HOPE ON THE HORIZON: MORDECAI ROSHWALD, CORDWAINER SMITH, AND JAMES TIPTREE JR. LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

by

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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Dr. Carol McGuirk, Department of English, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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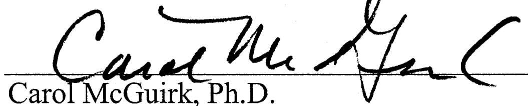

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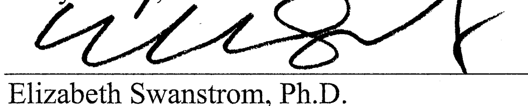

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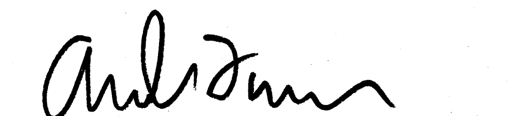

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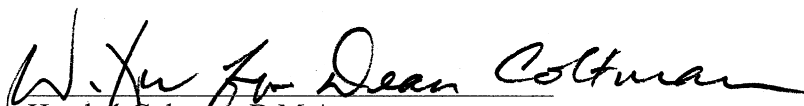

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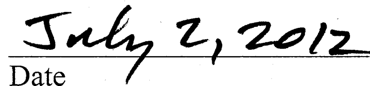

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ABSTRACT

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This project considers the future, and the hope for humanity within three dystopian science fiction works: Mordecai Roshwald's *Level 7*, Cordwainer Smith's, "The Dead Lady of Clown Town," and James Tiptree Jr.'s "The Girl Who Was Plugged In." There are many aspects and different manifestations of hope in science fiction, even in authors who show readers the darkest side of human nature and what will become of humans, and by default earth, if an effort is not made to change the world's direction. Though some dystopian stories show horrible possible futures, there is an underlying hope within these stories that the story will change readers' thinking about how the future might unfold. It is because there is a chance to save the world that science-fiction-authors tell stories about disasters, destruction, and post apocalyptic scenarios. It is within the hopeless story lines that hope for humanity manifests itself.

DEDICATION

For my mother, Mary, my inspiration and my best friend.

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INTRODUCTION

Hope in itself is just a word, a noun or a verb used in various situations. Hope can be seen as a desire of a positive outcome in a situation or a wish or deep persuasion that good will overcome evil. According to Valerie Braithwaite, "hope is essentially goal-directed thinking…it occurs when we would like to reach a goal but are not absolutely certain that it will happen, even when we take action to effect the change" (135). In the ancient Greek story of Pandora's Box, hope is "the only good the casket [holds] among the many evils, and remains to this day mankind's sole comfort in misfortune" (Hamilton 74). As the myth suggests, hope, the good thing that remains in the box, can only be found when all else seems dark. I call this my "Pandora's Box Theory." There are many aspects and different manifestations of hope in science fiction, even in authors who show readers the darkest side of human nature and what will become of humans, and by default earth, if an effort is not made to change the world's direction. In the darkest of situations, these authors express some form of hope for humanity. In these situations, the authors *whisper* throughout the pages of a story or novel. By *whisper* I mean their intent to subtly bring about a way of thinking that will enable a reader to hope for change.

In order to have hope, a person must believe that there is a possibility of a positive outcome. According to Luc Bovens, "one cannot hope for some state of the world, unless one has a degree of credence that it will come about which ranges between some threshold value close to 0 for confidence that it will not come about and

some threshold value close to 1 for confidence that it will come about" (673). It is because there is a chance to save the world that science-fiction-authors such as Mordecai Roshwald, Cordwainer Smith, and James Tiptree tell stories about disasters, destruction, and post apocalyptic scenarios.

Throughout this thesis, I will consider these works in light of my Pandora's Box Theory, in order to identify the hope found in the midst of hopelessness. According to Friedrich Nietzsche, the hope left in Pandora's box is believed to be the greatest worldly good, yet man reaches for it, unaware that hope can be seen as "the most evil of evils because it prolongs man's torment" (71). However, with the Pandora's Box Theory, we will see that hope, rather than prolonging the torment of man, is a beacon of light when all else is dark. Luc Bovens argues that hope is "intrinsically valuable in that it provides for the pleasures of anticipation and respite in trying times" (680). In many works of sf texts of nuclear and other disasters, hope is threaded through the words on the page and hidden in the sub-text of dystopian scenarios.

Humanity tends only to hope for things when in need. When all is well and going as it should be, people are hope-less. When things begin to go wrong, not only with the individual, but with the world as well, people begin to hope for a change. It is exactly this concern for the direction of the world that inspires science-fiction authors to write stories that address issues in need of attention. Though some dystopian stories show horrible possible futures, there is an underlying hope within these stories that the story will change readers' thinking about how the future might unfold.

Mordecai Roshwald in *Level 7* (1959) posits a world before, during, and after the nuclear annihilation of earth. Within this novel there appears to be no hope for

humanity, as everyone dies and earth is destroyed; yet the hope is present within the change that takes place in the narrator and the art that Roshwald suggests is the best part of humanity. Roshwald feels, as did many people during the cold war period (c. 1946-82), that the world is heading down a path of destruction that can only end with everyone losing and earth being destroyed because of the use of nuclear weapons. Mutually assured destruction was the cold war theory that nuclear arms will defer either side from pressing the buttons to launch nuclear weapons. Roshwald posits a world wherein everyone dies and earth becomes uninhabitable, even a hundred thousand years later; yet within the pages of his novel, he shows how the arts can awaken the humanity within even the most hardened humans. If we find beauty in museums, libraries, and nature itself, humanity might be less likely to destroy the earth.

Cordwainer Smith, in “The Dead Lady of Clown Town” (1964), gives us a world that appears to be a Utopia, yet shows us just how dystopian perfection can be. Though human inhabitants of Fomalhaut III lack nothing, he shows how perfection removes their humanity and compassion. In turn, he also shows that the animal population, or “underpeople,” is more human because they have purpose, love, and struggles to overcome. They have hope. Rather than showing a world destroyed, as Roshwald does, Smith’s vision is of a place where sickness is eliminated and shortages non-existent; yet this privilege for “true men” is supported by the enslavement of underpeople. In both Roshwald’s novel and Smith’s novella, hope is present in that both authors are showing extreme situations that ask the reader to reevaluate their own realities and begin to make a change that will save their world.

In James Tiptree Jr.'s novella "The Girl Who Was Plugged In" (1973), we again are given a dystopian world: big corporations find a way to advertise although "it used to be is against the law. […] Since the so called Huckster Act, sellers have been restrained to […] displays in or on the product itself, visible during its legitimate use or in on-premise sales" (51). Global Transmissions Corporation (GTX) intervenes in the life of a deformed, lonely, and desolate girl who is so desperate for love, compassion, and human kindness in a world where she is shunned, abused, and ignored that she attempts suicide. GTX matches her with a remote robot that she manipulates advertising its products under the assumption that she is really helping humanity. Unfortunately, to have friends, the main character P. Burke, must give up her life and agree to be legally dead so she can animate an empty doll shell that has a perfectly acceptable appearance as opposed to Burke's deformed one. Though it appears that there is no hope for P. Burke throughout the novella, the underlying whispering indicates that the worst-case scenario that Tiptree posits is exactly where the world is headed if something is not done.

What Is Science Fiction and What Does It Do?

Darko Suvin, in *Positions and Presuppositions,* states that science fiction (sf[1]) is "the literature of change, more realistic than realism" (Suvin PPSF 23); in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* he suggests that the twentieth-century genre "moved into the sphere of anthropological and cosmological thought, becoming a diagnosis, a warning, a call to understanding and action, and—most important—a mapping of possible alternatives."[2] It is up to an attentive reader to hear the *whispering* of the author and decipher the messages embedded within the entertainment. Science fiction shows

how bad a situation can become if something is not done. "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" (*MOSF* 8). Authors in the genre make statements about various issues in society (feminism, politics, globalization, and commodification) by transferring issues to a secondary or alternative world, which allows readers to think about any parallels to their reality. David Hartwell, in *Age of Wonders: Exploring the World of Science Fiction,* suggests that Smith's stories "are compelling to the SF audience for the evocative changes they bring on familiar and worn-down SF clichés" (129) and Veronica Hollinger notes that, "one of the most (if not *the* most) important features of science fiction is its capacity for imaginative explorations which contain the possibilities for social praxis based upon visions of viable futures" (127).

Readers are able to reflect on, and act upon, issues that have been dramatized through the authors. Given these definitions, when looking at the fiction of Mordecai Roshwald, Cordwainer Smith, and James Tiptree Jr., readers see that they all make a statement about the world they live in through the stories about nuclear annihilation of earth in *Level 7*, rebelling against perfection and advocating for all living beings in "The Dead Lady of Clown Town," and calling for equality by satirizing the worship of superficial beauty in "The Girl Who Was Plugged In." Within these texts the manifestations of hope for humanity are whispered throughout the pages in very different ways. Roshwald's novel suggests that the hope for humanity lies within the arts, while Smith's novella shows hope for humanity through love, awareness, and

compassion for other living beings. Tiptree's novella express a hope for humanity (hidden in a dark box) by showing that change is necessary.

HOPE FOR HUMANITY THROUGH THE ARTS –

"THE GREAT FIRE ON EARTH"

Mordecai Roshwald's *Level 7* depicts one possible outcome of a war with nuclear weapons. In the preface, the reader learns that Martians find a journal (a written record) more than 1500 years after the "Great Fire on Earth" (xlix). Death, mass destruction, and the annihilation of mankind are depicted in the novel; yet there is also an underlying theme of hope, seen through the main character, push-button officer X-127, who introduces the reader to the buttons that can and do destroy the world. The narrator, X-127, describes his life at a military base and his transfer to an underground shelter where he remains throughout the novel. X-127 soon finds out that he has been placed deep underground on Level 7 because his job is important, more important than that of the politicians, because his job is to push the buttons to destroy the other side if it comes to that. These buttons can be seen and pushed to cause destruction but there is also an unseen *button* that if "pushed [can] release the humanity which everyone perhaps has somewhere inside him" (157).

Level 7 is the deepest and therefore assumed to be the safest level of nuclear bomb shelters. Due to his position, X-127 and his three fellow push button officers have privileges that none of the others do. Throughout the story the reader is acutely aware of his feelings, emotions, and internal struggles, and can see how he develops from being nothing more than a programmed human, no more emotional than a robot, to a fully

functional human with regrets, emotions, and compassion, though the insight comes too late.

According to R.E. Foust, a "[d]ystopia…is a usurpation of humanity by technology, a warning about the future, and, thus, a form of moral prophecy" (81). Novels such as *Level 7* can be considered dystopian glimpses of a possible social future, a warning, and a "moral prophecy" that predicts one possible outcome. Roshwald's dystopia, however, also attempts to express or teach a conception of the right values that might prevent the possible outcome. Science fiction has the ability to show the reader what is, what has been, and what could possibly be. As Neil Gerlach and Sheryl N. Hamilton have suggested, "the opportunity [in sf] lies in the potential for developing powerful critical tools to analyze social reality" (170). In science fiction from the cold war period, a reader is confronted with the social issues of the time and can access the fears of massive retaliation that were a part of everyday life.

A professor of philosophy at the University of Minnesota at the time the novel was written, Mordecai Roshwald states that his "immediate conscious reason for writing [*Level 7* was] concern about the international scene" (xxix). During the Cold War, mutually assured destruction was a policy of the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Both superpowers acquired arsenals to assure the utter "destruction" of any enemy who attacked. Roshwald states that he "decided to write a book that would frighten people into sanity. I thought a novel would reach a much wider readership than an academic and scholarly essay" (xxx). Roshwald suggests that in the first two World Wars, humans were ultimately responsible for the death and destruction of others, and that the wars depended largely on modern weaponry. The problem during the Cold War was the

creation of weapons with the potential to destroy the human race. The ultimate fate of the world rested on machines, not humans. In Roshwald's view, a nuclear catastrophe would be

> the consequence of the spontaneous "action" of the weapons systems themselves. A mistake made by radar, by computer, by electronic controls of missiles, could lead to a nuclear exchange. Even if man retained the ultimate control over the weapons, the ease of dispatching them had become so great that the man in control could hardly be seen as actually in command. Can one regard a push-button officer [as] a war criminal in the same way a cruel general is viewed as such? The machine designed to make defense, and offense, easy was successful to such an extent that the designers of the machine became obsolete and, along with the rest of mankind, they were the potential victims of their own ingenuity. Dangers of this kind, robots turning against mankind, had been foreseen by various science fiction writers before, but they had to be highlighted in the context of the nuclear confrontation, as they descended from the sphere of theoretical speculation into the domain of an actual situation. (xxxi-xxxii)

Looking back, Roshwald admits that *Level 7* did not prevent nuclear escalation or stop the production of weapons or their testing. The novel did not bring about world peace; yet Roshwald states that "perhaps this tale, with others of its kind, has had an impact on a growing number of people who became fiercely opposed to the novel system of warfare. Perhaps such stories contributed to the creation of a consensus that nuclear

weapons constitute an unacceptable danger to humanity" (xli). In this way, Roshwald hopes for the future of mankind.

The narrator of Roshwald's story is introduced through his journal as he writes. He is a number -- we are never told his given name or surname, only told that he began his journey down to the seventh level of the fallout shelter in his room at the "PB (Push-Button) training Camp" (Roshwald 2). He is summoned to his commander's office and we glimpse his dehumanized personality through his recollections of this encounter. He is haughty, and pointedly makes remarks about his commanding officer's demeanor and speech. Once the narrator is told that he will be leaving immediately for underground training, he finds himself feeling comfortable in the back of a car being driven by a soldier. It occurs to him that "this is the way a major should feel […] reclining on the soft seat [he] felt like Napoleon after Austerlitz" (5). Later we find that the narrator is Push Button Officer X-127. We are not given a physical description of him or of his fellow Push Button Officers, except that one wears a uniform similar to his, is "about the same age and build," and resembles him (10). X-127's roommate, X-107, is described as having "an open and rather kind face, suggesting a man of quiet disposition, well-balanced and firm" (24). X-127 looks at his roommate with warmth. He views him as an "older brother" figure and begins to form an attachment to him.

A disembodied voice over a loud speaker informs X-127 that to the world above he is invisible and there may be a day when he has to push a button to destroy the world. Until that day, he "will have to serve his country and humanity on Level 7" (Roshwald 13). These words consume X-127 and he focuses his thoughts on starting the war and getting it over with so he can get out of the dungeon. Yet he soon realizes that

even if they start the war and his side wins, there will be no going back to the surface (15). He will never be able to see sunshine and interact with people again (perhaps forgetting that there are others in the dungeon with whom he can interact with. At this point X-127 realizes that he cannot read, as there are no books, but can write, though not to anyone in particular. He retrieves the writing materials he finds in a drawer, which he finds "a good psychological move on someone's part" (16), and begins a diary of his thoughts and feelings on Level 7. Though he recognizes that writing is a "good psychological move," he fails to fully understand its meaning. He is comforted by his thought that "one day […] my diary might be discovered and published on the surface of the earth, up there in the sunshine. Part of me, my spirit, might one day see daylight, might be warned by the sun!" (16). He equates his diary with his spirit. The journal becomes part of him and anyone who may read the journal will connect with him and be able, while reading it, to understand and sympathize with his plight. Though at points throughout his diary entries, he verges on making this connection, it does not fully sink in until after he has destroyed the world by pushing the button that launches a nuclear attack.

In the dystopian world presented in *Level 7*, whose inhabitants are given enough for survival but no more, one seemingly extraneous pleasure is music. By allowing this luxury, the creators of Level 7 unwittingly introduce a thread of humanity into the life of the shelter. X-127 only turns to music out of boredom, without realizing that the music will further his connection to humanity. Listening to the recorded tapes, he feels himself slip into a "state of utter tranquility" (Roshwald 41). The music connects him to something outside his "cave-like" dwelling. Yet when after some time the tape he has

been listening to begins again, he understands the implications of his imprisonment: "the seemingly unending stream of music [had] held the last surviving suggestion of boundless, of infinity" (42).

When X-127 becomes aware that the tape is repeating, he realizes that if the world is destroyed, there will be no one left to make more music; with the end of the creators of music, humanity ends. The strings that were once plucked will have been broken. There is never again to be a bond that speaks from an artist's soul to the souls of other people. Through reading, hearing, and seeing the creativity of another human, Roshwald suggests that a person is able to feel the connection that allows a reader to be moved by a piece of literature, and repelled by mass destruction and war.

X-127 is told through the loud speaker that he has been chosen for this mission because he "must have proved to be a man of stable disposition, technically skillful, ambitious, intelligent and very healthy. Also you must have got a very high score in claustrophobia tests" (Roshwald 22). These qualities describe a shell of a person. He has been chosen for his lack of emotion, his insensitivity, and his inability to make personal connections to others. This position, for which he has been given a higher pay rate and higher status, requires a person able to perform the duty of destroying mankind. He may do so without fear and have no moment's hesitation because he does not love someone still on the surface. X-127 recalls that during his interview, when asked about family and friends and how he felt about them, he had replied that he "had no strong family ties and no intimate friendships" (54). He realizes that he, and the others who now inhabit Level 7, have been chosen because they all have the same inability to connect with others. As he spends more time on Level 7, he begins to feel as if his "soul

were deformed, or part of it has been amputated" and equates this with being a monster (which he does not want to be) because "a man without emotions is a monster" (56).

To be of use in his position, X-127, as well as the others surrounding him, must be stripped of any identity, including his name. All on Level 7 are given names consisting of letters and numbers that correspond with their jobs. This makes them no longer people, but an extension of their jobs. Roshwald suggests that his novel has a political objective, to be

> strictly neutral and focus on the danger of a nuclear catastrophe, irrespective of the political creed or social philosophy of the potential combatants. The danger pointed at was the weapons, not the ideologies. Therefore, the characters of the story had to be designated by numerical identities, and not referred to as John or Ivan. The fringe benefit of naming individuals in such a manner was that it also conveyed the sense of the depersonalized characters; men and women became mere numbers. (xxxv-xxxvi)

Before his descent to the seventh level, X-127 thinks he is better than everyone around him, including his commander. Yet X-127 begins to doubt his purpose on Level 7, becoming a danger to the program that has trained him to push the buttons that will release a nuclear attack. He is taken to the psychology department and given "drugs and some electric shock treatment to clean out [his] mind" (Roshwald 117). X-127 must have no doubts because doubts make his job of destroying the world more difficult. X-127 explains that the treatment has been good because "I do not suffer now. Nor do I

enjoy my awareness of things" (117). The psychologists have removed the feelings that X-127 was beginning to have.

After being sufficiently desensitized through treatments, X-127 performs his purpose in life by pushing the button that destroys humanity. Although the idea was that the two super powers would not launch any nuclear weapons because mutually assured destruction would prevent retaliation, a malfunction occurs. Rather than empowering humans, who have faults due to emotions, the two great powers allow machines to control the programming that detects incoming attacks. Because a machine has no emotional ties to anyone, it is assumed that it would not hesitate in retaliation and in addition would not make a mistake. In his introduction to *Level 7,* David Seed quotes Roshwald's thinking in his portrayal of the push-button officers. "I chose X-127 to tell the story, or to write the diary because I wanted to tell it from the inside. I also intended to create a desensitized, dehumanized individual who complements the apparatus of an automated weapons system" (Seed xiv). It is assumed that because the push button officers have been sufficiently desensitized to resemble machines, they will not hesitate to retaliate. Unfortunately, those that do become aware of their humanity awaken when it is already too late. After he destroys the world, X-127 begins another slow process of growing awareness: "I think a good deal about humanity—the humanity that disappeared during those few hours of button-pushing" (Roshwald 158). By making the distinction between the facts that he thinks about "humanity" and that, "the humanity [has] disappeared," it suggests that X-127 is aware that there is a difference between the billions who have died and a different "humanity that disappeared." Humanity means

more than just living and there must be something more that connects humanity together.

Fear of what is lost is seen in *Level 7* after the button is pushed, when the neutral states begin to chastise the two great powers that have brought about destruction. To them, the important things destroyed are the "[l]ibraries and museums, works of art, institutes of learning" (Roshwald 136). Now all that remains is a "bare minimal existence" (136). The neutrals equate living a full life as essentially impossible without the arts. X-127 also begins to see art as the essence of humanity. After the devastation, a line of communication is opened. (Roshwald purposely keeps from naming who the "two great powers" are, creating a scenario where it could be read as any country with great power). After much bickering, it is discovered that the launching of the 12 missiles by the enemy was a 'technical' malfunction.

X-127 and his wife P-867 visit his fellow officer, X-117, after the destruction. He is the colleague who refused to push the button and was taken to the medical unit. Seeing no reason to continue treating him, as the job he was there to do has been performed, they release him and allow him to go back to his room. Upon their arrival, they find X-117 deep in despair and guilt. He insists he is responsible for "killing hundreds of millions of people … [and] is the greatest hangman in history" (Roshwald 138). While trying to talk him out of his agitated state, P-867 tells him that X-127 obeyed the same orders he had refused. X-127 informs X-117 that he "feel[s] better now than [he] did before. Not that [he] enjoyed pushing those buttons particularly but doing it made [him] feel rather important" (139). Suddenly, X-117 turns on X-127 and tells him he has no right to talk about how he feels after he killed millions of people and

tells him he is a "monster" (139). X-127 realizes that this is true. He is without emotions and feelings, and below the realm of human. As P-867 and X-127 prepare to leave X-117 and his ranting behind, he screams at P-867, a psychologist, "You managed to cure me of my conscience so that I'd be able to kill humanity. And you did the same to your husband" (139).

X-117 commits suicide by hanging himself from a pipe across the top of the Operations Room doorway. The remaining three pushbutton officers are instructed not to mention the suicide. This affects X-127 greatly: "It is odd that I should feel sorrier for X-117 than for those thousands of millions killed in the war. I believe that if I had been told to push a button which would execute X-117, I could not have done it. Though without thinking twice about it I pushed the buttons which executed millions!" (Roshwald 141). By being forced into close quarters with his colleague, X-127, without realizing it, formed connections. He begins to realize that he has been disconnected from broader humanity, which allowed him to push the buttons that destroy the world.

The question then becomes how long the cave dwellers will have to remain underground. The neutral states ask both sides what was used in the bombs so they can determine how long it will be unsafe to go to the surface. Neither side will answer. As X-127 listens to the inhabitants of Level 2 (much closer to the poisoned surface) as they die, the question becomes one of intense interest to those on Level 7. What was used and how long it will take the radiation to die down? Although the question is posed to Level 5, which contains people who may know this information, they are not given an answer. Assuming that they are dealing with Uranium 238, the Level 7 survivors calculate a half-life of "410,000,000 years" (Roshwald 145).

A landscape painter and his wife decide to leave the shelter, though this will quickly kill them, and explore the now destroyed world in search of their daughter, who never reached the shelter. Throughout their broadcasts to those still inside the shelter, the dying couple compare themselves to Noah's doves. Yet when the doves do not return to the ship in Genesis, it is a sign of hope. These "doves" will signal the death of humanity when they stop sending back messages. As the couple explores the now empty world, they come across some evidence of what were once buildings and "[e]very now and then they see the remains of a steel frame sticking out of the ground, sometimes twisted into a strange shape." At one point, the artist finds a piece that he thinks is "beautiful and…would be quite in place in a museum of modern art. He thought an appropriate title would be 'The Martyred Steel'" (Roshwald 150-151). Even in destruction, art lives on; in this suggestion, the awakening of X-127 becomes complete. He realizes the consequences of what he has done by pushing the buttons that have destroyed the beauty of the world and with it humanity. He writes that the "doves" have "pushed the hidden button in my soul. The lost, forgotten, decayed button" (156-157). Roshwald suggests that something in the soul needs to be "pushed" to form a connection to humanity; and for this narrator, music, art, and writing have served this purpose.

X-127 listens to the couple's broadcast and thinks that there is some truth in what they say. "The earth *has* become like the dead moon—except for the caves. But who knows? --- there may be caves like ours on the moon, with some crawling creatures living in them. Just another planet. The earth was always that, anyway. But not just that: for there were other things on earth" (Roshwald 154). In this brief contemplation by X-

127, we again can see a thread of hope in his statement that the moon might have caves like ours. Perhaps the moon was once a vital living planet like the earth. Soon after their journey to the surface begins, the "doves" quit broadcasting and are assumed to be dead. After their death, X-127 becomes aware of his feelings toward strangers:

> Is this compassion? Love? Sociability? Are other human beings able to arouse in me feelings like those? Was there a green spot hidden in my soul which they, the doves, have discovered? It is a warm feeling – warm towards them. But it has enough warmth for humanity in general, for any living thing. It even reflects back to keep me warm inside. Only now do I realise how *cold* I was inside. How dead. Now I can understand X-117. He must have had a lot of that warm feeling. It could not have been taken from him, even by psychotherapy. I do not have *that* much. But I have some, enough to keep me warm. And chilly too, in a curious way, when I think of that screen, or even of the buttons which blackened it. One needs that warmth in order to feel chilly. And it is better to feel warm and cold than not to feel at all. That is what the treatment they gave me was supposed to do: deprive me of what little feeling I might have possessed. (155)

The dove symbolism is a metaphor for love and peace. The artist and his wife are "doves" who bring peace to X-127. Here, Roshwald implies that if we allow life and love to spread, we can stop the destruction of the world and prevent an outcome such as that depicted in his novel.

The day after X-127 concludes that Love and Life are the answer; he retracts his statement and states that "death and destruction, hate and indifference" are spreading. Yet he speaks about the life and love that have been lost due to the pushing of the buttons. His ranting here indicates remorse. Roshwald's whispering is loudest at this point. He indicates that the hope for humanity lies within love and compassion, as will also be seen in my later discussion of the science fiction of Cordwainer Smith and James Tiptree Jr.

In his dying moments, X-127 has with him his journal, he has turned on the music, and he realizes that he is "the last man on earth, the sole surviving specimen of homo sapiens" (Roshwald 182). In switching the word "man" to the phrase "homo sapiens," Roshwald suggests that his project is a representation of a larger entity: the writing and the music are the better half of the self and it is in this that we find our humanity. The full realization of what he has done by destroying the earth with a touch of a button is complete when X-127 realizes that the music will still play after he is dead.

In *Level 7,* the reader can see that technology is severing the connection to the human essence, our creativity. Seeing things through the eyes of art, music, and writing, we appreciate the beauty that lies within each soul. This expression of others allows our button of humanity, the button of hope, to be pushed. Although the end of the novel is tragic, still there is hope. The hope for humanity lies within the realization that the connection to others through the arts is what binds people together. As Roshwald sees it, the arts might have prevented the destruction of the world.

HOPE, LOVE, AND COMPASSION:

SMITH'S "THE DEAD LADY OF CLOWN TOWN"

Cordwainer Smith's "The Dead Lady of Clown Town," gives us a world wherein everything seems perfect and nothing is needed.[3] In this dystopian novella, evidence of hope for humanity manifests itself through compassion for all living beings. Gary K. Wolfe states that, "Smith may be a great creator of romantic dreams, but he also consistently contrasts these dreams with harsh realities – the dehumanization of the Scanners, the drudgery of the sailing ship captains, the alienation of the pinlighters from the rest of humanity" ("Cordwainer Smith" 189). Smith's animal-derived underpeople in this novella, as well as the robots and the human character Elaine, also face harsh realities. The term "true man" is used to distinguish between underpeople, those born of genetically engineered embryos of animals, engineered to resemble "humans," whose sole purpose in this story is to obey true man. The underpeople can talk, feel, and love, but they are not given recognition, freedom, or medical care. As far as the Instrumentality of Mankind (the central government) is concerned, the underpeople are disposable slaves easier slaughtered and replaced when they need to be "repaired" rather than acknowledged as living beings worthy of the same treatment afforded to true men.

In addition to true men and underpeople, the novella's characters include Lady Panc Ashash, once a Lady in the Instrumentality, but now a computer. A true man (Elaine), an underperson (dog derived D'Joan), and a robot (Ashash), start a revolution

that lasts “six minutes” and is fought with love. Elaine’s encounter with Lady Panc Ashash, D’Joan, and The Hunter (a true man) brings human Elaine to her humanity, which makes this story hopeful. This story is not solely about acknowledging and recognizing the “humanness” in animals, but also about making Elaine herself, as well as the rest of the human population, into a real person. In his whispering, Smith shows that hope for mankind is hidden within every living being, and can only be successful if brought to light through love and compassion.

Elaine is in error programmed from conception to be a “lay therapist [witch]” (Smith 223) to be sent to Fomalhaut III. Because sickness and accidents have become virtually non-existent, Elaine has no purpose in life and is not needed. As such she wanders through the streets, lonely and dejected. Once Elaine enters a door “*with another world beyond* it” (230), she sets into motion a revolution that has been planned for hundreds of years. In the place “nicknamed ‘the edge of the world’” (228), Elaine there encounters underpeople, “animals in the shape of human beings, who did the heavy and the weary work which remained as the *caput mortuum* of a really perfected economy” (224). They are taught “to speak, to work, [and] to perform useful services” (231), but have no rights and are expected to work and not question the orders or actions of true men. “People never loved underpeople. They used them, like chairs or doorhandles” (244). Elaine, though she does not yet know it, is the hope that the underpeople have been waiting for. A trueman that will show the world that underpeople are capable of love and compassion, and not just tools to be used. Herein lies the hope for mankind on Fomalhaut III and throughout the universe.

In speaking of Cordwainer Smith and his underpeople, Chris Morgan states that "To him the cat-people, dog-people, snake-people, cow-people, and so on are oppressed groups, persecuted and without rights" (733). Smith often contrasts the underpeople with non-oppressed groups, showing how the oppressed groups are much more alive than the privileged. True men refer to underpeople as dirt and treat them as such. If they are sick, they are killed rather than sent to a hospital because it is "against the law for animals, even when they were underpeople, to go to a human hospital" (Smith 224). The true men are afraid that "the tender, loving care of a hospital might give them ideas. Such as the idea that they were people" (224). Several hundred underpeople that can no longer take the cruelty and punishment of the true men hide in the yellow and brown corridor they call Clown Town and are forced to live in poor conditions with only the friendship of a computer with the downloaded consciousness of the long dead Lady of the Instrumentality, Lady Panc Ashash. Ashash can see that true men now lack humanity. She gives the underpeople of Clown Town faith and hope in the future by fostering the belief that the world can change and they will be considered part of humanity. The underpeople have reached a place of hopelessness, and with the help of Ashash, Elaine will bring them the hope they long for. Smith's whispering here echoes the treatment of others in his reality.

Lady Panc Ashash is a staunch supporter of the underpeople, plans their revolution, and is their hope to bring humanity back to the world. A former ruler, Ashash is now a "machine," provided with a prosthetic body so that she can come out of her Travelers Aid booth: The body is an exact replica of her during the time she lived, down to the dated clothing. She thinks, has emotions, and feels compassion for

the underpeople, yet she is a robot; the copy of her personality appears to have kept her thoughts from when she was alive, so perhaps a better term would be cyborg. Her ability to feel things and at the same time deduce probabilities and make predictions about the world around her goes against the typical depiction of cyborgs as cold, calculating, and unfeeling, like the desensitized humans we see in *Level 7.* Yet appearances are not always what they seem.[4] Ashash's voice is not tinny, metallic, and robotic, but rather warm, "with a bubble of laughter […] with a hint of sympathy and enthusiasm in its tone" (Smith 232); she still speaks "with the authority and kindness of a great lady" (233). Her "touch [is] warm and very human" (236), and yet when Elaine looks at her as though she is a human, Ashash informs her that "[t]his is not me. It's a robot body. You looked at it as though it were a real person. And I'm not me, either. It hurts sometimes. Did you know a machine could hurt? I can. But—I'm not *me*" (235). This sentiment from Lady Panc Ashash places her more in the realm of human than Elaine herself. Ashash not only has the benefit of once having been alive, most likely in a time when dystopia was not so well-established, but also of having hundreds of years to reflect on the fading away of humanity throughout the worlds. Because she can accept her own faults, and those of the underpeople, she is able to express her emotions and feelings, which are things Elaine cannot do at this early point in the novella. It is only by Elaine recognizing her own limitations, that she will be able to bring hope to the underpeople and change the worlds around her.

Although the reader does not encounter the Lords and Ladies of the Instrumentality until late in the story, their role is instrumental (no pun intended) in the

revolution. All, with their faults, must play the part they are assigned for humanity to awaken.

> There is the Lord Femtiosex, who is just and without pity. There is the Lord Limaono, who thinks that underpeople are a potential danger and should not have been started in the first place. There is the Lady Goroke, who does not know how to pray, but who tries to ponder the mystery of life and who has shown kindness to underpeople, as long as the kindnesses were lawful ones. And there is the Lady Arabella Underwood, whose justice no man can understand. Nor underpeople either. (Smith 245)

Without Lord Femtiosex's rage against the world, Lord Limaono's certainty that underpeople should not be allowed to be*,* Lady Arabella Underwood's unconventional judgments of the other Lords and Ladies, and Lady Goroke's awakening compassion, the revolution could not have succeeded. Without the existence of true opposition to change, change cannot happen. Smith's positioning of the Lords and Ladies as tyrannical and opposed to change, helps the message of compassion reach the inhabitants of Fomalhaut III see underpeople as part of humanity. It is in this whispering that hope for humanity manifests itself the loudest.

Elaine's role is large, as she is needed to change the little girl-dog D'joan into the young woman Joan so that Joan can make them aware that underpeople are *people*. In the beginning of the story we are informed that Elaine is human, yet we can see that this does not mean having compassion. The lives of the true men on Fomalhaut III are the same every day. Each person is allotted 400 years of life before being sent to a

"dying room" to terminate. Because everything necessary is provided for them, there is no need for any physical work. It is all done by the robots and underpeople.

This is similar to Vladimir Grigorev's short story "An Old Robot's Two Times Two" (1981), wherein humans invent robots to do all their work for them and eventually flee the planet, leaving it to the robots. The reason for their flight is boredom, fear of "atrophy," and the awareness that they have become dehumanized:

> We were freed from work—and the pleasures of the creative process disappeared, the very strongest of all pleasures. No sooner would a barely discernible human desire arise than it would be fulfilled. Our activity is gradually being reduced to nothing. A little longer and our brains will begin to atrophy. (290)

Within Smith's story, written almost 20 years earlier, we get a similar feeling about the inhabitants of Fomalhaut III.

> The street had filled full of real people, crowding together to see something which would ease the boredom of perfection and time. They all had numbers or number-codes instead of names. They were handsome, well, dully happy. They even looked a great deal alike, similar in their handsomeness, their health, and their underlying boredom. Each of them had a total of four hundred years to live. None of them knew real war, even though the extreme readiness of the soldiers showed vain practice of hundreds of years. The people were beautiful, but they felt themselves useless and they were quietly desperate without knowing it themselves. (Smith 274)

It seems that there can be no living when all is ordered and pre-destined. Like the humans who have abandoned Earth in Grigorev's short story, the inhabitants of Fomalhaut III are on a path of devolution and one has to wonder if the true men will learn from their mistakes or return to them, as the humans do in Grigorev's story.

Though life on Fomalhaut III is comfortable, there is no hope, creativity, love, or compassion evident until Elaine meets the Hunter and comes to see the underpeople as fellow beings. She was "born without being needed, without being wanted […] she went into life doomed and useless […], could never find work, [and] without work, she had no time for love; without work or love, she had no hope at all" (Smith 226). Elaine is treated much as an underperson is treated. She is ignored. "Women did not hate Elaine; they did not look at her. Men did not shun Elaine; they did not notice her either" (228). Throughout the early scenes, the streets appear to be virtually deserted except for Elaine, sweeper robots, an ornithopter, an underperson, and the true man that the underperson avoids. As Elaine approaches the door that will lead to her humanity, no one stops her. She is not addressed in any way though it is clear that she is lonely, feels she is without purpose, and believes that she is mad. Carol McGuirk in "The Rediscovery of Cordwainer Smith" notes that "Smith's plots force characters to rethink the very conditions of their existence" (161), and we see this as Elaine enters the door that leads to her destiny; she is "filled with fear, hope, expectation, and the surmisal of strange appetites, [as] she walked downward with quiet, unknown purpose (Smith 231).

When Elaine first enters the clearing at the bottom of the steps, she encounters what she soon realizes is a young underperson, dismisses her, and instead approaches the "Traveler's Aid" booth in front of her. A disembodied voice informs Elaine that she

is Lady Panc Ashash, is “a machine [who …] used to be a person” (Smith 232), and demands that Elaine come forward. Ashash then says, “You’re Elaine. Your number originally ended in 783 and you shouldn’t even be on this planet. All the important people here end with the number 5 and 6. You’re a lay therapist and you’re in the wrong place” (232). Elaine is informed that her lover is waiting for her and that the little girl she has just met is “*D’Joan herself*. The story has begun. ‘The world’s great age begins anew.’ And I can die when it is over” (232).

Elaine’s feelings of uselessness, madness, and loneliness are confirmed with this statement. She is not one of the “important” people and she does not belong here. It is not until Lady Panc Ashash puts on her “human body” and exits the booth that she sees her as human and scans her. Elaine is informed that Ashash is a machine, part of her destiny, and together they will “change the destiny of the worlds, perhaps even … bring mankind back to humanity” (Smith 235). Elaine is at first unwilling to believe what she hears, but eventually she comes to feel as if Ashash is a real person: “this thing, whatever it was, this thing seemed to know so much about her. Nobody else had ever cared” (235). Although Elaine starts to follow Ashash’s instructions, she still rebels at the thought of a “lover” because she has not yet been authorized for one and has not found her life’s work. She informs Ashash that she “may not be much of a person, but [… has] some self-respect” (234). Elaine exhibits no emotions and no feelings for those around her, yet we can see that she longs for some form of kindness, much like the underpeople and robot population. In this sense, it is as if the roles have been reversed and the human inhabitants, the “true men,” are much more robot and animal-like than the robots, animals, or a witch like Elaine. To become what she is destined to be, Elaine

must learn "love for [her]self. Love for life. Love for all things living" (244). Otherwise, there is no hope.

As Elaine enters (or rather is pushed into) the door to the hideout of the underpeople, what they call "Clown Town," she encounters underpeople and "trained witch, born witch that she was, she perceive[s] the truth immediately. All these people, all that she could see, at least, [are] sick. They need[…] help. They need[…] herself" (Smith 237). Although Elaine has wandered through her life looking for her purpose and people that need her, she is, at first, unwilling to help the underpeople even when they ask, because "they [are] just animals […] Dirt (237). Gary K. Wolfe states that "Even in the stories in which such characters [underpeople] are sympathetically portrayed, the point is made that others regard them as monsters, as frightening challenges to the concept of what it is to be human" (*Known* 185). Although the underpeople are meant to contrast human with non-human, Smith stories seek to prove that the non-human characters often have emotions and feelings that the ironically named true men lack. Without a purpose, Elaine is not truly human and living. At this point, Elaine is still not aware of the underpeople as people and she is surprised when for the first time in her life, the renegade underpeople talk to her.

In *The Animal That Therefore I Am,* Jacques Derrida discusses the dilemma of animals and the way that philosophers misunderstand them. He suggests, "[t]he experience of the seeing animal, of the animal that looks at them, has not been taken into account in the philosophical or theoretical architecture of their discourse. In sum they have denied it as much as misunderstood it" (383). Like the philosophers Derrida speaks of, Elaine is aware that the underpeople are looking at her, but she

misunderstands or denies what it means. Elaine is asked by an underperson if she is "Death," because the underpeople are used to humans and robots entering their cavern to kill them, she responds by saying "Of course not […] I'm just a person. A witch woman, ordinary people would call me. We don't have anything to do with you underpeople. Nothing at all" (Smith 238). Elaine considers the underpeople beneath her attention because they are just animals made to do the bidding of true men. She is confronted by Charley-is-my-darling, a goat-man, and he threatens to twist her head off, fearing she is indeed the "death" they have been expecting. Elaine understands the position she is in, being the only true man in the corridor, and does not want her life terminated in "a sewer with things which did not even have a right to exist" (242). Elaine feels that if she tries to "pretend that he [Charley-is-my-darling] [is] in fact a man" (239) she will be able to reason with him on her level. Elaine does not realize, at this point, that Charley-is-my-darling has the capacity to feel and think, things that place him above her and in the realm of human, a state that she has not yet reached.

Once Elaine tells Charley-is-my-darling her name, the atmosphere in the brown and yellow corridor changes: "we are your people. We will do whatever you say" (Smith 240). Elaine meets the little dog-girl D'joan again and is told by the underpeople that the Lady Panc Ashash has been telling the underpeople for hundreds of years that "somebody would come from Earth, a real person with an animal name, not a number" (240), who would "do something to D'joan and bring [them] all help and deliverance—give [them] life, in short, *real life*" (242). With this statement, it is evident that hope is prophetic: Smith uses this statement to show that things can change in the future. Although the underpeople in the corridor begin to praise Elaine as their destiny after

they learn who she is, one underperson does not join in the celebration. The bison woman, Crawlie, looks at Elaine with a

> quick stare of blazing hatred and her pretty face locked itself into a glare of concentrated hostility and scorn; then her eyes wandered and Elaine felt that she, Elaine, no longer existed in the thing's mind, except as a rebuke which had been administered and forgotten. (241)

Crawlie is there as a reminder to the underpeople that this is how true men treat underpeople and they should not forget it. Crawlie is unwilling to accept the hope being offered to her by D'joan, Elaine, and Ashash; she later stabs Joan but is then herself killed.

Elaine is once again pushed through a door, this time with D'joan, and "new worlds began" (Smith 246). The Hunter tells Elaine they will make love, but when she protests because D'joan is present, he leads both Elaine and D'joan to a circular design on the wall. D'joan stares at the design and can no longer see or hear the Hunter or Elaine. After she makes love and telepathically links with the Hunter, Elaine becomes fully aware of her humanness and "considers the underpeople human as well," says Karen Hellekson, and "[s]he no longer thinks of them as things to be used, but as her equals" (Hellekson 127-8). While linked, Elaine, for the first time, has her mind explored, feels her "personality and D'joan's mingling" and realizes that "this [is] not communication. It [is] being" (Smith 252). She learns how animals suffer at the hands of humans, and now knows that they can see, speak, and suffer. Herein lays the hope for humanity. It is only with the recognition of the Other as capable of feeling the same emotions, feelings, and suffering, that true change and progress can happen. Smith's

whispering, in this instance, echoes what his own reality believes about the other, and his hope for the progress that will bring about the change in thinking that will enable humanity to regard each other as "human" and not as Other.

The telepathic linking has also affected D'Joan, who is imprinted with the experiences of many underpeople before her, as well as Elaine, the Hunter, and the Lady Panc Ashash. She is no longer D'joan but has become *Joan.* She now understands what she is supposed to do and is ready to walk into her destiny. The message that both Joan and Elaine have learned is love, which helps them to understand that "*[p]eople and underpeople meet on the terms of love"* (Smith 254), and that "people did not create [underpeople]. Whatever made people, made [them] too" (266). Hellekson says that this message "proves that ultimate self-sacrifice and love can lift an underperson, and even a True Man, to the status of human (Hellekson 127). Through love, Elaine has learned compassion for underpeople and when she reenters the halls of Clown Town, she allows Joan "no longer an undergirl" to lead her, and "Elaine, human or not, followed" (Smith 255). She no longer views the underpeople as dirty; she now sees them as in need of her help and scans them with her preprogrammed checklist, because "[w]ith love, the underpeople exist as humans instead of animals hiding in a place of safety" (Hellekson 128).

Derrida, in speaking of different states, writes that "Being *after,* being *alongside,* being *near [pres]* would appear as different modes of being, indeed of *being-with"* (379). Derrida breaks the idea of *being* into three categories and makes the distinction that they are different modes of being. Yet, it seems that after, alongside*,* and near the animal are not the same as *being-with.* Being-with enables people to truly stand

by and be one with another and to understand another, whether animal, human, or robot. Joan, after her transformation, informs the underpeople (now dear people) that she brings them life-with:

> I bring you something much bigger than love. If you're alive, you're alive. If you're alive-with, then you know the other life is there too—both of you, any of you, all of you. Don't do anything. Don't grab, don't clench, don't possess. Just *be.* That's the weapon. There's not a flame or a gun or a poison that can stop it. (Smith 256-7)

Joan's message of *alive-with* is similar to Derrida's *being-with,* in that Joan's statement is that the underpeople have always been fully alive with the rest of humanity and are a part of it rather than being on the outside as they were when they were *alongside, near,* and *after* trueman. Though Joan's message of love touches all the underpeople in the corridor, Crawlie still hostile and skeptical, challenges Joan, and demands to know what the weapon is.

> Don't give us words. We've had words and death ever since the world of underpeople began. That's what *people* give us—good words, fine principles, and cold murder, year after year, generation after generation. Don't tell me I'm a person—I'm not. I'm a bison and I know it. An animal fixed up to look like a person. Give me something to kill with. Let me die fighting. (Smith 256)

Joan Berger in "Why We Look At Animals" states that an animal "can be tamed so that it supplies and works for the peasant. But always its lack of common language, its silence, guarantees its distance, its distinctness, its exclusion, from and of man" (6).

Smith has given the underpeople language and yet they are still considered separate, distinct, and excluded from man. In this, Crawlie is right not to accept the words that Joan gives as a weapon. She understands that underpeople have a common language with man and yet are not considered people. Crawlie, like the true men, misunderstands the power of love. Joan tells the underpeople that "Love is not something special, reserved for men alone. 'Love is not proud. Love has no real name. Love is for life itself, and we have life. 'We cannot win by fighting. People outnumber us, outgun us, outrun us, outfight us" (Smith 266).[5] In the end, Crawlie is killed by a snake-woman after wounding D'joan and is left in the corridor as Joan, Elaine, Ashash, and the rest of the underpeople start toward their destiny.

Armed with their new weapon, the underpeople, who are alive-with*,* march to their destiny, to bring humanity back to mankind. Joan's message of love to the "true men" opens their eyes and makes them aware of the underpeople's humanity, and by contrast, their own lack of humanity. In the six minutes that the revolution lasts, the underpeople profess love to the human crowd by hugging, chanting, and terrifying them, in the case of the snake-woman, who in her eagerness to love*,* makes a man faint and drapes "him over her arm like an empty overcoat," before moving on and looking for "somebody else to love" (Smith 269). Speaking of the underpeople and their humanity, Hellekson suggests that "Smith, by patterning his underpeople after the imperfect creatures humans used to be, mourns the loss of humanity's former, imperfect vigor and simultaneously indicates that in imperfection lies the driving force of humanity. Trumen are decadent: underpeople are vital" (127). It is the sight of Joan

burning and the fact that the underpeople love, even those who will kill them, that brings a sense of sorrow and guilt to the on-lookers.

Before she dies, Lady Panc Ashash tells the robots they are "making a choice for kindness" and that their choice "makes [them] men" (Smith 270). The robots choose to self-destruct rather than kill more underpeople. Hellekson suggests that Joan's love "affords the robots human status, giving them the power of choice. Like the underpeople, as the robots die, they become human" (128). Even robots that possess artificial intelligence have the capacity of human feelings. With the rate of technology accelerating today, it is worthy of noting that there will soon be robots capable of thinking and feeling, and humanity will be faced with this exact scenario.

Derrida notes "[a]s with every bottomless gaze, as with the eyes of the other, the gaze called animal offers to [our] sight the abyssal limit of the human; the inhuman or the ahuman, the ends of man" (381). Derrida implies here that by seeing ourselves in the eyes of an animal we are confronted with our own flaws, failings, and lack of sympathy. As such, the soldiers and onlookers are, as Joan dies, confronted with the cruelty of what they have done, and weep because they are "bewildered by hurt and shocked by the prospect of more hurt to come" (Smith 279).

As Lady Goroke and Lady Arabella Underwood arrive in the clearing to stop the revolution, Lady Arabella Underwood, with her unconventional ways states that *They must have a trial"* (Smith 272). After being condemned, Joan is burned stating "If you light a fire today, my Lord, it will never be put out in the hearts of men" (282).[6] The Lords and Ladies of the Instrumentality ignore and dismiss these words. They fail to understand her true meaning. If they choose to burn her, the fire will awaken the long

dead love and compassion within the inhabitants of the planet and they will see, know, and understand the unjust cruelty visited upon not only Joan, but on all underpeople.

Joan must die to bring love back to people and bring the people back to their humanity. This echoes Elaine's early thought when she first encounters the underpeople: that they are "so much like people, but so inexpert about it, as though [they] all had to 'die' before [they] really learned what it is to be alive" (Smith 241). Elaine, metaphorically, has to die and be reborn to learn what it is to be alive, and like Joan and Elaine, all those present at the trial and burning learn what it means to be alive from the horrors of Joan's death. Joan's death has brought the underpeople and the truemen "life with," and as such has changed the worlds. Smith's text shows us that through love and compassion, we become aware of our cruelty and as such, a small change can make a big difference in the world. Though in the end Joan dies, her suffering was necessary to awaken the long dead compassion in the humans, so that they may, too, learn to live "with" and not just "near."

HEAR OR NOT HEAR: THE WHISPERING IN "THE GIRL WHO WAS PLUGGED IN" BY JAMES TIPTREE JR.

James Tiptree, Jr.'s "The Girl Who Was Plugged In" is a novella about technology, advertising, and change. By change, I mean not only physical change but a change of thinking as well. James Tiptree Jr. was actually a she. Dr. Alice Bradley Sheldon wrote under the pen names of James Tiptree Jr. and Racoona Sheldon. She won two Hugo Awards, two Nebula Awards, and others including the Locus award.[7] Michael Swanwick's introduction to Sheldon's biography gives insight into Sheldon's world:

> A stream ran through the living room of the house in McLean, Virginia, and there were pet tarantulas as well and a tank of Siamese fighting fish atop the toilet. But strangest of all were the three writing desks, each with its own distinct typewriter, stationery, and color of ink. One belonged to James Tiptree Jr. A second was used exclusively by Raccoona Sheldon. The third was for Alice Sheldon, a sometime scientist, artist, newspaper critic, soldier, businesswoman, and retired CIA officer, who on occasion moved to one of the other desks to write science fiction in the persona of Tiptree or Raccoona. (viii)

Sheldon's fiction will, as Swanwick states, "endure," and may bring about a change in thinking. I view this as the author's "whispering." By "whispering," I mean to imply that through literature, (most notably in science fiction literature) an author has an

underlying intent to bring awareness to society as a whole about a particular subject and by doing so, bring about a change. Tiptree's works all have an underlying message that invites feminist, post-colonial, or psychological interpretations. Her work is dark, depressing, and ironic. Though there appears to be no hope that emerges throughout the novella, I contend that there is hope hidden in a dark box. I will here focus on a counterpoint whispered by Tiptree in "The Girl Who was Plugged In": that the change necessary to save humanity lies in recognizing that female is forced by society to be something she is not.

Sheldon's Mystery - She Becoming He

As a child, Alice Sheldon lived in Africa with her parents and experienced feelings of displacement in her own life; giving her an understanding of being the Other. During the time she, through James Tiptree, Jr., wrote stories, the sf genre was mostly male dominated.

Lewis Call suggests that "[b]y the time Tiptree's identity was revealed in the late 1970s, the name Tiptree had indeed come to characterize a discourse that dealt with topics that were certainly not coded as feminine, according to the cultural standards of the time […] Sheldon ended up using Tiptree to say things that, within the cultural and epistemological system that surrounded her, women were not authorized to say …. Before she could speak about these crucial topics, then, Alice Sheldon had to become James Tiptree" (59-60). Although this argument is true, there is more to it for Sheldon. Julie Phillips suggests that

> Alli's [Alice Sheldon] performance speaks, in a way no other writer's life has, to the ongoing problem of writing as a woman. Which is not to

> say that Alli wrote only about or for women. She wanted to lose her gender partly because, like Woolf, she didn't want to write for half the world. (7)[8]

As Tiptree, Sheldon appeals to, and is marketable to, both male and female readers. Heather J. Hicks contends that P. Burke in "The Girl Who Was Plugged In" is parallel to Sheldon herself, a woman who had to become someone other than who she was in order to fit into the sf genre. As Hicks notes, "Sheldon herself can achieve authorial success within the American Marketplace only in a body that is inscribed as male, while her own female body is coded in the most appalling imagery possible" (73). While this is a valid argument, I would say that with this story, Tiptree is calling attention to how females become what is acceptable to society - physically, behaviorally, and intellectually in order to show hope for the future.

In "The Girl Who Was Plugged In, the main character, P. Burke, is Other and as such, is forced into drastic measures in an attempt to make connections with others around her, to not only be seen but also heard in a world where she is given no agency and no hope. In this way, Tiptree uses the characters of P. Burke and the remote robot Delphi to hold a mirror up to the readers and ask them to reflect not only on events in the story but in the reader's reality. She presents the readers with hidden hope by calling for awareness and encouraging action to change the way women are viewed and heard in society.

The consensus about Tiptree's work is that it highlights the isolation the world has imposed upon women in society. Speaking of the themes in Tiptree's works, Lillian M. Heldreth suggests that

> A survey of twenty seven of them [Tiptree's short stories] reveals scenes of physical violence or death in twelve, and a direct association of sex with death or violence (or both) occurs in eleven; six of them depict death as ultimately triumphant over the best human efforts. Of the twenty-seven stories, only seven are not in some way concerned with violence or death. Another theme that pervades all of Tiptree's work, but is a major plot element in only five or six of them, [is] feminism. (98)

For Heldreth, Tiptree's message is that "[t]he world is intolerable for women" (Heldreth 23). If this is the case, we can assume that Tiptree, in the majority of her stories, calls attention to seeing women as part of humanity rather than "others." By focusing on extreme scenarios, Tiptree shows one way the world can be. Bill Clemente notes that "Alice Sheldon's women suffer greatly and in many ways, for the suppression takes on numerous forms; by far the most violence occurs, however, in narratives that emphasize feminist concerns" (30). Yet Tiptree's violence, in the narratives that emphasize feminist concerns, calls attention to issues. Tiptree illuminates feminist concerns by creating these scenarios for what was then mostly a male readership, likely hoping that the extreme cases she posits for her characters will speak to the male readership. Speaking of Tiptree's work as a whole, Veronica Hollinger notes that "the very fact that such a body of work has been created as a response to the contemporary 'human condition' demonstrates the necessity for social change" (128). This is brought to the forefront in all of Tiptree's works. Reader's reactions to the horrific situations that her characters are placed in encourage hope for the change that Tiptree calls for.

Who Is The Girl Who Was Plugged In?

"The Girl Who Was Plugged In" introduces Philadelphia Burke (P. Burke), a "rotten girl" who is among "the ugly of the world," with a "jumbled torso [and …] mismatched legs" (Tiptree 43, 44). A "sharp faced" narrator, who carries on a conversation with an unknown male character, introduces P. Burke to the readers (78). In the opening section P. Burke is only introduced as a side note, a way to portray another aspect of a future city and the options available for advertising. Burke attempts suicide soon after the story opens, choosing to die in the middle of the city that has ignored her. Her "few furtive hand-mouth gestures […] don't even interest her bench mates" (44). Global Transmissions Corporation (GTX) rescues Burke and offers her a chance to "live" by bringing to life a "remote," (an empty doll shell) named Delphi, by manipulating the controls with her mind. By agreeing to become a commodity of GTX, Burke, through remote mind control, animates the Delphi Doll and, for the first time in her life, interacts with the people on the hologram television screens she has idolized. Throughout the transformation of P. Burke into Delphi and through the remote control (wireless) connection, the reader is forced to see Delphi and P. Burke both as separate and combined entities.

P. Burke, a seventeen-year-old victim of society, has been educated at the city college. When asked by a representative of GTX Corporation before her transformation, what she studied she responds "La----languages" (Tiptree 46). He asks her to say something and Tiptree chooses to end this part of the conversations with "Unintelligible rasp" (46) rather than words. This seemingly simple statement begins P. Burke's silencing throughout the novella, and it is worth questioning whether her response is

really “unintelligible” or if the representative chooses not to hear her, in English or otherwise. Although P. Burke is not heard, she is often spoken to or about. Both the original GTX representative that approaches her in the hospital and Mr. Cantle, the top man, rely on reading her body language and the look in her eye, a similar concept to that of Derrida and the gaze of the Other that we see in Smith’s novella. This is a story of hope, longing, love, and technology, disguised in a grisly plot.

Throughout the novella, Tiptree makes various literary allusions that reinforce P. Burke’s situation. Melissa Colleen Stevenson suggests that

> Once the reader does become involved in P. Burke’s story, he or she is accused […] of attempting to force the narrative into the shape of familiar myths and fairytales […] a retelling of Pygmalion, Cinderella, or “The Ugly Duckling,” and finally expecting it to be a tale of love conquering all. (96-97)

Stevenson suggests that Tiptree uses these devices ironically. Yet below the surface of these literary references, is another level of meaning. Tiptree uses references to myths, short stories, and novels that all, in one way or another, refer to pain, isolation, love lost, death, and transformation. In this way, Tiptree embeds her fiction with echoes of earlier myths and fictions.

These allusions to myths in Tiptree reveal a hope for change. This is evident with the naming of Delphi, which calls to mind an image of the City of Delphi, in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses,* where mortal men seek advice and help “heal them in the misery and the ills of their great city” (385). The hope found in the name Delphi can be looked at in two ways. Burke sees Delphi is expressed in the way Delphi heals Burke’s

misery. The temple of the god Apollo, who is the "revealer of present, past and future" (Ovid 19), is located in the City of Delphi. Tiptree likewise gives the reader clues about the past, present, and future. In other words, by positing a worst-case scenario, Tiptree gives the reader a glimpse of a possible future wherein a person must change the outward appearance to be deemed acceptable by society. The very nature of Tiptree writing a story such as this shows she has hope that this type of situation can change and/or be prevented.

The various myths that Tiptree sprinkles throughout the novella highlight the metamorphoses of women into something they are not to escape a situation they find frightening, including a reference on the first page about "mortals who love a god and end up as a tree or a sighing sound" (43). These references to other myths are intentionally placed by Tiptree. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* bodies change. Many of the tales depict acts of cruelty by those in power: rape, revenge, lust, greed, betrayal, the only escape is to become a tree, bird, insect, or flower. P. Burke is likewise subjected to acts of cruelty by those who have more power than she does, which pushes her to the choice she ultimately makes, one of transformation and isolation.

Yet below the surface of the imagery Tiptree presents, she alludes to several snippets of myths throughout the novella that highlight the strength of women such as Aphrodite with her "magic girdle" and the "winged sandals" of Hermes which allow him to travel between the mortal and immortal world to be a messenger of the gods (Tiptree 56). The strength of Aphrodite is evident in the way Delphi fights for and wins (though a small battle) the ability to not only wear the products she advertises but also to give input to GTX about the flaws of the products. Delphi's love for others and her

beauty help to win the hearts of millions of viewers, and of course, Paul Isham, whom readers would like to believe, advocates for change in his newfound home, the boardroom, at the end of the novella. Tiptree's reference to Hermes is a reference to the "messenger," like the messenger imagery we are given with the name Delphi. This implies that there is a message here to be heard by any reader who is willing to look below the surface to the subtext: Tiptree calls for a change in thinking that will allow women in the future to be included and seen as part of the human race and not just half the population.

In addition to the mythic allusions, Tiptree refers to "the bushy man—Dr. Tesla," who is responsible for entering Delphi into the Central Dossier and scheduling the events to put Delphi "on the scene" (49). This is an allusion to Nikola Tesla, who invented wireless communication and was involved with the early invention of robotics, remote controls, and computer science. The use of his name as the doctor who helps Delphi is a nod in his direction and yet, we are also given an obscure reference to light with Tesla's name. Delphi represents everything that is good and "light" about P. Burke. With Delphi, the reader sees the true beauty of Burke's *soul* (for lack of a better word) manifested outwardly in an avatar. In general, people are quick to overlook the good and light inside people who appear monstrous. Readers would not know, or be as in tune with, P. Burke as they are without knowing her through Delphi.

As Delphi enters the GTX Holocam enclave in Chile, Tiptree describes it as "a neat giant mushroom-farm," (61) and later refers to an executive of GTX speaking to "Level Seven" in Chile (62) about Delphi. As we have seen, the premise of Roshwald's *Level 7* involves the isolation of people in an underground nuclear fall-out bunker cut

off from the rest of the world. Like X-127, Burke is isolated underground and is physically cut off from the rest of the world. Instead of having a journal that connects her to the rest of humanity, she has Delphi, and in this way is connected to others.

The descriptions of Burke are given in increasingly derogatory terms by various characters (most notably the narrator and representatives from GTX), as we progress through Tiptree's novella. We find ourselves interrupted by a narrator who returns to her "pig body"; readers rush through the ugly descriptions of Burke to get back to Delphi and her glamorous life. We find ourselves hoping that Burke will be successful in her attempt to *become* Delphi so she can retain her happiness, and we fail to focus on the larger picture of P. Burke as a silenced woman in a box. What Tiptree does with these descriptions, on the surface, is exactly what Hicks suggests. Yet Tiptree also makes a statement that despite the outer appearance, there is still a viable human being inside that deserves a chance to live. We see evidence of Burke's personality, love, compassion, and hope manifested in Delphi. It is through the actions of Delphi that we are able to see how viable Burke is. Beyond that, by focusing on the ugly descriptions of Burke, the reader is led by Tiptree to conclude that what is important is that she is offered a chance to live through Delphi, who has an acceptable social appearance. Tiptree uses this to make a larger statement about how people automatically treat people with deformities as less than human and ignorant.

As Delphi grows and begins to gain an identity of her own, P. Burke "can no longer clearly recall that she exists apart from Delphi" (Tiptree 68). She attempts to be Delphi. Stevenson writes, "[o]nly in her physically acceptable 'girl body' is [P. Burke] welcomed into the social network, allowed to develop relationships, and given the

opportunity to experience emotions other than pain and isolation" (95). Once she realizes that there are "places where her beastly P. Burke body *feels* things that Delphi's dainty flesh does not" (55), she understands that she is no longer isolated: "when embodied as Delphi," says Stevenson. "[She] is not aware of her own malformed and abused flesh and neither are the individuals with whom she comes into contact" (98). In this sense, GTX has turned the actual female into something hyper-real; a simulacrum perceived as more real than the original. P. Burke fails to understand in the early scenes that although the desensitized Delphi body prevents her from the pain she is used to, this lack will also prevent her from feeling the sensations associated with pleasure and love that could ultimately lead to the connection with others she longs for. Although Burke at first enjoys this lack of sensation, it later turns to mental anguish because she is still unable to connect to those around her, especially Paul, whom she has grown to love.

P. Burke can animate Delphi when she is not plugged in, and at times Delphi "all by herself smiles a bit or stirs in her 'sleep'" (Tiptree 60). As P. Burke leaves herself behind and Delphi becomes more self-aware, they meet Paul and although Burke is used to "young men looking at her with many peculiar expressions" (63), Paul "stares back" (63) and she finds his gaze "somber and knowing" (63). Not surprisingly, P. Burke falls in love with Paul and as her desire for Paul increases, Delphi cries even though "remotes aren't hooked up to flow tears" (67), "nuzzle[s]" Paul and "call[s] his name" (70) while she sleeps. P. Burke is ashamed and on a deep level knows that it is not she whom Paul loves, but the perfect Delphi-doll. When Paul believes that Delphi is being controlled by "PP implants" (70), P. Burke misunderstands and believes that he

knows she is a remote and "still loves" her (71). Because P. Burke knows Delphi is animated when she is not plugged in, she stops eating in the hopes that she "*will die and be born again in Delphi*" (72). Although her ability at controlling Delphi when not plugged in gets stronger, she still believes that in becoming Delphi she will be able to feel the sensations and love that Paul has awakened in her. Stevenson suggests that "as Delphi, P. Burke is prevented from feeling physically what she is finally given the opportunity to feel emotionally. In the end, both bodies represent a lack to her, and the splice between the two is not quite wholeness" (99).

When Burke realizes that Paul has not really understood that Delphi is a prosthetic device, a "waldo," she tries to explain, but he ignores her. Her voice does not register because, as Bill Clemente notes, Delphi fits "patriarchal society's definition of an attractive woman: mentally challenged, physically stunning, charmingly passive, and appealingly naïve" (32). Paul views Delphi as a bird-girl, an allusion to Hudson's novel *Green Mansions*, who needs to be rescued. He treats her as a child and cannot see that he has misunderstood the situation. Where GTX sees a woman they can "fix" by transforming her into Delphi, Paul sees in Delphi a victim to be saved. Both assume a patriarchal position of power over the feminine, believing that men know women better than women know themselves. P. Burke has learned to love and has made herself and Delphi human, much as D'joan does for Elaine but in the end, as Lillian Heldreth has noted, "[b]oth P. Burke and Delphi suffer and die as victims of a society that uses women as disposable objects, neither of them perceived as human beings by the manipulators who use them" (23).

Andy Clark suggests that we are making advancements in technology that allow people with hearing and sight impairments to catch up quickly to those who have never had these impairments. Though there is more to this topic, it seems to me that this analogy with impairments captures P. Burke's situation. Before she "transforms" into Delphi, P. Burke is unable to access the world she lives in, but once she is in the physically desirable body of Delphi, she rapidly catches up to those around her and is able to form her own opinions and have input as to how she wants to live (though still limited by the all invading GTX). Through Delphi, P. Burke grows and learns about the world around her. P. Burke is a part of the world, and she is able to have experiences that shape her outlook on life. Clark asserts that "various kinds of deep human-machine symbiosis really do expand and alter the shape of the psychological processes that make us who we are" (32), and P. Burke's life through Delphi has done this for her. Through her cyborg-like life in a "waldo cabinet, Burke is able to connect to things she has been cut off from. Although P. Burke dies in the end, this is a story that is hopeful in its call for change.

THE HOPE IN THE END

Each of the texts has an element of hope for humanity that manifests itself in different ways. Yet each of the authors show the reader how bad the world will be if something is not done to change the path it is on. Roshwald's text shows how closed off people can be from humanity, and how the simple act of opening up oneself to the arts can change a person's perspective. Though the insight comes too late in the novel, it represents Roshwald's hope. Though the world that Smith posits has not destroyed itself, it has closed itself off to "Others." "The Dead Lady of Clown Town" gives the reader insight into how humanity is detached from animals and sees them as something to be used and thrown away. Within Smith's novella, there too is an awakening. Even with James Tiptree Jr., who is ironic, fatalistic, and depressing, we can see that she indeed had hope that women, in the future, would be considered part of the human race, rather than half of the population, and valued as writers who have some form of social commentary on the world around them. With Tiptree's novella, the intent is hidden deep within the story itself, and yet it is still present, if you are willing to look for it.

In all three texts, this process of fulfilling a hope begins with connections: love and compassion grow from these.

NOTES

[1] In the first chapter of *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* Darko Suvin argues for "an understanding of SF as literature of estrangement" (9). He lays the foundation for the definition of Science Fiction by stating what science fiction is not and by defining each category to show why it is not SF; SF is not myth, folk tale, fairy tale, and fantasy. Pastoral literature, he states, is the closest to SF because "its imaginary framework of a world without money-economy, state apparatus, and depersonalizing urbanization allows it to isolate, as in a laboratory, two human motivations: erotic and power-hunger." He further states that when "pastoral escapes preciosity, its hope can fertilize the SF field as an antidote to pragmatism, commercialism, other-directedness, and technocracy (MOSF 9).

[2] This is from chapter two "The Significant Context of SF: A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation." In this chapter, a conversation takes place between three people (A, B, and C) about the place *Science Fiction Studies* will have. "Transcribed and edited on the occasion of the first appearance of *Science Fiction Studies,* 1973" (30).

[3] All references to "The Dead Lady of Clown Town" come from *The Rediscovery of Man: The Complete Short Science Fiction of Cordwainer Smith*. Ed. James A. Mann. Framingham, MA: NESFA, 1993. Print.

[4] It is typically depicted that robots are unable to express emotions, think, and feel because they are considered machines that should only be able to think logically. It is generally believed that robots are incapable of feeling, though they are often depicted as having strong emotions of hatred for humans, which are feelings.

[5] There is a strong similarity in this passage to that of the passage in the Bible from Corinthians 13:4-7. Love is patient, love is kind. General interpretations of this passage of Corinthians include love conquering all.

[6] Much of the criticism on "The Dead Lady of Clown Town" discusses the Joan of Arc similarities. Though they are present throughout this novella, I am focusing on a different area in this chapter.

[7] Sheldon won the Hugo award for "The Girl Who Was Plugged In" in 1974 and for "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" in 1977, the Nebula Award for "Love is the Plan, The Plan Is Death" in 1973, for "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" in 1976, and for "The Screwfly Solution" (published under Racoona Sheldon) in 1977.

[8] Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* discusses the nature of the male and female mind. She believes that we see the sexes as two distinct entities yet the writers mind should be both sexes (i.e. man-womanly and woman-manly). In this way, women can write and be read not just by women, but also men, and not be judged in a negative way for the content of the writing, especially if the woman writes about topics that women, during that time, were not supposed to talk about.

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