’s methodology, which I call, “re-revision within multiple relevant vocabularies,” or “contextual re-vision” (CR) for short. CR is defined by this study as *the creation of a new vocabulary through the synthesis and analogy of different vocabularies that can be demonstrated to have confluence, valence, or relevance*. This study will show that rhetoric and SF have confluence, valance, and mutual relevance and will thus build a new vocabulary that describes the art of Heterotopian Rhetoric.

CR is inspired by Adrienne Rich’s concept of re-vision: “the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction” (Rich 18). And that is precisely what CR is all about, building a new vocabulary from different ones. That is, this study reads “seeing with fresh eyes” as *synthesizing and articulating a new way of seeing*. But how can CR do this? Perhaps one good way to see with fresh eyes is to understand the old and seemingly concrete ways of seeing as illusions, as defections of reality. The use of *vocabulary* as defined above is useful to CR in part because it helps its practitioner see through the illusions of “naturalness” and “common sense” and thus escape the grand narratives that would be otherwise inescapable.
For example, in the book suspiciously titled, *Relativity and Common Sense*, Hermann Bondi uses a quasi-evolutionary paradigm to claim that a grand narrative can be discerned from the history of physics. Bondi writes that looking backwards, “one begins to see [Einstein’s] theory not as a revolution, but as a natural consequence and outgrowth,” and he calls this, “a traditionalist’s approach”(1). Bondi evokes Newton’s famous “standing on the shoulders of giants” speech to corroborate his story of science as a natural and progressive “staircase” of steps (1-2).

Granted, Bondi’s approach is likely useful to many lay-readers of physics. And granted, Einstein’s and Newton’s work is clearly built on the work of others before them. However, Bondi’s narrative of natural consequences must be looked at skeptically because it suggests that nature itself is codified into a grand jig-sawed narrative of consequential discourses. Furthermore, Bondi claims that “the unity of physics” is “yet another point that emerges” from his traditionalist approach (6-7). But if readers recall chapter one’s discussion of the incommensurability between relativity and quantum mechanics as the fundamental problem of modern physics, it can be observed that Bondi may be rather predisposed to seeing grand narratives.

Using *vocabulary* as defined above marks this study’s theoretical rejection of all such narratives. Doing so is crucial to CR, for without the ability to mark as illusory the paradigmatic claims of “naturalness” or “common sense” made by thinkers like Bondi, any “re-vision” is doomed to be nothing more than a mere reiteration. Thus, the use of *vocabulary* as defined above is key to this study
because it notices paradigms in a way that points to an ironic sense within the study’s methodology, CR. Ironic sense is the opposite of common sense and is an approach that “thinks of logic as ancillary” (Rorty 74, 78). And in the next chapter, this approach will allow this study to build a vocabulary describing the art of Heterotopian Rhetoric and its power to persuade cognitive paradigms toward either shift or entrenchment.

Furthermore, the use of vocabulary as defined above allows this study, in the inclusivist spirit of Johanek’s Contextualist Paradigm for Research in Rhetoric and Composition (2000), to use a mixture of approaches regardless of intellectual or academic hegemony. For example, the fact that physics is well outside the accepted confines of English studies does not mean that it cannot be discussed in a way that is useful to this study and its theory building. Likewise, the fact that rhetoric and SF are two separate crafts with well-defined academic space doesn’t mean that the overlap between the two is not useful and sophisticated in ways yet to be articulated by either field. CR allows this study to approach theory building not only as a critical task, but also as a creative task. This study does not pretend to uncover the “truth” or “nature” of heterotopian narratives. This study’s objective is only to create, through synthesis and analogy, a useful vocabulary—a way to think about, discuss, and apply Heterotopian Rhetoric.
Multiple Relevant Vocabularies as Directive

As useful as Rich’s concept of re-vision is, it leaves its practitioner without much of a compass. The directive “within multiple relevant vocabularies,” provides the practitioner with a more clear methodology. In other words, instead of trying to see an old text through the filter of a different paradigm, CR makes the conscious attempt to draw-and-weigh-in multiple vocabularies from multiple paradigms in order to synthesize a new vocabulary.

This is contextual re-vision simply because the subject matters of this study are re-visioned within the contexts of other vocabularies. This methodology is also contextual because it shares “a sensitivity to the contexts from which [the researcher’s] work emerges” with Johanek’s Contextualist Research Paradigm for Rhetoric and Composition (Johanek 88). Johanek argues that “our field is simply divided by different ways of knowing, and we argue about which ways are better or worse” (87). Thus, instead of debating about which methodology is best, Johanek’s “contextualist approach to research does not (cannot, should not) value one set of research methods over another.” Instead, “the contexts from which research questions come[. . .]guide[. . .]methodological questions” (Johanek 2). This is important to rhetoric because it recognizes the fallacy of paradigm-independence in arguments that apotheosize one research method to the exclusion of all others, and it provides way of dealing with this fallacy. This study’s methodology is heavily influenced by Johanek because instead of this being concerned with a particular form (e.g., objectivist,
phenomenological, etc.) or lens (feminist, psychoanalytic, etc.), CR is free to mix and match forms and lenses in order to create a new and useful vocabulary.

Despite the contribution of Johanek’s argument to this study, her foundationalist assertion that inquiry “emerge[s] from some natural process” is problematic (88). For example, Johanek claims that in her question matrix “we see rhetoric and dialectic unfold in Aristotelian terms” (113). *Dialectic* is the art of categorizing reality into hierarchies and forms through a dialogical process to ascertain truth (Black 87-88; Lord 162-63). Carnes Lord summarizes Aristotle’s concept of the relationship between rhetoric and dialect: the purview of rhetoric is “to see the persuasive and the apparently persuasive, just as it is within the scope of dialectic to see the syllogism and apparent syllogism” (163). However, the discussions of cognitive paradigms and vocabularies in the first two chapters of this study clearly deny any notion that dialectic does more than reify the privileged cognitive paradigms of the dialectician. And Johanek is clearly standing in the middle of her own perception when she uses a generalization about “All people” to imply that Aristotle’s dichotomy is, in fact, natural (113).

Indeed, what is most contrary to this study’s spirit about Johanek’s paradigm is her use of a vocabulary entrenched in the illusion of paradigm-independent naturalness. For example, she writes, “Numbers as well as narratives naturally occur in most contexts” (111). While Johanek’s point that there are multiple vocabularies that can be tapped and blended in any context is well taken by this study’s methodological approach, the implication that these vocabularies are somehow anything other than applied paradigms is
troublesome. Thus, rather than abiding strictly to Johanek’s research paradigm, this study’s methodology for theory-building involves the reflective synthesis and analogy of conscientious, recursive research in order to fulfill the directive of re-visioning within the contexts of multiple relevant vocabularies.

**Re-vision as a Common Postmodern Move**

This study is far from the first to use re-vision as the basis for a research methodology. Re-ision has served many investigations into various texts. In their introduction to *Feminist Rhetorical Theories*, Foss, Foss, and Griffin write, “Adrienne Rich’s notion of re-isioning is the inspiration for this book, which is about seeing rhetoric in new ways and, in particular, through the lens of feminist perspectives” (1). And as mentioned in Chapter One, Foss, Foss, and Griffin’s project is very similar to this one. Like *Feminist Rhetorical Theories*, this study is an attempt to expand the rhetorical tradition to include feminist methods, including the education of paradigms and SF.

In *Rhetoric Retold*, Cheryl Glenn goes into more detail about the creative and critical processes of her re-ision. She explains her project as having a conceptual and methodological integrity very much like this study’s:

Frederic Jameson defines history as nothing more than an “ideologeme,” a construct that is susceptible to both a conceptual description and a narrative manifestation all at once (87). Hayden White [echoes] Richard Rorty, who, nearly twenty years ago, rotated the argument of Thomas Kuhn and convinced us that we
simply cannot “mirror” any reality in any narrative—scientific, historical, or otherwise[. . .]. (6)

In the terms favored by this study, Glenn builds the theoretical scaffolding for her re-vision with the ironic view that all vocabularies are paradigmatic. And to coordinate the broader theoretical framework of her re-vision within the specific geometry of her paradigmatic exigency, Glenn adds a familiar passage from Burke:

The “terministic screen,” of each history writer’s language, then is a reflection of reality; but by its very nature it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent, it must function also as a deflection of reality (Burke, Language 45). Consequently, all historical accounts, even the most seemingly objective historical records, are stories. (7)

Despite the notable similarities in theoretical scaffolding between Glenn’s project and my own, there is little doubt that our projects have quite different geometries, or shapes, overall. So while this study indeed seeks to create new knowledge, it seeks to do so by employing a methodology that has been useful to similar projects in rhetoric and in the humanities in general. In fact, re-vision, in myriad forms, is currently the most abundant and popular mode of theory building in use.

To corroborate this, one merely need jaunt to the nearest Barnes and Noble “Philosophy” section and witness such book titles as Introduction to the Philosophy of Shakespeare’s Sonnets; The Lord of the Rings and Philosophy;
One Book to Rule Them All; The Matrix and Philosophy: Welcome to the Desert of the Real; Star Wars and Philosophy; The Chronicles of Narnia and Philosophy; Harry Potter and Philosophy: If Aristotle Ran Hogwarts; even Seinfeld and Philosophy: A Book About Everything and Nothing; Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Philosophy: Fear and Trembling in Sunnydale; The Sopranos and Philosophy: I Kill Therefore I Am; Woody Allen and Philosophy: You Mean My Whole Fallacy Is Wrong?; and my personal favorite, The Simpsons and Philosophy: The D’oh! of Homer (Amazon).

As even the titles demonstrate, such texts are re-visions of narratives through the lens of various paradigms. That is, what the publishers of these books are calling “philosophy” is typically an array of theoretical approaches—critical, philosophical, political, sociological, and so forth. For example, The Simpsons and Philosophy has chapters covering topics such as Lisa and American Anti-intellectualism, The Simpsons and Allusion, Simpsonian Sexual Politics, Atomistic Politics and the Nuclear Family, and The Function of Fiction (Irwin et al. eds. vii-viii). Clearly, The Simpsons and Philosophy re-visions The Simpsons within a broad range of theory, not just philosophy, and this study is in some ways a similar project.

However, that said, many readers will wonder how valid a methodology can really be if it allows cartoons to be construed as theory. After all, re-vision has been criticized for making “distortions” and being contradictory (Bizzell 9). That is, critics of re-visionary projects point out that often re-vision seeks to
establish grand narratives while hypocritically condemning grand narratives. This charge indeed sounds severe and is likely warranted, at least in some cases.

The editors of *The Simpsons and Philosophy* don’t say much about methodology or methods, and they offer only this in defense of their project: “[The Simpsons] is just deep enough to warrant serious attention” (Irwin et al. eds. 3). And as simple as it may be, the editors’ point is valid. Re-visions are based on any exigency that warrants an attempt at seeing with fresh eyes, not epistemological certainty. And while re-visions do not abide by the grand narratives of history or science or society, they are not in any way theoretically barred from positing grand narratives of their own. Indeed, the consequences of *ironic sense* are such that positing an alternative grand narrative or paradigmatic vocabulary is all that can really be done. Donald Davidson explains that using vocabularies “is not a trait a man [sic] can lose while retaining the power of thought” (185). Cognitive paradigms shape thought and frame logic, “So there is no chance that someone can take up a vantage point for comparing conceptual schemes by temporarily shedding his own” (Davidson 185). As Patricia Bizzell tells us, re-vision “is a contradiction only if there is one kind of truth, [. . .]the “objective” kind[. . .]” (9).

Thus it is not an objective or paradigm-independent truth about rhetoric or heterotopias or Butler’s narratives that this study seeks. Rather, this study seeks to offer a new way of seeing and thinking through a new vocabulary. That is, it seeks to create a new and hopefully useful metaphor, not a syllogism. This study makes no claims of a methodological correspondence with reality or truth to be
ensured by steps x,y,z. Rather, it works through reflective synthesis and analogy of conscientious, recursive research. And just as Rorty writes of his own methodology, this study is more likely to say “things like, ‘try thinking of it this way,’” than offer “proof” (9).

The Vocabularies Re-Visioned in this Study

As this study’s theory of heterotopian rhetoric is illustrated with a case study of Butler’s *Lilith’s Brood*, one might be tempted to think of the primary vocabulary re-visioned in this study as Butler’s. A bibliography of Butler’s work can be arranged into five categories: the *Lilith’s Brood* trilogy, the *Patternist* series, the *Earthseed* series, the “postmodern slave novels,” and the short stories. This study focuses on *Lilith’s Brood* as its three novels seem to provide an ideal synthesis of the theories processed in the other works. Of course, there is little doubt that the discussion of Butler’s rhetorical practices is deepened by discussing these characteristic theories within the context of Butler’s entire body of work. Therefore, this study at times dips into Butler’s bibliography beyond *Lilith’s Brood*.

Chapter Three focuses on several vocabularies designed to describe SF itself, the most important being Darko Suvin’s concept of cognitive estrangement. In “On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre” (1972), Suvin builds his notion of estrangement from Bertolt Brecht’s definition of Viktor Shklovsky’s term *estrangement*: “A representation which estranges is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time see it as unfamiliar” (qtd. in Suvin,
This is important because, as Suvin posits, “In SF, the attitude of estrangement[. . .]has grown into the formal framework of the genre” (375). And in Chapter Three, this framework is shown to be crucial to Heterotopian Rhetoric. Also at play in the discussion of cognitive estrangement are Robert Heinlein’s definition of speculative fiction and Robert Scholes discussion of structural fabulation. Other vocabularies describing SF that are re-visioned within this study include Lyman Tower Sargent’s taxonomy of heterotopias. Chapter four adds several more critical vocabularies to the re-visionist mix by considering the literary criticism of Butler’s narratives.

Yet, while we might be tempted to consider Butler’s narratives along with contemporary SF theory as the primary texts for re-vision in this study, the real core of this re-vision is the set of vocabularies spun from the rhetorical tradition. In particular, this study will utilize the vocabularies of sophism—as articulated in contemporary scholarship—and of third wave feminisms, particularly those referred to as “cyborg” and “postcolonial” feminisms, e.g., those by Donna Haraway, Trihn T. Minh-ha, and Gloria Anzulduá. And it is important to note that sophism, most feminisms, and the craft of heterotopian science fiction are all entwined with one another both literally and theoretically.

Sophistic and feminist vocabularies share several concepts and attitudes, and as Susan Jarratt argues, sophistic rhetoric, women, women’s writing, and feminisms have numerous important relationships, including their hegemonic marginalization as superficial:
This parallel can be traced even more closely into the realm of “style,” both as it refers specifically to language and in its more general reference to gesture, appearance, and dress. The devaluation of both the sophists and women operates as their reduction to a “style” devoid of substance. Both rhetoric and women are trivialized by identification with sensuality, costume, and color—all of which are supposed to be manipulated in attempts to persuade through deception. (Jarratt 65)

Indeed, according to several feminist accounts, rhetoric and women are entwined in a way that re-visions the interdisciplinary hierarchies of academia as articulations of patriarchal hegemony. Building on this critique, Michelle Ballif tells us that feminist vocabularies within Rhetoric and Composition studies work to refigure “Woman” and challenge hegemonic paradigms. She writes,

this different figuration of Woman is that which confuses the traditional binaries of Man/Woman, truth/deception, being/not being and therefore embodies the discursive form known as sophistry—a form condemned by philosophy and by most of the rhetorical tradition as effeminate and deceptive. (2)

Clearly at least some of contemporary feminist rhetorical theory has aligned itself theoretically and figuratively with sophism, and at least some of these sophistic feminisms are concerned with the altering of paradigms. This study draws on these connections in explaining both heterotopian narratives in general and Butler’s dystopias as rhetoric.
Just as there are strong links between feminist vocabularies and sophism, Chapter Three’s discussion of how heterotopian narratives function as rhetoric will suggest that there is also a strong link between sophism, feminism and SF.

As Moylan writes, heterotopias are “an optimum mode for reaching beyond the myths of male power” (41). To see that feminism and heterotopian narratives have long gone hand in hand, one need only consider works such as Butler’s Parable of the Sower (1993); Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tales (1985); Joanna Russ’ The Female Man (1975); Ursula K. Le Guin’s The Left Hand of Darkness (1969); Charlotte Gilmore Perkins’ Herland (1915); or even, Christine de Pizan’s The Book of the City of the Ladies (1405).

The discussion of sophism largely centers on the concept of *to dynaton*, or potentiality—the possible. Indeed, what Poulakos tells us in “Towards a Sophistic Definition of Rhetoric” (1994) about sophistic attention to potentiality sounds remarkably like a discussion of SF and in particular, heterotopias:

> By exploiting [sic] people’s proclivity to perceive themselves in the future and their readiness to thrust themselves into unknown regions, the rhetorician tells them what they could be, brings out in them futuristic versions of themselves, and sets before them both goals and directions which lead to those goals. All this he does by creating and presenting to them that which has the potential to be but is not. Thus it is no paradox to say that rhetoric strives to create and labors to put forth, to propose that which is not. (43)
Heterotopian narratives are crafted to work with our power to re-imagine ourselves and reality as other and elsewhere. Thus, if Poulakos is correct in his description of how rhetoricians mark and make use of *to dynaton*, how can one possibly deny that heterotopian narratives have very high valence with rhetoric and sophistic rhetoric in particular?

Beyond the central vocabularies of Butler, SF theory, and rhetoric, this study re-visions vocabularies from related fields, for example, the philosophies of language, epistemology, and political science of Rorty, and the philosophies of science and history of Kuhn. While it is hopefully now clear to readers how Kuhn and Rorty tie into both this study’s methodology and vocabulary, it is probably not clear how these two have already contributed in one way or another to the study of rhetoric.

Rorty’s contribution to rhetoric comes in the form of antifoundationalism that favors a sophistic or rhetorical view of the world. Rorty argues that “a talent for speaking differently, rather than arguing well, is the chief instrument of cultural change” (7). And from this position he posits that rhetoric is the key to liberal society:

the sort of society which liberals are trying to avoid [is] one in which “logic” rule[s] and “rhetoric” [is] outlawed. It is central to the idea of a liberal society that, in respect to words as opposed to deeds, persuasion as opposed to force, anything goes. (51-52)

Rorty’s work has been a key source for many of the arguments that have intellectually revitalized rhetoric since the 1960s, including Glenn’s *Rhetoric*.
Retold, as discussed above. Thus, as Glenn tells us that Rorty “rotated” Kuhn’s philosophy of science to the Liberal Arts and Rhetoric, we can also say that Kuhn’s work is relevant to the revitalization of Rhetoric. Indeed, perhaps Kuhn more than anyone else has managed to tear down the dogmatic view that scientists and their methods somehow objectively uncover Truth. Kuhn points out that science functions by establishing paradigms that “gain their status because they are more successful than their competitors in solving a few problems that the group of practitioners has come to recognize as acute” (23).

This means that instead of uncovering Truth in the world or universe, science:

- seems an attempt to force nature into the preformed and relatively inflexible box that the paradigm supplies. No part of the aim of normal science is to call forth new sorts of phenomena; indeed, those that will not fit the box are often not seen at all. Nor do scientists normally aim to invent new theories, and they are often intolerant of those invented by others. Instead, normal-scientific research is directed to the articulation of those phenomena and theories that the paradigm already supplies. (Kuhn 24)

Evidence of this paradigmatic reaffirmation can be seen throughout science. Consider Newton’s misguided labeling of indigo as color and not a shade in order to get the sacred number seven from the visible color spectrum, for example. Or consider the very existence of a fundamental problem of modern physics that theoretical physicists have asserted themselves to resolve. Greene tells us that superstring theory and the “the even grander synthesis currently (and
mysteriously) named M-theory” are attempts to described general relativity and quantum mechanics in such away as to make them not only commensurable but “require one another” (4). In other words, superstring and M theories are attempts to make mathematical and natural phenomenon come together in a way that fits physics’ existing paradigm in order to validate what physicists already “know.”

Kuhn’s disruption of the dogma of scientific Truth can be taken, finally, as the death knell for the Platonic critique of Rhetoric and Sophism along with his paeans to Logic. As James Kinneavy tells us, “Gorgias and some of the other sophists carried the implications of relativism of different situations to such lengths that Plato countered with the stability and permanence of his world of ideas” (81). But with Kuhn, Plato’s notion of logic uncovering permanent, objective Truth is delivered a severe blow as our contemporary champions of objectivity, scientists, are understood in terms of their own subjectivities. Thus, if James Kastely is correct in his assertion that “the history of rhetoric can be read as a series of responses to Plato” then there should be no problem in understanding how Kuhn’s response to Plato is important to rhetoric (96).

In addition to the philosophical approaches of Kuhn and Rorty, this study also re-visions some of the “scientific” vocabularies of psychology, and in particular, concepts identified by Freud that have retained theoretical value. Of particular interest to this study are the concepts of the uncanny and psychological projection. The “Freudian” theory of the uncanny (developed by Freud and Ernst Jentsch) simply refers to that which is both unfamiliar and yet
familiar and thus creates a feeling of uneasy interest—the experience of déjà vu is often invoked as an example (Freud 931).

Psychological projection (developed by Freud and Anna Freud) is another theory used in this study. This phenomenon is considered a defense mechanism that protects people from damaging their egos by projecting their own undesirable attitudes and traits onto an “other,” that is, another person (Niolon par. 4). For example, people who may unconsciously realize that they themselves are impatient will likely find this trait in others for little good reason. Both of these theories will be shown to be at play in heterotopian narratives and key to Heterotopian Rhetoric.

**SF as CR and CR as Metaparadigm**

Physicists prize *elegance*—a profound unified simplicity—in their theories. Composers of music and other arts strive for *concinnity*—an artful mixture of constituents—in their work. And as grandiose as these ideals might sound, a good dose of each is advisable in the synthesis of a new vocabulary. Thus, care has been taken in building this study’s articulation of the art of Heterotopian Rhetoric to unify its constituents in a simple yet profound way. Not only is CR the methodology of this study, but the products and processes of CR are also the subject of this study. That is, SF and heterotopian narratives are themselves contextual revisions. The art of Heterotopian Rhetoric is the art of persuading or educating paradigms toward shift or entrenchment through a process of CR—a process of creating of a new vocabulary through the synthesis and analogy of
different vocabularies that can be demonstrated to have confluence, valence, or relevance. A rhetor’s artful articulation of a new vocabulary synthesized and estranged from vocabularies familiar to the reader (as in heterotopian SF) ipso facto creates of a new paradigm or way of seeing for the reader that is represented by the vocabulary.

Of course, SF writers and critics have been noticing SF’s re-visionary powers and almost tying them to rhetorical theory for quite a while. Russ, the aforementioned of author of The Female Man, tells readers in To Write Like a Woman:

If any theme runs through all my work, it is what Adrienne Rich once called “re-vision,” i.e., the re-perceiving of experience, not because our experience is complex or subtle or hard to understand (though it is sometimes all three) but because so much of what’s presented to us as “the real world” or “the way it is” is obviously untrue that a great deal of social energy must be mobilized to hide that gross and ghastly fact. (xv)

Picking up on this, Moylan tells us that SF “has formal potential to re-vision the world in ways that generate pleasurable, probing, and potentially subversive responses in its readers” (4). Moylan then solidifies the link between re-vision and SF and implies a relationship to rhetorical theory by sounding very much Poulakos’ discussion (quoted on p. 35) of to dynaton in rhetoric:

Central to [SF]’s textual tendency to go where others haven’t (at least not in ways acknowledged within the purview of those who are
inclined to settle for the world as they immediately and
unreflectively see it and know it) is [SF]’s imaginative proclivity to
re-create the empirical present of its author and implied readers as
an “elsewhere,” an alternative spacetime that is the empirical
moment but not that moment as it is ideologically produced by way
of everyday common sense. (5)

In other words, heterotopian narratives are prone to offer readers new
cognitive paradigms that simultaneously subvert and re-vision the dominantly
accepted paradigms. Thus, we see that heterotopian SF is primarily concerned
with a kind of re-vision that is very much in the spirit of Rich, Glenn, and Foss,
Foss, and Griffin. That is, re-visions that “get under [history’s] surface
appearances, tear open its sutured explanations, and uncover the tensions and
contradictions that are constantly in motion” (Moylan 26). Heterotopian
narratives can be thought of as re-visions of reality set in the space of
potentiality, and this, as we shall examine in Chapter Three, has confluence with
the argument that these narratives can indeed be described as Heterotopian
Rhetoric.

With the valence between re-vision and heterotopian narratives thus
established, it shouldn’t be difficult to understand the project of the sophistic
rhetorician as described by Poulakos to also be a type of re-vision. Poulakos
tells us the sophists maintained that “By voicing the possible, the rhetor discloses
his [sic] vision of a new world to his listeners[. . .]” (45). While this may seem to
be dominated by future spacetime concerns, we need not see potentiality and
sophistic re-vision as limited to deliberative rhetoric. Indeed, as Moylan tells us above, heterotopian narratives provide cognitive maps of imaginary worlds that help readers map the real world (Moylan 26). And Poulakos’ discussion of potentiality and sophistic rhetoric nicely mirrors this Moylan’s assertion:

the sphere of actuality always entails a lack, the absence of that which exists only in the future; more particularly, [. . .] actuality frustrates man [sic] when he dreams of being other and binds him where he already is when he wants to be elsewhere. (Poulakos 43)

Thus, a rhetor might use the re-vision made available by potentiality to critique the present, and it is readily apparent how the proposition of Utopia can lead to discontent with the status quo. However, Poulakos also suggests another way the sophists used potentiality for re-vision: by contrasting “the place in which one has situated one’s dreams and the place where with horror one sees oneself surrendered to chance or ill luck” (43). One might argue that Poulakos has just provided a broad yet apt enough description of dystopian narratives, and readers can see how potentiality and re-vision are linked concepts, even if re-vision is strictly “looking back with fresh eyes.”

As suggested above by Glenn’s invoking of Burke, Kuhn, and Rorty in her explanation of history as “story,” re-vision is a method rooted in the antifoundationalist traditions, which again ties re-vision to the sophists. These antifoundationalist traditions work in this study to provide an added layer of theoretical current. Therefore, so far as this study relies on ideas about language and perceptions, the theories invoked to support and articulate these ideas are
theories that are completely germane to the other theoretical currents in the study. This study not only employs CR as its methodology, but it also identifies re-vision as its underlying theme, and it does this in an effort to remain theoretically cohesive yet open.

Finally, while re-vision and CR unify this study’s methodology and its constituents—this is a re-vision of a method of re-vision (SF) as another method of re-vision (rhetoric)—there are other levels of unity as well. The prime example of this is that in so far as vocabularies ipso facto entail paradigms represented by said vocabularies, this study’s use of CR is a metaparadigmatic methodology. That is, CR is a methodological paradigm for the synthesis of theoretical and narrative paradigms in order to create a rhetorical paradigm for understanding heterotopian narratives as persuasive paradigms intended to use and either shift or entrench their readers’ cognitive paradigms. Whether this study’s methodology and hypothesis is elegant or artful is really a matter of taste. However, this study’s simple theoretical unity drawn from distinct and disparate parts is undeniable. And that, more than anything else, makes it worth further examination by rhetoricians and SF scholars alike.

Summary

This study’s methodology is keyed by the use of vocabulary to mark the paradigmatic assumptions of discourses. And this approach applies to all vocabularies, scientific or otherwise, and reveals an ironic sense in this study’s methodology. Ironic sense, in Heisenberg’s language, realizes that, counter to
commonsense, what we observe in nature is “not nature itself but nature exposed to [a] method of questioning.” Thus, in order to re-vision “with fresh eyes,” this study is dubious of and alert for the apotheosizing vocabularies.

This study’s methodology, CR, uses the phrase, *multiple relevant vocabularies* as a directive to reflectively and consciously attempt to draw-and-weigh-in multiple vocabularies from multiple paradigms in order to synthesize a new vocabulary. This methodology has many similarities in theoretical scaffolding projects in Rhetoric and in the Humanities in general. In fact, re-vision, in myriad forms, is currently the most abundant and popular mode of theory building in use. So while this study indeed seeks to create a new vocabulary, it does so by employing a methodology that has been useful to similar projects in the past.

There are numerous vocabularies re-visioned in this study, including the work of Bulter, SF critical theory, rhetorical theory, various philosophical vocabularies, psychology, and other miscellaneous scientific and theoretical vocabularies. And the synthesis and analogy of these vocabularies through the methodology of CR suggests that re-vision can be thought of a metaparadigm for the study. Like *the Golden Ratio* of Pythagorean geometry—which appears in everything from sea shells, to spiral galaxies, to great works of art—re-vision has an uncanny way of popping up everywhere we look (Livio 2). Indeed, heterotopian narratives can be thought of as re-visions of reality set in the space of potentiality, and this, as Chapter Three shall examine, has confluence with this study’s argument that these narratives are indeed rhetorical craft.
Chapter Three:

A Vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric

It was a parable for students of scientific objectivity. Wherever the chart disagreed with his observations he rejected the observation and followed the chart. Because of what his mind thought it knew, it had built up a static filter. Seeing is not believing. Believing is seeing. - Robert Persig (Lila, 392)

The lesson Persig offers above is that a way of knowing or understanding is also a way of not knowing or not understanding—a way of looking at the world is also a way of closing one’s eyes to it. This means that what people know or understand interferes with what they can know or understand. This can be an enormous rhetorical problem. For example, many feminisms are dedicated to identifying and altering hegemonic ideas about the sexes. But this can be exceedingly difficult: If I “know,” for example, that “maternal instinct” and the female role of “nest-builder” is the “natural” way of the world, then it is very difficult or impossible for me to understand how the expectation for women to be housewives is oppressive. How could it be, I would ask, when commonsense says that the natural order of the world is for females to tend to the nest and young?

This study proposes that heterotopian SF has the power to overcome such rhetorical obstacles with varying degrees of effectiveness by providing competing cognitive paradigms that suggest what is possible. This can be described as persuading or educating cognitive paradigms towards shift. Furthermore, the possibility is also there for Heterotopian Rhetoric to persuade or
educate cognitive paradigms towards entrenchment. This distinction and many others will be made to offer a definition of Heterotopian Rhetoric in this chapter.

This chapter offers a somewhat abbreviated taxonomy of SF. This explains the variations and distinctions within the critical vocabulary of the SF super-genre that are important to the articulation of this study’s theory. This taxonomy reveals the importance of cognitive estrangement, and the chapter thus turns its attention to the critical vocabulary posited by Darko Suvin. After Suvin’s theory of cognitive estrangement has been explained and exemplified, it is tied to rhetoric. From there, the chapter then synthesizes the emergent vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric with vocabularies from psychology, classical rhetorics, and feminist rhetoric. These syntheses culminate with a further examination of the vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

An Abbreviated Taxonomy of SF

Chapter One borrows from Foucault to define heterotopias as “real and mythic” reflections and “contestations of the space in which we live.” And in light of Chapter Two’s discussion of CR3, we can understand these heterotopian reflections as re-visions. Before describing in detail how and why the re-visioning of heterotopian SF functions as rhetoric, it is important to explore some of the distinctions and subgenres of the SF super-genre because they have rhetorical

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3 Re-vision is defined as the act of “seeing with fresh eyes” (Rich 18). On p. 21 of this study CR is defined as “the creation of a new vocabulary through the synthesis and analogy of different vocabularies that can be demonstrated to have confluence, valence, or relevance.” SF can also be thought of as a method of re-vision or “re-perceiving” (Russ xv). SF synthesizes a new vocabulary from the vocabularies of to dynaton, or the possible, and “the space in which we live.”
analogs that are important to building the vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric. That is, the definitions and distinctions of SF and heterotopian subgenres are useful for discussing the rhetorical function and efficacy of SF, and these definitions and distinctions that follow will be developed throughout this chapter.

In Chapter One, the abbreviation, SF, is given to mean science fiction. But “SF” is used in science fiction criticism as an open ended term that can mean several different things—e.g., *science fiction*, *speculative fiction*, *structural fabulation*. Furthermore, while it can mean any of the above, it also serves as a deflection of the term, scifi, so SF is “serious” or “literary” science fiction, and scifi is the campy stuff of comic books and “B” movies.

Heinlein argues that all SF is speculative fiction and thus is fundamentally different from scifi because:

the author takes as his first postulate the real world as we know it, including all established facts and natural laws. The result can be extremely fantastic in content, but it is not fantasy; it is legitimate—and often very tightly reasoned—speculation about the possibilities of the real world. This category excludes rocket ships that make U-turns, serpent men from Neptune who lust after human maidens, and stories by authors who flunked their Boy Scout merit badge tests in descriptive astronomy. (374)

Thus, SF or speculative fiction is different from scifi because it has an eye for the possible or even probable rather than the fantastic and highly unlikely. As discussed later in this chapter, the assertion that SF is concerned with to
dynaton, or the possible, is also found in Darko Suvin’s theory of SF as the literature of cognitive estrangement. Suvin’s idea that SF estranges cognitively (while other forms of art merely estrange) is referenced and variegated by the term, structural fabulation.

Robert Scholes, who first articulated the theory of structural fabulation, writes that fabulation, “is fiction that offers us a world clearly and radically discontinuous from the one we know, yet returns to confront that known world in some cognitive way” (29). Thus, Scholes also calls fabulation, didactic romance, due to the education of the reader’s cognitive paradigms about the present through dialogue between “real space” and the heterotopia or other space. Scholes writes, “There are two kinds of fabulation or didactic romance[. . .], ‘dogmatic’ and ‘speculative’ fabulation” (30). Dogmatic fabulation is said to be typically “romances of religion,” e.g., Dante’s Divine Comedy. Speculative fabulation is said to be typically “romances of science,” e.g., Moore’s Utopia (Scholes 30). Speculative fabulation can be further subdivided into pseudo-scientific sublimation and structural fabulation.

In structural fabulation, “idea and story are so wedded as to afford us simultaneously the greatest pleasures that fiction provides: sublimation and cognition” (Scholes 44). Scholes tells us that this pleasure of cognition in structural fabulation is due to “an awareness of the nature of the universe as a system of systems, a structure of structures, and the insights of the past century of science[. . .]” (41). And just as Heinlein and Suvin emphasize SF’s use of to dynaton, or the possible, Scholes writes that structural fabulation is an
“exploration of human situations made perceptible by the implications of recent science” (41-42).

On the other hand, Pseudo-scientific sublimation “transports men to Mars merely to tell a cowboy story.” And the writer of pseudo-scientific sublimation “fails to understand the discontinuity on which his work is based as a discontinuity from a contemporary view of what is true or natural” (Scholes 43).

In other words, pseudo-scientific sublimation is another genre of fiction posing as science fiction. This form provides readers the narrative pleasure of sublimation⁴, but not the intellectual pleasure of cognition.

In Scholes’ category of pseudo-scientific sublimation, we can place the numerous transparently “posing” genre forms of scifi. Examples of these transparently posing genres include the space opera, the space western, the space mystery, and quite often science fantasy; however, the line between SF and fantasy can be very tricky at times due to Arthur C. Clark’s third law of prediction: “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic” (21). Sublimations that fall short of SF in general can be thought of as scifi. However, not all cross-genre SF narratives are scifi or pseudo-scientific sublimation, as genre-blurring has a long tradition in “serious” science fiction and is a critical element of the most sophisticated and contemporary forms of SF.

⁴ Sublimation here does not refer to the chemical process many readers may be familiar with by which solids transform to gasses with no intermediate liquid stage. Rather, it refers to the Freudian defense mechanism for the redirecting of unhealthy thoughts or feelings into positive or socially accepted activities (Niolon, par. 3). For example, instead of punching her boss, the disgruntled employee satisfies her hostile emotions through reading about the big boss of some Martian cattle ranch getting beat up in the standard Martian saloon.
The key is a *blurring* of SF with other genres as opposed to simply putting the conventions of a popular genre in an outer space or otherwise “scientific” setting.

Other distinctions include “hard” versus “soft” SF, which is posited as an analog to the distinction between the “hard” or natural sciences and the so-called “soft” or social sciences. Hard SF tends to have a lot of technical and scientific detail and explanation. Robinson’s *Mars* trilogy is a perfect example of this. Soft SF tends to focus more on the psychological or social details. Butler’s *Lilith’s Brood* trilogy, the subject of chapter four’s case study, is a perfect example of this.

Finally, there are the heterotopian distinctions or subgenres of SF. In his essay, “The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited” (1994), which is perhaps the single most-cited article in the field of Utopian Studies today, Lyman Tower Sargent identifies seven of these: utopias, eutopias, dystopias, utopian satire, anti-utopia, the critical utopia, and the critical dystopia. These distinctions provide a good point of departure for a taxonomy of heterotopian narratives. Furthermore, the final classification, critical dystopia, is the genre of Butler’s *Lilith’s Brood*.

Heterotopias in general, according Sargent, are forms of “social dreaming” (3). He defines *utopia* generically as “a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in space and time” (9). If he added to this definition that these societies have real rhetorical functions as counterpoints

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to “real” spacetime, his definition of utopia would basically be the same as this study’s definition of heterotopia.

A eutopia is a utopia or heterotopia that “the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably better than that in which the reader lived” (Sargent 9). A good example of a eutopia is Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s Herland (1915), which imagines a perfect society composed entirely of women (who reproduce asexually) that is free from war, crime, poverty and other hardships of patriarchy.

Dystopia, then, is a heterotopia that “the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than that in which the reader lived” (Sargent 9). For example, Anthony Burgess’, A Clockwork Orange (1962), imagines a society troubled by ultra-violent youth and psychotropic drugs that tries to solve its problems with an extreme form of brainwashing. The society Burgess imagines certainly has a resemblance to 1960's British society, but it is also certainly worse. And although Sargent doesn’t make this distinction, we can also subdivide dystopias into malevolent dystopias and unintended dystopias—although some dystopias, like Burgess’ are neither. Malevolent dystopias, like George Orwell’s 1984 (1948), are dystopias with negative characteristics that are intentionally created by an oppressive force (human or otherwise). Unintended dystopias, like Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World (1932), are dystopias with negative characteristics that are the unintended consequences of technology or ideology. Unintended dystopias are similar to but less direct in their criticism than utopian satires and anti-utopias.
According to Sargent, the utopian satire is a heterotopia that “the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as a criticism of that contemporary society” (9). Unlike the subtle, masked criticism provided by other heterotopias, the utopian satire, through comedic or ironic dissonance, announces to the reader that it is criticism. A good example of utopian satire is Gerd Brantenberg’s *Egalia’s Daughters* (2004), which poses a world in which gender roles are completely reversed from traditional patriarchy: The women, or “wim,” are masters of their own destinies and the world, and the “menwim” are basically domestic servants and sex objects.

The criticism of anti-utopias is also more obvious than those of other heterotopias, but typically more subtle than utopian satires. An anti-utopia is a heterotopia that “the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as criticism of utopianism or of some particular eutopia” (Sargent 9). A good example of anti-utopia is Pamela Sargent’s *The Shore of Women* (1986), which imagines a world where men and women are separated by walls and the women’s insurmountable technological advantages as a failed and oppressive attempt at eutopia.

However, the anti-utopia should not be confused with the critical utopia. L. T. Sargent writes that a critical utopia is a heterotopia that “the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as better than contemporary society but with difficult problems that the described society may or may no be able to solve and which takes a critical view at the genre” (7). That is, the anti-utopia’s main rhetorical thrust is typically a swipe at utopianism in general or at specific
euphan dreams—e.g., P. Sargent’s anti-utopia can be read as rhetoric critical of Gilman’s isolationist eutopian vision. On the other hand, the main rhetorical thrust of the critical utopia is to complicate yet preserve eutopian hope by putting it into to a dialogue with elements of dystopia and/or anti-utopia.

Figure 3.1: Heterotopian narratives can generally be divided into eight different types.

These narratives are “critical,” according to Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan, in a way that “incorporates an Enlightenment sense of critique [and] a
postmodern attitude of self-reflexivity” (2). A good example of this is Robinson’s Mars trilogy, as its arch is guided by eutopian dreams of Martian potentiality complicated by the monetary and social dystopian realities that have plagued human society for millennia.

If the critical-utopia can be identified, so can the critical-dystopia. In a lecture given to the COTEPRA conference (July 9, 2000), Sargent described the critical-dystopia as a heterotopia “that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as worse than contemporary society but that normally includes at least one eutopian enclave or holds out hope that the dystopia can be overcome and replaced with a eutopia” (qtd. in Moylan, 195). So the critical dystopia is a dystopia in which the conventions of dystopia are complicated by the legitimacy of eutopian hope and social dreaming. A good example of a critical dystopia is Butler’s Lilith’s Brood trilogy (the subject of Chapter Four’s case study). This trilogy posits a future with clear dystopian elements, including sexual slavery and the loss of bodily autonomy, while also offering a eutopian glimpse of humanity’s potential if it could overcome its instincts for and hegemony about hierarchal behavior.

Numerous other distinctions or subgenres exist within the critical vocabulary of SF and heterotopian narratives. For example, Moylan posits the additional distinctions of the pseudo-utopia and anti-critical dystopia (195). And other critics of the genre, such as Ernst Bloch and Maria Varsam, posit the concrete utopia and concrete dystopia, subgenres that share “an emphasis on the real, the material conditions of society that manifest themselves as a result of
humanity’s desire for a better world” (Varsam 208). But these distinctions become considerably less critical to understanding the rhetorical power of heterotopian narratives once the general distinctions outlined by Sargent are taken into account with Heinlein’s, Scholes’, and Suvin’s claim that SF is a cognitive literature that deals with the spacetime of to dynaton.

**SF – The [Rhetoric] of Cognitive Estrangement**

In Suvin’s landmark essay, “On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre” (1972), he “argue[s] for a definition of SF as the literature of cognitive estrangement” (372). The term, estrangement, comes from Russian critic Viktor Shklovsky, and is sometimes rendered, defamiliarization. Suvin sites a 1948 Bertolt Brecht play as providing the best definition of estangement: “A representation which estranges is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time see it as unfamiliar” (qtd. in Suvin, 374). A visual example of this is the cubist artwork of Pablo Picasso, like “Maya with Doll” (Figure 3.2), which depicts a familiar scene in a way that defies dimensional expectations and is thus unfamiliar.

Some may understandably wonder whether this isn’t the case with all literature and all art, at least to some degree. This indeed may be true. Even realistic literature and art utilizes estrangement effects (Parrinder 37). However,
Suvin posits, “In SF, the attitude of estrangement[. . .] has grown into the formal framework of the genre” (375). So while a novel like Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie* (1900) may somewhat dramatically estrange late Nineteenth Century Chicago and New York, its core is mimetic or familiar, not estranging. And this partially explains why it was met with so much outrage. As this chapter hopes to make apparent, outrage is an emotion that estranging narratives can generally sidestep. Indeed, heterotopian SF’s ability to say, “no, not the real Chicago, not the Chicago that the reader might identify with, but an other Chicago,” is one of its key rhetorical strengths.

But estrangement is also the fabular core of other literary genres that have varying degrees of rhetorical efficacy. For example, as Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, and many others have pointed out, mythology is a potent form of fabulation with “motifs” representative of what Jung calls “archetypes” of the “collective unconscious”⁶ (Jung 42). However, while some if not all of SF taps into the psychological vocabulary of mythology, the purpose of this study is to specifically examine SF’s rhetorical power by isolating it as much as possible from similar genres.

So what makes SF different from mythology and related genres like fantasy? As this study hopes to demonstrate, what makes SF different from other forms of estrangement is the very thing that allows it to function as a form

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⁶ According to Jung, “The collective unconscious is a part of the psyche which can be negatively distinguished from a personal unconscious by the fact that it does not, like the latter, owe its existence to personal experience and consequently is not a personal acquisition.” Jung explains that *archetype*, “which is an indispensable correlate of[. . .] the collective unconscious, indicates the existence of definite forms within the psyche that seem to be present always and everywhere” (42).
or mode of rhetoric: cognition. To distinguish the estrangement of SF from that in mythology, fables, and other tales of the fantastic, Suvin argues that SF’s estrangement is uniquely cognitive:

*SF is, then a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author’s empirical environment.* (Suvin 375)

*Cognition* for Suvin, for Scholes, and for Heinlein (by description if not name) amounts to a principle of estrangement in SF that “sees the norms of any age, including emphatically his own, as unique, changeable, and therefore subject to cognitive glance” (Suvin 375). This is to say that narratives of cognitive estrangement defamiliarize by considering what is possible or probable within a dynamic continuum of human situations and history. As Scholes writes, SF is an “exploration of human situations made perceptible by the implications of recent science.” And as Heinlein writes, “The result can be extremely fantastic in content, but it is not fantasy; it is legitimate—and often very tightly reasoned—speculation about the possibilities of the real world.” So while mythology “conceives human relationships as fixed, and supernaturally determined[. . .]” and “fantasy is inimical to the empirical world and its laws,” SF views human relationships as dynamic and subject to both scientific technologies and physical realities (Suvin 375). And the *novum* (or *estranging quality*) of SF must repose on the dynamic of potentiality or the work fails to be SF.
To follow up the visual example of Picasso’s cubism, consider Wolfgang Paalen’s, "Le genie de l'espece" (figure 3.3) created in the same year as Picasso’s “Maya” (1938), as an example of cognitive estrangement. Paalen’s handgun made of bones estranges the familiar weapon with a novum—bone—that at least seems within the realm of the possibility. A lot of guns are made mostly of wood, after all, and caparisons of wood to bone are quite common. So this piece has a good mix of cognition and estrangement—possibility and defamiliarization. And quite noticeably, Paalen’s cognitive estrangement of the handgun takes an undeniably rhetorical or persuasive stance on its subject matter, whether he intended it to or not. It educates or influences the viewers’ cognitive paradigms of and about guns. Indeed, the theories explored in this study need not be limited to written rhetoric. The task at hand, however, is to examine the use of cognitive estrangement in certain written rhetorics, especially heterotopian feminist rhetorics. But before re-visioning SF within the contexts of various rhetorical vocabularies, it is important to explain why heterotopian SF has rhetorical power.

**The Psychorhetorical Function of Cognitive Estrangement**

The vocabulary of cognitive estrangement lends itself to confluence with some of the vocabularies of psychoanalysis. This includes but perhaps is not
limited to the concepts of *projection* and *the uncanny*. The psychorhetorical function of cognitive estrangement is not difficult to understand if one takes the vocabulary of cognitive paradigms and cognitive paradigm shifts seriously, as the works of Kuhn, Burke, Rorty, Rich, Persig and many others would seem to suggest one should.

A rhetoric that focuses on making logical arguments and using ornamental language will provide no grounds for critiquing existing paradigms. In order to enable such a critique, the rhetor must be prepared to offer alternative paradigms. But to do so often necessitates a rhetoric that is not only challenging but probably threatening to the subjective identity of its audience, not to mention the paradigms it wishes to replace. That is, audiences often vehemently identify with their hegemonies and privileged cognitive paradigms. So to critique the paradigm is to critique the audience.

A rhetor with a message that challenges and/or threatens her audience must seek ways to overcome the audience’s psychological resistance and defense mechanisms if she is to get her message through at all. In the mid to late 1970’s Maxine Hairston and others developed a form of argument based on concepts from Carl Rogers’ client-centered approach to psychotherapy as articulated in his "Communication: Its Blocking and Its Facilitation" (1951). Rogerian rhetoric can be described as an empathetic form of rhetoric designed to overcome the sense of threat that blocks critical communication by recognizing and articulating the audience’s opposing point of view within the argument (Lunsford 146-47). Composition instructors often deal with this aspect of
audience awareness by teaching the concept of the *counterargument*. Students are taught to anticipate then concede and/or refute their audiences’ objections to certain arguments or ideas in order to subvert the “knee-jerk” dismissal that confrontational or threatening ideas often elicit. But counterargument is a rhetorical strategy crafted of logic and ornament. The very idea of addressing the audience’s objections implies a level of paradigmatic homogeneity that makes counterargument alone unfit for the task of persuading cognitive paradigms.

To alter cognitive paradigms, as Butler said she hoped to with *Lilith’s Brood*, the rhetor must criticize her intended audience. This is a big problem because people tend to protect themselves against criticism. And heterotopian texts are quite often successfully built on arguments that threaten and criticize the norms of its audience. Yet heterotopian readers are less likely to resist these criticisms because they are *projected* in a heterotopia that is estranged from the “real space” of the audience.

*Psychological projection*, according to the theory developed by Freud and Anna Freud, is a defense mechanism that protects the subject from damaging his own ego by projecting undesirable attitudes and/or traits onto an “other”—that is, another person (Niolon par. 4). For example, people who may unconsciously realize that they themselves are impatient will be likely find this trait in others and be extremely annoyed by it. And perhaps seeing impatience in others as annoying will teach a person to be more patient. Heterotopian Rhetoric seeks to provide a form of psychological projection that allows the audience safe passage
to cognitively explore critiques of themselves, their societies, and most importantly, their privileged paradigms.

To be clear, cognitive estrangement is invaluable to this psychorhetorical projection. Estrangement makes the critique safe—sufficiently other but still recognizable. And cognition makes the critique effective by allowing the reader to consider these veiled critiques within the realm of what is possible. This vocabulary reposed on potentiality ipso facto creates a cognitive paradigm about what is possible and thus what is real. Through the projection of criticism onto a possible or scientific heterotopia, the vocabulary of the rhetoric educates or persuades the audiences’ cognitive paradigms towards shift or entrenchment without directly confronting the ego’s defense mechanism. So while Suvin describes SF as the literature of cognitive estrangement, it can also be thought of as Heterotopian Rhetoric—cognitively estranged rhetoric.

The vocabulary of cognitive estrangement also has confluence with the uncanny. The theory of the uncanny (developed by Freud and Ernst Jentsch) refers to that which is both unfamiliar and yet familiar and thus creates a feeling of uneasy interest. Freud gives the experience of déjà vu as an example, but a contextual re-vision of the uncanny and estrangement suggests that terms refer to basically the same idea (Freud 931). Things that are uncanny are estrangements of the familiar. In déjà vu, the subject does something that seems familiar, but also strange for seeming so familiar—Did I dream about this? Why do I feel like I have lived this experience before? The experience can be both fascinating and unnerving. And in these moments of déjà vu, the subject gains a
perspective of the event that is quite rare in the human experience—one in which past and present overlap.

Heterotopian Rhetoric also creates a unique perspective for its audience: one of uncanny worlds reposed on scientific potentialities to allow cognitive critique through psychological projection. This process allows the rhetor to critique the audience while providing it with an uncanny projection that creates interest in the rhetorical message while minimizing resistance to it. Heterotopian SF gains significant rhetorical power from its ability to subvert paradigms and defense mechanisms via possible or scientific heterotopias.

This re-vision of SF critical theory and psychoanalytic theory as describing the how of a rhetorical mode is certainly not enough to define Heterotopian Rhetoric. However, it provides a starting vocabulary to describe how and why heterotopian narratives can be read and studied as Heterotopian Rhetoric. And one would be hard-pressed to deny that strong relationships exist between psychology, rhetoric and heterotopias. However, if heterotopias are to be thoroughly understood and classified as a mode or form of rhetoric, a re-vision of heterotopian narratives within the contexts of the rhetorical tradition is necessary. Thus, in the next several sections, this study will demonstrate the strong valence between heterotopian SF and classical, sophistic, and feminist rhetorics. And from synthesis with these vocabularies, a definition of Heterotopian Rhetoric emerges.
The Fourth Proof and the Three Branches

Traditionally, rhetoric has been divided into various categories and subcategories. And the most important and basic of these are the three recognized proofs or appeals of rhetoric—*logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*—and the three recognized "branches" of rhetoric—*judicial*, *deliberative*, and *epideictic*. By synthesizing the traditional vocabulary of these elements with the theory that heterotopian SF is psychorhetorical craft, a clearer picture of Heterotopian Rhetoric emerges.

According to Aristotle and the tradition he founded, *logos* (linguistic appeals to reason or reasonableness), *ethos* (appeals to the character or credence of the speaker), and *pathos* (appeals to a certain disposition or emotional state of the audience) are considered the three primary *artistic proofs*—proofs that could be found by the art of rhetoric. These are contrasted by *nonartistic* or empirical proofs (Aristotle 1.2.2-4). An entire study could be conducted to re-vision each of the classic works of rhetoricians like Quintilian, Cicero, and Aristotle with the theory of Heterotopian Rhetoric. So in order to keep this articulation of Heterotopian Rhetoric’s confluence with the tradition succinct, these proofs will be treated as an autonomous set of ideas apart from the Aristotelian framework. This is justifiable because these proofs do hold up well as a vocabulary for how rhetoric persuades without Aristotle’s framework.

When the vocabulary of ethos, logos, and pathos is synthesized with the vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric, something very interesting happens: The cognitive estrangement of a scientific or possible heterotopia (CESH) emerges.
as a fourth proof. Heterotopian Rhetoric utilizes the cognitive estrangement of a scientific heterotopia as a form of argument. The playing out of the possible on the stage of strangely familiar provides a proof or an appeal that differs from ethos, logos, and pathos through providing a different and rhetorically favorable paradigm for selecting, reflecting, and deflecting character/credibility, language/reason, and empathy/sympathy.

So just as a rhetor will often use a mixture of ethos, logos, and pathos, the rhetor using the proof of cognitive estrangement through scientific heterotopia will also employ elements of ethos, logos, and pathos. The narrator’s voice must establish ethos, cognition requires (or is) logos, and good story-telling just like good rhetoric requires an element of pathos. But in heterotopian SF, unlike other forms of rhetoric (and fiction), these proofs are established under the estranged paradigm of scientific potentiality, which itself offers a representational proof—a vocabulary for a way of seeing. This is different from logos because it goes beyond reason as it is known into reason as it could be. The CESH proof is closely aligned with logos, but unlike logos, CESH subverts paradigms about what is reasonable by shifting the stage of the argument to another space/time reposed on scientific possibility. This is not just an extension or variation of logos, it’s a unique and subversive form of appeal or proof.

Thus, in order understand the why and how of Heterotopian Rhetoric, it could be defined: cognitively estranged rhetoric that subverts hegemonic, privileged cognitive paradigms and the audience’s psychological defense.
mechanisms by using the cognitive estrangement of a scientific heterotopia (CESH) as a proof or appeal.

While Heterotopian Rhetoric insists on a fourth proof, this new CESH proof merges harmoniously with the three traditional branches of classical rhetoric—the judicial, the deliberative, and especially the epideictic. Each of these branches has a specific purpose and, according to Aristotle, a specific temporality of concern.

The purpose of judicial rhetoric is to accuse or defend, and it deals specifically with the past (Aristotle 1.10-15). Heterotopian Rhetoric can do this as well. For example, the cognitively estranging quality of a heterotopia might be that it somehow represents an alternative path for history. For example Phillip K. Dick's dystopia, *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), is based on a history in which the Axis powers won World War II. Dick lived a somewhat tragic life troubled by psychological problems and drug abuse, and he wrote a lot of his novels quickly and heavily under the influence (Lethem 802-4, 806-15; Sutin, par. 7-8). So it is not the position of this study that Dick or even most heterotopian SF writers set out to write rhetoric *per se*. But some certainly do, especially recent feminist writers. And even without the authors *intending* to write rhetoric, a story that utilizes cognitive estrangement and provides a possible "other" place must, by virtue of providing a vocabulary for that possibility, *ipso facto* create for and with the reader a paradigm of what is possible that is represented by the vocabulary. Heterotopian narratives and the *ipso facto* paradigms they represent offer readers proof through CESH of a certain point of view that can persuade
readers. Therefore, heterotopian SF can always be read as rhetoric—as proof by cognitive estrangement.

That said, The Man in the High Castle argues first and foremost that multiple layers of cultural hegemony inform societal and personal distinctions between art and reality, history and story, authentic and fake, person and persona. But there are other rhetorical paradigms at work as well. For example, the novel can be read as a defense of Japanese culture. It may even be an indictment of the U.S.A. after World War II for the reduction of Japanese manufacturing to “junky good luck charms” (Dick 161).

To explain these arguments without providing a close rhetorical analysis of the entire novel is challenging. The novel poses Japanese culture as one of a conquering, occupying nation with certain undesirable hegemonies, including racism. But in sum Japanese culture comes across as admirable in numerous ways that differentiate it from that of Nazi Germany. Most notably, these redeeming qualities include the spiritual, artistic, and intellectual currents of the culture. This could be seen as a defense of Japanese culture in the court of history: Certain faults are conceded as circumstantial evidence, but a strong and rather unexpected case is made that Japanese culture is essentially a good partner for American culture and its ideals. Meanwhile, Dick's post WWII Americans much more readily accept the attitudes of Nazism than they accept what is presented as a much more benign Japanese culture. In this way the text functions as an indictment and critique of America’s own traditions of anti-Semitism and racism.
To a lesser degree, the novel can be read as an accusation against the United States for its domination of postwar Japan, especially its economy and manufacturing. For example, a Japanese businessman proposes to buy into a line of fine American-made metal jewelry—only instead of producing handcrafted fine metals, he wants to turn the jewelers’ designs into mass produced plastic trinkets. This seems to put the proverbial shoe on the other foot as for decades after WWII the majority of Japanese exports were plastic toys and trinkets, including the “junk” one would find in Cracker Jacks and cereal boxes (Phoenix 14; Enderland, par. 1-3). The emotional impact of this criticism for American readers proud of their nation’s workmanship is a rhetorical history lesson and an education of perception.

If arguments about the past can be made with the proof of cognitive estrangement through scientific heterotopias, then it should come as no surprise that Heterotopian Rhetoric can also argue about the future. The purpose of deliberative rhetoric is to implore or dissuade, and it deals specifically with the future (Aristotle 1.4-8). Robinson’s Mars trilogy (a copious imagining of a multinational attempt to colonize and terraform Mars) can definitely be read as imploring about the future of space exploration and the real potential for Mars to transform humanity and be transformed by humanity. The aeroforming of humanity and terraforming7 of Mars is meticulously and artfully posited as a

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7 *Terraforming* is the process of changing planetary climates. Global warming is an unintentional realization of this concept; however, the terraforming of Robinson’s fiction involves the changing of Mars’ climate in order to make the planet more and more inhabitable for humans. *Aeroforming* is posited by Robinson as the impact of life on Mars on humanity—psychologically, physiologically, socially, technologically, and historically.
critical scientific utopia by Robinson. And along the way he utilizes the CESH proof in the heterotopia of near-future Mars to make a number of arguments about what humanity, or at least its most advanced scientific civilizations, should do with our nearest and most earth-like planetary neighbor.

Like the so-called antistrophe or counterpart of rhetoric, dialectic, the trilogy puts various scientific and humanistic vocabularies into a character-driven dramatic dialogue with each other as a method of rhetorical investigation. These multiple points of view coalesce in a Martian societal and scientific rift between Reds (like geologist Ann Clayborne) who want to keep the planet wild and pristine, and Greens (like biologist Hiroko Ai) who want make Mars a warm, wet home for life. But socioeconomic and historical momentum is stacked towards the side of the Greens in Robinson’s rhetoric. Humanity must spread life to other planets if it is to continue to thrive. Robinson also points out that there is already a considerable amount of intellectual momentum for the terraforming of Mars. Our imaginations and hopes have already provided Mars with a noosphere—“the layer of thought first enwrapping the silent planet from afar, inhabiting it with stories and plans and dreams[. . .]” (Robinson 246). And with a sense of alchemical destiny, a mixture of science and mysticism, Robinson tells readers:

And because we are alive, the universe must be said to be alive. We are its consciousness as well as our own. We rise out of the cosmos and see its mesh of patterns, and it strikes us as beautiful. [. . .]It’s a holy feeling, and our task in this world is to do everything we can to foster it. And one way to do that is to spread life
everywhere. To aid it into existence where it was not before[. . .].

(9)

While Robinson’s trilogy makes several cogent arguments about the future by utilizing the CESH proof, it also makes several contemporaneous arguments, particularly about unchecked corporate capitalism. And while it might seem that nearly all heterotopian SF is concerned with the future, typically its arguments are set in the present, which is the realm of epideictic rhetoric. This is the rhetoric of praise and blame (Aristotle 1.9).

As mentioned above, while alternate histories and copiously articulated plans for the future are sometimes the subject of heterotopias, these narratives are ultimately about contemporary everyday society. Aspects of praise and blame thus land in these heterotopias according to where they land on the continuum described by Sargent of eutopia/dystopia. Eutopias are often in praise of present aspects of society, like technology. For example, readers may be familiar with television cartoon series The Jetsons and its praise of technology. All types of epideictic dystopias blame present aspects of society. For example, readers are perhaps also familiar with The Matrix films and their blame of technology for the dehumanization and fragmentation of society. There are, of course, some exceptions where praise and blame are mixed. For example, Gilman’s Herland could be described as a eutopia that blames men and patriarchy for every form of violence or suffering, from war to loneliness. Yet it also praises women for their potentials as peaceful, responsible, intellectual people, an argument that needed to be made at the time.
In the critical heterotopias, we see similar mixtures of praise and blame. For example, Butler’s *Lilith’s Brood* trilogy has some very critical things to say about human “nature” and society. But it also praises human intellect and science. Within a dystopia that is both biological and social, Butler’s narratives hold on to the eutopian hope for the possibility of an intentional transformation of humanity into a peaceful, responsible, and thus more intelligent species.

In sum, the proof of a cognitively estranged scientific heterotopia (CESH), works well with all three branches of traditional rhetoric. Thus, the definition of Heterotopian Rhetoric can be clarified: *cognitively estranged rhetoric of any rhetorical genre that subverts hegemonic, privileged cognitive paradigms and the audience’s psychological defense mechanisms by using the cognitive estrangement of a scientific heterotopia (CESH) as a proof or appeal.*

But the CESH proof may not be strictly limited to SF. Although the definition and explanation of CESH posited by this study is new, in many ways the proof itself is a very old idea. Heterotopian SF may be the best example or most highly evolved genre of the sophistic rhetoric. As mentioned in Chapter Two, there are certainly some provocative connections between heterotopian SF and sophistic rhetoric.

**Heterotopian Rhetoric and (Neo)Sophistic Rhetoric**

The Sophists offered views on rhetoric, ontology, and epistemology that deeply concerned philosophers and critics of rhetoric including Plato and Aristotle. Bizzell and Herzburg write, “Plato faults the Sophists for not using
rhetoric to try to discover absolute truth. He ignores the fact they do not believe that absolute truth is accessible to humans[ . . .]” (28). Unfortunately, much of what is known about the Sophists comes from these ever-influential critics and competitors of the Sophists. And, as Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee write, “Because of this, the rhetorical practice associated with [the Sophists’] epistemology, called sophistry, now has a pejorative connotation that is unfair to them and their work” (11). But slowly over the past two centuries, starting with E.M. Cope and G.W.F. Hegel in the Nineteenth Century, the Sophists have been restored as an intellectually important group to both rhetoric and philosophy. And thanks to the much more recent work of rhetoricians like Michelle Ballif, Susan Jarratt, John Poulakos, and Mario Untersteiner, there exists today a reasonably reliable picture of the Sophists and “why they were condemned so easily and vociferously for so many years” (Ballif 32). However, for this study’s theory of Heterotopian Rhetoric, such questions are mostly irrelevant. What is relevant is the Sophists’ rhetorical theory.

It would be very surprising if all of the Sophists would or could have agreed on one particular theory of rhetoric. And as Edward Schiappa and others have pointed out, the existence in ancient Greece of a “monolithic sophistic rhetoric” is most likely a romantic product of contemporary theory (Schiappa 246). Nonetheless, despite a lack of complete, objective certainty, Poulakos is able to “reexamine the surviving fragments of and about the Sophists and to[ . . .] articulate on probable grounds their view of rhetoric[and]derive a ‘sophistic’ definition of rhetoric” (Poulakos 55-56). Poulakos’ proposed sophistic view of
rhetoric is simple, concise, and well supported by the known written fragments of
sophistic work and ancient second-hand accounts: “Rhetoric is the art which
seeks to capture in opportune moments that which is appropriate and attempts to
suggest that which is possible” (Poulakos 56).

In unpacking Poulakos’ definition, the first thing one notices is that
sophistic rhetoric has three primary concerns: the opportune moment, or kairos;
that which is appropriate, or to prepon; and that which is possible, or to dynaton.
And each of these concepts deserves some exploration as each must shape any
successful proof or genre of rhetoric.

Kairos, a concept resurrected by James Kinneavy as a “Neglected
Concept” in rhetorical studies, basically refers to timing: knowing when to speak
and when to be silent and how the moment dictates to prepon and to dynaton.
Crowley and Hawhee attribute to the Sophists a notion of kairos that “points to
the situatedness of arguments and the ways in which different arguments depend
on different forces[. . .]” (40). As the cliché says, timing is everything, and a
particular moment is right for rhetorical speech or rhetorical silence. And that
moment is also right for a particular kind of rhetorical speech or silence. Thus, in
order for rhetors to answer questions of to prepon and to dynaton, they must first
or perhaps ipso facto answer questions about kairos. Indeed, as indicated by
Poulakos’ definition, all three concerns are linked: what is appropriate and
possible at this time?

Questions about to prepon, decorum, or what is appropriate, besides
being closely related to questions of kairos, also have an interesting conceptual
valence with the proof of pathos. That is, *to prepon* is largely an issue of rhetorical attention to the dispositions of the audience. In the terms favored by this study, *to prepon* is an awareness of and a willingness to work within the audience’s privileged paradigms. But *to prepon* also influences ethos and logos as well. And an awareness of the audience’s privileged paradigms certainly shapes the way rhetors establish ethos and articulate logos. As Poulakos writes, *to prepon* advises rhetors to “take into account and be guided by the formal structures of the situation[. . .]” (61). And the primary distinction made by Poulakos is that unlike *kairos*, which focuses on the rhetor’s sense of timeliness, “*to prepon* emphasizes his sense of propriety” (61).

While questions of *kairos* and *to prepon* lend themselves to all sorts of answers about *who, when, where, and how*, questions of *to dynaton* lend themselves to answers about *what* and *why* by suggesting what is possible. As Poulakos writes, the sophistic rhetorician tells readers “what they could be, brings out in them futuristic versions of themselves, and sets before them both goals and the directions which lead to those goals” (63). This position clearly has confluence with the position of this study that heterotopian SF can be described as a distinct form or mode of rhetoric. Suvin defines SF as estrangement through what is possible—*cognitive estrangement*. Heinlein defines *speculative fiction* as speculation about the possibilities of the real world. Robert Scholes defines *structural fabulation* as an exploration of what is perceptible based on scientific implications about the possible. And Poulakos definitively positions the purpose of sophistic rhetoric as “to suggest that which is possible.”
According to Poulakos’ definition of sophistic rhetoric—“Rhetoric is the art which seeks to capture in opportune moments that which is appropriate and attempts to suggest that which is possible”—the very point of sophistry is to offer a persuasive vocabulary describing what is possible. Not to find the right time, not to find the appropriate way, but to suggest what is possible with maximum rhetorical effectiveness. And maximum rhetorical effectiveness entails finding the right time and the right way. In the terms favored by this study, Poulakos’ sophistic vision of rhetoric can be re-visioned as, *Rhetoric is the art which seeks to use informed timing and an awareness of the audience’s privileged paradigms to posit an alternative paradigm based on potentiality.* And, as Poulakos claims, “the starting point for the articulation of the possible[. . . ]is the assumption that [desires drive audiences], especially the desire to be other and to be elsewhere” (62). Thus, from a sophistic point of view as articulated by Poulakos, the creation of heterotopias, or *other places*, is clearly a matter indulging the audience’s desires. And by making their heterotopias scientific/possible, sophistic rhetors indulge their audiences towards rhetorical ends by offering paradigms that set “goals” and “directions” to act on in the present.

Furthermore, just as *to prepon* has a close relationship to the proof of pathos by virtue of the concepts’ shared concern for the audience’s dispositions, *to dynaton* has a close relationship to the CESH proof because of the importance of potentiality: If the heterotopia is not scientific or possible, then the text does
not employ cognitive estrangement and thus does not offer readers the CESH proof.

Thus, to more clearly articulate the how and why of Heterotopian Rhetoric its definition can be revised: *rhetoric of any rhetorical genre that subverts hegemonic, privileged cognitive paradigms and the audience’s psychological defense mechanisms by using the cognitive estrangement of a scientific heterotopia (CESH) as a proof or appeal for what is possible.*

This strong valence between cognitive estrangement, SF, the proposed CESH proof, and sophistic rhetoric demonstrates that Heterotopian Rhetoric and CESH have a place in the rhetorical vocabulary, even though they wreak havoc on Aristotelian diagrams of rhetoric (e.g., see Bizzell and Herzberg 174) by mixing fictitious and historical examples with enthymemes of potentiality. Specifically, the vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric can be described as having high valence with neo-sophistic rhetorical vocabularies. Moreover, like sophistic rhetoric, Heterotopian Rhetoric has a strong valence with feminist rhetorics.

**Heterotopian Rhetoric and Feminist Rhetoric**

While there are admittedly numerous feminisms as opposed to one monolithic Feminism, it will be useful to this discussion to propose a distilled definition or nature of feminism, similar to Poulakos’ sophistic vision of rhetoric. In her highly influential essay, “Feminism and Methodology in Composition Studies,” Patricia Sullivan provides a useful distinction for defining feminism: “it takes gender as it starting point” (49-50). This is true of feminism both
historically and critically. Another distinction common to many feminisms is a call and respect for multiplicity (as opposed to dominance and marginalization). As Foss, Foss, and Griffin write in Feminist Rhetorical Theories, “the myriad definitions of and perspectives on feminism[. . .]speaks to the very nature of feminism” (3). Finally, feminist vocabularies generally address power relationships, particularly those arising from gender and race. [B]ell [H]ooks describes this aspect of feminism as an attempt to interrogate “belief in a notion of superior and inferior, and its concomitant ideology—that the superior should rule over the inferior” (19). With the assumption that the three denominators of gender and multiplicity are nearly universal in feminisms, this study will utilize the following working definition of feminism: A radically open theoretical, scholarly, and/or artistic lens for the interrogation of power relationships and the privileged or dominant vocabularies about gender, race, and otherness.

With this definition in mind, it may be readily evident to many readers that Heterotopian Rhetoric is a useful form for feminists. Johanna Russ summed up one of the main reasons heterotopian SF and feminism potentially have strong valence when she writes that science fiction narratives are “not stories about men qua Man and women qua Woman; they are myths of human intelligence and human adaptability. They not only ignore gender roles but—at least theoretically—are not culture bound” (91). This theoretical freedom allows heterotopian SF an opportunity to get outside the bounds of present-day reality in a way that provides a useful and realistic projection, an opportune scenario for
social critique. Furthermore, SF delivers feminists a chance to truly change minds and alter perceptions.

After all, what type of audience would or should an SF writer be likely to expect? At least stereotypically, one would expect a predominantly white male audience that is largely representative of and privileged by hegemony, patriarchy, and the privileged paradigms and vocabularies of history and society. But one could also expect this SF audience, like most audiences, to be open to theoretical re-vision up to a point, to be very willing to indulge themselves as others in other places.

But the point at which most audiences close down and stop listening is where the text becomes critical of the audience itself. This behavior of the audience can be explained as a defense mechanism, related to the projection defense mechanism discussed earlier in this chapter (see pp. 59-60), protecting the ego or self and its belief systems. And psychological theories aside, perhaps it could just suffice to say that almost no one revels in being criticized.

Feminist critique by its very nature (as defined above) is critical of the dominant vocabularies about gender and society that many SF readers are likely to associate with their own identity. Therefore, feminist arguments benefit greatly from use of the CESH proof. The CESH proof provides feminist rhetoric with a form of fabulation favored by the intended audience, thus fulfilling many concerns of kairos and to prepon. More importantly, it provides a way to a critically articulate a vocabulary for what is possible that subverts the audience’s defense
mechanisms and privileged paradigms, thus satisfying the concerns of *to
dynaton*.

Furthermore, the CESH proof can be used in any rhetorical genre/branch. So feminists are able to use it to re-vision history, as Butler does in her postmodern slave novels. Feminists are also able to use CESH to argue about the future and society direction as well, as Robinson does with the matriarchal critical utopias his *Mars* trilogy imagines. And most importantly, feminists are able to critique and argue about the present with the CESH proof as Butler does in her *Lilith’s Brood* trilogy.

But besides the somewhat obvious alliance between Heterotopian Rhetoric and feminist SF, feminism and Heterotopian Rhetoric have *other* interesting valances. Indeed, certain third wave feminist theories heavily rely on heterotopian or SF imagery, metaphor, and even terminology. Perhaps the most famous and obvious example of this is Donna Haraway’s “*A Manifesto for Cyborgs*” (1985), which uses scientific speculation to build “an ironic political myth faithful to feminism, socialism, and materialism” (Haraway 2269). Haraway’s essay has been lauded as the seminal text of *Cyberfeminism*: an “iconoclastic wave of feminist theory and practice that is attempting to reclaim technoscience” (Leitch et al. 2226).

The central thesis behind Haraway’s appropriation of the cyborg—“a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as fiction”—is to tap into the “rhetorical method and political strategy” of irony, which is “about contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes, even dialectically” (2269).
And so to discuss “the tension of holding incompatible things together because both are necessary and true,” she turns to the CESH proof. Haraway’s galvanizing metaphor and primary intellectual example is proof through the cognitive estrangement of the space of the human body. The cyborg is a bodily heterotopia that is similar in many ways to the reversal of body horror in Butler’s *Lilith’s Brood*.

Haraway chooses the cyborg because “Liberation rests on the construction of the consciousness, the imaginative apprehension, of oppression, and so of the possibility [emphasis mine]” (Haraway 2269). Therefore, Haraway uses SF imagery to tap not only into the rhetoric of irony but the rhetoric of cognitive estrangement, of what is possible. And she even allies her rhetoric with science fiction by name with her claim:

> The cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women’s experience in the late twentieth century.
> This is a struggle over life and death, but the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion. (2269)

Given the above statement, it seems more than reasonable to assume that Haraway understands the social rhetorical power of SF. And the “optical illusion” she refers to is cognitive estrangement: “the boundary between science fiction and social reality is [cognitive estrangement].” Having realized the rhetorical significance of SF’s ability to mirror social reality and simultaneously suggest what is possible, Haraway embarks on making her argument “for
pleasure in the confusion of boundaries and for responsibility in their construction" by utilizing the CESH proof and appeal of the cyborg (2270).

In addition to Haraway’s use of the CESH proof in her academic prose, many feminist thinkers have posited arguments that make use of the CESH proof in a way less obviously SF in spirit than Haraway’s cyborg. Less obvious, but noticeably heterotopian nonetheless: the positing of other worlds or realms of society. For example, Mary Daly’s and Jane Caputi’s Webster’s First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language posits a social reality divided into foreground and background. The foreground is defined as the “male-centered and monodimensional area where fabrication, objectification, and alienation take place; zone of fixed feelings, perceptions, behaviors; the elemental world[. . .]” (Daly and Caputi 76). This is contrasted by the background: “the Realm of Wild Reality; the Homeland of women’s Selves and of the Others; the Time/Space where auras of plants, planets, stars, animals and all Other animated beings connect” (Daly and Caputi 63). This background can be described as a heterotopia—a place that is cognitively real and that exerts force on the “real” world, the foreground.

Furthermore, besides the alternate realm posited by Daly and Caputi, readers might notice the alchemical tone and terminology of their vocabulary. Daly and Caputi quite often tap into social science (especially anthropology, archeology, psychology, and sociology) and female or goddess centric metaphysical concepts similar to those found in the common practice of Wicca and/or modern witchcraft. And just as the title suggests, the Intergalactic
Wickedary is an alchemy of science fiction and supernatural lore—an intellectual cyborg of social science and mysticism—all written to educate and persuade cognitive paradigms towards shift away from the dominant paradigms of patriarchy.

The heterotopia of the background and the use of alchemical language make the Intergalactic Wickedary an interesting case. The estrangement of familiar words by re-contextualization with an alchemical vocabulary of scientific and spiritual concepts lends the text to classification as a science fantasy form of the CESH proof. And the classification need not stop there: Daly and Caputi tend to engage in a form of utopian satire. They propose a better world while making fun of the familiar. And they do this on many levels. For example, the Intergalactic Wickedary is itself a cognitive estrangement of a dictionary, a “scientific” authority on language. And Daly’s and Caputi’s cognitively estranged dictionary is satirical of the object of estrangement in a way that critically suggests what is possible. To be specific, its vocabulary satirizes the assumptions and self-absorptions of patriarchy while reclaiming and reversing language and attitudes that have entrenched a culture of intellectual, material, and spiritual violence towards women.

For example, consider this definition of phallic solipsism: “the theory or view that the phallus is the only reality: the phallusy fallacy, the most pathetic fallacy” (216). This humorous but obviously critical estrangement of logic via fallacy and solipsism—a position of sophists like Gorgias of Leontini and
Protagoras of Abdera\(^8\) that the mind is the only certainty—satirizes the object of its estrangement. The overall effect is persuasive, and the methods of persuasion are at the very least closely similar to the methods of Heterotopian Rhetoric. However, because the rhetoric is so transparently critical, it fails to fully utilize the potential of the CESH proof. That is, the proposed heterotopia does not act as a projection for the reader while it exerts its force on the real world, and readers are left to feel the full sting of the criticism.

However, it should be noted that Daly and Caputi’s intended audience is not the same as Octavia E. Butler’s, Ursula Le Guin’s, and Joanna Russ’: Daly and Caputi assume an audience already sympathetic to their point of view, so the need to subvert defense mechanisms is not as pronounced. In fact, Daly’s and Caputi’s use of CESH works to affirm the point of view one might expect to be held in some degree, including nascence and latency, by readers of books published by the Women’s Press. Granted, not all readers of science fiction are white men and not all readers of battle-ax-wielding Mary Daly\(^9\) books are feminists. But obviously, audience awareness is a key concern in any major

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\(^8\) For example, perhaps Gorgias’ most famous argument is “(1) nothing has being; (2) even if it did have being, no human being could understand it; (3) that even if it was apprehensible, still it could not be expressed or explained” (Waterfield 232). And before Gorgias, Protagoras is said to have “denied the existence of ‘wind-in-itself’ with objective properties, as distinct from the wind I feel and the wind you feel[...]” (Waterfield 208). This may sound like an extreme position, but as Heisenberg writes, “we must remember that what we observe is not nature itself but nature exposed to our method of questioning.”

\(^9\) In slang, a battle-ax is a whip-cracking, scolding, impossible to please woman, and for readers not familiar with Mary Daly, the battle-ax has become a symbol repeated in the cover art and prose of Daly’s numerous feminist manifestos. This is part of her overall reclamation and reversal of the language that has woven patriarchy into the fabric of thought itself. The battle-ax seems to have resonance for Daly and her publishers due to the confrontational tone of Daly’s prose and because it is emblematic of Carry Nation, a woman Daly admires. Daly and Caputi define battle-ax: “1: a Raging, Dreadless, Unconquerable Crone. Example: Carry Nation 2: double-edged weapon of a Woman Warrior; Labrys wielded by an A-mazing Amazon” (106).
linguistic endeavor, and this means that to no small degree writers and publishers are obliged to observe stereotypes and marketing reports. So in cases where the audience is likely to agree with the critique offered by a work of Heterotopian Rhetoric, it does not need to take full advantage of the CESH proof, and a utopian satire can be ideal.

Even Daly’s and Caputi’s sympathetic audience is subject to the hegemonic and privileged cognitive paradigms because they are unmarked in the vocabularies that dominate society and are thus mistaken for what is “natural.” So a sympathetic audience can still benefit from a cognitively estranged vocabulary and *ipso facto* cognitive paradigm that marks and deflects hegemonic vocabularies and paradigms. The CESH proof is an ideal option for doing just this. And by subverting the dominant paradigms about *language* and *meaning* with a cognitively estranged dictionary, Daly and Caputi use the CESH proof to persuade or enable its sympathetic audience towards further paradigmatic shift.

The examples of *A Manifesto for Cyborgs* and *The Intergalactic Wickedary*, show that the CESH proof can be applied to both more traditional academic feminist rhetoric and creative feminist rhetoric that has only a loose kinship to SF. And in light of Daly’s and Caputi’s use of CESH to enable a sympathetic audience towards further shift, the definition of Heterotopian Rhetoric can be refined: *rhetoric of any rhetorical genre that subverts hegemonic, privileged cognitive paradigms and, if necessary, the audience’s psychological defense mechanisms by using the cognitive estrangement of a scientific heterotopia (CESH) as a proof or appeal for what is possible.*
While Heterotopian Rhetoric can be found in both academic and popular feminist writing, the most common form is the heterotopian SF narrative. The next chapter examines how Butler makes use of the CESH proof to make numerous arguments that are very similar to those posited by influential feminists like Gloria Anzuldúa, Judith Butler, Haraway, and Trinh T. Minh-ha. There the connections between heterotopian SF and feminist rhetoric are operationalized within the contexts of Butler’s narrative to reveal the a sophisticated sophistic, feminist rhetoric. But before this study applies its emergent theoretical vocabulary to the texts and contexts of Lilith’s Brood, a further examination of this vocabulary is in order.

**A Vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric**

The vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric has several key terms or concepts. First among these is the assumption that rhetoric entails the art of intellectual persuasion. Second is the concept of heterotopias as texts that have a cognitive “counteraction” on real societies. Take the first, the art of intellectual persuasion; then add the second, a cognitive counteraction to reality, and the result is Heterotopian Rhetoric.

But as suggested in the abbreviated taxonomy of SF early in this chapter not all heterotopias are equal. Variants of heterotopian narratives and science fiction in general have relative degrees of rhetorical effectiveness and/or appropriateness based on two definite factors. The first is the degree to which the heterotopia is estranged and thus shields readers from direct criticism. The
second is the degree to which the heterotopia is scientific or possible and thus provides a viable competing cognitive paradigm. Both factors are necessary for the defining characteristic of Heterotopian Rhetoric, the CESH proof: the demonstration of an argument or appeal through the cognitive estrangement of a scientific heterotopia.

The concerns of cognition and estrangement are often competing. After all, if cognition of the possible were the only goal, then a rhetoric steeped in detailed realism would seem to be the best choice, and potentiality would ideally exemplified within the contexts of the real world as well. On the other hand, if estrangement were the only goal, then the heterotopia would ideally be completely fantastic and bear only a minimal relationship to things known. But Heterotopian Rhetoric functions by satisfying the concerns of both cognition and estrangement by using the CESH proof to suggest what is possible. And the need for this balance implies that SF narratives are the most likely place to find use of the CESH proof.

Figure 3.4: Heterotopian Rhetoric can be thought of as a confluence of several powerful concepts.
Furthermore, the different subgenres of SF and the different kinds of heterotopias discussed earlier in this chapter have relative degrees of potential rhetorical effectiveness. That is, by definition some blend cognition and estrangement better than others. For example, sci-fi, or pseudo scientific sublimation allows only a low level of cognition. But SF—speculative fiction, structural fabulation, or the literature of cognitive estrangement—is by definition an effective mix of cognition and estrangement. But beyond the sci-fi/SF distinction, the classifications of heterotopias discussed earlier in this chapter have rhetorical implications.

Critical utopias and critical dystopias are the most rhetorically sophisticated and sophistic of the heterotopias because by definition they are reflective and involve a dialoguing of arguments and points of view about what is possible. Thus, the critical heterotopias might also be the most likely to persuade or educate towards a shift of the reader's cognitive paradigms so long as they also use the CESH proof with an artful mix of cognition and estrangement. But because the critical heterotopias are also more cognitive by virtue of being reflective and dialogical, they run the risk of becoming too transparently argumentative.

By definition, transparency is more than a possible liability for utopian satires and anti-utopias, which could be called the announcing heterotopias. These heterotopias announce themselves as criticism and point out their own analogs, effectively translating their estrangements into the familiar for the readers. Thus, instead of presenting a rhetorically useful projection, the
heterotopia breaks-down into an obvious representation, and the CESH proof loses its ability to subvert readers’ defenses. However, as noted in the discussion of Daly’s and Caputi’s *Intergalactic Wickedary*, a sympathetic audience can still benefit from a cognitively estranged vocabulary and *ipso facto* cognitive paradigm that marks and deflects hegemonic vocabularies and paradigms. And the CESH proof of an announcing heterotopia can do just this. Another example of an announcing heterotopia written for a sympathetic audience is Sargent’s anti-utopia, *The Shore of Women*, which is more concerned with the fine points of feminist philosophy than combating hegemony.

The relatively *fantastic* heterotopias, the eutopias and malevolent dystopias by virtue of being extreme run the risk of not being cognitive enough; however, they may work well with sympathetic audiences. Eutopias in their purest form are especially at risk of not being taken seriously. The ironic tone of postmodern society makes the idea of eutopia seem a naïve fantasy. As Russell Jacoby writes, the spirit of utopianism is an anachronism in contemporary society: “Today only the historically obtuse can believe that to build castles in the sky is urgent. [. . .]Today most observers judge utopians or their sympathizers as fool-hardy dreamers at best and murderous totalitarians at worst” (ix).

Malevolent dystopias can also seem too extreme to be taken seriously. Sadly, the malevolent government of *1984* is very believable to most readers. But like *1984*, most malevolent dystopias rely on conspiratorial governments or malevolent aliens, two ideas that societal hegemony ridicules and holds in contempt. Whether or not this contempt is good for the free exchange of ideas in
an open society is debatable. But the negative impact of the dominant paradigm that theories of malevolent shadow governments are ridiculous has repercussions on the rhetorical effectiveness of malevolent dystopias. For example, readers are unlikely to take seriously the notion that in order to deal with population growth the government would conspire to feed humanity its own dead as in Harry Harrison’s *Make Room! Make Room!* (1966) or invent a religious system that required citizens be ritualistically terminated (“recycled”) at age 21 as in *Logan’s Run* (1967) by William F. Nolan and George Clayton Johnson. When malevolent dystopias rely on extreme political demonization for estrangement, they are likely to read as caricatures of political ideas or issues—cartoon governments nearly as fantastic as J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Sauron of Mordor*. And the incredulous response of contemporary audiences makes malevolent dystopias and eutopias companion heterotopias of the fantastic.

The relatively *moderate* heterotopias—the dystopias and the unintentional dystopias—provide perhaps the most rhetorically sound form. While the critical heterotopias might be more effective than the moderate heterotopias, the moderate heterotopias by definition are the most balanced between critical cognition and escapist estrangement. The moderate heterotopias propose other places that are estranged more cognitively than fantastic heterotopias by virtue of being far less than perfect in a way that does not require some fantastic leap of tyranny. The moderate heterotopias are in this way similar to the critical heterotopian blends of utopia and dystopia, which also estrange more cognitively than the fantastic. Critical and moderate heterotopias are more rounded or
balanced and thus cognitive, and the fantastic heterotopias are more flat or one-sided and thus are difficult for postmodern audiences to.

Moreover, Tom Moylan writes that scientific heterotopias are located “within a continuum between texts that are emancipatory, militant, open, and ‘critical’ and those that are compensatory, resigned, and quite ‘anti-critical’” (188). The sub-classification of some heterotopias as anti-critical is a rhetorical distinction—while some heterotopias are geared towards shift or emancipation, some are geared towards entrenchment or resignation. And this awareness takes us back to the purpose of Heterotopian Rhetoric: to persuade or educate cognitive paradigms towards shift or entrenchment. Entrenched uses of the CESH proof essentially turn-up the hegemonic white noise by reifying the dominant and privileged paradigms as potentiality. In this case, the CESH proof is not necessary for subversion but perhaps adds rhetorical impact by engaging the audience’s desire to be other and elsewhere. Thus the definition of Heterotopian Rhetoric can finally be revised: *cognitively estranged rhetoric of any*
rhetorical genre that subverts or reifies hegemonic, privileged cognitive paradigms and, if necessary, the audience’s psychological defense mechanisms by using the cognitive estrangement of a scientific heterotopia (CESH) as a proof or appeal for what is possible.

Summary

This study proposes that heterotopian SF has the power to overcome the rhetorical obstacle of hegemonic and privileged cognitive paradigms with varying degrees of effectiveness by providing an estranged vocabulary and ipso facto cognitive paradigm of what is possible. This can be described as persuading or educating cognitive paradigms towards shift. Furthermore, the possibility is also there for Heterotopian Rhetoric to persuade or educate cognitive paradigms towards entrenchment.

“SF” is used in science fiction criticism as an open ended term that can mean several different things—e.g., science fiction, speculative fiction, structural fabulation. Furthermore, while it can mean any of the above, it also serves as a deflection of the term, scifi, so SF is “serious” or “literary” science fiction, and scifi is campy comic books and B movies. And these distinctions have rhetorical significance as do the various distinctions among heterotopias. For example, what can be called the critical and moderate heterotopias are likely to make better use of the CESH proof and thus be more effective rhetorically than the announcing and fantastic heterotopias.
The CESH proof utilizes what Darko Suvin labels as the defining characteristic of SF, cognitive estrangement, to demonstrate an appeal or argument within the estranged space of a scientific or possible heterotopia. This proof can be used in all three branches of rhetoric and has a strong valence with sophistic rhetoric. Sophistic rhetoric, as distilled by Poulakos, intends to provide a vocabulary for what is possible (to dynaton) in the most effective manner, which entails taking kairos (timing) and to prepon (what is appropriate to the audience’s dispositions) into consideration.

The creation of heterotopias, or other places, is clearly a matter indulging the audience’s desires. And by making their heterotopias scientific/possible, sophistic rhetors indulge their audiences towards rhetorical ends by offering paradigms that set “goals” and “directions.” And the CESH proof provides rhetors with a form of fabulation favored by the intended audience, thus fulfilling many concerns of kairos and to prepon. Most importantly, it provides a way to subvert the audience’s privileged cognitive paradigms and defense mechanisms in order to create a vocabulary for what is possible, thus satisfying the concerns of to dynaton and (neo)sophistic rhetoric.

The sub-classification of some heterotopias as anti-critical is rhetorical—some heterotopias are geared towards shift or emancipation, and some are geared towards entrenchment or resignation. Entrenched uses of the CESH proof essentially turn-up the hegemonic white noise by reifying the dominant and privileged paradigms as potentiality. Thus, Heterotopian Rhetoric is defined: rhetoric of any rhetorical genre that subverts or reifies hegemonic, privileged
cognitive paradigms and, if necessary, the audience’s psychological defense mechanisms by using the cognitive estrangement of a scientific heterotopia (CESH) as a proof or appeal for what is possible.

The next chapter provides a case study of Butler’s Lilith’s Brood trilogy, a critical dystopia, as Heterotopian Rhetoric. This case study will discuss Butler’s use of the CESH proof to make a set of arguments that begins with gender and branches into vocabularies about ontology, identity, and agency.
Chapter Four:

Octavia E. Butler’s Heterotopian Rhetoric, a Case Study

Not in the margins of the opening chapter, but at the culmination of Primate Visions, Octavia Butler’s speculative/science fiction is preoccupied with forced reproduction, unequal power, the ownership of the self by another, the siblingships of humans with aliens, and the future of siblingship within the species. Butler’s is a fiction predicated on the natural status of adoption and the violence of kin. Like Tiptree—and like modern primatologists—Butler explores the interdigitations of human, machine, nonhuman animal or alien, and their mutants in relation to the intimacies of bodily exchange and mental communication. She interrogates kind, genre, and gender in a post-nuclear, post-slavery survival literature.

– Donna Haraway, Primate Visions, 378

Haraway sees a valance with her own vocabulary in Butler’s work. And she declares her brief examination of Lilith’s Brood to be the culmination of her “always oblique and sometimes perverse” re-vision of science’s relationships to gender, race, and nature (377). While Haraway’s purpose is clearly different from this study’s, her allegiance to Butler’s work is of great interest. Chapter One of this study opens with Butler’s confession that she had a rhetorical purpose “in mind” when she wrote Lilith’s Brood—to “alter perceptions” so that male hierarchal behavior “would no longer be a big problem.” That is, Lilith’s Brood critiques readers’ cognitive paradigms and representative vocabularies tied to
hierarchal behavior, and it persuades readers toward feminist vocabularies and ipso facto cognitive paradigms.

The first three chapters of this study build a vocabulary that explains heterotopian SF as a form of persuasion, called Heterotopian Rhetoric. This rhetoric utilizes the cognitive estrangement of a scientific heterotopia (CESH) as a proof and appeal that persuasively demonstrates to dynaton or what is possible. Now this chapter will apply and exemplify the vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric with a case study of Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood*.

This chapter answers several questions about Butler’s *Lilith’s Brood*: Why it was chosen for study? What is the trilogy’s narrative about? And how does it fit with the science fiction and heterotopian taxonomies outlined in Chapter Three? Following these explanations, the study turns to the specific arguments Butler makes with the CESH proof. These arguments include a critique of humanism, and the reversal of and cooption of the three main origin stories of humanist hierarchy in order to suggest an ontology, identity, and agency of becoming. Finally, Butler’s rhetoric of Mars as a partner in human survival and evolution is briefly explored. This final argument ties into the *Ad Astra*, “Toward the Stars,” rhetoric of Butler’s *Parable* novels and their embedded *Earthseed* text. Thus, with Butler's Heterotopian Rhetoric sketched and the final chapter foreshadowed, this chapter closes with a brief summary.
Why Butler and *Lilith’s Brood*?

One of the main reasons Butler’s work was chosen for this case study is that it is already the subject of a large body of diverse scholarship, so there is a well-developed critical vocabulary available for contextualization and synthesis. And *Lilith’s Brood* and its constituents are the most common topics of this vocabulary. Another reason is that Butler seems to have written *Lilith’s Brood* with the intent to alter cognitive paradigms or “perception.” Chapter One of this study begins with Butler’s acknowledgement that she wrote the *Lilith’s Brood* with a rhetorical goal:

> What I intended to do when I began the [*Lilith’s Brood*] novels, what I wanted to do, was change males enough so that the hierarchical behavior would no longer be a big problem. So, yes, I did have a perception-altering idea in mind. (Butler, Mehaffy, and Keating 54)

And in the introduction to their interview with Butler, Marilyn Mehaffy and AnnaLouise Keating ask, “in its formal aesthetics, how much political power and efficacy might Butler’s science fiction, or any radical author’s fiction, promise as a revisionary social project?” (47). This chapter seeks to answer this question based on the vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric.

However, *Lilith’s Brood* is not uniquely rhetorical among Butler’s work. In fact, much of her work at least appears to have specific, meditated rhetorical intent. As the academic discussion of Butler’s work has developed in numerous journals including *College English, Contemporary Literature, Cultural Critique, English Journal, Foundation, Melus, Novel*, and *Science-Fiction Studies*, one
thing has been almost universally agreed upon: Butler’s critical dystopian narratives engage in sublimely sophisticated, feminist arguments. For example, Hoda M. Zaki claims that Butler’s work joins “Feminist philosophers” in the centuries old debate over human nature:

[Feminists] debate the question by investigating the extent to which gender is a social construction[. . .].

Butler joins the current debate by advancing her particular version of human nature and her particular vision of politics. Her views on both issues are logically consistent, and together serve as a critique of the contemporary social order and as the foundation for her utopian and dystopian vision. (240)

From this debate that begins with gender, Butler’s Lilith’s Brood enters into persuasive dialogues about ontology, identity, agency. In doing so, she provides a vocabulary that argues for and creates cognitive paradigms about reality, knowledge, and the self that compete with hegemonic and privileged cognitive paradigms. And the persuasive vocabularies of Lilith’s Brood, deeply rooted in the traditions of feminism, rhetoric, and philosophy, make the trilogy a good case for the study of Heterotopian Rhetoric.

However, Lilith’s Brood may not be her most rhetorically aware work. So strong is the rhetorical bent of Butler’s work that some of it, particularly Parable of the Sower and Parable of the Talents, can be read not only as rhetoric but as rhetorical theory as well. But as discussed further in Chapter Five, that is a subject for another study. This study is focused on creating a vocabulary for
reading heterotopian SF as rhetoric, not rhetorical theory. And while *Lilith’s Brood* provides numerous instances of rhetorical theory, it is not the ideal text for a study of Butler’s rhetorical theory. But it is Butler’s most fully realized feminist posthuman vocabulary and her best use of the CESH proof to persuade her readers towards adopting this vocabulary and its ipso facto cognitive paradigms.

Specifically, *Lilith’s Brood* argues that humanity must overcome both its social history and its “seductive” but “dangerous” genetic proclivities in order to survive. Ironically, this path for the survival of humanity means transcending humanism to cultivate a posthuman identity and agency very similar to those explained and argued for by third wave feminists. And Butler’s argument for the cultivation of a posthuman identity and agency reposes on a sociobiological ontology of cooperative *becoming*. Furthermore, while her rhetoric offers goals and directions toward personal and/or social cognitive paradigms shifts, Butler also posits a goal that will literally cause humanity to evolve both physically and socially: the colonization of Mars. That said, an abbreviated overview of the *Lilith’s Brood* narrative is order.

**Lilith’s Brood and Xenogenesis**

*Lilith’s Brood* (2007) is comprised of *Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988), and *Imago* (1989). The novels were originally published and marketed as the *Xenogenesis* series and later a comprehensive *Xenogenesis* (2000) text was released, now out of print (Butler iv). The reissued comprehensive text was re-titled to avoid confusion with other “Xenogeneses” that have no relationship to
Butler’s novels, including a 1978 film written and directed by James Cameron and Randall Frakes (IMDb.com). This is unfortunate because the term *Xenogenesis* is important to the narrative’s cognitive estrangement and rhetoric.

*Xenogenesis* means re-genesis with an *other*—a blurring of the lines between self and other. And in the case of *Lilith’s Brood*, it means the death of humanity as a species and its re-genesis as an alien/human hybrid. The aliens of *Lilith’s Brood* are called the *Oankali*, a name that connotes the Hindu goddess of creative destruction, *Kali Ma*, who is depicted in figure 4.1 (“Kali”). The Oankali are a “gene-trading” and gene-manipulating species who resuscitate Earth after an apocalyptic global nuclear war. Part of that resuscitation includes the collection and “healing” of the planet’s dominant species. In *Dawn*, the vast majority of post-apocalyptic humanity has been in a state of suspended animation aboard the Oankali’s fully interfacing, fully organic planetoid star ship for about 250 years. Lilith Iyapo, an African American woman originally from Los Angeles, is awakened and trained by the Oankali to serve their rhetorical purposes.

The Oankali are covered in tentacles, their “sensory organs,” that are reminiscent of serpents and worms. And, repulsively, they “move in response to

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10 Butler (1947 - 2006) was also an African American who spent much of her life in the LA area—primarily in Pasadena, where she was born. She received an associate’s degree from Pasadena City College and studied at Cal State – LA.
wishes or emotions or outside stimuli.” Despite being humanoid, the Oankali look like “tentacled sea slugs—nudibranchs—grown impossibly to human size and shape” (Butler 13-14). See figure 4.2 for one example of the many bizarre species of nudibranchs. The Oankali realize that their profound difference is an enormous obstacle to their biological imperative to have “a willing trade” with humanity. As Haraway explains, “The Oankali are intensely interested in humans as potential exchange partners [. . .] because humans are built from[. . .]beautiful and dangerous genetic structures [. . .], flawed [. . .] as simultaneously intelligent and hierarchal” (Primate Visions, 379). And this exchange will mean the end of the putative human form: Humanity as it has existed since the days of Cro-Magnon will cease to exist and will become something new—an Oankali/human hybrid.

A “willing trade” also requires humans to submit to the embrace of the most inhuman aspect of the Oankali, the ooloi. The ooloi are “a third sex neither male nor female nor the bisexual synthesis of masculine and feminine into a single being” (White 404). Like Kali, the ooloi have two sets of arms. All Oankali have filaments that can be released from their bodies into the bodies of others in order to “taste” genetic material and share in bodily sensations. But, unlike male and female Oankali, the ooloi have extremely talented filaments that extend from their extra “sensory arms” and can create sensation in others,
among other things. The ooloi’s “sensory arms” function as sex organs, collecting reproductive cells from the male and female for fertilization and manipulation inside its own body (for later implantation it into the female of either species). In doing this, the ooloi provides a “virtual” sexual ecstasy for all three partners. This sexual process involves an exchange of bodily chemicals that makes human intercourse obsolete, even impossible, after mating with an ooloi. It should be noted that “trade” families actually consist of five partners: male/female sets from each species, Oankali and human, and one ooloi.

Needless to say, Lilith’s rhetorical chore of educating her people for union in an alien familiar pentad is a difficult one, but not as difficult as readers initially guess. The ooloi are enigmatically aware of others’ bodies and can emit an irresistible pheromone. Moreover, in their desire for a “willing” trade, the ooloi only seek a consensus of will. That is, instead of waiting for or even expecting a verbal notice of willingness, the ooloi “perceived all that a living being said—all words, all gestures, and a vast array of internal and external bodily responses. Ooloi absorbed everything and acted according to whatever consensus they discovered” (Butler 553).

Furthermore, the Oankali have given humanity a motivation to “trade”—every man and woman has been sterilized and only an ooloi is capable of reversing this. And as frightening as the extinction of humanity through cross-breeding with a bizarre alien species may be, the Oankali have a lot to offer humanity, and they are in many ways benevolent. For example, while the Oankali sterilized humanity, they also extended human longevity to about 500
years and corrected the presence of all manifest and latent diseases, most notably cancer—the mutating power of which the Oankali find to be “a treasure [. . .] beyond Human comprehension” (Butler 551). Moreover, in the Oankali’s favor is the fact that the human species had already doomed itself to extinction anyway:

    Humanity in its attempt to destroy itself had made the world unlivable. [Lilith] had been certain she would die even though she had survived the bombing without a scratch. She had considered her survival a misfortune—a promise of a more lingering death.
    And now. . . ? (Butler 15)

Without the Oankali’s desire to trade, humanity would cease to exist, but with the trade, at least some of the genetics and some of the culture of humanity is saved. By the end of Dawn, Lilith has trained the first group of humans to survive on the renewed Earth (the planet has changed in subtle ways that could be dangerous if misunderstood). And the ooloi have successfully mated with some human male/female pairs, including Lilith and a man named Joseph who is soon killed by his peers for being a “traitor to humanity.”

    Adulthood Rites takes place on Earth several years after the end of Dawn. The narrative focuses on Lilith’s “construct” son, Akin, who is the first male Oankali/human hybrid born to a human mother, and his interactions with “Resisters” after being kidnapped by them. The Resisters are humans who have chosen not to mate with the Oankali and have been allowed to escape and form their own sterile communities. Within and between these communities, people
desperately cling to pre-apocalyptic nostalgia and their very human identity. In their boredom, frustration, and xenophobia, they also engage in the worst kinds of human behavior: war, racism, and a trade in kidnapped women and human-looking construct children.

At least half Oankali, Akin is horrified and perplexed by the waste and suffering of humanity, as well as its xenophobia. The Oankali are peaceful beings who are healed naturally by their ooloi mate and tend to never physically suffer unless they are left alone because they crave otherness. This nature is of genetic design and has intentionally been passed to Akin, so the hierarchal violence he witnesses while living among the Resisters both horrifies and intrigues him. And eventually he understands humanity in a way that the incredibly intelligent and acquisitive Oankali cannot.

The Oankali believe that humanity is genetically doomed to destroy itself due to the “Human Contradiction”—a “seductive” and “dangerous” mix of intelligence and hierarchal behavior that is most pronounced in the masculine gender. This is why Akin is the first male construct born of a woman: the Oankali believe human males to have profoundly dangerous potentialities. And the Oankali believe that humanity, male or female, “can't resolve [the Human Contradiction] in favor of intelligence. That hierarchal behavior selects for hierarchal behavior whether it should or not.” Thus, the Oankali believe that allowing humanity to breed on its own again “would be like breeding intelligent beings for the sole purpose of having them kill one another” (Butler 501).
After Akin’s liberation from the Resisters, he communicates his lived experience to the Oankali through a type of chemical mind-melding so that they can “understand on an utterly personal level what he had suffered and what he had come to believe” (Butler 468). Akin believes that humanity should be allowed to pursue its destiny on a terraformed Mars because “All people who know what it is to end should be allowed to continue if they can continue” (Butler 471). And the communication of Akin’s lived experience is enough to persuade the Oankali of this. So by the end of Adulthood Rites, the Resisters are given back their fertility and allowed to terraform and colonize Mars. Thus, humanity is given a second chance on Mars while Earth continues as the home of Oankali/humanity constructs.

But Mars and the salvation of humanity as a distinct species is not the ultimate goal of Lilith’s Brood. In Imago, a title that references the final stage of an insect’s metamorphosis as well as the Freudian notion of an idealized self or other, Butler’s vision of human transformation is completed. The narrative focuses on Jodahs, another of Lilith’s children and the first Oankali/human construct of the ooloi sex.

Jodahs represents a revolution in the evolution of the Oankali. Thanks to the Oankali’s “natural” genetic engineering, Oankali/human ooloi constructs have the power to shape their bodies into forms that are useful or pleasing. This gift is the result of the Oankali’s transformation of human cancer from a useless, dangerous mutation into the ultimate mutability. But Jodahs discovers that this mutability can be dangerous. As Eric White points out, for Butler’s shapeshifting
ooloi “Structural complexity, and the consequent possibility of further
differentiation and metamorphosis, depends on their being situated in a social
matrix less chaotically mutable than themselves” (405). Jodahs attests to this,
saying, “It’s easier to do as water does: allow myself to be contained, and take on
the shape of my containers” (Butler 612). Jodahs undergoes several
transformations throughout the narrative, from looking like a woman whom a
particular man “used to dream about” to becoming “green, scaly, and strange”
while on extended excursions alone into the forest (Butler 604, 610).

Jodahs’ “twin,” Aaor—who is born shortly after Jodahs and is also ooloi—
has even more chaotic transformations: “It changed radically: grew fur again, lost
it, developed scales, lost them, developed something like tree bark, lost that,
then changed completely, lost its limbs and went into a tributary of [a] river”
(Butler 674). Aaor faces such dramatic transformations due to his inability to find
a stabilizing environment, a family of its own, a human pair to mate with.
Eventually it becomes “a kind of mollusk, something that had no bones left. Its
sensory tentacles were intact, but it no longer had eyes or other Human sensory
organs” (Butler 674).

Jodahs manages to avoid such formlessness by becoming involved with a
pair of humans. These humans are unique, however, because they are
runaways from a colony that survived the nuclear holocaust and eluded “rescue”
by the Oankali. Thus they are not only fertile but deformed and diseased from
nearly three centuries of inbreeding. Jodahs heals this pair of runaways, who are
also brother and sister, and eventually mates with them. This is, of course, taboo
to humans, but in the Oankali reproductive system, it is the norm for ooloi to mate with a brother/sister pair from a different family.

The union of Jodahs represents the eventual salvation of the hidden human colony: its members are healed and then given the choice to mate with Oankali partners on Earth or live “human” lives on Mars. It is also the salvation of Aaor, as Jodahs and his mates are able to help it achieve solidity through neuro-linkage via Jodahs’ sensory filaments. Eventually, some members of the hidden colony agree to mate with Aaor, thus ensuring its stability. Jim Miller reads this as a happy ending, writing that in the end, “humans have lost the worst elements of their xenophobia, and the Oankali have come to recognize the importance of individual autonomy” due to Lilith and her construct children (342).

Miller’s verdict may not be entirely accurate, but it points to the rhetorical core of Butler’s uses of the CESH proof: the re-visioning of Man’s identity in a way that sheds the necessity of othering in individuation. However, before examining Butler’s arguments and estrangements in detail, a discussion of how Butler’s trilogy fits into the science fiction and heterotopia taxonomies offered by Chapter Three will be useful to an understanding of the rhetorical efficacy of Lilith’s Brood.

A (de)Classification of Lilith’s Brood

Classifying Lilith’s Brood within the taxonomies of science fiction and heterotopias outlined in Chapter Three is in some ways very easy. Simply based

11 While I am aware that referring to humanity as Man is both inaccurate and sexist, as discussed later in this chapter, the object of Butler’s critique is the humanist paradigm of identity that posits individuated Man, ala Da Vinci’s famous Vitruvian romance, as its ideal and putative form.
on the amount of scholarship and critical studies inspired by the trilogy and Butler’s work in general, it would seem a safe assumption that Lilith’s Brood should be described as SF—serious, literary, speculative fiction and structural fabulation that utilizes cognitive estrangement to suggest what is possible. However, there are some problems with this assumption.

Most glaringly, Heinlein’s definition of speculative fiction specifically excludes stories about “serpent men from Neptune who lust after human maidens” (374). And as Haraway writes, the Oankali are “humanoid serpent people [who] speak to [Lilith] and urge her to touch them in an intimacy that would lead humanity to a monstrous metamorphosis” (Primate Visions, 379). So is Butler’s work too fantastically estranged to be considered cognitive and within the realm of to dynaton?

Along this same line of interrogation, Lilith’s Brood sounds as if it may fall into the category of a “malevolent dystopia”—a heterotopia in which the dystopian elements are intentionally created by a malevolent, oppressive power. In Lilith’s Brood the source of power is a highly intelligent and sophisticated species of space-faring aliens who “pursue a death-driven desire to totalize within themselves the sum biotic potential of the universe” (White 405). Such a postulation indeed sounds fantastic. However, a closer reading confirms Lilith’s Brood as SF. And instead of a malevolent dystopia, several critics have argued that it is in fact a critical dystopia.

Butler’s trilogy is not readily decoded as a phallic myth of protean male sexual conquest. Rather, as White points out, the ooloi “trouble what is arguably
the source of all dualistic thought: the (apparent) sexual dimorphism that serves as the basis for hierarchized binarism” (404). Furthermore, Butler’s aliens are not clearly malevolent or benevolent, and the root cause of the dystopia is not the Oankali but humanity’s hierarchal violence. The Oankali are humanity’s saviors from the not so improbable nightmare of nuclear apocalypse, but the Oankali are also dissolutive masters, sexual enslavers of humanity. And in many ways the Oankali are the estrangements of hard science vocabularies like biology, genetics, biogenetic engineering, and evolution. And as Joan Slonczewski notes in her “Octavia Butler’s Xenogenesis: A Biologist’s Response” (2000):

In the years since [Dawn] was published, research has revealed interesting parallels to the Oankali in the population dynamics of living organisms on Earth. Microbes and plants have been shown to possess surprising capacities for “genetic trade” with other species, even taking up naked DNA released by dead organisms and incorporating it into their own chromosomes. Our current view of bacteria is that, like the Oankali, these single-celled organisms evolve so as to keep only the limited set of genes they need for their current environment, but retain nearly endless capacity to acquire new genes, such as genes for antibiotic resistance, from DNA “out there.” (par. 9)

Thus, given their high valence with scientific vocabularies and well-rounded “natures,” the Oankali really are not so fantastically fabulated, even if they do tap into and co-opt cliché phallic monstrosities from Neptune. Furthermore, readers
might consider the Oankali a morphological mixture of nudibranchs and Kali, biology and popular mythology.

So even though the reader does not believe that the Oankali really exist, the Oankali are rendered in a way that seems possible. That is, the Oankali at least seem much more biologically and socially plausible than the aliens common to scifi. Furthermore, it seems reasonable to assume that typical SF readers are sympathetic or at least receptive to vocabularies that posit a universe filled with life. And Butler’s Oankali and their diversity-collecting fits well with the real potential for a universe of living abundance. Moreover, Butler mitigates the limitations to space travel posed by the enormous expanses of outer space with the Oankali’s life spans of dendrological proportions and their organic, planetoid space vessel. Space is unfathomably vast, but the Oankali don’t leave home to travel in it. Rather, they travel space in and on their home, sometimes with numerous generations living their entire lives in transit between “trades.” Thus, Lilith’s Brood does indeed offer readers cognition and can be considered SF.

Not only is Lilith’s Brood SF, it can be considered a critical dystopia because it is critical in a way that “incorporates an Enlightenment sense of critique [and] a postmodern attitude of self-reflexivity” (Baccoloni and Moylan 2). And, in accordance with Lyman Tower Sargent’s description of critical dystopias, Butler’s dystopia “includes at least one eutopian enclave and holds out hope that the dystopia can be overcome and replaced” (qtd. in Moylan 195). However, the trilogy also exhibits the characteristics of a critical utopia in its reflexivity as it
mixes sharp criticism of the humanist eutopian dream of an essential, pure human form with some less sharp criticism of collectivist eutopian yearning.

Thus, to some extent Butler’s trilogy resists and blurs genre classification. It has elements of sci fi, SF, critical utopias and dystopias, malevolent dystopias, and, as numerous critics point out, elements of origin stories, slave narratives, and the somewhat amorphous horror genre. And because Lilith is an African American and, as Haraway writes, Lilith’s Brood “seems deeply informed by Afro-American perspectives,” the trilogy has also been labeled, “Afrofuturism” (Haraway, Primate Visions, 378; Ramírez 374). However, while Butler’s stories resist pure or clear genre classification, Lilith’s Brood can clearly be classified as Heterotopian Rhetoric. To understand why this is so, an examination of how Butler uses the CESH proof to make specific arguments is now in order.

**Humanism, Ontology, Identity, and Agency**

Before describing what Butler is arguing for in Lilith’s Brood, it important is to understand what she is arguing against. As detailed in Chapter Three, the CESH proof is particularly useful when the rhetor wants to critique vocabularies that the audience identifies with. And Butler does just this with her use of CESH in Lilith’s Brood: the vocabularies she argues against are powerful cultural constituents of ontology, identity, and agency that make up the master vocabulary deceptively called *humanism*.

As Foucault writes, the ontology and identity of humanism proposes the existence of a “true self—an exact essence[. . .], [a] purest possibilit[y], [a]
carefully protected identit[y]” (History, 78). And this pure form is at the heart of humanist ontology, identity, and agency. That is, humanist ontology positions a pure and original form atop the hierarchy of existence. The further a form “falls” from the Form, the lower on the hierarchy it goes. Thus humanist ontology has “marked everyone except white men as ‘other’[ . . .]” (Peppers 52). This ontology positions white men, Butler’s likely readers, at the center of the universe—at once the culminating triumph of evolution and the very image of God *Himself*.

Naomi Jacobs writes that she prefers to use the masculine pronoun to discuss the vocabulary of humanism “as a reminder of the extent to which this humanist self has been conceptualized in masculine terms” (93). Some good visual examples of this concept are Da Vinci’s “Vitruvian Man” (Figure 4.3) and the quintessential marketing icon of rugged individualism, the *Marlboro man*. And Butler, beginning her critique with gender, takes advantage of the masculine nature of humanism in order to critique not only its vocabulary of individualist identity, but in particular its “manliness.”

In the humanist vocabulary, identity is ideally a matter of a fully realized individual who is centered, self-contained, and impermeable. As Jacobs put it, “his boundaries are impenetrable” (93). And as Jungian psychologist M. –L. von Franz points out, “Stones are frequent images of the Self[. . .]because they are complete[. . .and]eternal” (223, 225). According to Foucault, this vocabulary of
an ideally complete and immutable identity is entrenched in society by the vocabularies of human origin. He argues that intellectuals and scholars should, “challenge the pursuit of origin[. . .]because this search assumes the existence of immobile forms[. . .]” (48). And as Trinh T. Minh-ha writes, the humanist vocabulary of identity and immobile forms:

require[. . .] the elimination of all that is considered foreign or not the true self, that is to say, non-I, other. In such a concept the other is almost unavoidably either opposed to self or submitted to the self’s dominance[. . .]. The search for an identity is, therefore, usually a search for that lost, pure, true, real, genuine, original, authentic self[. . .]. (“Not You,” 215)

Thus, the humanist vocabulary of ontology and identity is built on two pillars: narratives of original/pure form and the process of othering in which the self is defined by difference. Moreover, as Trinh points out, these pillars imply a rationale for xenophobia. That is, a fear or even hatred of otherness is appropriate to the humanist vocabulary of agency because according to the logic of the humanism, “agency is enabled by the individual’s separateness and independence from the social” (Jacobs 93). By projecting an idealized original form of the autonomous self, the humanist vision of ontology and identity is doubly othering: first of all the less one looks like that idealized image the more marginalized one is: according to Western tradition, “white” males will always have the upper hand as the putative form in a humanist system as described by Foucault and others.
As examined in greater detail later in this chapter, the Oankali evoke repulsion because they represent an impurity or defiling of “the sacred image,” the human body. White points out that the history of bodily impurity as sacrilege goes back at least as far as the Biblical “abominations” of organic and thus animal and defiling bodily processes like menstruation (397). And as Mary Douglas writes in *Purity and Danger* (1966), “Defilement is never an isolated event. It cannot occur except in the view of a systematic ordering of ideas,” which is disrupted (41). Bodily defilements, such as those described in *Leviticus* and *Deuteronomy*, disrupt the idea that the human form was created in God’s image: The body is a “holy temple,” and bodily secretions defile the temple “precisely because they reveal the body to be an organic process like any other and hence fated to pass away” (White 397). Thus, as Douglas writes, “Holiness means keeping distinct the categories of creation. It therefore involves correct definition, discrimination, and order” (53). And in accord with the humanist concept of identity, “holiness is exemplified by completeness” (Douglas 53).

Thus, the concept of bodily impurity or un-holiness requires a story for the holy origin of a self-contained body that is godly in form, like the story of Adam and Eve. And the justification for purity and oppressive *othering* handed down from origin stories, like the Garden of Eden, is precisely why Foucault warns people away from the search for origins. However, as Peppers writes,

> At the same time, it’s important to read how alternative/rewritten feminist origin stories destabilize, contradict, and contest the traditional discourse of origin of their own turf. These origin stories
are powerful precisely because they not only denaturalize the
dominant accounts, but also because they partake of the enabling
power that marks all discourse about origins. (48)

There are three such "master narratives" of humanism, three tales that
articulate the ontology, identity, and agency of Butler's audience: the Biblical
story of *Genesis*, the sociobiological story of genetics, and most importantly, the
paleoanthropological story of "Man the Hunter," which position man as *the* fittest,
*the* culminating triumph of evolution. Butler cognitively estranges each of these
stories in *Lilith's Brood*. And each of these cognitive estrangements is projected
onto the heterotopias of post apocalyptic Earth and/or the bodies of the Oankali
and the constructs. Each CESH functions as a proof that both rejects the
humanist vocabulary and embraces a feminist, even at times sophistic
vocabulary.

**Original Sin vs. Original Mutation**

Up to this point in the study, Lilith has been explored mostly as a vessel
for the Oankali’s plans and Butler’s re-vision of humanity. But that is hardly a
complete depiction. In Talmudic mythology *Lilith* is the first wife of Adam. And
as Irven Resnick and Kenneth Kitchell write,

> When Adam wished to have intercourse with her in the ‘missionary’
position, Lilith refused to lie beneath him because, both having
been created from the dust of the earth, they should be equal, and
one should not lie above the other. When Adam attempted to force
himself on her, she uttered the magic name of God and flew off to the desert around the Red Sea. (85)

There, in exile, Lilith is said to have mated with demons and, as Peppers writes, “give[n] birth to a monstrous brood of children” (49).

While Butler’s Lilith certainly has an analogous fate to the Talmudic Lilith, Butler’s is neither a willing vessel nor a breeder of true monsters. And while the Talmudic Lilith may well represent the first feminism, the first battle for equality, Butler’s Lilith is not allowed to magically escape from her rapists. As Peppers observes:

Butler’s African-American Lilith is forced to live the “choice”\(^{12}\) enforced during slavery. [. . .] Lilith sees her role as being a “Judas goat” leading humanity to an undesired mutation, and her hope throughout the first novel is to prepare the humans for escape once they reach Earth. In short, she is anything but eager to embrace her power as the progenitrix of the new human race. (50)

However, through Lilith’s point of view the Genesis story is complicated and re-visioned and conflated by the slave narrative of forced miscegenation and African diaspora. Butler’s re-tells Genesis through point of view of a woman who is the progenitrix of the new humanity with Oankali “monsters,” who are effectively forces of evolutionary genetics and biology. Thus, Lilith’s Brood is a tale of miscegenation and dispersion, not purity and “falling.” So instead of humanity’s origin residing in the purity of Adam or Vitruvian Man, its origin

\(^{12}\) Peppers later qualifies this “choice” as “the non-choice of being permanently ‘available’ to the sexual desires of the slave owners[. . .]” (50).
resides in the detours and collisions of impurity, the mixing of forms and peoples. In other words, through Lilith, the Genesis story is retold not as a story of original form and original sin, but as a story of original mutation and original slavery to the forces of evolution.

This retelling refuses the Genesis story’s longing for the primeval garden by reversing the story from one of origin to one of becoming. That is, the point of Xenogenesis lies in the potentiality and mutability of forms, while the point of the Biblical Genesis lies in the past purity of forms. And this re-vision of the garden as original mutation counters the humanist ontology of the privileged, pure form atop the hierarchy of existent forms. Readers may have already associated the pure forms of humanism with Plato’s world of forms. And as James Kinneavy tells us, “Gorgias and some of the other sophists carried the implications of relativism of different situations to such lengths that Plato counteracted with the stability and permanence of his world of ideas” (81). That is, in her re-vision of Genesis, Butler reverses the Platonic view of immobile, pure forms into a sophistic view of sliding scales, mutability, and change. And as discussed in Chapter Two (see p. 33), sophistic relativism and feminist boundary blurring are vocabularies that not only have valence, but have often been conflated by their opponents.

Thus, in the mythological margins of Lilith’s Brood, the dominant Biblical vocabulary of origin is interrogated and co-opted through the CESH proof of Lilith’s journey in a way that posits and affirms feminist vocabularies of ontology, identity, and agency. The ontology of becoming suggested by Butler’s re-vision
of the Genesis story implies that agency is enabled not by the individual’s
separateness and independence from the social, but by the ability to embrace
becoming, to merge and emerge with other forms and concepts. That is,
because the underlying nature of existence is a process of constant change,
agency is the ability to shape change and merge with others not the ability to
resist change and exclude others.

This, of course ties into the story of evolution. As Butler writes in Parable
of the Sower, “Adaptations that an intelligent species may make in a single
generation, other species make over many generations of selective breeding and
selective dying” (29). Thus, agency is the potential to adapt to and initiate
change. And the purpose of this agency is not to preserve an essential self, but
to shape the inevitability of change so that it is a beneficial force, not a
malevolent or malignant one. However, while the re-vision of Genesis in Lilith’s
Brood suggests an ontology and agency of becoming, as well as a concomitant
identity of symbiotic multiplicity, these feminist vocabularies are better articulated
by the cooption of the sociobiological story of origin, “which situates out identities
within our genes” (Peppers 48).

Genetics and Being

The sociobiological story goes beneath the skin to describe evolution as
the result of ruthlessly competitive genes. It is a Darwinist tale of biology. Thus,
everything, every facet of biology and morphology, is essentialized as being
either favorable or unfavorable for survival. As sociobiologist Edward Wilson writes,

Samuel Butler’s famous aphorism that the chicken is only an egg’s way of making another egg has been modernized: the organism is only DNA’s way of making more DNA.

[. . .]In the process of natural selection, then, any device that can insert a higher proportion of certain genes into subsequent generations will come to characterize the species. (3)

This has been referred to as “the selfish gene theory”: genes compete for their own propagation, and “Intelligence [is] only a tool to aid successful reproduction” (Robinson, Red Mars, 68). However, as Peppers writes, Lilith’s Brood “is about changing the sociobiological story from within, using its very real power to help us imagine the origins of humanity in alien ways, ways more open to including our ‘imperfections,’ our differences within” (52).

As Miller notes, Zaki is “Perhaps the harshest critic” of Lilith’s Brood (342). The thrust of Zaki’s criticism is the interpretation of Butler’s work as arguing for an essential human nature that is genetic and fundamentally unchangeable:

For Butler, there is a pervasive human need to alienate from oneself those who appear to be different—i.e. to create Others. Even when she describes the diminution of racial antagonisms among humans upon encountering a new extraterrestrial Other, she foregrounds how we seize upon biological differences between the two species to reassert, yet again, notions of inferiority and
discrimination. For her, the human propensity to create the Other can never be transcended[...]. (Zaki 241)

To support this argument, Zaki turns to the Oankali’s notion of the *Human Contradiction* and their idea that humanity’s hierarchies are unavoidable products of its genetic maps. However, as Miller points out, “in an effort to make theoretical points against essentialism, [Zaki] confuses Butler’s position with that of the biologistic Oankali” (342).

Peppers concurs with Miller, claiming that Butler’s CESH of the sociobiological story is in fact a “cyborg narrative” of the kind posited by Haraway as discussed briefly in Chapter Three of this study (see p.77-78). That is, as Peppers describes *Lilith’s Brood*, “rather than reinforcing the story of the ‘pure, bounded individual,’ who ‘evolves’ through a competitive ‘survival of the fittest,’ it finds our origins in genetic ‘miscegenations’—mutations, symbiosis” (52). And there are several ways Butler achieves this shift from purity and exclusion to mutation and symbiosis.

Perhaps one of the most interesting ways Butler values mutation over purity is the cognitive estrangement of cancer. As mentioned earlier, the Oankali find cancer to be an extraordinary gift and talent of humanity. And thanks to cancer, the Oankali are able to re-grow lost limbs. For example, in *Dawn* the ooloi Nikanj, Lilith’s eventual Oankali mate, loses one of his sensory arms in an accident. Yet he is able to grow a new one by physically linking with Lilith and tapping into her “talent” for cancer. And later in the narrative, construct ooloi like Jodahs and Aaor are actually capable of shape-shifting. This, of course, is a
monumental reversal of a disease that is a real world horror of the body. And as Peppers very astutely points out, cancer is horrifying because “cancer cells are not wholly other, but exist precisely on the border of me/not me” (53).

This border of me/not me resonates strongly with the vocabularies of feminism. As Peppers points out, it’s a cyborg story. Only the bio-apparatus of genetics stands in place of technology. That is, genetics, as re-visioned through the CESH of the Oankali, is technology: “a technology for regeneration and metamorphosis” (Haraway, Primate Visions, 380). Indeed, all of the Oankali’s technology is biological. Even their interstellar vessel is an organic being that receives pleasure from and communicates with the Oankali. That is, not the Oankali and all of their technologies are part of a fully symbiotic organic system. However, as Peppers points out, “it’s not just the Oankali who are symbionts; enforced contact with them makes humans see how we too are symbiotic beings” (53). For example, human mitochondria evolved separately from humanity only to later join it in symbiosis, a point not lost on the Oankali. Peppers ties this vocabulary of cooperation to Lynn Margulis’ and John Lovelock’s “Gaia hypothesis,” that posits a symbiotic origin of humanity by which “All of us are walking communities” (54). Thus, the genetic tale is not one of ruthless competition as in the cliché of Darwinism, but communities that succeed through cooperation—a revelation for ardent capitalists and rugged individualists who assume that competition is crucial ingredient to a successful society.

The concept of symbiosis also complicates humanist vocabularies of ontology and identity. And this complication can be seen clearly in the Gloria
Anzuldúa’s *mestiza consciousness*. The *mestiza* consciousness is a unique, semi-autonomous state that is the product of “crossbreeding” or the social and genetic swirl that makes each individual unique. Anzuldúa and Butler seem to have the same idea: people are all made of each other, but are not each other. That is, like circuits, they are all different but connected and conducting the same energy.

Anzuldúa builds on Jose Vasconcelos’ vision of “la raza cósmica” (cosmic race): “a fifth race embracing the four major races of the world. Opposite the theory of the pure Aryan, and to the policy of racial purity that white America practices[. . .]” (Anzuldúa 85). Thus, it is possible to consider Butler’s Oankali in light of Anzuldúa’s discussion of the cosmic race:

> At the confluence of two or more genetic streams, with chromosomes constantly “crossing over,” this mixture of races, rather than resulting in an inferior being, provides hybrid progeny, a mutable, more malleable species with a rich gene pool. (85)

This vocabulary describes the ontology and identity proposed by *Lilith’s Brood* because Anzuldúa’s cosmic race is a product of becoming through miscegenation—the detours and collisions of symbiosis.

Due to the symbiosis between self and society, the line between the two is easily blurred. However, as Trinh points out, this blurring of borders is paradoxical: just as concepts of the self are complicated by the blurring of the self/society border, so must the concept of society be complicated (216). Just as the construct ooloi of *Lilith’s Brood* are reliant on others to give them shape and
definition, so the ooloi shape the social and family systems of which they are a part. In this way Butler resolves the nature/nurture argument. She disagrees with the biological determinists, but she also disagrees with social constructionists. The social constructionists would have it that society is the undisputed inheritor of all that is lost by individual identity in the blurring of the border with society. But this paradigm fails to recognize that the self’s proverbial glass is also half full: If the self is a social construct, then society is a construct of selves. This symbiotic vocabulary of genes, individuals, and social units is strong reversal of the sociobiological story typically used to justify the violence of hierarchy.

**Body Horror, Identity, and Becoming**

While Butler’s CESH of *Genesis* and the sociobiological story are both quite powerful, the primary cognitive estrangement of humanism in *Lilith’s Brood* is the Resister plot. The Resisters, who lead sterile lives desperately clinging to their humanity in a collection of mutually hostile hierarchies, illustrate not only the vocabulary of humanist identity and agency. And as Haraway points out regarding the reproductive order of the *Lilith’s Brood* heterotopia, “Pregnancy raises the tricky question of consent, property in the self, and the humans’ love of themselves as the sacred image, the sign of the same” (*Primate Visions*, 380).

Thus, as cognitive estrangements of humanist rugged individualism, the Resisters separate themselves from the Oankali and each other in an attempt to preserve the essential self and the putative human form, or “the sacred image,”
to different xenophobic variants: Some colonies are racially homogenous, and those that are not still have common denominators, ways of *othering* the outside and privileging the inside.

The Resisters consider those who decide to live and mate with the Oankali “traitors to humanity,” and kill them if they can. This course of action is justified by humanist agency that posits the protection of the autonomous individual as integral to the human ideal. However, as Jacobs points out, “what is there in such a vengeful and xenophobic humanity to which any rational being would wish to remain loyal?” (99).

As mentioned earlier, the Resisters engage in the worst of human vices: egotism, leader worship, ideological and religious dogmatism, sexual assault, multifarious forms of scapegoating (including sexism, racism, and homophobia)—all of which involve the exclusion and subordination of an “outside” in relation to a privileged “inside.” (White 403)

The grim familiarity of these vices on the stage of a cognitively estranged Earth reveals the humanist ideal of the integral Man to be a fabrication as carcinogenic beneath its brave exterior as the Marlboro man. This is ironic because, as Peppers points out, these most despicable of human behaviors are explained and justified by Darwinist tales of natural selection and survival of the fittest (56). Yet these same behaviors seem to imply that the Oankali are correct in their assessment of the “Human Contradiction.” That is, in their attempt to preserve
human identity and the putative human form, the Resisters have the species pointed in a familiar direction that is clearly not “the fittest.”

The Resister plot functions to estrange and critique the othering of humanist identity and agency. But in doing so, Butler is also estranging one of the dominant stories of human origin—the one used to justify “Divide and conquer[. . .man’s] creed, his formula for success” (Trinh 216). Haraway calls this the “Man the Hunter” story because it claims: “Hunting was a male innovation [and. . .] the principle of change. [Thus. . .], the crucial evolutionary adaptations making possible a human way of life[. . .are attributed to]male ways [. . .]” (“The Contest,” 82). In other words, the “Man the Hunter” story is a vocabulary of evolution that identifies Stone Age Man, Cro-Magnon, as the original, pure, and triumphant form. And while the Resisters’ behavior is portrayed as counter to survival on an evolutionary scale, Butler’s critique of humanism and its othering vocabulary goes much deeper than a mere episodic reading of bad behavior as bad survival skills.

Perhaps the biggest hole in the “Man the Hunter” story is that as a Darwinian paradigm, the story must change; man must change. Yet change from the original or pure form is the very thing the “Man the Hunter” story tries to excuse humanity from enduring by positing Man as evolution’s triumph and culmination: Millions of years of evolution all so that Man could possess fire, make tools, and use all living creature as he sees fit. In effect, the “Man the Hunter” story is an evolutionary explanation on behalf of a humanist fear of evolving. And as cognitive estrangements of the “Man the Hunter” story, the
Resisters' most common reaction to the Oankali and the evolution they represent is one of horror, revulsion, and abjection.

Considering the Oankali’s medusoid appearance, readers themselves are likely to be revolted by the Oankali because morphologically they are “horrific monsters.” In his *The Philosophy of Horror* (1990), Noël Carroll identifies two main characteristics of horrific creatures. The first and “incontestable” aspect is that “They must be dangerous.” Carroll observes that this danger can come in several forms, including some that resonate with the Oankali: “It may destroy one’s identity[. . .], or advance an alternative society[. . .]. Monsters may also trigger[. . .]sexual fears, concerning rape and incest.” And secondly, horrific monsters are also “impure” and thus cause “revulsion” (Carroll 43). Carroll argues that impurity arises from “transgressions or violations of schemes of cultural categories” (31). That is, in the terms favored by this study, impurity contradicts cognitive paradigms about natural, inviolable forms. And this description fits well Douglas’ explanation of defilement and impurity as transgressions of “distinct categories of creation.”

Thus the Oankali, with their third sex and tentacled humanoid figures, resonate as well with Carroll’s definition of impurity as with his discussion of danger. Their bodies are sea slug abominations “grown impossibly to human size and shape” and thus are defilements of the “sacred image”—a form that even humanity’s nearest primate relatives can only approximate. Worst of all, the Oankali want to meld their interstitial morphologies with humanity’s—an even more horrific defiling of the “sacred image.” Jacobs ties the Oankali’s proposed
“trade” to Kelly Hurley’s definition of *body horror*—stories of the “human subject dismantled and demolished: a human body whose integrity is violated, a human identity whose boundaries are breached from all sides” (Hurley 205; Jacobs 91). And White claims that the body horror of the Oankali and their proposed trade arouse feelings of *abjection* in readers (402). *Abjection* is described by Julia Kristeva in her *Powers of Horror* (1982) as profound, emphatic disgust in response to a disturbance of “identity, system, order” by “the ambiguous, the composite” (4).

Feelings of horror, revulsion, and abjection are the point of departure for Lilith and Butler’s audience into the world of the Oankali. Yet, *Lilith’s Brood* is not a horror story. As Carroll writes, “What appears to demarcate the horror story [. . .] is the attitude of characters in the story toward the monsters they encounter” (16). And readers, along with Lilith and numerous other truly human characters, manage to overcome their initial feelings of horror, revulsion, and abjection towards the Oankali and their plan. The Resisters, however, do not overcome these feelings. And ironically, their way of seeing is revealed to be the truly horrific monster of the story—the disfiguring beast of *othering* hierarchy.

In “The Erotics of Becoming,” White compares *Lilith’s Brood* to H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) and John Carpenter’s 1982 film, *The Thing*, noting one common denominator: “these narratives interpret biological evolution as a process of limitless becoming or metamorphosis that deprives every putative finality of ontological warrant” (399). That is, *Lilith’s Brood*, like many science horror stories, offers a human potentiality that radically challenges
Western and humanist ontological assumptions by casting biology and the forces of evolution as dissemblers of the putative human form. In the masculine tradition of humanism, Wells’ and Carpenter’s stories posit rugged individualists who “powerfully register[. . .]the anguish and horror occasioned by the recognition of human subjection to the evolutionary process” (White 399). On the other hand, countering that masculine tradition, *Lilith’s Brood* “can in fact be said to intervene in and reverse a tradition of paranoiac responses to evolution in which Nature in effect persecutes Culture” (White 402).

The reversal of the horror of becoming occurs due to the CESH proof of the bodies of the Oankali and those of the Oankali/human constructs. That is, the Oankali’s and constructs’ bodies can be thought of as scientific heterotopias that cognitively estrange the “chaos” of metamorphosis and becoming—an ontology that is stridently resisted by humanist identity and agency. And as the body horror of the Oankali is reversed, so is the horror of becoming. Thus, the reversal of Oankali body horror is a CESH proof for the inevitability and beneficial potentiality of humanity’s evolution into something *other*. And by exposing humanism’s essentialist narratives about and fears of evolution, Butler successfully co-opts the cultural authority of Darwin. The CESH of the Oankali body horror and the Resisters’ responses to their fear demonstrate that hierarchy and *othering* are not only counter to survival but ontologically misinformed. So while the Resisters’ emotions of horror, revulsion, and abjection toward the Oankali are understandable considering the Oankali’s morphology and goals, the narrative leads its protagonists and readers away from these “instinctive,”
negative emotions towards thoughtful, positive emotions. And this reversal provides the persuasive vocabulary for a cognitive paradigm shift away from humanist vocabularies of identity, agency, and ontology towards feminist vocabularies.

**Mars et “Ad Astra Per Aspera”**

Finally, apart from her arguments and re-visions of the dominant vocabularies of ontology, identity, and agency, Butler suggests a goal that has often been called the next step in human evolution: the colonization of Mars. In *Adulthood Rites*, Akin secures Mars as a place for human evolution to continue without interference from the Oankali. Akin does so because he believes that humanity indeed deserves a second chance and because “Chance exists. Mutation. Unexpected effects of the new environment. Things no one has thought of” could bring humanity to a new evolutionary level, one in which hierarchal behavior is no longer a problem (Butler 501-502).

Our nearest and most Earth-like planetary neighbor is a logical step if humanity is to fulfill it’s *Star Trek* dreams of “going boldly” into the unknown and becoming a truly space-faring species. This is a dream that has captivated the human imagination for centuries; long before the Wright brothers took the first step off the surface of the planet. Mars is not the focus or ultimate aim of Butler’s re-vision of humanity, but her suggestion of its potential points to a direction that could likely lead to real human evolution—particularly if technology is considered a part of human evolution, as Haraway’s cyborg suggests.
In the Star Trek television series and movies, “the star ship Enterprise” bares the motto, Per aspera ad astra, which is Latin for “through difficulty, to the stars.” This phrase, in a modified form, was adopted as the state motto of Kansas in 1861: Ad astra per aspera, to the stars through difficulty. And while this longing to better humanity through the quest to reach the stars is a narrative dead end in Lilith’s Brood, it is the primary, galvanizing goal of the Earthseed (semi-spiritual) path posited in Butler’s Parable novels. The vocabulary presented in these novels engages in many of the same arguments as Lilith’s Brood; however, because the Earthseed vocabulary becomes the basis for persuasion and recruitment into a utopian movement, the novels can also be read as rhetorical theory. And an exploration of this rhetorical theory is one of the doors open for the further study and articulation of Heterotopian Rhetoric in this study’s fifth and final chapter.

Summary

Butler’s work was chosen for this case study because it is already the subject of a large body of diverse scholarship, and so there is a well-developed critical vocabulary available for contextualization and synthesis. And Lilith’s Brood and its constituents are the most common topics of this vocabulary. Another reason is that Butler seems to have written Lilith’s Brood with the intent to alter cognitive paradigms or “perception.”

Butler’s trilogy is not readily decoded as a phallic myth of protean male sexual conquest. Rather, as White points out, the ooloi “trouble what is arguably
the source of all dualistic thought: the (apparent) sexual dimorphism that serves as the basis for hierarchized binarism” (404). And in many ways the Oankali are cognitive estrangements of hard science vocabularies like biology, genetics, biogenetic engineering, and evolution. Thus, given their high valence with scientific vocabularies and their well-rounded “natures,” the Oankali really are not fantastically fabulated, even though they tap into and co-opt cliché phallic monstrosities from Neptune. And Lilith’s Brood can be considered a critical dystopia because it is critical in a way that “incorporates an Enlightenment sense of critique [and] a postmodern attitude of self-reflexivity.”

As detailed in Chapter Three, the CESH proof is particularly useful when the rhetor wants to critique vocabularies that the audience identifies with. And Butler does just this with her use of CESH in Lilith’s Brood: the vocabularies she argues against are powerful cultural constituents of ontology, identity, and agency that make up the master vocabulary deceptively called humanism. Some good visual examples of this concept are Da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man and the quintessential marketing icon of rugged individualism, the Marlboro man. And Butler, beginning her critique with gender, takes advantage of the masculine nature of humanism in order to critique not only its vocabulary of individualist identity, but in particular its “manliness.”

There are three such “master narratives” of humanism, three tales that articulate the ontology, identity, and agency of Butler’s audience: the Biblical story of Genesis, the sociobiological story of genetics, and most importantly, the paleoanthropological story of “Man the Hunter,” which position man as the fittest,
the culminating triumph of evolution. Butler cognitively estranges each of these stories in Lilith’s Brood. And each of these cognitive estrangements is projected onto the heterotopias of post apocalyptic Earth and/or the bodies of the Oankali and the constructs. Each CESH functions as a proof that both rejects the humanist vocabulary and embraces a feminist, even at times sophistic vocabulary of ontology, identity, and agency.

Finally, apart from Butler’s arguments and re-vision of the dominant vocabularies of ontology, identity, and agency, she suggests a goal that has often been called the next step in human evolution: the colonization of Mars. While the longing to better humanity through the quest to reach the stars is a narrative dead end in Lilith’s Brood, it is the primary, galvanizing goal of the Earthseed vocabulary posited in Butler’s Parables novel. Thus, the Parables novels and their embedded Earthseed text can be read as not only rhetoric, but rhetorical theory. This along with a few other possible paths for the further study of Heterotopian Rhetoric will be discussed in the closing chapter of this study.
Chapter Five:

*Opportunities for Further Study*

Chapter One sets the purpose of this study to build a theory or vocabulary that explains Science Fiction (SF) as a form of persuasion, called Heterotopian Rhetoric, and identifies some of its defining characteristics. And to begin this examination the chapter articulates what perceptions or cognitive paradigms are like, a discussion which reveals why addressing these paradigms is important to both rhetoric and science. Chapter One’s discussions of physics, cognitive paradigms, and the subjective nature of reality also suggest a postmodern and ironic theoretical stance that is articulated in Chapter Two.

The second chapter is devoted to explaining and foreshadowing this study’s methodological and overarching theoretical approach, CR. In this study this approach is keyed by the use of *vocabulary* to mark the paradigmatic assumptions of discourses. This applies to all vocabularies, scientific or otherwise, and reveals an *ironic sense* in this study’s methodology. *Ironic* sense, in Heisenberg’s language, realizes that, counter to *commonsense*, what we observe in nature is “not nature itself but nature exposed to [a] method of questioning.” There is no objective point of view. CR, uses the phrase, *multiple relevant vocabularies* as a directive to reflectively and consciously attempt to draw-and-weigh-in multiple vocabularies from multiple paradigms in order to synthesize a new vocabulary within this study.

Chapter Three begins by providing a landscape and a vocabulary for SF and heterotopian narratives, and the key this vocabulary is the ideas of
potentiality—scientifically plausibility—and estrangement. These various descriptions of SF, especially Suvin’s *cognitive estrangement* are shown to not only have valence with rhetoric but to even suggest that SF is a form of sophistic rhetoric. Suvin defines SF as estrangement through what is possible—*cognitive estrangement*. Heinlein defines *speculative fiction* as speculation about the possibilities of the real world. Robert Scholes defines *structural fabulation* as and exploration of what is perceptible based on scientific implications about the possible. And Poulakos definitively positions the purpose of sophistic rhetoric as “to suggest that which is possible.”

Chapter Three argues that in order to suggest what is possible, Heterotopian Rhetoric uses the CESH proof and appeal—the cognitive estrangement of a scientific heterotopias—to subvert and educate cognitive paradigms. The form of persuasion is extremely valuable when the rhetor wants to critique the cognitive paradigms and vocabularies that the audience takes for granted as “natural” or commonsense. It is even more valuable if the rhetor wishes to critique paradigms and vocabularies that the audience identifies or that are ingrained by the redundant force of hegemony into society. The value comes from the CESH proof’s use of a projected other space, that both indulges the reader’s desire to be “other and elsewhere” and creates a safe space for the criticism of vocabularies and paradigms closely aligned to the intended audience. And this value is perhaps the main reason why the CESH proof is utilized by feminist rhetors like Octavia Butler, Donna Haraway, Mary Daly, and many others.
Chapter Four illustrates the vocabulary developed and discussed throughout the first three chapters with a case study of Butler’s *Lilith’s Brood*. The narrative is discussed for both its relevance to feminist thinkers, especially Haraway, and is placed in the SF taxonomies of Chapter Three as a “critical dystopia.” The study then turns to an analysis of Butler’s use of the CESH proof to make arguments against her intended audience’s privileged vocabularies of ontology, identity, and agency. The Resister plot, the proposed “Human Contradiction,” the sexual enslavement of humanity, and the pre-Oankali nuclear war all work as estrangements of humanist ontology and identity.

The fourth chapter also examines Butler’s use of the CESH proof to propose alternative or competing vocabularies and *ipso facto* cognitive paradigms by challenging the grand narratives of humanism. There are three such “master narratives” of humanism, three tales that articulate the ontology, identity, and agency of Butler’s audience: the Biblical story of *Genesis*, the sociobiological story of genetics, and most importantly, the paleoanthropological story of “Man the Hunter,” which position man as *the* fittest, *the* culminating triumph of evolution. Butler cognitively estranges each of these stories in *Lilith’s Brood*. And each of these cognitive estrangements is projected onto the heterotopias of post apocalyptic Earth and/or the bodies of the Oankali and the constructs. Each CESH functions as a proof that both rejects the humanist vocabulary and embraces a feminist, even at times sophistic vocabulary of ontology, identity, and agency.
This chapter briefly discusses some the limitations of this study and then briefly peers into two other spaces in which the vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric could be usefully contextualized. The first, mentioned in Chapter Four, remains well within the stream of this study: an examination of the potential to read Butler’s *Earthseed* novels as rhetoric and rhetorical theory. The second space, however, has a potentiality that could help educators, students, and citizens address the challenges of literacy in the Information Age—the Heterotopian Rhetoric of cyberspace.

**Some Limitations of this Project**

This study has demonstrated a theory and articulated a vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric through a case study of one author and her trilogy. Additional applications to more of Butler’s work and the works of others are called for to further articulate and test the vocabulary. The vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric could be used as a tool for SF criticism to get at what is going on in almost heterotopian narrative. But this theory needs to be tested, and surely testing will bring refinement. And the contextualization of Heterotopian Rhetoric with genres other than science fiction could also prove fruitful. For example, a contextualization of the psychology of mythology and the vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric could provide a useful application beyond the bounds of SF.

Another limitation to acknowledge is the narrow purpose of this project: to develop a theory and vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric. Additional work needs
to be done to demonstrate the utility of this theory for rhetorical studies and rhetorical theory, where it could show potential for the pedagogy of critical thinking and, in particular, cyberspace literacies. The ability to read, utilize, and think critically about Heterotopian Rhetoric in cyberspace could very well become one of the most important literacies of twenty-first century.

Therefore, with these limitations acknowledged, this study will conclude with a brief examination of two options for further study. The final words will be with the potential for the study of Heterotopian Rhetoric in cyberspace. But before leaving Butler behind, her vision of humanity shaped by the quest for the stars offers another path for the study of Heterotopian Rhetoric that is worthy of note.

**Parables, Earth Seed, and Rhetorical Theory**

Perhaps the most interesting areas for the specific study of Butler’s rhetoric is an examination of the rhetorical theory she offers in *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents*. These novels chronicle the life of Lauren Oya Olamina in a near-future dystopian that foregrounds a disintegrated U.S. civilization in which most people must choose between a life of precarious survival in a dangerous and lawless land or debt slavery to predatory corporations that both protect and imprison their workforce.

Lauren is an *empath*—born with a psychological pathology that makes her feel the pain she imagines others feel. This hyper-sensitivity to others along with her lived experience as the daughter of a professor/preacher in an armed and
walled community are the CESH proof for a rhetoric and a rhetorical theory that embraces an ontological vocabulary of becoming. The *Earthseed* critical dystopia cognitively estranges the chaos and inevitability of change, while appealing to and “proving” the need to shape change. And in accord with this ontology, Lauren’s pathology blurs the border between self and other and suggests an identity that is multiple and connected to an evolving web of relationships.

For Butler the necessity and purpose of rhetoric is to shape change, to embrace and work with an ontology of becoming and an identity of ideally symbiotic multiplicity. This rhetoric takes the shape of a matrifocal “spiritual” worldview in *The Parable of the Sower*. Lauren spends her formative years developing a vocabulary for a cognitive paradigm of God that differs radically from her father’s paradigm. Her paradigm is of a God that is manifold and multiple and whose only Truth is change. Lauren articulates this vocabulary in a text she calls, *Earthseed, the Book of the Living*. This vocabulary cognitively estranges the journal writing genre and is not only a rhetoric of becoming and multiplicity, but a rhetorical theory. The theory empowers Lauren and the people she befriends to create a new order after her neighborhood’s walls give way to a criminal hoard and the social fire that has been burning at the edge of their sanctuary for all of Lauren’s life. Like sophistic rhetoric, *Earthseed* articulates what is possible and points in a direction to get there. And this rhetoric and the rhetorical methods for sharing this vocabulary developed by Lauren gives her and her friends the ability to shape a new reality for themselves and deal with fluidity of existence in productive ways.
The term, *Earthseed* connotes Lauren’s vision of what is possible: embracing change can lead humanity to the stars, *ad astra per Aspera*: “The Destiny of Earthseed/Is to take root among the stars” (84, 85). This vision of what is possible has rhetorical significance for the *Earthseed* vocabulary as a galvanizing goal and direction. As Lauren explains in *Parable of the Sower*, “‘The essentials’” of the *Earthseed* vocabulary and community:

“are to shape God with forethought, care, and work; to educate and benefit their community, their families, and themselves; and to contribute to the fulfillment of the Destiny[. . .], the hope of heaven not for themselves and their children. A real heaven, not mythology or philosophy. A heaven that will be theirs to shape.” (261)

And Lauren’s rhetoric not only embraces posthuman potentialities, such as the colonization of the stars, it rejects hierarchies and embraces a vocabulary that is perhaps like a synthesis of Taoism and Wicca: God is “Power—/Infinite,/Irresistible,/Inexorable,/Indifferent./And yet God is Pliable—/Trickster,/Teacher,/Chaos,/Clay./God exists to be shaped./God is Change” (25). There are three central tenets to this philosophy: 1. God is change, and everything must and always will change; 2. we may, through our intentions and gardening of our lives shape change; 3. God is many things, and diversity, therefore, is to be cherished. This apotheosis of becoming ultimately articulates a feminist ontology at odds with patriarchal religion and the hierarchal vocabularies it posits.
Indeed, Lauren’s vocabulary is not so different from that expressed by Starhawk in her recent treatise on Earth-based religion and magic, *Earth Path*, in which she calls magic, “the art of changing consciousness at will” (4). Change, metamorphosis, the concept most central to Lauren’s rhetoric—process not product—is what is at the heart of Earth-based religion and the honoring of the planet’s cycles.

And change is what the edifices of most organized religions, the captains of industry and monetary systems, and even academia try to slow or prevent. Change is the enemy of the establishment because change implies new establishments. Nonetheless, change is inevitable. Butler imagines a world in which society has not been conscientiously shaped or *gardened*, a world that has never learned to overcome its hierarchal tendencies. But according to both *Earhtseed* and the work of feminist spiritualists, intentional, gardened change is possible primarily through rhetoric that some might call “magic.” Foss, Foss, and Griffin note:

[According to Starhawk,] In the rhetorical system of the Goddess, rhetorical options rooted in change do not involve persuading others to change their beliefs or actions. Instead, they involve individual or collective rhetorical activity directed at the self. Options such as mystery, ritual, and power—with focus on changing the consciousness of the rhetor as a means for changing larger structures. (188)
This very approach is the one chosen by Butler’s Lauren: “The Self must create/
Its own reasons for being./To shape God,/Shape self” (258).

Butler’s *Earthseed* novels offer an interesting and potentially productive entry to the study and articulation of Heterotopian Rhetoric. And Butler’s other works, as well as the works of similar feminist SF authors like Ursula Le Guin, are sure to present even further opportunities. However, perhaps the most important potential contextualization of Heterotopian Rhetoric’s vocabulary is not with the traditional, printed novel but with new media.

**Heterotopian Rhetoric in Cyberspace**

Perhaps the most urgent and practical use for the vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric and the CESH proof is computer technology. Cyberspace offers a new frontier for intellectual vocabularies, including new uses and potential forms for Heterotopian Rhetoric. For example, application of the CESH proof to the cyberspaces of avatar-driven interactive online heterotopias—like those offered by interactive games and “alter-ego” building communities such as *Second Life*[^13]—could provide programmers and users with significant rhetorical potentials. At the same time, an understanding of the CESH proof and the power of Heterotopian Rhetoric can help technophiles, educators, students, and all citizens understand how the virtual spaces that are becoming evermore present in their lives are or can be used to influence or shape vocabularies. Information technology implies a vast potential for the evolution of society. However, as in

[^13]: www.secondlife.com provides a fully interactive virtual world were users can live a "second life." This cyber heterotopia offers a mix of eutopianism, pragmatism, networking, video-game-like graphics and scenarios.
every other age, the true potential of the Information Age relies upon the relative literacy of its populations. And in the Information Age, literacy entails much more than the ability to read the newspaper and write in the Queen’s English. Further study of Heterotopian Rhetoric and the CESH proof within the contexts of cyberspace could prove very beneficial to building new cyber literacies—a task of great importance to educators today. Anne Francis Wysocki writes,

> Given our current cultural and technological situation, readers expect the visual aspects of texts on computer screens—but also now on paper—to be given more attention than they were afforded in the past. [. . .And] Our culture throws more visually shaped texts at us than we grew up learning to expect or be comfortable analyzing." (184,185).

Wysocki’s observations can be extended beyond the intended context of visual rhetoric to the “shaped texts” of cyber heterotopias. Like visual rhetoric, Heterotopian Rhetoric is proliferating in unexpected ways due to the “current cultural and technological situation.” As Christine Tulley and Kristine Blair point out, redefining computer literacy can help students and non-students alike understand and take control of concepts such as online identity construction (58-59). Heterotopian Rhetoric in the form of the SF novel has proven to be a powerful mode of feminist rhetorical vocabulary building, and the rhetorical power of cyber heterotopias have the potential to empower users with similar opportunities for vocabulary building. Tulley and Blair note, “For many women, controlling their own images online represents a form of agency that differs
dramatically from their experiences with web sites designed to objectify rather than personify the female image" (58). Tulley and Blair cite Adobe Photoshop’s potential for “enabling students to see the technical and personal power of image editing[. . .]” (58). And in the terms favored by this study, this is a reference to Photoshop’s power to cognitively estrange images of the self in ways that critique and subvert privileged and hegemonic vocabularies about identity and the self, including gender, race, and all other power-shifting characteristics.

By building new computer literacies to account for the CESH proof and the power of Heterotopian Rhetoric, perhaps contemporary audiences will better appreciate cyberspace as a powerful reflection of the real space of society. Due to the potential to create heterotopias via computer software and the potential for enormous audiences with internet access growing world-wide, heterotopian literacy—the critical reading and creative writing of Heterotopian Rhetoric—has the potential to be a matter of great importance to scholars, teachers, and society at large.

In English Studies, this promise implies the possibility of achieving our goals as teachers of the textual arts, the literacy arts. As Janet Carey Eldred and Lisa Toner observe:

> Computer technology is much too central a feature of twenty-first-century literacy, environment, culture, and economics to pretend that it merely “augments” pedagogy. Electronic literacy has already transformed writing instruction. Software already teaches. It’s our job to teach with it—and against it. (44)
Thus, behind the cyberspace portal is a world in need of new literacies and new ways of talking about literacy. Perhaps the re-vision of Heterotopian Rhetoric within the contexts of cyber heterotopias can provide a vocabulary helpful to the cause of building of these new cyber literacies and vocabularies.

**Conclusion**

This study has attempted to build a vocabulary for discussing heterotopian SF, like that of Octavia Butler, and other forms of heterotopian cognitive estrangement, like that of Mary Daly, as Heterotopian Rhetoric. The primary means of persuasion employed used by Heterotopian Rhetoric, the CESH proof, allows rhetors to indulge readers’ desires to other and elsewhere while providing a projection to critique readers’ hegemonic and privileged vocabularies and cognitive paradigms by suggesting what is possible. Thus, Heterotopian Rhetoric can be usefully studied in many ways.

While there are numerous potential avenues for the further study of Heterotopian Rhetoric, perhaps one of the most interesting areas for the further study of Butler’s rhetoric is an examination of the rhetorical theory she offers in *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents*. For Butler the necessity and purpose of Rhetoric is to shape change. And like sophistic rhetoric, *Earthseed* seeks to articulate what is possible in order to shape the way potentiality is pursued. Butler’s rhetoric not only embraces posthuman potentialities, such as the colonization of the stars, it rejects hierarchies and embraces a vocabulary that is perhaps like a synthesis of Taoism and Wicca.
However, perhaps the most urgent and practical use for the vocabulary of Heterotopian Rhetoric and the CESH proof is computer technology. An understanding of the CESH proof and the power of Heterotopian Rhetoric can help technophiles understand how the virtual spaces that are becoming evermore present in their lives are or can be used to influence or shape vocabularies. And further study of Heterotopian Rhetoric and CESH within the context of cyberspace could prove very beneficial to building new cyber literacies—a task of great importance to educators today. Cyber heterotopias have the power to cognitively estrange images of the self and society in ways that critique and subvert (or entrench) privileged and hegemonic vocabularies about and the self, including gender, race, and all other power-shifting characteristics. Thus, the study of Heterotopian Rhetoric within the contexts of cyberspace perhaps can help develop literacies for the twenty-first century and enable educators to “teach with [technology]—and against it.”
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