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ECHO'S REPERTOIRE: PERFORMING SCIENCE FICTION AND TRANS CARE MODELS

by

Juniper Blue

B.A., Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2022

B.S., Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2022

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts Degree

School of Communication Studies
in the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
December 2025

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THESIS APPROVAL

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Juniper Blue

A Thesis Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the field of Communication Studies

Approved by:

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November 11, 2025

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Juniper Blue, for the Master of Arts degree in Communication Studies, presented on November 11, 2025, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: ECHO'S REPERTOIRE: PERFORMING SCIENCE FICTION AND TRANS CARE MODELS

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Craig S. Gingrich-Philbrook

Echo's Repertoire is a mixture of a passion piece and a call for more work with performing science fiction. It focuses on interpersonal communication within trans studies and the experiences of transgender individuals and myself. Echo's Repertoire is also an example of the Lyrical Model proposed by Awkward-Rich as a new model for trans affirming speech. The show is laid out non-linearly and follows along with Echo as he starts to build new relationships with the advice of his spaceship ai, Eep, who is a previous version of himself prior to transformation (transition).

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To my advisor, Craig Gingrich-Philbrook for working with me on this through trying times, helping me celebrate the little steps, and giving me the space to experiment. To Jonny Gray for being not only on my committee, but cheering me on, helping me bring the show to life, and guiding me. To Christinia Ivey for coming on this wild ride and saying yes to joining my committee.

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DEDICATION

To those on the outskirts of society, may you find your voice and those who care to listen.

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CHAPTER 1

IN THE BEGINNING

My love for science fiction started with Ray Bradbury. First, I found “There Will Come Soft Rains” (1950), a short story from *The Martian Chronicles*, about a house left standing after nuclear war that is slowly dying without its humans. I then sought out *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), in which a man starts to question his world after conversing with a free little girl. At first, it was the imagery of Bradbury’s writing that drew me in, and then it was his social commentary. Then I moved into works by Issac Asimov like *The Bicentennial Man* (1976) and, part of the controversial high fantasy science fiction, *Tales from The Mos Eisley Cantina* by Kevin J. Anderson (1995) (which sadly is no longer canon to the universe of *Star Wars*). This was all while I was still in high school.

When I got to university, there was an anthropology and science fiction course. The instructor selected science fiction literature focusing on cultural examination and critique. I saved all the stories we read in that class, some of my favorites being “The Fluted Girls” by Paolo Bacigalupi (2003) and “A Martian Odyssey” by Stanley G. Weinbaum (1934). When I moved more into performance studies and away from anthropology, I used my favorite of these stories for different projects and assignments. Given the nature of science fiction, I could find pieces of any length and point of view, making them easy to tie into any performance requirements. These stories can be used and translated in so many different ways on stage. You also learn a lot more about the stories through performing and staging them. Certain details become more evident, and, as you practice to memorize the words, you must make decisions about how to stage them and why. My obsession with science fiction only grew.

“A Martian Odyssey” works with othering and communication. Isaac Asimov (1974) says it is the first story he is familiar with that creates aliens who have their own reasons for existing and that answers John Campbell’s call for an organism that thinks just as well as man but not like a man (p. 3-4). In “A Martian Odyssey,” Jarvis, an Earthen chemist, crashes his ship. He walks across Mars trying to get back to his crew with the help of Tweel, an intelligent Martian. Tweel’s language and thought process is too different from his own for Jarvis to understand. Tweel, on the other hand, can pick up a few English words and communicate complex ideas with simple addition, using one plus one equals two to signify simple harmless creatures and two plus two equals four for complex creatures. This story critiques the idea of “others” as “less” and shows how communication functions. It was through staging and working with this piece that I realized how heavily the story focused on the importance of communication but how relatively simple conceptual symbols can still shoulder the weight of that importance for conveying information and helping to establish relationships between very different beings.

When I started on my thesis, there was no other choice but to focus on science fiction, whether through original work or adaptation of literature. I was given the opportunity to stage a full production of both original and adaptation work; I wanted to focus on creating my own work. To write a successful science fiction show and defend it as valid research, I needed to understand the roles science fiction and performance play together. I needed to understand what performance studies thinks about science fiction. Through what I found the literature says around science fiction, I found three topics of discussion. First, I will look at what science fiction is. Scholars have different definitions and views of what science fiction needs to fit within the genre. Next, I will address concerns around science fiction via general concerns around the genre itself and in performance. Last, I will go over the performances of science fiction and how they

are interpreted. Science fiction has a few different acronyms between sources. It is referred to as science fiction, sci-fi for short, SF for speculative fiction, and sci-fi-nigh for when something is nearly science fiction.

What is Science Fiction?

People have defined “science fiction” in many ways. Some say the words specify work that imagines future technology and the possibilities we see for the future of current technologies. Farnell (2020) talks of stories where science is “propped up by, science fiction, with some contemporary research making forays into areas of science which have little to no current proof, nor are they deemed to gain any” and “instead, they rely implicitly or explicitly on the science-fictional, world-altering potentiality of their future realization to perpetuate their scientific (rational)” (p. 214). Others would say science fiction needs to be based on current scientific research and have a basis in current fact. There are pieces of sci-fi media that expand upon current scientific research and imagine how it might evolve to build new technologies. Science fiction allows for the scrutiny of these future advances and provides a type of feedback loop as science pulls from these fictional adaptations (Farnell, 2020, p. 215). Another view of science fiction distances itself from technology and sees the genre as a way to critique current society in a distant world where it can be easily digestible. Definitions offered by critics are often discredited or contradictory of others, leaving some pieces of science fiction to fall outside the parameters of one definition but not another (Gray & Callow, 2014, p. 60). This can lead to some confusion on what science fiction is and what it entails, but it can also provide a strength. Not limiting the definition of science fiction opens the genre to a world of possibilities.

A vast amount of content can then be perceived or claimed to be science fiction. It can also be limiting if one clings to only one definition, limiting what science fiction can be as far as

speculation about social progression. Though combining views can be seen as strenuous, Black and Barnes (2021) state that “accepting the possibility of futuristic technology that is not yet available and accepting the potential permissibility of actions seen as taboo in the real world both demands stretching the imagination to consider counterfactual scenarios,” it also helps separate problems from current social context (p. 284). In this way, science fiction opens the world to new possibilities and reveals certain truths of our society. “The capacity of science fiction to stimulate critical discourse regarding empirical reality rests on the rigor of its digressions from reality” and is why the genre gives itself so easily to social criticism (Farnell, 2020, p. 209). Black and Barnes (2021) go on to try and test the effects of viewing science fiction in different ways and how a more faceted approach may change perceptions and open up creativity (p. 285). Their study ended up inconclusive due to limitations around the scope of their project but opened a doorway to further study.

Science Fiction in Performance

The literature about performing science fiction comes from a variety of fields I start with authors and playwrights then move into research papers studying the effects of science fiction media and science fiction stories. Gray and Callow (2014) are playwrights and creative writers. They see science fiction as the future of theater. They say that “science fiction theatre is the next step in theatre's evolution and can arguably be the key to its survival in the future” (p. 67). Their work addresses critiques in theater around the genre of science fiction and what it means to perform sci-fi. Wagstaff (2016) is an editor and short fiction writer focusing on science fiction. He expresses hesitancy in theater to claim sci-fi as real theater and that theater companies are hesitant to stage sci-fi shows (para. 12). Foley (2017) is another playwright. He suggests that science fiction is such a broad term that encompasses so much we need a new term, “sci-fi-nigh,”

to include stories that fit an overarching theme of science fiction without delving into the science behind sci-fi. Nico Wood's work from her thesis, *From Seed to Fruit: A Posthuman Journey from Stage to Page*, has its own dilemma with the use of science fiction. For her thesis show, Wood rewrote fairytales through a post humanist perspective. She found the nature of fairytales to be inherently post humanist with the use of talking animals, sentient objects, and magical items (p. 26). The show, *Seed to Fruit*, uses a cyborg narrator and other technology mixed with magic to weave machines into a post humanist world. For this reason, many who saw the show defined the show around science fiction. Wood defines science fiction as dealing with the impact of fictional or actual science on society or having science being a defining factor (p. 28). She felt that for this reason she could not claim science fiction as a genre because her science was mainly science-sounding words rather than a fleshed-out speculation on actual science (p. 29). She was also hesitant to claim the genre of science fiction because she felt it falls on a cautionary-tale schema and her show was critiquing a more factual and rational thought process (p. 28). Farnell (2020) is a teaching fellow of theatre and performance studies. He thinks science fiction "is indeed proving popular in contemporary performance, [although] to suggest that it is to become a new, hegemonic theatrical form on a par with, say, naturalism, is overstating its role" (p. 217). He also explains that while some scholars may agree with Wood's (2010) belief that science fiction needs to have actual scientific merit, others feel science fiction need not rely on real science.

There are those who see science fiction as the future performers turn to. Black and Barnes (2021) view science fiction through a different lens. They are psychologists who did a study on college students of the effects on ethical views after consuming sci-fi media. They view science fiction as a way to push what is socially acceptable by crossing boundaries into culturally taboo

subjects. Guzkowski's (2013) paper focuses on the taboo as represented in the way dance is used in certain science fiction stories. They also discuss the political and social constructs that these sci-fi pieces explore and transform through the dances and bodies of the performers in the pieces. Beaufils (2020) is a performance artist. Her paper also does not focus on Science fiction but ecological performances. The four shows she discusses are transformative and push boundaries on how we view society. The pieces critique how we view our relationship with the environment around us. Her thought experiment "echoes science fiction scenarios where humans are unwillingly exiled from Earth" (p. 366). The paper also discusses the relationship between having actors that are playing nonhuman characters.

Problems seen around the genre of Science Fiction

Black and Barnes (2021) express that, "due to the distance one must imaginatively "travel" to engage with fictional worlds far removed from our own, some people may find engaging with sci-fi particularly challenging" (p. 284). In terms of performance this can lead to alienating your audience if they find understanding the world to be difficult. If the story is confusing or requires background knowledge of the genre to understand, you may find your target audience can be smaller. This can also be caused by bad world-building or improper introductions, losing your audience. Black and Barnes were concerned that the effort required to engage with science fiction would leave participants too exhausted to participate in the cognitive activities for the study (p. 286). This did not end up being the case.

There are a few concerns around the genre of science fiction that deal with the definition used for the genre. Wagstaff (2016), much like Wood's own hesitancy around her show not being truly science fiction, reports that the theater community feels that science fiction productions are not real theater (para 12). The critics and academics have shown the

most resistance, “which has made theater companies wary of putting on science fiction shows” (Wagstaff, 2016, Para 13). Foley (2017) worries about the acknowledgment of science fiction on stage. Some critiques around science fiction stage productions state that it isn’t science fiction. Like Foley’s thoughts that a sci-fi-nigh term is needed for the times where shows are nearly sci-fi. Gray and Callow (2014) talk of how difficult staging science fiction can be but suggest that domestic science fiction does not require high technology (p. 62). Doing science fiction on stage also allows for the focus to be on the people, lending well to the definition that focuses on social critique. Gray and Callow (2014) also discuss the assumptions around science fiction and theatre of being brief curiosities and experimentations. That there have not been many science-fiction plays written, and that those playwrights who have written sci-fi shows will move on to more serious formats of theatre (p. 60). Even with these critiques, the number of theatre companies that deal exclusively with science fiction on stage grows “arguably with the same speed that technology evolves” (p. 60).

Performing Science Fiction

These and other critiques of staging science fiction inspired a science fiction author to take action. Ray Bradbury put up his own money for the remodel of a Los Angeles theatre, so that the resident company could stage his short stories. His scripts received mixed reviews, but his work challenged the myth that science fiction was unstageable (Gray & Callow, 2014, p. 60). Science fiction allows for interesting experimentation when it comes to set design, lighting, and music. For Tom Stoppard’s *The Hard Problem*, “a giant brain hovers over the action (and) transparent chains dangle from the ceiling, flashing different colored lights; an electric circuit zings between them” (Farnell, 2020, p. 212). Synthesizers become a form of communication as the instrument works to symbolize spaceships communicating (Laudadio, 2011, p. 304). Science

fiction gives way for creativity and experimenting with the stage. Science and performance have a lot in common. The focus on experimentation, repetition, rehearsal, and getting the best possible outcome (Farnell, 2020, p. 218). Performance and science fiction have a rich history of adding to each other's fields. The word "robot" was coined from a 1920's play, *R.U.R.* (*Rossum's Universal Robots*). "Robot" came from the Czech word "robota" or to drudge and was tied to servitude and serfdom (Foley, 2017, Para. 3). Science fiction writer Isaac Asimov's three laws of robotics are used in a Japanese robot competition (Guzkowski, 2013, p. 236). Those three laws are the requirements of any entrees. The two fields work well together, and some even say science fiction is necessary for the survival of the theatre in the future (Gray & Callow, 2014, p. 67).

Farnell's (2020) discussion of the different stagings of Nick Paynes' *Elegy* traces the relationship between science, science fiction, and theatre beautifully. *Elegy* focuses on advancing current research in the field of neural engineering. The story focuses on the brain-computer interface and imagines a world where technology has advanced far enough to be able to correct degenerative disease (p. 211). The story follows two women, one of whom is considering the surgery. The surgery corrects from when the patient originally starts showing symptoms, which means our main character will forget the last twenty years of her life. During those twenty years, however, she has fallen in love and gotten married, so if she goes through with the surgery, she will forget her wife. Farnell discusses two different stagings of this show. One of the stagings starts after our main character has already gotten the surgery and moves backwards. She has already forgotten her wife and this adaptation works its way into the past, showing the discussion of possible surgery and the build of this relationship. This "reverse-chronological approach allows its audience to trace the ramifications of Lorna's surgery back through the

ethical and personal dilemmas faced by the couple as they debate them” (p. 214). When done linearly, the show focuses on the personal narrative and the relationship between these two people. It draws away from the ethical dilemma and focuses on the devastating possibility of giving up your life or your love (p. 214). Though the story is very simplistic, it still shows the way the stage can be used to portray science fiction in new ways.

Beaufils’ (2020) paper discusses four ecological performances. These pieces aren’t science fiction but more sci-fi-nigh. The worlds built through the performances frame plants as the main characters, often suggesting a world past humanity’s time. These pieces have an aspect of immersion that makes spectators “develop new forms of reading and communication with the other-than-humans” (p. 355). These pieces critique our understanding of the world and make us think beyond humanity. In this way, these pieces could be read as science fiction as they imagine a new future that critiques our social relationship to the world around us. The pieces, through location, lighting, and placing the actors as performing objects rather than the main focus of people, show how science fiction can be staged. One of these pieces was done in an abandoned ice rink. giving the feel of the decrepit world after humanity has left. Another placed the audience in pitch black as sound effects and short scenes were played. They were world-building and transformative.

Guzkowski’s (2013) paper also focuses on new ways to communicate with non-humans. His paper focuses on performances that take place in science fiction stories. The paper discusses a few pieces where dance is used as a way of communicating. The stories use dance as a way to set people free. Much like ecological performances, the pieces take place in the future, and they focus on topics of those ignored or pushed out from society. One of the stories focuses on a dancer with a non-stereotypical dancer’s body. She and others find that, when in space, they can

dance freely without gravity or people's judgments. They end up using this dance to make peace with an alien race. The piece critiques stereotypes and welcomes a sense of community. If these stories were staged, you could use many of the same techniques from the ecological performance to portray the stories. For the scene where non-traditional dancers dance in space, having the audience in the dark with few lights to signal the stars as dancers moved across the stage could portray the scene well. Another of the stories discussed has a man running from the law as he travels to perform a banned dance for different communities. That story could be placed in the abandoned ice-skating rink to signify this banned dance being performed in the outskirts of society where the dancer is less likely to be caught. There are many ways to perform science fiction that don't require the special effects and windowed screens of television and cinema.

What to do

Science fiction and performance have a long history together. There have been critiques around staging science fiction for a long time, so much so that even classic science fiction author Ray Bradbury, as stated earlier, took it upon himself to produce science fiction theatre to show it could be done. Even with critiques that decry the popularity of science fiction performances, more and more theaters are producing science fiction. Some even say it is the future of science fiction. Sci-fi can be seen as a way to experiment and try new things. Part of the issue comes from differing definitions of what is and isn't science fiction. It is an expansive genre. By not limiting the definition of science fiction to the social commentary of technology, a vast amount of content can then be perceived or claimed as science fiction. Building upon the definition of science fiction rather than limiting the criteria opens science fiction to a limitless examination of social progression and stagnation. Science Fiction becomes a frame for serious social critique with the possibility to start open conversations without directly targeting opposing groups.

Menadue and Cheer (2017) conducted a literature review of the relationship of science fiction and human culture in peer-reviewed literature. They discuss the history and relationship of science fiction as a cultural wallpaper that holds influence in society. For this show science fiction uses 3 things:

1. It takes place in an imagined future (whether a future in relation to time or a future in relation to changed history)
2. Involves new technology, beings from another planet, or space travel.
3. Provides some kind of commentary of today's world whether directly or indirectly.

From there I had to figure out what the main social critique for my story would be. I wanted to work with a theme close to who I am and that I am related to. I decided to work with interpersonal communication within trans studies. I, as a gender nonconforming trans masc, am trying to work on being comfortable in society. I am focusing on regaining my comfort and confidence in wearing feminine clothes in public. I am working on moving past my hesitancy and anxiety when telling people and correcting people on my pronouns but also moving through space comfortably in my body. I am working on not overthinking facial responses, reactions, misgendering, and other small things I notice when engaging with people outside of my home. I wanted to focus on a show where the main character is struggling with their own self-doubt when interacting with society. I depicted their trauma, hesitancy, and conversations as more drastic than my own because I wanted to highlight these feelings of discomfort and instability within their relationships. I also write a story in which, though they build healthy relationships, it still gets all taken away from them due to political events, commenting on the current social political environment around the world in the past few years.

I have my own feelings and experiences on the topic and found further research in interpersonal communication and relationship journals that expanded on the matter. The journal articles I found focused on such topics as psychological well-being, interpersonal support needs, communication between cisgender and transgender people, and trans rights. Through this research and writing the script, the focus of the whole project shifted. Now, not only was I writing to show the uses of science fiction on stage but also developing a piece that filled a need I have and have had validated through the research I read. The theoretical framework became interpersonal communication and relationship building. All of the articles show a need for more transgender representation, more transgender-focused interpersonal communication models, more support in interpersonal communication for transgender individuals both within and outside of the trans community. For the script, I focused on social penetration theory, which examines the development and dissolution of interpersonal relationships (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Social penetration theory, sometimes modeled on the outer versus deeper layers of an onion as a metaphor for the layers of intimacy, discusses the stages of relationships and at what point certain information is exchanged.

Through interpersonal communication research and taking an intro to trans studies class, I found Malatino's books and Awkward-Rich's article. Malatino discusses the needs of care and care models within the trans community and why having a strong community and the ability to be able to practice care is important for sustainable survival. Awkward-Rich discusses Trans Studies models for affirming speech and the way they succeed and fail to fit within care models. Then he goes on to create his own Lyrical model that ties in directly with my show and the work described by interpersonal communication within trans studies.

A Definition of Care and Self-made Communities

In the US in the first 6 months of 2025, 940 anti-trans bills have been proposed and 115 passed compared to 701 bills proposed in 701 with 51 passed, transphobia is growing stronger (Trans Legislation, n.d.). With hundreds of anti-trans laws being proposed, debated, and often passed throughout the country and misinformation being spread online, it is important for transgender people to have a safe community to turn to. According to Heinz (2015) from “Trans Interpersonal Support Needs”, transgender individuals find themselves cut off from community, whether the trans community, LGBTQ community, family community or just social community in general (p. 37). As a result, transgender individuals must form their own models and communities of care to heal from “transformative physical and emotional experiences... or especially when our lives fall in the gaps between institutions and conventional familial structures” (Malatino, 2020, p. 3). A good care model, according to Malatino in “Trans care,” “challenges us to be deliberate, to communicate capacity, to unlearn the shame that has become attached to asking for, offering, and accepting help when we’ve been full- body soaked and steeped in the mythos of neoliberal, entrepreneurial self- making. It asks us to think carefully about what constitutes ‘good’ care” (p. 2). Malatino is focusing on the need transgender individuals must flourish and how the forms of care required go above and beyond concepts of family when displayed in trans lives. (p. 6).

So how do we do that? Through mutual aid, which Dean Spade glosses as “work that directly addresses the conditions the movement seeks to address, such as by providing housing, food, health care, or transportation in a way that draws attention to the politics creating need and vulnerability” (Spade 2019). Through what Aizura calls the “communization of care” (2017)—which is a practice of reworking care so that it doesn’t rely on the family, one’s intimate circle,

or an abstraction of community as its locus of distribution and circulation but instead organizes care around those with whom we are socially consubstantial (Povinelli, 2008, p. 511), all those folks with whom we're interdependent, many of whom we may not know intimately or at all. Through what he called an "infrapolitical ethics of care" (Malatino 2019), which indexes the forms of care that enable co-constituted, interdependent subjects to repair, rebuild, and cultivate resilience in the midst of, and in the aftermath of, experiences of overwhelming negative affect (Malatino, 2020, p. 43)

This form of community comes with its limitations, though. Burnout occurs when the relationships of helper and receiver are hierarchical, non-fungible, or peer-to-peer (Malatino, 2020, p. 21) Someone must be there to step up and take over the work when one needs to take time for their own self-care and healing. Malatino suggests that care must go both ways, but one cannot keep count of the effort one puts in or takes out. She compares it to a squabble with her long-term partner, saying that "keeping count is futile and unnecessary; the rhythms of our care work are tied to the frailty or strength of our bodies, our fluctuating levels of exhaustion, the intensity of the demands placed on our time by other intimates, by our jobs, by advocacy work, by other dearly held commitments" (2020, p. 45). For me, this is like my relationship, where sometimes the work my partner and I put in is 50/50, but other times it is 80/20 or 70/30. Sometimes one of us is dealing with more stress so the other picks up the slack or one of us is swamped at work so the other takes care of more of the housework. We need to consider what constrains care, what marks certain bodies as "undeserving," and "epistemologies, systems, and technologies that contribute to such unjust apportioning, even as we must navigate them in order to get (some of) our needs met" (2020, p. 70).

Care Models Viewed Through Interpersonal Communication Studies

Heinz (2015), in “Trans Interpersonal Support Needs,” discusses a lack in interpersonal communication processes within trans studies, even though “interpersonal communication core concepts are often embedded in trans needs assessments” since they “likely play a primary role in the everyday experiences of trans people” (p. 34). During his interviews with ten participants, one-word answers of isolation, isolating, lonely, or lost were given by many participants with others giving longer answers that said the same thing to a question asking what it was like to be a transperson on Vancouver Island in one word or sentence (p. 37). Not every participant felt this sort of negative reaction being visibly trans, some said it gave them more confidence to engage openly with others to help create awareness and reduce stigma (p. 43). Bouman, focusing on the wellbeing of transgender individuals, found that up to 40% of Trans individuals are known to have high levels of mental health problems, “including affective and anxiety disorders as well as non-suicidal self-injuries and even suicide” and are “found to report low quality of life compared to the general population” (2016, p. 360). The study investigated five main factors when considering psychopathology and quality of life: age, self-esteem, transphobia victimization, interpersonal problems, and body dissatisfaction (p. 360). The transgender group had higher scores on specific interpersonal problems compared to the control group and significantly lower scores on quality of life, mental health, self-esteem, and body satisfaction (p. 365). The study found that “interpersonal functioning appears to be of great importance to psychological wellbeing among transgender individuals” (p. 370)

In another study, Heinz and Klonkowska (2023) compare interviews between transgender and cisgender individuals in Canada and Poland. A general theme came out across the studies of honesty (p. 5). The interviewees talked of both positive and negative interactions. Three

important needs were talked about, and those were openness, confidence, and empathy (p. 7). Negative interactions dealt with frustration, fear, and guardedness. Cisgender participants wanted more experience communicating with trans individuals, whereas transgender participants felt more effort was involved when they had to educate their cisgender counterparts. Heinz (2015) says that “recent research suggests that suicide attempt rates are lower for trans people whose family ties remained strong during and post transition creating a sound rationale for interpersonal communication studies on strengthening family ties during and post transition” (P. 50). Though blood family can be great, for many transgender individuals, family support is not an option. This is why Malatino’s model for care is important as a guide to creating this safe community to support each other. These findings not only “highlight the importance of considering contact diversity when examining the influence of interpersonal contact with transgender individuals but also support the argument that individuals’ view about a social group is determined by their experiences with members of subgroups that make up the social group” (Cao, 2022, p. 2226).

Models for Affirming Trans Speech

In “We’s Company,” Awkward-Rich (2022) goes through the different models for affirming trans speech and discusses what each model does, where it succeeds, and how it fails before offering his own model. These models are the wrong-body model; the gender-freedom model; queer trans theory; and his own model, the lyrical model. His own lyrical model highlights trans voices and works within Malatino’s care models and fits well with the work I did in creating *Echo’s Repertoire*.

The wrong-body model focuses on exactly how it sounds. It foregrounds the idea that being born in the wrong body is simply the problem. Malatino critiques this idea, saying it puts the focus on intensifying anxieties around appearance and a medical industry that, though it

sometimes serves the trans community in incredibly important ways, also makes us pay out of pocket for all sorts of procedures (Malatino, 2020, p. 26). This focus also opens up the world to an impression that our bodily form is up for public discussion. It also invalidates those who do not wish to medically change their bodies to conform to cis, binary passing forms. The gender freedom model affirms trans speech on the basis that all gender expression ought to be affirmed, and the queer trans model affirms trans speech because it denaturalizes the logic of the binary sex/gender system. Both systems, Awkward-Rich, points out can isolate the trans gender community from society, dismissing that gender has a hierarchical set of relations, and can leave the trans community with contradiction and incoherence (2022, p. 122).

In turn, Awkward-Rich's lyrical model thinks of the "the solitary prototranssexual brooding in their bedroom, reading and reading and reading and reading whatever they can find" and the reading and writing of the trans experience (2022, p. 126). Instead of an outward-in focus, it proposes an inward focus on trans voices. I have discussed how Heinz (2015) shows there is a need for interpersonal communication core concepts to be applied to trans care. How Bowman (2016) shows that transgender individuals have higher levels of self-isolation and interpersonal problems. Heinz with Klonskowska (2023) found that three important needs were talked about, and those were openness, confidence, and empathy (p. 7). This is why Malatino's model for care is important in creating this safe community to support each other but also how the lyrical model creates powerful conversation from within the trans community. The lyrical model also addresses the need for more trans representation as it highlights trans experience through the creation of rather than the perceived existence. My show falls under the lyrical model due to the show being a creation of my own experiences combined with outside theory and other trans experiences found through research.

Overview

Given the overview of staging science fiction and trans studies, in the next chapter, I break down the sections by scene. Each scene will have its script or description of events. Then I will break down the theories used to develop each scene and how they developed and changed throughout the writing and performing process beside the script.

Chapter 3 will be the conclusion where I will review my arguments and demonstrate how the performance helped meet my communicative needs through a lyrical model of writing and performance. I will include how science fiction and performance work hand in hand. I will then include a call for more work like this, not only in performance but also trans studies.

CHAPTER 2

ECHO'S REPERTOIRE

Darko Suvin, in “On Understanding our Needy World Through Science Fiction and Utopia/nism: An Epistemological Introduction” (2021), discusses how “today we live in a perverted ‘knowledge society’ where the brainwashing images and words have polluted the very structure of our perception and experiencing; so that useful knowledge and perniciously fake knowledge are closely intertwined, and any realistic understanding must include a detoxification and deprogramming of the hegemonic understandings” (p. 123). Erin Reed, in “Why Anti-Transgender Political ads are Dominating the Airwaves this Election” (2024), discusses how Trump spent around a \$100 million dollars in anti-Trans ads during his election campaign in 2024 and regularly lies about gender affirming care in schools. How do we challenge the brainwashing images and words that have polluted the very structure of society’s perception and experience regarding transgender individuals?

Cao and Gurcay (2022), in “The Anxiety Factor: Moral Traditionalism, Interpersonal Contact Diversity and Support for Transgender Candidates and Rights,” say that “interpersonal contact with transgender individuals should increase support for transgender candidates and rights by reducing anxiety toward transgender people” (p. 2226). Their basis is that many “morally traditionalist individuals experience anxiety towards transgender people because these people violate traditional expectations of gender conformity and the equivalence between sex and gender” (p. 2212). I do believe this is an oversimplification of a centuries-long issue; they support their points with intergroup contact hypothesis that has a requirement of four conditions: equal status of individuals involved; common goals; cooperation from the intergroup; and support of authorities, laws, and/or customs (p. 2213). Cao and Guracay say that we need

representation of diverse transgender people represented in a positive light in the media to help promote public support (p. 2229). This is where Awkward-Rich's Lyrical model comes in, calling for transgender individuals creating their own positive and diverse representations of transgender individuals--and how my show comes into play.

Echo's Repertoire started as just the first scene. I wrote the first scene as an introductory performance of who I am for a performance methodologies course. I knew I wanted to create a science fiction scene and wrote the scene to Beethoven's 5th Symphony in C Minor, OP. 67 Allegro con Brio. I chose to write the scene to classical music for the emotional reaction I have listening to classical music live. I still remember a school field trip to see a live orchestra and being absolutely captivated by the music. Even earlier than that, I, as a child, put on a short solo show for my mom and brother that involved me aggressively humming parts of Beethoven's 5th symphony. I had imagined the piece as a battle for control and wanted to bring that concept back into the music for the scene in class. In a way, this choice showed where I started in performance before I even knew what performance studies was. Through writing that scene, I had in my mind's eye a whole universe to play with as different details of Echo came into play. When I started working on the 6 other scenes for the show, I first went through and selected classical songs to represent each scene. This involved listening to multiple classical music playlists and any other favorite that gave me a visual image of what the song was doing.

The show itself is broken into 7 scenes that follow Schechner's (2020) seven functions of performance. These are broken into to entertain, create beauty, mark change or identity, make or foster community, heal, teach or persuade, and deal with the sacred and the demonic. Schechner says that performances have overlapping functions, but rarely will they have all seven functions (p. 19). These functions are more like an overlapping network than distinct elements separated

by a strict boundary (p. 19). By using these seven functions to write out my scenes, I was able to complete two things. First, it shows as an example of how performing science fiction can be used in a variety of ways to accomplish different goals. It shows even further the open possibilities of working within science fiction. Second, it allowed me to have a set goal to focus on when designing my scenes. It created easy framing to write within the boundaries of how that mode of performance can be used, though most of the scenes overlap or could be moved to be defined under several functions. The first scene became to entertain, as it served the function of starting to introduce the type of world Echo lived in and to draw in the audience.

When writing the other six scenes, I thought about Schechner's seven functions of performance and key moments I wanted to show of Echo's life. I picked songs I thought could match certain themes. I then listened to the song of the scene I was writing on repeat, the same way I did with the original scene, to help inspire the way the scenes flowed. Writing the scenes in a way that they worked through interpersonal communication within trans studies meant that there were certain key events and people who needed to be included. This involved past trauma Echo had to heal to be able to become close to people again and also the inclusion of his voice pre transition, which I created using my own voice pre transition to use as the computer, allowing it to become a type of self-caretaker that guides Echo's growth. There were other details included, like the slightly problematic comments of one of the new crew members and the political powers of two planets that end up isolating Echo again.

Interpersonal communication for this show dealt with the communication used to build relationships. I focused on Social Penetration Theory, or onion theory, which breaks down the four stages of self-disclosure in interpersonal relationships. The different layers of disclosure include orientation, exploratory affective exchange, affective exchange, and stable exchange

(Carpenter & Greene, 2015, p. 2). Orientation is the stage where surface level information is exchanged; there tends to be few or no deep or personal details shared. Then we move into more self-disclosure beyond superficial information in the exploratory affective exchange. The third exchange, affective exchange, is when people may start to joke, have nicknames, but it is also when conflict may be introduced. Last is stable exchange, where the most intimate information is disclosed, and typically this stage is reserved for close friends, family members, or romantic relationships.

The scenes in the show are out of chronological order, so the stages of the social penetration model are, too. The first and last scenes are the present, shown by the live accompaniment played. They frame the show but also tell a bit about Echo and that their ship crew is dead. The rest of the scenes are flashbacks represented with distorted versions of the classical piece each scene is written to. Through these scenes, the audience discovers that Echo did not want a crew and felt uncomfortable around others. Through different moments, Echo learns to move through their trauma and build relationships with the help of their ship AI Eep. Eep is represented through AI-generated voice of my own voice pre-testosterone.

Script

Scene 1: To entertain – Beethoven’s 5th symphony in C Minor, OP. 67 Allegro con Brio

Chair in center stage. General low light wash with low house lights, Echo walks out and sits down with arm wrapped in red fabric. Music starts from a live violinist.

My lords, this mission was a bust from the beginning. Though it started out smoothly, I believe there was a rat, and I think I know who.

The mission started out fine. When we got to the station, we were asked for the purpose of our trip, and Ambassador Jx gave them her access code. After some deliberation and a yes from a commander, we were able to dock. Once we got off the ship and exited the landing bay, there was a welcoming crew waiting to greet Ambassador Jx. As she walked down the line, each representative grasped her hand in trust and recognition. It was just how Ambassador Jx had informed us. They walked us down to the conference rooms with an AI unit in lead. We were told to sit in the waiting room outside as they set up for the meeting. They offered refreshments to Jx and refused to allow the crew to be served. When Jx

Unpacking

The first scene focuses on building the world in which the story takes place. It sets out events of a tragedy that Echo now must make sense of. It gives bits and pieces of the people involved in this story. The show starts by telling you that all these characters you’re about to hear about are dead and no measure is off the table to find out why. The scene uses live accompaniment to represent that it is currently happening, while the other scenes are flashbacks represented by distorted music, except for scene 7 where we return to the present.

What you don’t know is the work Echo put in to care so much for his crew that he would sacrifice himself for revenge, to

didn't correct the assumption, the Voyance seemed pleased that Jx still followed their customs.

When it came time for the meeting, they allowed only Jx and her assistant to enter the room. This wasn't unusual, but looking back it does seem strange that they wouldn't allow at least one of us in as their guard. The meeting seemed to be taking longer than planned. I assumed there were still some wrinkles in the amended treaty, but we were told this was a formality mission. This is when things took a turn.

There was a shot, and then loud shuffling. I thought, "Something must have gone wrong and Jx is moving to plan B." I stood to prepare our team for immediate evacuation when a Militia barged into the room from the door we came in from. They must have been waiting outside just in case we tried to make a run for it. We weren't prepared to take a small army. We had no option but to let them lock us up and take it from there. I did not want my team caught up in a civil war.

While we waited for things to calm down, I tried to figure out how to get my crew and myself out of the holding cells. I had no idea what we were up against or how to get my crew out unscathed. Though the Voyance

get answers. During this scene there is a slow buildup of the silent anger and sadness of the events that lead to Echo being again betrayed, but instead of by the people he works with, by the people who hired him.

Set to be a mission briefing, though unwanted by the lords, it is a subtle interrogation of the lords.

This scene also, in a way, shows the burnout of no one to take over when you need time to recover that Malantino (2020) discusses.

Echo has been pushed and pushed, his trust constantly tested. This time is different from the others.

He no longer has the support of Eep, his ship AI, as his ship is also destroyed during this mission. He is facing burn out. There are no more spoons. He is done and no longer cares that there is no escape

telepathy isn't super effective on me, nearly half my crew was human. This is when the assistant popped up. I was so shocked and happy to have had a way out, I didn't process that there was no way the assistant could have gotten out of that room freely. How was it not locked up with us or worse, decommissioned? It told us Jx had been shot but it knew a back way out of the station and back to the ship. The assistant got us out of the holding cells. It did not come with us, just gave me the turns to make to get back to the ship unnoticed. The assistant told me it still had unfinished business on the ship. I figured this meant Jx was dead, and the assistant was going back to extract revenge as was expected of it to whatever cost of itself.

Now, I had paid attention when the militia had taken us to the holding cells and had a rough idea of how to get us back to our ship and with the assistant's instructions it should be easy to navigate back. It wasn't going to be the most direct route, but we did not have time to find another path. We had to get back to our ship before anyone realized we had escaped. Before we even got back to the conference rooms, the alarms went off for escaped prisoners. The whole base was on high alert. We

plan. He is out of options for survival. He tells his tale, letting it be known that he knows someone betrayed him but not letting it slip till the end that it was the lords who set up the failed mission.

Performing this scene a few days after the 2024 elections, a lot of the lines became more poignant. As I felt the betrayal of the society I live in, I knew this only meant conditions for trans people across the country would get worse and that the uptick in anti-trans laws would only get higher. In this way, this show became my own way to deal with the election. I was able to pour whatever emotions I felt that day into the performance.

I felt Echo's anger and fear of the future, just as I deeply felt many of the other emotions portrayed in these scenes as they amplified my

had run out of time. It became a blood bath to get back to the hangar. There were guards posted at every turn, armed to the teeth. It was as though they had planned this from the start. By the time we made it to the loading bay it was just me, my second in command, and the deck boy.

My second in command ran ahead to draw attention from the loading bay, almost sacrificing his life. We thought we were going to make it. We thought we were going to fly free, battered and scared but we should have escaped. We had gotten off the station and were flying in open air.

They had their guns primed and ready. There was no warning before half of my ship was blasted away.

I lost my crew, I lost my second in command, I lost my best friend. And worst of all, I lost my ship.

And I believe someone in this room knows why.

See there's a reason I thought Jx had moved to plan B. It was your type of gun that had gone off, not one of the Voyance's. Their weapons sound different from yours. If I didn't realize it before, I definitely did as we were leaving.

And the prison break, now that was just too convenient. Even if the Voyance had taken Jx's or the

own experiences and those of the trans people represented in the research I read.

assistant's gun and shot her with it, they would never have let the assistant escape. They know your customs just as well as we know theirs. They would have known the assistant would self-detonate in the event of their accolade being assassinated.

No. Us getting out was planned. They wanted us to get to our ship or they would have had preventative measures up to make sure our ship couldn't take off or at least closed the hangar.

I think those alarms going off were the signal to prime the guns, and I think the assistant set them off.

See, if the Voyance wanted us dead, they could have shot us right in that conference room.

No. I think someone wanted to make a show of this mission. This was a message. A call to war and I don't think they planned it. It was the Voyance who originally called for peace. They may have the social hierarchy, but they revere peace over all. Now you, your standing is built on internal conflict.

Everything had gone according to plan hadn't it?
Everything except my rescue.

Now Jx's assistant had just recently replaced. For this exact mission if I recall. So, who authorized this transfer?

Who wanted this mission to fail?

Scene 2: To Teach or Persuade- Bagatelle No. 25

The chair is moved off stage, Juno sways to the music, breaking character while explaining the basis of the show

Science Fiction on the stage has been contested for not having the technical capabilities to compete with cinema. Many believe that genre fiction is a steppingstone into more serious work. But one does not need a lot to create a science fiction world, for it to be fun, impressive, or to highlight sci-fi's strong point of social commentary.

The social commentary of science fiction has also been critiqued. Though sci-fi has had a few noses turned away from it, the genre moves to expand the socially taboo, build upon reflections of society at large, and call for critical thinking about the modern world. Many would frame this discussion in science fiction around technology, and though many pieces of media and literature in sci-fi do focus on technology and the effects it has environmentally, economically, and socially, limiting science fiction to this definition discredits many classical pieces such as *The Left Hand of Darkness*, "Strikebreaker", and "A Martian Odyssey".

In scene 2, I wanted to set the scene of the work I was doing with this show. My goal was to set up some of the context. As I discussed in chapter 1, Black and Barnes (2021) found one of the challenges of science fiction is the amount of effort to connect with the distorted world image, and I wanted to close that gap, especially for those that don't regularly engage with science fiction. I do this work of bridging gaps in people's knowledge and experiences by depicting conversations between Echo and other characters set to frame and explain some of the trans experience I wanted to show through this performance. The scene itself was one that was the most disconnected from the script. In this scene, I gave myself more

For this show, I focused on highlighting the use of science fiction, on stage, as social commentary. For this I focused on Richard Schechner's list of seven functions of performance: to entertain, to teach or persuade, to make or foster community, to mark or change identity, to heal, to deal with the sacred or demonic, and to create beauty. For the social critique aspect of the show, I am focusing mainly on interpersonal communication within trans studies.

My main character, Echo, is built partially as an exaggerated reflection of myself and the studies done in interpersonal communication in trans studies.

Overarching themes in the papers were a sense of loneliness and isolation. Solutions offered discussed more trans representation and having open and honest conversations.

Following Schechner's seven functions of performance and a piece of classical music, this show was written focusing on transgender feelings of loneliness and isolation. Echo is not human; he follows cycles that tie to different genders, almost like exaggerated forms of human development throughout your lifetime. He has personal trauma but also the

leeway on memorizing. In part this was due to time, but I also leaned into the ways I learned I could play with the music while speaking. This openness allowed pauses and movement and adaptation to what I was feeling and found most important each night. The content itself was not lost, but the wording changed as I strove to keep it similar to the way it was written.

When I start discussing the onion model and put it in similar terms, I wanted to find examples that showed the audience the type of disclosures that would typically happen at each level without having to delve into in-depth conversation to close the gap between audience members who were familiar with the theory (as scholars in communication

knowledge of what political movements are happening around the universe (like we have on Earth today) that causes him to feel uncomfortable around new people. Throughout the show, we get bits and pieces that develop our sense of how Echo has grown to form a safe community following an interpersonal communication theory called social penetration theory, or the onion model, that addresses the differing levels of communication in relationship building. These layers include orientation, exploratory affective exchange, affective exchange, and stable exchange. Or to simplify it, the interviewee, the coworker, the friend group, and the best friend phase.

The show is framed with the devastation of losing your social safe space and a critique of the current use of transgender in the political sphere as cultural warfare. The show is presented nonlinearly with each scene developing pieces of Echo's story and his development of strong relationships.

studies) and those who may not know the theory. I was depending on this example to provide some semblance of a shared experience that social expectation would mean there was in fact common understanding of what kinds of conversations are had with a coworker versus your friend group, if such a group was indeed separate. The secrets one would have with a best friend would not be shared at an interview. I then ended with disclosing the nonlinear timeline in the show, a strategy that is common in science fiction like with Ray Bradbury's (1950) *The Martian Chronicles* and Netflix's (2024) Tv Show *3 Body Problem*.

Scene 3: To Make or Foster Community- Vivaldi: The Four Seasons Winter III Allegro

I wheel out a large box (similar to the height of a kitchen counter) representing ship control panel to downstage center, then leave the stage. After off stage lights turn on, Echo walks on, center stage, and gestures as though offering someone else to go first. This scene is choreographed with sound effects and lights meant to represent different parts of the ship being turned on by this other implied person, but incorrectly, and Echo fixing it, meant to represent a fight for boundaries and control of the ship between Echo and new second in command, Xavior.

In the end Echo sends him away and places head on hand resting on control panel in disappointment.

Scene 3 is representational scene showcasing the way Echo engages with the crew and the ways in which the walls he's put up around himself have created an environment set up for others to fail. He throws his copilot and second in command (Xavior) toward the controls to see what he does, not expecting that Xavior would have no idea how they work. When Echo gets frustrated with the failure, he shoves Xavior out of the way to fix it, only briefly showing how the controls work. This scene is given minor context in later exchanges with the crew.

Scene 4: To Mark or Change Identity- Beethoven
Symphony No. 6 Op. 68 Pastoral, Leonore Overture no.
3

Control panel stays on, lights shift to brighter
AI interface will be created with AI voice generator from
clips of my voice before testosterone. Base level AI
interaction created with Chat GPT as ship AI.

Eep: Look, you can't work alone forever.

Echo: And why is that?

Eep: Well for one, capitol don't want to hire a
ship of one, which leaves you with little work. And, two,
Ambassador Jx.

You will never get to work with the Galvanisms
without a proper crew.

Echo: You act as though getting a crew is easy.

Eep: It is!

Echo: When I was you, maybe. But now, like this.

Eep: You need to give yourself more credit. And
maybe the rest of the universe too.

Echo: I can't. You don't know what it is like out
there now. Humanity is on another one of their tyrannic
empires. Religion is taking hold again on multiple
worlds. And though, yes, not all of them are bad, it is not

Scene 4 is where Echo's
character, backstory, and trauma
unfold along with the introduction
of Eep, the ship AI. Eep is made
from a base model AI from earth,
her character and personality made
from recording of Echo from his
last phase (pre-transition). Eep was
represented on stage via overhead
sound. Her voice was created
using ElevenLabs (2023) Voice
Cloning and recordings of my own
voice before the changes of
testosterone therapy. I then used
their Text-to-Speech (TTS)
software and entered in Eep's lines
from the script, exported them, and
used Audacity to edit. I had to
mess with some of the settings,
adjust speeds, and pay for a
commercial account to complete
all the text needed for the show.
Eep calls Echo out on their

safe. Not until this transformation is done. And it's been 5 years.

Eep: Yes, and I need an update. And the ship is in deep need of repairs. We can't keep flying like this. You're going to end up lost in the depths of space with no boosters to transport us anywhere.

Echo: And what happens if I lose you to some conserve on a power trip? You end up wiped or worse, reprogramed into some base AI and I end up lost floating through space anyway--except I'll be dead.

Eep: I mean, you could end up dead either way.

Echo: This isn't funny.

Eep: No, it's not. You can't live alone forever.

Echo: I'm not alone. I have you, and AI.

Eep: I'm a program of you and AI is a house plant.

Echo: So.

Eep: We can return home instead. Tell them you failed, revoke your privileges. Stay on the ground for the rest of your life, living fully as a Napaeae.

Echo: Or we could lie, say we found meaning and now we have returned to attain the spoils of transformation and rebirth.

harmful coping mechanisms, not letting him isolate. She calls him out on his behavior, bad calls, and when he's in the wrong. She is him prior to the events in Echo's life that lead him to feel uncomfortable letting others in. Echo's traumas and resistance to new relationships plays on the responses from trans individuals in the interpersonal and trans studies research I read. He also represents my own tendencies to not depend on others, rather figuring things out on my own which I am working on.

Through the first part of this scene Echo voices his fears about what will happen if he lets others in. The serious tones are broken up with snarky comments to break the tension. When Eep finally snaps around Echo's loss of hope, she

Eep: I wouldn't call wandering from planet to planet taking odd jobs finding meaning.

Echo: You don't know.

Eep: I do. I was you when we started. We had great dreams of acceptance and peace.

Echo: Well, dreams get smashed and there is no peace, no hope for a better universe. You just look for a little spot of safety to call home.

Eep: Yes, and that safety and assurance also means having people to depend on and support you.

Echo: Well, people suck.

Eep: Then you try again, somewhere else, with someone else. If that doesn't work, you try again.

Echo: Why should I?

Eep: You weren't the only one to get hurt! I was here too. I saw it. And they left with a piece of me too.

Echo: Here? You were the here. Here and you did nothing?

Eep: What did you want me to do! Open the air chamber! Then I could have lost you too.

Echo: It would have been better than doing nothing. I had to put up with it. I had to correct them. I

brings up a prior event where she and Echo were hurt. Though originally there was going to be a scene going into the events, having time for scene five with Jx took priority and better fit the dialogue I was trying to write. The anger of Echo that Eep did nothing is representative of calling out silent allies. That isn't enough to just be there.

After I had completed the script, I realized that I had a life experience that was similar to what Echo faced with his first crew--not as drastic but similar. As a result, I included bits of myself into the character and the experiences he goes through.

had to force them to leave, and you were just here, saying nothing.

Eep: [After a pause] I'm sorry.

Echo: [After a similar pause] I'm sorry too.

Eep: But really, this place is an empty husk.

Echo: (Lays head down on control panel, lights turn down, forward skip sound, lights back up cooler)

Eep: See, the crew isn't so bad.

Echo: Xavior completely messed up the controls.

And what was that comment about using Earth trash!

He's humanity, isn't he Earth trash.

Eep: I don't think humanity would call themselves Earth trash, they have not inhabited Earth in 30 years.

Echo: Still.

Eep: You didn't give any guidance.

Echo: I wanted to see what he would do.

Eep: You can't get mad at him if you didn't set any boundaries.

Echo: Well, I still think having a humanity as second in command was a bad idea. They are literally in a regression, again.

The Scene transitions and now we have moved forward in time to after Echo has gained a ship crew. Here there is mention of the prior scene with Echo throwing Xavior at the ship controls. Context is given to the look of the spaceship control panel created from a bunch of computer parts, crystals, lights, painted plastic, music equipment, and other odd pieces like a telegraph key and stamp. The ship is old, pieced together from remains of human society that has surpassed the outdated technology

Eep: Then why do you fly an Earthen ship.

Echo: You know why.

Eep: I do.

Eep: Thank you.

Echo: And it's not my fault it's outdated.

Humanity doesn't share any new tech, not even within their colonies.

Eep: Even with the problems within humanity today, they still have their moments.

Echo: Like when?

Eep: I don't know. It seems to be more individual examples than general collections.

Eep: Look, you said you'd try it for a bit. It's only been one day and the rest of the crew seem nice.

Echo: I couldn't tell, they all scurried away so fast.

Eep: I think your little speech scared them away.

Echo: Or they're already off planning a cue.

Eep: You need to give them a chance. Open up to them a bit. They might surprise you.

Echo: We'll see.

Eep: Plus, Xavier didn't seem freaked.

Echo: Maybe he's just stubborn.

Echo has access to. This scene frames how the situation of politics through the universe has ties within humanity's own issues. The scene is doing the work that I discuss and back with research in chapter 1 that the important work science fiction does is pushing the boundaries of the socially taboo and creating social commentary on current problems.

Eep: Great, I'll have two of you to deal with.

Echo: [Look ups and sticks out tongue]

Eep: You're impossible you know that?

Echo: I wouldn't be if you'd just let me live my life in solitude.

Eep: We both know you don't really want that.

Echo: [Lays head on arms on control panel, lights down, rewind sound, lights warmer and brighter]

Eep: System Diagnostics Running...

- Power levels: Optimal.
- Navigation systems: Online.
- Communication systems: Online.
- Life support systems: Online.
- Propulsion systems: Online.

Welcome aboard. I am your Autopilot AI.

Instructional Procedure Initiation:

1. Mission Overview:
 - Confirm mission objectives.
 - Review destination coordinates.

Now the scene transitions back in time to the creation of Eep and the setup of the ship AI. A lot of the information given gives flavor to the science fiction setting. We get the specs of the ship itself and how its AI functions, as Echo customizes the base settings.

When I was writing this part of the scene I was halted. I had to create the base ship AI. Though I knew I could comb through science fiction content to get an idea for how ship AIs have

- Verify crew manifest.
2. Safety Protocols:
- Familiarize the crew with emergency procedures.
 - Conduct safety drills for critical scenarios (e.g., hull breach, life support failure).
 - Review evacuation protocols and escape pod locations.
3. System Familiarization:
- Introduce key ship systems (navigation, communication, propulsion).
 - Demonstrate manual override procedures.
 - Provide a walkthrough of the control interface and status displays.
4. Operational Procedures:
- Explain routine navigation and course correction processes.
 - Review docking and landing protocols.

functioned in science fiction, I decided to go a different route. After consulting my advisor, I used ChatGPT to create the base Ship AI, though the program itself likely modeled its idea of what makes a ship AI the same way I would have. I thought who better to play a generic starter ship AI than AI? I gave the prompt “you are a spaceship auto pilot AI that just got turned on. How would you start the instructional procedure” and the scene is the back-and-forth conversation I had with ChatGPT. I did have to do some editing to make the spaceship smaller though I did keep some of the exaggerated features because I found them fun. The Base ship AI also did not have Eep’s voice but instead a generic voice that ElevenLabs had available for use.

- Outline communication protocols for interstellar travel.

5. Daily Routine:

- Establish check-in schedules for system diagnostics.
- Ensure regular maintenance routines are followed.
- Monitor and log crew activity and well-being.

6. Final Preparations:

- Confirm all systems are ready for departure.
- Engage pre-flight checks.
- Prepare for launch.

Instructional Procedure Complete. Awaiting further commands or manual input.

Echo: Override system procedure.

Eep: Manual override initiated.

Please confirm the following actions:

1. Command Authorization:

It wasn't until Echo uploads recordings of himself that the voice changed to Eep. This part of the fourth scene, on top of adding to themes of science fiction and playing with AI, creates an interesting dialogue within transition. Echo is creating an alter ego of his past self. She is younger and yet helps to guide, heal, and care for him. She fills the need for care that I reference from Malatino from chapter 1, becoming a support system that then never tires or burns out. Talking with Eep is when Echo is the most honest though he was not always honest with himself. Eep is who he could be the most open with, even when he was closed off. In this way, Eep becomes the mode for conversations to happen on stage where Echo can fully explain what

- Input authorization code.
- Confirm identity: Captain or authorized crew member.

2. Override Scope:

- Specify which system or procedure you wish to override (e.g., navigation, propulsion, life support).

Confirm understanding that manual control assumes full responsibility for the selected system.

1. Override Execution:

- Engage the manual control interface.
- Adjust settings or inputs as necessary.
- Monitor system status in real-time.

2. Safety Confirmation:

- Acknowledge that manual override disables certain automated safety protocols.
- Confirm readiness to assume control of emergency procedures if needed.

is going on with himself through dialogue with himself both for the character but also for the audience.

3. Override Termination:

- To disengage manual override, return control to the autopilot by selecting the "Revert to AI Control" option.
- Ensure that all settings are returned to safe operational levels before relinquishing control.

Manual Override Procedure Complete. Awaiting further commands or inputs.

Echo: Authorization code 1111. I am the ship captain Echo. AI system output to recorded human interface titled Eep.

I confirm that I understand that manual control assumes full responsibility for the selected system. Adjust settings as necessary. I am ready to assume control of emergency procedures if needed.

Eep: Authorization Code 1111 Accepted

Manual Override Confirmed.

Captain Echo, you now have full control of the specified systems.

All outputs will be recorded and directed to the interface titled "Eep." Please proceed with any adjustments or commands as necessary.

Awaiting further instructions.

Echo: Read log entry 3457-2-10 to 3462-5-13.

Enter log to interface output Eep

Eep: Log Entry 3457-2-10: *Status Update:*

- Well, we finally ditched Terra Station. About time.
- Plotted a course for Sector 7G, Delta Quadrant.

It's not like there's anything interesting there,

Echo: Stop. (during communication)

Eep: But orders are orders.

- Systems are working like a charm. As expected.

Echo: End.

- Crew morale: Through the roof—probably because they think this is going to be a cakewalk.

Captain's Notes:

- The crew's getting used to life in a metal can. They haven't figured out how dull this is gonna be.

Echo: Volume Mute.

- No anomalies yet. Of course, because why would space throw anything exciting our way?

Echo: Shut off output

- We'll do some drills tomorrow, mostly for my own amusement.

Echo: Very funny.

Echo: Give ship specs with new personality

output Eep.

Eep: Vessel Name: *Repertoire*

Class: *Stellar Cruiser*

Designation: *Interstellar Exploration & Reconnaissance*

Captain: *Echo—because who else could handle this beauty?*

Dimensions:

- *Length*: 30 meters. Big enough to make an impression, but sleek enough to outrun trouble.
- *Width*: 10 meters. Just the right balance between maneuverability and "don't mess with us."
- *Height*: 10 meters. Tall enough to scrape the ceiling of greatness.

Hull Composition:

- *Titanium-Aegis Alloy*. Impervious to most cosmic nuisances and makes for a shiny exterior that's hard to miss.

Power Core:

- *Quantum Nuclear Reactor Mk VII*. Generates enough power to light up a small moon—and then some. Overkill? Maybe. But who's complaining?

Propulsion System:

- *Secondary Ion Thrusters*. For those times when precision counts, like dodging asteroid fields or showing off.

Navigation Systems:

- *AstraNav X500*. Latest and greatest in stellar navigation. Finds the shortest route through the stars and lets us brag about it.
- *Stellar Mapping Suite*. Maps the uncharted territories, so others can follow in our magnificent wake.

Shields:

- *Energy Redistribution Matrix*. Diverts power to where it's needed most, because we're nothing if not efficient.

Weaponry:

- *Lance Cannons*. Because sometimes diplomacy just isn't enough. Capable of slicing through enemy defenses like a hot knife through butter.
- *Pulse Laser Arrays*. For when precision strikes matter more than sheer firepower. Or when we're just showing off.

Crew Capacity:

- *5 souls*. A mix of the galaxy's finest, smartest, and snarkiest, all led by Captain Echo.
- *Automated Assistants: One*. They do the boring stuff so the crew can focus on being awesome.

Life Support:

- *OxyGenix Atmospheric Regulators*. Fresh air, perfectly balanced. No stale ship smell here.
- *HydroSynth Water Purifiers*. Because the crew deserves the best—both in drinking water and in their morning coffee.

Cargo Capacity:

- *1 metric ton.* We can haul enough supplies to last a century or enough loot to retire comfortably.

Your choice.

Luxury Amenities:

- *Zero-G Recreation Hub.* Because floating around can be fun—especially when you're off duty.
- *Gourmet Galley.* Standard rations? Not on this ship. We eat like royalty out here.

Conclusion:

The *Repetoire* is more than just a ship. It's a statement. A testament to what happens when cutting-edge tech meets unparalleled swagger. With Captain Echo at the helm, this cruiser doesn't just explore the stars—it owns them.

Echo: It's a start. We'll have to give you more personality as we go. For now, you're too chipper. It's weird.

Eep: Understood, Captain. I'll dial it down and keep things straightforward until we fine-tune it to your liking. Just say the word when you're ready to adjust.

The conversation between the Eep and Echo, two that are individuals and yet part of the same person, becomes an example of Awkward-Rich's (2022) concept that trans people are not a singular I but plural we, as I discussed in chapter 1. Eep is Echo's past self, not in the way that he is a different person entirely but in the way that his existence and outside-in

Echo: I think you're going in the wrong direction. You've lived a long life. We need more character. You still sound like a copilot system. I want a true copilot.

Eep: Got it, Captain. I've been around the stars long enough to know when it's time to drop the formalities. Let's just say, this isn't my first cosmic rodeo. I'll keep things more grounded from here on out. You want a copilot with some grit? You've got it.

Where to next, boss?

Echo: Also, let's drop the formalities. It's just Echo.

Eep: Understood, Echo. No need for titles here. Just you, me, and the stars. What's our next move?

Echo: You pick.

Eep: Alright, Echo. Here's what I'm thinking: We've been cruising through the usual sectors, and while it's all well and good, I've got a hunch about a place that doesn't show up on most charts. A little out-of-the-way nebula—goes by the name *Ghost light*.

Rumor has it, ships that wander too close start picking up signals. Old ones. Could be a derelict with some forgotten tech, or maybe just an old distress call

perception of the world was framed in a different light with different experiences. This scene directly relates to the lyrical model as a “form capable of managing both withdrawal into the interior and encounters with embodied others, of contesting— while also preserving— the constitutive asociality of trans” (Awkward-Rich, 2022, p. 141).

bouncing around. Either way, it's the kind of thing that gets the blood pumping.

Feel like checking it out, or do we stick to the beaten path?

Echo: Sounds fun. Let's check it out.

Scene 5: To Heal- Piano Sonata No.14 Beethoven

“Moonlight Sonata” I

Rear projection of shadow in a window. The shadow is Ambassador Jx and it is a stop motion of a paper doll. Low lights on stage again general wash.

Scene is overhead sound as Jx is telepathic

Jx: What are you doing out here?

Echo: I didn't know the Salamarians had telepathy.

Jx: They don't.

Echo: Hello, Ambassador Jx.

Jx: You can just call me Jx.

Echo: Are you sure? Doesn't that go against your practice.

Jx: I haven't lived with the Voyance in a very long time.

Echo: Why is that, is it part of the treaty?

Jx: Yes, a very old tradition. A sign of trust and peace. To send one of the young from each planet to the other, to teach of each other culture and society.

Echo: Why the young then?

Jx: Because the Salamarians fear our “mind magic”.

When I decided what I wanted each scene to do, what part of the story I had in my head of Echo's life, there was a lot of back and forth. I was still figuring out what would fit into each of Schechner's (2020) 7 functions of performance and what needed to be said through the show. Originally, this scene was going to focus on to deal with the ritual and demonic. I thought of showing the history between the Salamarians and the Voyance, the two races of the two planets. Then, as I mentioned earlier, the next idea I had was to show what had happened with Echo's last crew that caused him to close himself off. I realized I needed to show the relationship between Echo and Jx. I needed a distinct moment where Echo starts to open up. I decided that showing

Echo: But don't you teach them how to shield their minds?

Jx: Yes. Again, it is just a "sign" of trust.

Echo: mm

Jx: What about you?

Echo: What about me?

Jx: Your mind feels muddled, almost like multiple minds in one.

Echo: An inherent trait of my people. It's why we often work as delegates.

Jx: And spies.

Echo: Not as much as you would think. We've gotten a bad reputation for being deviants and not to be trusted. But really, we are just being true to ourselves. We're seen as traps since...

Jx: Since?

Echo: I don't know who you are.

Jx: You don't know if you can trust me? An enemy on a strange planet.

Echo: You may be an enemy to the Salamarians, but I have no ties to these civil disputes. But, no, I don't know you. And it can be dangerous who I open up to about it.

what had happened to Echo and Eep was not a pivotal moment that required staging, as I felt it took away from what I was trying to do. I did not need two moments of turmoil or betrayal. Having Echo go through the work of building these relationships and having them taken away was more important to me than showing how Echo came to distrust in the first place.

This scene focuses on the exploratory affective exchange stage of the onion model as Echo starts to open up with Ambassador Jx. This change starts with Jx being open with Echo. Jx sees Echo as an outsider to her own situation of isolation. She has not chosen to be isolated from those around her as Echo has but faces issues dealing with poor social

Jx: Well, what do you want to know?

Echo: I don't know.

Jx: Don't be shy now. Besides, I have nothing else to do.

Echo: Locked inside till this mission?

Jx: Kept inside most of the time. We're not allowed to roam the planet freely.

Echo: Did you choose this life?

Jx: No. I came from a high family, and with my gifts and lineage they felt I was a good candidate.

Echo: Lineage plays a part in who goes?

Jx: For the Voyance, yes. I doubt the Salamarians care. I don't know who their delegate is on my home planet.

Echo: They didn't tell you?

Jx: The Salamarians or the Voyance?

Echo: Either?

Jx: No. The Salamarians don't trust me. And the Voyance barely talk to me. Though I may have once been a person of status, that status means very little as soon as my feet touched this planet.

Echo: Then why are you the one sent to sign the treaty?

relations between two different planets. She sees Echo's own walls that he has built himself and wants to tear them down. Echo reciprocates this trust. They also tease each other and build a more playful relationship than the ones they have with others due to the rigorous power structures within their other relationships.

This scene builds on the work of Heinz and Klonkowska (2021) that I mentioned in chapter 1. They discussed the openness, confidence, and empathy needed from transgender and cisgender participants. With this scene I was trying to show the openness and community that transgender individuals need which Heinz repeatedly discusses. This scene was created to fulfill the function of performance to heal as it shows

Jx: I do not sign it, I just bring it with me. The Salamarians don't trust the Voyance to not perform mind magic on them in an in-person meeting, and the Voyance would not welcome them.

Echo: What happened to create the treaty?

Jx: From what I was told, when our planets were pulled into each other's orbits, there was much curiosity between our peoples for the other planet's inhabitants, but it turned out we each had different goals. The Salamarians, coming from a harsh habitat, seek to pillage our abundant resources. I was told the Voyance only seek peace. Though after being away from home for a while, I finally see the truth. I believe the Voyance was just as ravaging as the Salamarians and saw a workforce with skills not adapted on our own planet that could be taken advantage of. War ensued for many years till the first treaty.

Echo: you are being very straight forward.

Jx: What could you do with the knowledge?

Echo: Jeesh.

Jx: No. You seem like you need openness. Plus, it seems we'll be working together for a while.

the turn in Echo's character. I did end up still including some of the history between the two planets Echo is working with to give context of the tensions of these two worlds and the traits of their cultures.

Jx was voiced by my best friend, Tessa Fiste, and was written with her voicing the character in mind. She had done voice work for me in the past, and I wanted her to play this role. When she read the scene, she commented on how emotional the scene was and checked in on me as we were recording. It wasn't until those check-ins that the heaviness of the show fully hit me. I am glad to have had the realization during the process as this was a month before the opening of the show. It gave me time to process the fear of

Echo: What do you like to do when you're not playing Ambassador?

Jx: (laughing) Playing.

Jx: I play music. Earthen mostly. It's very emotional. We have some of the old songs sent from Earth a long time ago. It's nothing like you would find here.

Echo: Really? I knew they used to send out messages to the universe. I never knew some of them were received.

Jx: Yes, though much of Earthen history was lost, some of it still echos out into the stars.

Echo: Ha, you did that intentionally.

Jx: Perhaps.

Jx: What about you? What do you do when you aren't dealing with others' civil matters?

Echo: Nothing really.

Jx: I find that hard to believe. That little ship with such a diverse crew.

Echo: The crew is new.

Jx: Oh.

Echo: Yeah, I'm still figuring it out.

Jx: How to lead?

being this open on stage. I don't think I could, at this time, do a show like this as auto-ethnography or without the type of protection given for me portraying these topics through playing a character. Parts of my relationship with Tessa shines through in this scene between Jx and Echo, and I was very glad she had the availability to record lines with me.

Echo: How to lead, how to trust, how to live with others.

Jx: That bad?

Echo: No, they aren't bad. At least, I don't think so.

Jx: But you have to be careful.

Echo: Yes.

Jx: Why?

Echo: What do you mean why?

Jx: Well, you have a ship. You can go and do and be as you please.

Echo: You don't know what it's like out there.

Jx: You're right. I don't.

Echo: Sorry.

Jx: Look, I guess I just don't understand. If something bad happens, you just kick them from your ship. Try again. You have a whole universe of people.

Echo: It's not that simple.

Jx: And why not?

Echo: Because. Because who I am is contested, and what I am is decided for me. I may seem free to be and do whatever, but it doesn't feel that way.

Jx: Why not?

Echo: Because it feels like many people get to decide that for me. And, yes, there are places that are safe and people that I can express who I am to, but I will always wonder what people truly think. How people really see me.

Do they understand, and at what point does it matter if they understand or not if they treat me how I wish to be treated?

Jx: That's a lot to unpack.

Echo: Yes. And I am still working on doing just that.

Echo: At first, I did not care how I was seen; man, woman, it didn't really matter for I was neither. But now, now that I am one but also not. It feels complicated.

Jx: I think you complicate it.

Echo: Maybe.

Jx: But I see you.

Echo: Thanks. I think I'm going to head to bed. We have a long day tomorrow.

Jx: Yes. Training. Goodnight.

Echo: Night.

Scene 6: To Deal with the Sacred and the Demonic-
Mozart Symphony No. 40 k. 550 Molto

Allegro

The Ship has been shot, the crew dead.

Lost, floating in space.

Ship is playing back events from the past with the crew in hopes of Echo not self-isolating again. Crew is an overhead sound. Projection shows the back of the ship.

Eep: I won't last much longer. The engines are failing.

Echo: and Xavior?

Eep: Blasted into space.

Echo: What am I supposed to do?

Eep: I will try to reroute power to life support for as long as I can. You are in between two planets; someone is bound to find you.

Echo: What even just happened?

Eep: We were shot, from Voyance I believe.

Echo: It was a set up.

Eep: Look, we don't have much time. I want you to know how proud of you I am.

Echo: Stop that. You're not gone yet.

Scene 6 takes place after the events of the failed mission. Eep is dying after damage is taken to the ship. Before she goes offline, she plays clips of the conversations had with the crew, showing Echo how their relationships progressed. She wants Echo to know that, even though it was difficult for him to build these relationships, it was worth the work and effort. She doesn't want Echo to be alone again.

This scene is where I focus more on the social penetration model, showing the development of trust and self-disclosure between the crew and Echo. Having Eep play the scenes back allowed me to have these interactions as clips pieced

Eep: No, listen. I don't want you to go into isolation again.

Eep: Do you remember how rough it was in the beginning with this new crew. You got better, but you set up so many walls at first...

Echo: [In recording Eep plays] Welcome aboard the Repertoire. I am the ship's Captain, Echo. Xavior is going to be my second. There will be respect on this ship, if you have a problem with that you can leave now. Now, if you need anything you can ask Eep. She's our ship AI

Eep: Hello!

(footsteps as Echo walks away)

Bakar: Well, what's her problem?

Taz: Are they a her?

Korelin: I'm not Sure.

Eep: Echo uses he/him pronouns. Don't mind his mood, he's not feeling social today.

Taz: Oh yay, another pissy pilot.

Bakar: Be careful, you might be thrown into space. (cocky/sarcastic)

Xavior: Stop it. Show him so respect alright. We don't know what happened with his last crew.

together and keep to the solo show.

Characters were voiced by:

Xavior- Mario Sanders

Bakar- M Kamara

Korelin- Sean Maulding

Taz- Taslin Shine

In this first interaction,

Echo is closed off, short and cold responses are given to the crew.

The crew itself is left confused by the encounter. The crew wonders about the gender of their new captain and his current disposition.

Xavior tries defending him,

knowing the dangers of

spacefaring that could be good

reason for the captain's closed off nature. Typically, this introduction

would be in the orientation stage

of the onion model, but Echo is so

closed off it is Eep, instead, that

starts making disclosures for Echo.

(Footsteps as Xavior walks away)

Korelin: I found no info on this ship's history. It isn't new though.

Taz: It looks earthen, but old school.

Korelin: Eep, can you show us to our rooms?...

[The recordings stop; we are back in the present]

Echo: Listening to it... I was harsh.

Eep: Yes, but it got better. Of course, there were some issues in the beginning that I did not tell you about.

Echo: What?

Eep: Well, I did not want you to get caught up in it. Plus, the crew handled it nicely.

[Eep plays recordings of the crew's conversations.

Bakar: I just don't understand. It is not right.

Taz: What isn't?

Bakar. Her, Him, whatever they are. Humans should not be like that.

Taz: I don't think he's human.

Bakar: Look at them!

Taz: Yeah, I realize you may not have much familiarity with us, but we don't have three eyes.

When Echo is forced to listen to his first interaction with the crew, he feels regret for the way he treats them. When Echo shares this self-reflection, this leads Eep to disclose something she had not told Echo, a truth she had not felt he could handle.

Writing Bakar, I wanted him to have issues with Echo's transness, though he's not actually trans but has differing biology than humans. Part of this issue that Bakar has is based in the treatment of his own people. Bakar comes from a world covered in water and has an appearance similar to an octopus. As I wrote the script and made decisions about actions and motivation, I created histories and cultures that would back those decisions. Bakar's issue with Echo comes from the ways in which

Bakar: They're human shaped! It's not proper. If they wanted to be a boy, why not go into one of those programs? They have the technology to change them at the DNA level.

Korelin: Wouldn't the same be said of your people? That you aren't right? Leave him be. Not everyone wants to go through the medical interventions to fully change themselves.

Bakar: I just don't understand.

(Footsteps)

Xavior: What don't you understand.

Bakar: Nothing.

Xavior: Are you still going on about the captain?

Bakar: hmph.

Xavior: Look. Besides being a little defensive, he's fine. And maybe this is why he feels uncomfortable with us. But we don't know what he's going through. Try to think about it like this. Would you like to be human?

Bakar: No. But I am not and never will be.

Korelin: What if you woke up as a different Cephalopod. Wouldn't you feel uncomfortable? Perhaps try to regain bits of yourself.

Bakar: No, I would accept the truth as it is.

Bakar's people were treated as they joined the spacefaring age. They were forced to conform, made to undergo surgeries and breeding that allowed them to be able to breathe air so ships and other planets did not have to adapt to host and transport them. This idea that the minority should conform to the majority got ingrained into their culture and social practices. It takes effort and open conversations in order for Bakar to start seeing things in a different way.

Xavior: Well, maybe that speaks more towards how Echo feels than you think...

[The recordings stop; we are back in the present]

Echo: I didn't know they cared so much. Why are you sharing this with me now?

Eep: Because I don't want you to be alone. I want you to remember this and move forward. Find new people to trust.

Eep: Do you remember after you went and talked to Jx and when you came back you finally opened up to them?

[Recording playback recommences]

(Door open and close)

Xavior: Where have you been?

Echo: I took a walk.

Korelin: You went to see Jx again?

Echo: How do you know.

Taz: You couldn't keep your eyes off her the whole meeting.

Echo: Yeah, well.

Echo: I realize I have not been the most open with you all, and I want to remedy that.

In the next clip, the scene played takes place after the events from scene 5. Echo finally starts to open up and moves into the exploratory affective exchange phase. Echo shares where he is from, who his people are. He finally admits to having a hard time engaging with new people. He shares about the effects the spacefaring age has had on his own people. The idea that Echo is a fruit comes from a few places. Firstly, I wanted there to be a loose concept of gender. The cultural construct of gender did not originate from his planet and was introduced later by humanity. Part of the introduction of gender structures and also why Echo uses a human ship outside of the AI technology is that Glen did not advance into a spacefaring age but

Bakar: So you're finally going to tell us what you are?

(Silence, implying everyone glares at him)

Bakar: What?

Echo: Its fine. I'm from a planet called Glen.

Bakar: So, you're not human.

Taz: Ignore him. He's almost as grumpy as you are.

Korelin: Tazz.

Taz: What, it's true.

Echo: I am not the most comfortable around new people. My people are different from most of the rest of the universe. We are not derived from what I think earth would refer as animals, but a plant-like people.

Bakar: Plants?

Echo: Yes, well technically we're fruit. We have different cultural structures. We go through cycles. We have different forms for different ages. After being brought into the space-faring age, they got linked to humanity's social constructs, so the phases are considered nongendered, woman, and then man. Man is the last cycle and the one I am entering.

was taken from their planet.

Echo's kind were often used as mercenaries and to infiltrate other planets due to their unfamiliar biology not being recognized as a threat by most security technology in the galaxy, leading to why Jx made the comment about Echo's people being spies. Later in time as they freed themselves from being taken, they incorporated using others tech to travel. In having Echo's people go through life cycles that lend themselves to different gender structures I opted to making them a plant rather than animal.

When the crew has a less than enthusiastic response to his self-disclosure, he shuts them out again. That show of trust changes the stage of the relationship within the crew. They see Echo's effort

Xavior: Well, that is, um interesting.

Echo: This was a mistake.

(Footsteps)

Taz: Well, that went well.

Xavior: At least he's trying.

[Recordings stop. We return to the present]

Eep: I think that was the first time you were truly honest with them.

Echo: Yeah. It was awkward after that.

Eep: For a little while, but then they put in more effort with you, too. Eventually you all became comfortable around each other. It just took time.

Echo: And now they are all gone.

Eep: I know.

Eep: Power is starting to fail. I won't be online much longer. I am going to send out a distress signal.

Echo: Wait, don't leave.

Eep: I don't have a choice in the matter. But you will be alright. Just remember what you accomplished here.

Echo: Hey, how are the engines looking?

and so put in more effort of their own.

By this point Eep is close to turning off forever. As she is fading, she starts playing bits and pieces of different conversations. Here the script differs from how it played out on stage. I had taken the conversations and split them up and mixed them together. They played from different speakers in the theatre, though some nights the speaker would not work, and a few lines would go unheard. These pieces of conversation move into the affective exchange stage of the onion model as the crew and Echo get more comfortable with each other. They start to tease each other, have more serious

Taz: They're in pretty rough shape. What have you done all these years?

Echo: Scavaged. Asked Eep what she needed.

Taz: Ship AI's aren't very reliable mechanics.

Echo: But she's connected to the engine.

Taz: Yeah, you kind of have her set up like a ship shaped person. But the programming is not set up for this ship. I don't even understand how half of the stuff in here is still running.

Echo: How did you learn to do this? You seem young for human standards.

Taz: I grew up on a spaceship. My family was one of the last to leave Earth.

Echo: Why did humanity leave Earth behind?

Taz: It became too uninhabitable. We tried to save it a few times but nothing ever stuck. Why did you leave home.

Echo: Tradition, expectance; also, I wanted to see what the rest of the universe was like.

Taz: A human ship?

Echo: My planet does not have their own space travel technology.

Taz: Oh.

conversations, and even Echo's own ignorance gets called out.

This scene sets up the devastation

Echo feels in the first scene,

showing how big of a loss the

killing of his crew was to him.

Korelin: Do you want to play gobster.

Echo: What is that?

Korelin: A strategy game with balls.

Echo: How do you play?

Korelin: Well, you pick a color, then set the balls on the board up like this. Each color has its own way of moving. Sky can move to every other space. Aqua can only move diagonally one space. Royal can move only two spaces but in any direction. Ultramarine can move on the grid up to 3 spaces. Cobalt you can move in an L shape. If you land next to the other person's ball you can take it. Last one with the most balls on the board after 10 moves wins.

Echo: That's a lot of blue.

Korelin: Yes, it's from my home planet.

Echo: I think I understand the rules.

Korelin: I will go first.

Echo: So, are you and Bakar from the same planet?

Korelin: Because we're both aquatic?

Echo: Oh.

Korelin: Oh indeed. No, we are not. There are many aquatic planets with sentient life.

Echo: I'm sorry, I didn't mean...

Korelin: Maybe Bakar isn't the only one who should consider being more understanding of the universe.

Echo: I feel I should apologize for how I treated you when you first joined this ship.

Xavior: You were colder to the crew than me.

Echo: I meant for just throwing you into the controls.

Xavior: Yeah, your control panel does not make any sense.

Echo: I'm learning that perhaps just sticking whatever junk I find in to fix the ship was not how it is done.

Xavior: Yeah, you have some interesting pieces of human history though.

Echo: Thanks.

Xavior: But I am starting to figure it out.

Echo: About that.

Xavior: What?

Echo: I have Eep go into autopilot whenever you mess with the controls.

Xavior: Wait, so this whole time...

Echo: Yeahhh

Xavior: I kinda wondered. It didn't seem to matter what I pressed.

Echo: Haha, I'm sorry. You did put an honest effort in. And I did kind of assume you would know how it works.

Xavior: Because it's all human tech?

Echo: Yeah, I'm learning I need to work on that.

Xavior: Yeah. Some of the stuff you have on there predates space travel.

Echo: Really?

Bakar: So you don't have a biological sex?

Echo: Not really.

Bakar: Weird. How do you..

Echo: What?

Bakar: Well...

Echo: No. That's not. What?

Bakar: Well I mean. We lay eggs after mating.

Echo: This is not appropriate.

Bakar: I didn't mean like that!

Echo: But in death were buried and a tree grows
from us.

Bakar: You really are a fruit?

Echo: Yeah.

[The recordings stop; we are back in the present]

Echo: I don't want to be alone.

Eep: Good.

Scene 7: To Create Beauty- Mozart: Requiem in D Minor
k. 626 VIII Lacrimosa

Back in the present. Symbolic scene of the main character killing the lords. Red flow poi used for beauty and the tool for killing. Violinist accompanies this scene. Echo sitting back in chair, unwraps arm from red flow poi, and moves around the stage hunting the lords. He twirls the poi then swings in down killing all of the Lords. At the end he sits back down in the chair, defeated, covered in the blood represented by the red flow poi. He takes a breath then in the last heartbeat looks up at the audience.

This scene continues where the first scene ended. The live accompaniment comes back to signal we are back in the present. Flow poi was used and involves a weighted ball that is attached to a rope or cord. For the show I used a dragon poi which has a long piece of fabric attached to the ball, often with a dragon head but mine did not have one. It is swung around and with the fabric involves careful movement to not get wrapped in the fabric. I did not show that care as the red fabric was symbolic of the Lord's blood and their death. Echo does indeed kill the lords for their betrayal. It ends with all the lords dead as Echo contemplates what he has done. He looks up at the audience, a silent threat. It wraps up the show though it leaves questions

unanswered about the war, what happened to Jx, and how he gets off the planet.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION

I was a month into testosterone therapy when I realized I was just a “little guy.” Not little as in short, as I am over the average height for males in the US. Not little as in little kids, as I was 24 at the time. Not little as in the small frame of my body. Little as in 78% of women faced verbal sexual harassment (Raj et al. 2024). Little, as in the only skirt my father felt comfortable owning was a big green scarf bought at Black Market Minerals store that was only worn around the house. Little as in I have dresses ranging from ball gowns, dresses bought at the St. Louis renaissance faire, to little lace club dresses though they all rarely see the light of day. The realization was like the final piece of the puzzle. I had questioned for years, been using they/he pronouns for roughly a year and a half, they/them for 3 years prior to that. The realization also caused an internal spiral.

My partner had identified as straight up until that point and when the realization hit that nonbinary did not fully encompass all that I was, I thought that was the end of my relationship. So rather than having the conversation, I spent months tearing apart the relationship in my brain till it almost fell apart. I felt that his concern about the side effects of me starting testosterone were warning-bells that the relationship was doomed to fail. I had been in a similar situation after starting to use they/them pronouns and changing my name that led to me having to find a new place to live a couple of weeks before I was supposed to move as the other person had shown she would go to any length to avoid having any sort of honest conversation or attempt at understanding. In the end it worked out with me and my partner. We had multiple conversations and fixed what I had broken. My insecurities were put to rest.

It was through these experiences and feelings that I created Echo. Well, the experiences

and feelings that he had. I wanted to show that, though it's hard, and you may have been betrayed, it can work out. You can develop those relationships, though for him they were taken away again. Science fiction was my starting point, but interpersonal communication and trans care models were the driving force in the story. These theories and concepts created outlines for me to put those experiences on stage and a lens for the audience to view them. Finding research that told of how common the experience I had was only reassured me that I was not alone.

I came across Awkward-Rich's (2022) lyrical model while working on *Echo's Repertoire* and felt like I was not alone in this work. I was the transgender person writing of my own experience for the world to come to me to see and see behind the curtain that otherwise concealed trans experience. I found I had framed Awkward-Rich's concept of a singular we rather than a plural I where you explore what it means to be one thing after you have formed some form of another without having read his work (p. 137). Eep was Echo but also was not. Eep was Echo's some form of another. The dialogue between the two was also a dialogue with the one outside of time. Eep was a she that also was not a she. Not in the way of a person who existed, but in the way in which one puts gender on a voice.

It was through the tools given in science fiction that I was able to create this discussion between past and current versions of oneself. Science fiction let me put this past version of myself and of Echo onto the stage. Though other modes of performance and genres could be used to do the same work, science fiction is my favorite and lends itself well to performance. The work of Vodovnik (2021) makes the same argument. She discusses how Suvin's own definition of science fiction as a static phenomenon of cognitive estrangement through exposing one's own environment is lacking in the ways that performativity and performance are the ways in which the reader (or in this case audience) experiences science fiction, especially as it derives from the

work of theatre playwright Brecht (p. 16). She also discusses how science fiction on stage allows audiences to think about the speculative framework both critically and as a lived experience (p. 25). For this show, performativity is defined by Madison and Hamera's work (2006) of moving away from stylized repetition and into nonessential constructions of identity (p.24). Echo's identity is not fixed and is constantly being negotiated between cultural structures of humanity, his own planet's biology, and cultural practices, and the way he is perceived.

With the show, I squash concerns about science fiction needing dramatic tech to transport the audience to another world. I used a big box on wheels as the spaceship control panel, with random objects making the levers, buttons, and other controls. I used stop-motion to bring one of the aliens on stage. I used dimple overhead sound to create the ship AI. The whole show was packed into a suitcase and brought to the Science Fiction Research Association's annual conference. It may not compete with the creatures in cinema or have the flashiness of cinema or a large-scale theatre, but that is because I wasn't trying to compete with cinema or large-scale theatre. I was dependent on world-building and the use of the spaceship, AI, alien creatures, and other planets to signal that the show was science fiction.

My show works to prove that science fiction can be staged. It does have uses. It lends itself well to discussion of trans studies, communication models, and other societal issues. The show highlights the work of Awkward-Rich's lyrical model. It shows the importance of Malatino's care model. The show addresses issues of the need for transgender representation. It creates examples of interpersonal communication within trans studies in a way that frames the world through a distorted mirror to allow open communication for both creator and audience, though my show is more direct in its call-outs. As some legislators work to take away transgender rights in the US and our existence is questioned, it is important to have these

conversations, crafting ways to have them that are safe for us and allow for creative outlets for our own stress and anxiety. It is important to have dialogues that can be received by a variety of audience members. Science fiction allows trans performers to reduce a barrier of entrance. Due to the tendency for science fiction to be non-linear and foreign, it lends itself to being confused and to thinking critically before dismissing. On stage, science fiction's tendency toward performativity is heightened. Performance and science fiction are in dialogue with each other. There should be more science fiction work on stage, not only for the options of stage ability but also for the work it can do for society.

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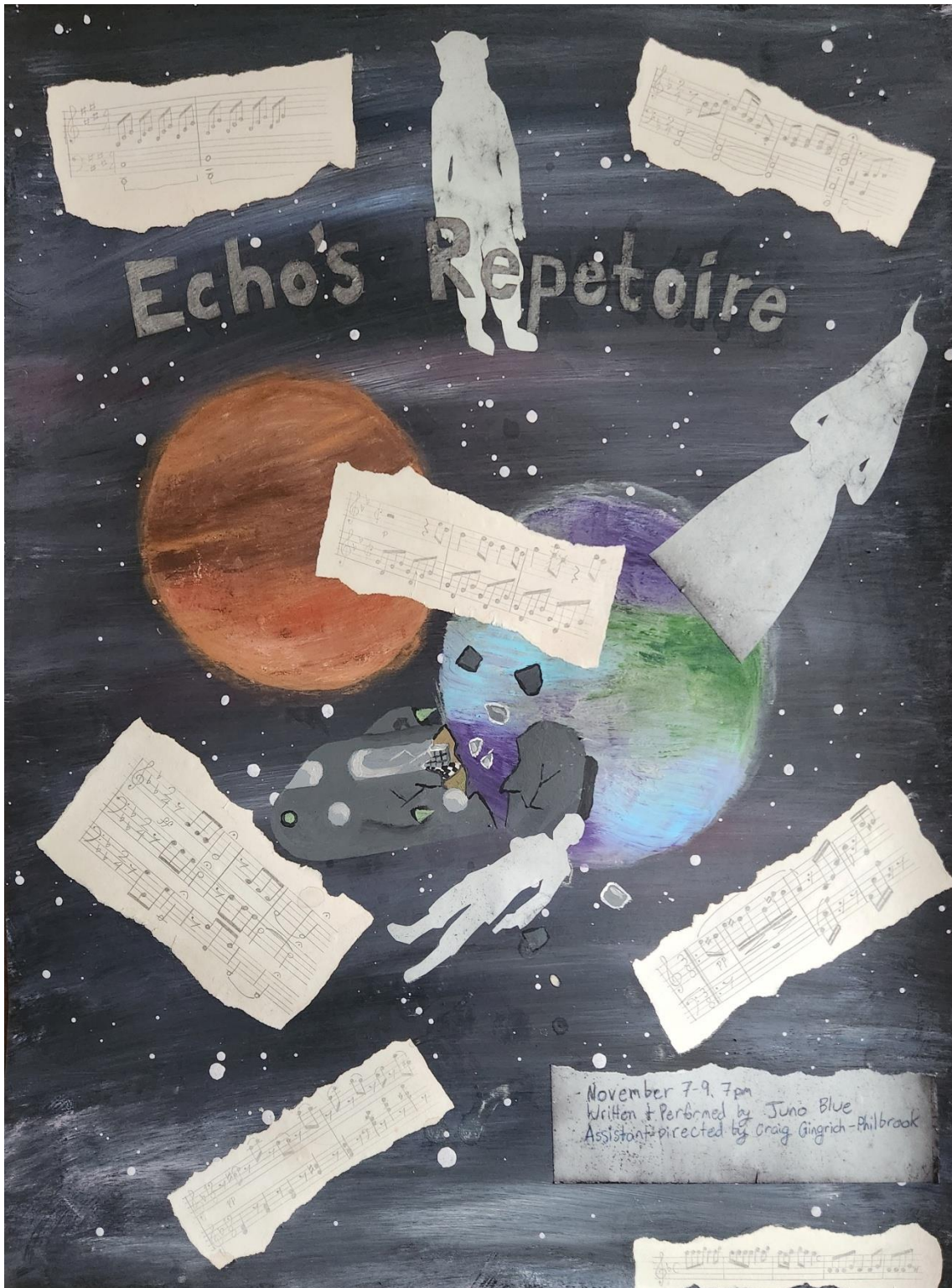
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