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FORMAL GENRE INTERRUPTION IN URSULA K. LE GUIN AND SAMUEL R. DELANY

by

CHRISTOPHER RAY REYNOLDS

Under the Direction of Jay Rajiva, PhD

ABSTRACT

How do authors Ursula K. LeGuin and Samuel R. Delany, both of whose work is closely concerned with social constructs of gender and sexuality, open space for underrepresented voices in the structure of their works framed by restrictive genre conventions? The primary structural focus of the study will be on *affordances*, a term Caroline Levine draws from design theory to examine the narrative and thematic possibilities made available by specific formal elements of a text. Ursula Le Guin's and Samuel Delany's early novels both feature marked structural departures from their genre conventions. By attending to the affordances these authors open for themselves by these departures, I intend to demonstrate both the new narrative possibilities for the exploration of social constructs pursued by the texts and a reflexive understanding of the values embedded in the genre conventions they interrupt.

INDEX WORDS: Genre, Science fiction, Fantasy literature, Affordances, Critical theory,
American genre fiction

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by

CHRISTOPHER RAY REYNOLDS

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, for their ongoing support and patience, and to my friends for their understanding and curiosity.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	V
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Research Questions	2
1.3 Focal Texts	3
2 CRITICAL CONTEXT	6
2.1 Genre as Such	6
2.2 The Structures of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature	7
2.3 Formalist Critical Approach: Narrative and Social Forms	10
3 “TRUTH FROM TRUTH”: URSULA K. LE GUIN’S <i>ROCANNON’S WORLD</i>	
11	
3.1 Science Fiction as a Genre Envelope	12
3.2 Genre Discussion with Criticism.....	27
4 “AN INFINITE NUMBER OF TRUE THINGS”: SAMUEL R. DELANY’S	
<i>THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION</i>	30
4.1 Genre as a Myth-mosaic	32
4.2 Genre Discussion with Criticism.....	47
5 CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER STUDY	50
REFERENCES.....	53

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The structures that organize our narratives and the structures that organize our lives are in close conversation, and an examination of how narrative-organizing structures, such as genres, are formed, maintained, and expanded, offers insight into the hierarchies of power embedded in them.

This study will rely upon two main layers of critical context. A model for genre as such will be derived from formalist theorization, chiefly Tzvetan Todorov, who considers genre a set of discursive choices within a broader group of discursive acts that differentiate literary texts from other forms of speech, choices made meaningful by social convention. For method, new formalist approaches targeting the utility derived by formal strategies will organize the approach, such as that of Caroline Levine, who seeks to make connections between literary forms and formal organizations of broader social contexts.

Formalist critical strategies fluctuate in popularity in scholarship, with critics currently (and productively) more concerned with social contexts surrounding texts and the potential for reinforcement of status-quo organizations moving in directions like New Historicism and Deconstruction. At the same time, critical attention to genre fiction is still relatively young, suggesting the possibility that what value is to be gained by formalist attention may not have had an opportunity to be fully explored before the critical landscape shifted. This appears to me as a critical gap that my approach intends to fill. Levine provides a defense of formal approaches that acknowledges the concerns of those wary of solipsistically isolating texts and reinforcing hierarchies by overly totalizing formal models. “The New Critics’ focus on the extraordinary plurality of overlapping forms,” she argues, “could prompt us to expand the logic of

intersectional analysis dramatically, continuing to take the structures of race, class, and gender extremely seriously, but tracking the encounters of these with many other kinds of forms, from enclosures to networks to narrative resolutions” (*Forms* p.11). Her theorization of narrative form, in its emphasis on the connections between the aesthetic and the social, are particularly compatible with this study, and suggest a productive thread of inquiry I intend to pursue through it: attending to the forms through which socially concerned authors explore power hierarchies and produce imaginative rearrangements of them.

1.2 Research Questions

The New Wave of American genre fiction in the 1960's and 1970's marked a period of innovation both in the subjects addressed by works in science-fiction and fantasy literature and in the formal features of the genres themselves. As such, works representative of this period provide useful texts for investigating the connections between formal genre characteristics and the wider social contexts those genres operate within. Given the dynamic sociopolitical contexts of genre authors of the '60's and '70's, it is perhaps not surprising that issues of social hierarchies, power imbalances, intersections between governments and individuals, and identity politics are quite pronounced as thematic threads running through these works. Nor, given increased public attention to such issues, is it surprising that the New Wave also features the entry of voices into science-fiction and fantasy publications previously quite underrepresented in those spheres, which had been (and continues to be) dominated by white, male, heterosexual writers. It is this intersection of formal genre innovation and the availability of novel perspectives in New Wave genre fiction that will be the focus of this study: how do authors open new spaces for novel voices within restrictive genres, and what ideological assumptions are

embedded in the structures of genres themselves? Given the social critique at the heart of works like those by Ursula Le Guin and Samuel Delany, a critical approach similarly concerned with the social contexts framing narrative would seem appropriate. With its potential for being limited by the texts and hand and unexamined recapitulation of hierarchies framing its aesthetic assumptions would seem at first to disqualify a formalist strategy. However, more recent reworkings of formalist approaches, particularly that of Caroline Levine, mitigate this risk by connecting aesthetic forms to social ones directly. “The form that best captures the experience of colliding forms,” Levine argues, “is narrative” (*Forms* p.19). And, more pertinent to the genres examined in this study, “I treat fictional narratives as productive thought experiments that allow us to imagine the subtle unfolding activity of multiple social forms” (19). Science fiction and fantasy literature, in part defined by their function as thought-experiments and imaginings of alternatives to their framing cultural context, provide ample opportunities to witness the forms colliding within and outside their texts—among them the conventions that frame Le Guin and Delany and their departures from those conventions.

1.3 Focal Texts

To narrow the investigation into genre structure and social contexts, the study focuses on texts from two representative authors of particularly innovative fiction from the New Wave: Samuel R. Delany and Ursula K. Le Guin. Both suit the concerns of this study in their formal experimentation and in approaching issues connected to their social contexts in their texts. Further, both function as representatives of groups hitherto underrepresented in genre fiction. Their formal experimentation, pushing their work somewhere into the interstices between science-fiction, fantasy, folk-tale, and myth, make them well-suited to a study examining the

consequences of such departures from conventional genre work. Critical approaches to these writers, in fact, frequently bring multiple genres into the conversation to anchor their analyses of both of these authors' work. For this study, Ursula K. Le Guin's *Rocannon's World* and Samuel R. Delany's *The Einstein Intersection* will be the focal texts.

Le Guin's 1966 *Rocannon's World* figures as an entry in a series of shared-universe novels and short stories centered on a gradually unifying collection of planets and cultures. In this novella, Le Guin uses the variation in technological progress between two cultures to explore cultural contact and divergent ways of knowing. Its protagonists, one a representative of a vast collection of worlds and another a native of a new world to join the union, occupy different narrative spaces, one a science-fictional rationalization of events, the other a more fantastic recounting.

Delany's *The Einstein Intersection*, published in 1967, explores the unusual setting of a post-humanity universe. Its characters begin as nebulous, formless beings that follow the passing of humanity and struggle to take up its forms—social, cultural, and bodily. The difficulties encountered in their assimilation of the cultural and social ruins of humanity offer the text an opportunity to explore the formation of identity from inherited cultural and social contexts, as well as perform an array of re-contextualizations of cultural resources. Science-fiction and fantasy tropes, pop-culture icons, and mythological threads are pulled into a collage that generates insight into its constituent parts by its novel arrangements of them.

Critics have observed how specific narrative techniques employed in both of these texts have facilitated their discussion or broader social issues—Le Guin's spatial and temporal constraints arguing for a universal movement toward unity (Nudelman 1975), Delany's autobiographical commentary driving at a quest for bodily identity (Lunde 1996)—but less

emphasis has been placed on how these techniques mark departures from the genres they operate within. Neither text fits comfortably into the general understanding of either genre's spaceships or dragons, nor the more focused spiral-shaped estrangement of Suvin or wonder-comedy of Attebery. And the goal here is not to press-fit them into such categories, nor develop new, more compatible pigeon-holes for them. This analysis seeks to examine how these authors use formal experimentation to open spaces in their genres, what (in Levine's terms) *affordances* are gained by interrupting genre conventions. What this understanding of the genre-work of specific texts will enable is a broader interrogation of those genre parameters themselves for embedded ideological assumptions and restrictions.

2 CRITICAL CONTEXT

The theoretical framework for this study consists of three levels of focus. First, a working model of what genre *is* will be drawn from Mikhail Bakhtin and Tzvetan Todorov. Next, critics closer to the specific genres at hand will be used to tailor the model to the needs of the focal texts: Darko Suvin for science fiction, and Brian Attebery for fantasy literature. Finally, Caroline Levine will ground the direct critical approach, enabling the comparison of formal genre elements (and innovations) in the focal works to social forms framing them.

2.1 Genre as Such

Central to Bakhtin's model, such as in his "Discourse in the Novel," is a notion of literature as one example of a wider system of speech—of literature as essentially dialogic. His "principle idea," of this work is that "the study of the verbal can and must overcome the divorce between an abstract 'formal' approach and an equally abstract 'ideological approach.'" (Leitch 1076). Instead, he offers an alternative in which "form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon—social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors" (1076). Essentially, Bakhtin reinforces this study's operating notion that genre is political, and his proposed entanglement of style and its context also aligns with the notion that it is political down to its stylistic choices.

Todorov's work is in direct conversation with Bakhtin's, and his model of genre is consequently compatible. His notion of literature is of a type of discourse, like Bakhtin's, distinguished from the day-to-day use of language socially. For Todorov, literary text functions as something like a game, a self-contained system of recombination pursuing new configurations of the techniques and projects that comprise literary tradition. This notion of an isolated system of recombined literary elements is reflected in his view of genre as a construct. In *Genres in*

Discourse, Todorov explains literary genres as effects of rule-violation of prior genres. “The fact that a work 'disobeys' its genre,” he explains, “does not mean that the genre does not exist. It is tempting to say 'quite the contrary'" (*Genres in Discourse* p. 14). With sets of conventions organizing the behaviors of texts, a text which provides alternative behavior functions as the seed of a new genre—a new set of behaviors expected of the text. Among all possibilities in literary expression, genres mark texts availing themselves of particular acts of speech, a set of acts made meaningful by social convention: "The literary genres, indeed, are nothing but such choices among discursive possibilities, choices that a given society has made conventional" (10). Aligning with Bakhtin, Todorov observes genre (and literature generally) at the intersection between formal functions detached from the wider social context of the text and those social forces operating on it.

2.2 The Structures of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature

At the second level, theorists concerned with the specific genres of fantasy and science fiction narrow the focus of this model to those forms organizing the focal texts. In *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, Darko Suvin provides a theoretical history and examination of the internal mechanisms of the genre that can provide a frame to understand Le Guin's and Delany's genre innovations. For Suvin, science-fiction (SF) is a genre of novelty and the consequences of that novelty. “SF,” he writes, “is a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment” (Suvin 7). Here, he presents the overarching goal of the work, as well as the major techniques used to pursue it. Estrangement is the displacement experienced by characters (and readers) in

SF when something foreign to their experience demands a reordering of their understanding—this brought about through cognition. This encounter or discovery is the main narrative thrust of a SF text, according to Suvin. Suvin makes this overarching-concern argument to distinguish SF texts from others (like fantastic ones) that feature unusual or unexpected elements, with SF being wholly governed by the consequences to the established order of those novel phenomena.

In *Strategies of Fantasy*, Brian Attebery defines fantasy literature as at the levels of genre, formula, and mode. His definition at the level of genre describes a kind of “fuzzy set” (Attebery 12) orbiting around Tolkien: “one way to characterize the genre of fantasy is the set of texts that in some way or other resemble *The Lord of the Rings*” (14). At the other levels, he describes fantasy as “indeed, both formula and mode: in one incarnation a mass-produced supplier of wish fulfillment, and in another a praise- and prize-worthy means of investigating the way we use fictions to construct reality itself” (1). His definitions track features at varying levels of abstraction that resemble discussions of form by Caroline Levine, scalable structures that are persistently recognizable despite varying contexts and scales. One such feature that identifies fantasy is a balance between mimesis on the one hand and pure invention on the other. Referring to critic Kathryn Hume, he writes “fantasy and mimesis are the fundamental operations of the narrative imagination...if the world were a simpler place and its rules less ambiguous, we might say that mimesis tells what is and fantasy tells what isn’t” (3). He hastens to add that no work is a pure example of either pole, but that works blend the two, with fantasy being more focused on the invented: “Mimesis without fantasy would be nothing but reporting one’s perceptions of actual events. Fantasy without mimesis would be a purely artificial invention, without recognizable objects or actions” (3). Thus, in whatever proportion, “the essential content” of fantasy “is the impossible” (14). Events that, like Suvin’s *novum*, violate the known rules of our

reality, but unlike those, are neither the primary focus of the fantasy story, nor impossible in the universe of the story itself. Another of the characteristics identified by Attebery is the use of the impossible to evoke significances that operate on a symbolic level: “fantastic literature is full of ‘loaded’ images, concrete emblems of problematic or valuable psychological and social phenomena. The combination of such images into a narrative order is an attempt to achieve iconic representation, so that the narrative can, like the city map, give us new insight into the phenomena it makes reference to” (7). The other characteristic use of the impossible is to evoke a sense of wonder, which he describes as “a key to fantasy’s impact,” and “an alternative formulation of the idea of estrangement” (16). His argument is that while estrangement re-novelizes the world, wonder reinvests it with familiarity and significance: “in order to recover our sense of something like a tree, it is only necessary to envision a dragon curled around its trunk...drawn into a comprehensible pattern, which for human beings means a story” (16).

Moving upward from content to structure, Attebery identifies the structure as “comic,” in that “it begins with a problem and ends with a resolution” (15). In his “Structuralism,” a chapter of the *Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, Attebery continues to make structural observations about the genre. “One difference between fantasy and the genres of realism and naturalism,” he writes, “is that fantasy typically displays and even celebrates its structure” (83). He identifies this emphasis on structure as “one reason that fantasies often take on a metafictional dimension,” and argues that a particularly characteristic device by which this metafictional dimension is evoked within the narrative is the manipulation of time (83). Differentiating from any text’s ability to manipulate the flow of time in its events, he argues “the same sorts of intervention in the flow of time are frequent in fantasy narratives. In fantasy, however, they typically occur not at the level of narrative discourse but at that of the story itself.

Rather than having a narrator artfully rearrange time in order to heighten suspense or anticipation, fantasy can move its characters into the past or future” (88). Prophecies, time-portals—any impossibility that allows narrativization of time-manipulation thereby calls attention to the structure of a fantasy work. Fantasy’s particular use of the impossible, symbol-laden, wondrous, and lending itself toward metafictional readings, will be of use in distinguishing SF elements from those more typical of fantasy, as well as understanding the effects of some of the focal texts’ impossible features.

2.3 Formalist Critical Approach: Narrative and Social Forms

Finally, new formalist Caroline Levine will provide the theoretical method for the analysis. Levine’s *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* attempts to return to fruitful lines of inquiry in formalist approaches which have fallen somewhat out of favor by examining connections between aesthetic and social forms, which she insists are iterations of recurring structures that organize both literature and social-political life. “From the gender binary to rhyme and from prison cells to narrative prose,” she writes, “aesthetic and social forms outlive the specific conditions that gave birth to them” (*Forms* p.12). Of particular importance to the strategy of this study is her notion of *affordances*, which she adapts from design theory to consider the benefits and drawbacks of materials and organizations of materials: “patterns and arrangements carry their affordances with them as they move across time and space...What is a walled enclosure or a rhyming couplet *capable* of doing?” (6). Considering structural aesthetic choices as providing narrative opportunities by nature of their design is closely compatible with the goals of this study, as is the emphasis Levine places on the connections between these forms within a text and the contextual social forms that frame them. What do Le Guin and Delany *gain* by departing from their genres, in terms of narrative possibility?

3 “TRUTH FROM TRUTH”: URSULA K. LE GUIN’S *ROCANNON’S WORLD*

The structure of Ursula K. Le Guin’s *Rocannon’s World* presents tensions between genres it incorporates as aspects of the narrative universe itself, fantastic and science-fiction elements becoming spheres of activity and understanding as lightspeed ships land in the courtyards of medieval planets. Like the rest of her “Hain,” stories, the novel concerns a network of planets connected by membership in a kind of League of Nations at the planetary scale. This League of All Worlds extracts resources and labor in order to prepare for some nebulous threat, defensively justifying its actions by a great, desperate need that elides careful consideration of the consequences of those actions. Fomalhaut II, the planet on which the principal action of *Rocannon’s World* takes place, is an extended example of such oversight. This planet has developed to a roughly medieval state of technological and social organization, and thus allows Le Guin to shift between science-fiction narration *above* the planet and narration *on* the planet more typical of a medieval romance or Icelandic saga—or indeed the stylings of fantasy literature that draw from these same roots. Interference on the planet from the League and others, thus, acts as an intrusion or interruption of the order of things on Fomalhaut, both at the level of plot events and at the level of narrative structure and genre possibility. The effects of this interference are striking on both levels. The titular character emphasizes the jarring technology-gap as he and his friend, Mogien, Lord of Castle Hallan, search for a way to contact the League after off-world League rebels decide to make the planet a base. Rocannon, worrying through the consequences of the invasion, “thought of Mogien offering to fight a fleet of lightspeed bombers with the swords of Hallan,” arriving at the image from the dawning realization that “to an aggressive people only technology mattered” (Le Guin 31-32). This variously compatible combination is what allows Le Guin to explore some of the more curious themes in the work. It

is in the points of contact (whether interlocking or frictional) between the genre conventions of science fiction and fantasy that she finds formal affordances that equip her novel to investigate bias and perspective, knowledge-storage and history, truth and truth.

Structurally, this arrangement offers unique opportunities for a genre-blending project. Genre tropes, narrative styles, and the inherited textures of the work—the narrative echoes Brian Attebery refers to as “raids on the recorded inventory of traditional narratives” made by “nearly all modern fantasy” (Attebery 8)—can become a function of position, rather than an integrated mixture. In this chapter, I will explore the consequences of this arrangement of stacked genres and divergent perspectives, demonstrating how Le Guin leverages stylistic differences to emphasize differences of understanding. Her varying sets of discursive choices mark genre-affiliation and align different ways of recording information (from myth to encyclopedia) with those genres, toward an assessment of their unique assets and limitations. This analysis will begin with an extended observation of the structural and genre-shifting moves of the prologue section, which acts both as a showcase of the narrative possibilities available in her multi-genre approach and as a vertical slice of *Rocannon’s World*. From there, key points of contact between the SF and fantasy layers of discourse and understanding will further illustrate the possibilities of her genre-envelope before the analysis moves on to alternative methods of placing genre in conversation.

3.1 Science Fiction as a Genre Envelope

With some license, *Rocannon’s World* could be said to begin at least four times, each opening from a slightly different angle to begin forming a composite understanding of the text’s world that draws from various perspectives and various genre conventions. A detailed

examination of the narrative shifts of this opening is appropriate, given its immediate generation of the composite image emblematic of the remainder of the work.

Significantly, the opening of the prologue is all questions. The unanchored narrator asks “How can you tell the legend from the fact on these worlds that lie so many years away?—planets without names, called by their people simply The World” (Le Guin 3). A second configuration of this narrative quandary acts as a kind of bookend before the introduction shifts to the next layer of narration: “How can you tell fact from legend, truth from truth?” (3). The expectations for the reader are immediately suspended among answers to this question. As the novella continues, the different types of information, different narrative styles and tropes applied to the same events, will be positioned as solutions to this problem, rather than receptacles of a certain, single truth. In addition to the fairly direct announcement of the concern of distinguishing between types of information (legend, history, truth), certain details appear in this introduction that begin establishing tensions among the types. The spaces on which these stories occur are both “worlds” and “planets,” the preference suggested by “world” appearing first revisited later as it becomes the choice used by characters to convey information to those whose astronomical understanding does not give “planet” the same currency. Such tension does not lead to a sense of conflicting definition, especially when applied to the types of stories, themselves. While the narrator laments narrative difficulty in treating worlds “without history, where the past is the matter of myth, and a returning explorer find his own doings of a few years back have become the gestures of a god,” a surprising identity binds together the different types of stories; legend, myth, history, fact, and whatever composite form this narrative will take still qualify as “truth” (3). So, the problem is not it revealing a hidden accuracy amid insufficiencies, but rather in treating with a story composed of various valid types of narrative. To “tell...truth from truth,”

suggests in the double-meaning of “tell,” both distinguishing and relating (3). The problems of relating the events are intricately bound up in the choice and proportions of discursive strategies.

As the world of the novel opens alongside its concerns, Le Guin provides another significant orienting detail by treating the audience as knowing members of the League community. The temporal confusion caused by space-travel is tied to “our lightspeed ships,” and the central figure of the story (however related) is defined as an “ordinary League scientist” (3). We are included in the observers of this half-historical world, assumed both to be looking down at about the elevation of the narrator and also to understand what is meant by lightspeed, planet, League, and—most telling—“ordinary” (3). The reader’s position is firmly aligned with that *exterior* to the literal world of the story, and this perspective enables structural tensions and dramatic irony that create the gaps between types of understanding and story pursued throughout.

The novel signals a shift in narrative layer by a line break, and the reader encounters samples seemingly from a kind of encyclopedia, but ambiguous until realized as such in the next layer of narrative. The samples begin to provide context for the world’s inhabitants. The World becomes renamed by the first of these entries, anticipating the renaming that realizes the novella’s title: “*Galactic Area 8, No. 62: Fomalhaut II*” (3). The name by star-association precedes a list of entries of “*High-Intelligence Life Forms: Species Contacted*” that serves several narrative and structural functions. Prior to a context that frames their nature, they are experienced as dislocated, short, encyclopedia-reductions of life-forms (an inherent contradiction). In setting reader expectations, the sequence is a kind of *dramatis personae* of the key players to follow—reinforced in purpose by its similarly extra-narrative position as we approach the story and by italicized differentiation from the subsequent text. They also serve as announcements of genre possibilities, and familiar SF types. Height differences between the

“*Liuar*,” a “*fortress/village, clan-descent society*” with “*a blocked technology (Bronze)*,” and the “*Gdemiar*,” and “*Fiiia*,” suggest types reminiscent of the humans-dwarves constellation familiar to fantasy narrative and its sources (3-4). Each species shares some characteristics, “highly intelligent,” “fully hominid,” but are distinct in other ways, including preferred dwelling, time of day, and the presence of “partial colonial telepathy” (4). This catalog (as it turns out to be) could just as easily appear in an extratextual guide to works of SF, and reinforces the grouping of the reader into an observational layer by being the initial opening into the world of the story. We encounter types before we meet peoples. These descriptions also establish what will be a persistent counterpoint between this style of information-storage and relation and other types of description ‘on the ground,’ during the narrative itself.

An early example of this counterpoint reveals the amount of information lost in the compression. The *Fiiia*’s final item of comprehensible information in the entry is that they are “currently untaxable,” intriguing in its inclusion (4). Soon after this guide, in the prologue proper, or ground-level of its narrative, the *Fiiia* appear and chide the principle character for asking about the loss of her jewel and gold necklace: “What would the *Fiiia* do with gold, Lady? For us there is sunlight...” (10). These people have no interest in currency, and express such by rather poetic appraisal of the abundance of mis-valued gold surrounding them—none of which makes it into their Guide entry. By this example, we begin to see that, just as the layers of this prologue are in conversation, joined in a question-answer format by line breaks and narrative shifts, the different discourses in the novel, clinical SF efficiency and mythic or romantic deep texture, are also in conversation. The reader is doubly informed about the character of the *Fiiia* because of the mutual presence of both types of discourse; neither description is *wrong*, and the humorous effect is only possible with both a frustrated bureaucratic assessment and a poetic

refusal to understand the systems it eschews. The differing discourses operate as components of a larger truth, answering each other's questions bred in the gaps left in their characteristic styles of storing and conveying information.

Rocannon, the protagonist, is revealed to be reading the entries in the next layer of the introduction (again, after a line-break). The effect of this transition is almost that of a cinematic camera-movement placing us at his shoulder. "That's her," he says, interrupting the entry on the Liuar, which he has been consulting to identify the principle character of the prologue, Semley, standing across from him. We also learn the title of the work excerpted: the *Abridged Handy Pocket Guide to Advanced Life-forms* (4). This title confirms any suspicion in the reader that the entries may be less than comprehensive, parodically ambitious in the mutual emphasis of the scope and brevity of the work. Locating the excerpted text inside an in-world Guide also shifts the importance of the definitions as we move down a layer of narrative. The entries now have diminished authority, as their information comes not from some omniscient gap between narrative layers, but from a parodically-titled guidebook in the hands of one character. The scene takes place in a "long museum hall," with Rocannon and the curator Ketho observing Semley, the "very tall, dark-skinned, yellow-haired woman" who matches her species Guide description, surrounded by "four uneasy and unattractive dwarves," or as Ketho describes them "troggs" (4). Rocannon later corrects this apparently outdated and offensive term for subterranean species. Curiously, though, the narrator applies the more familiar and fantasy-associated term "dwarves." Gaps between types of discourse appear, the one a scientific term that has accrued dismissive, othering censure, and the other a term equally varied in the history of its use and reception, but often pre-invested with significance for those it applies to. The curator is invested in the reductively scientific terminology; the narrator is not. No Guide entry anticipates these League

characters, whom the reader meets as people with embedded assumptions and values about those around them.

The final transition that orients the narrative in its ground-level layer and perspective also establishes a bookending effect that envelops the bulk of the prologue. Rocannon, dissatisfied with the limitations of the Guide's information, agrees with Ketho's comment that he "didn't know Fomalhaut II has all those people besides the trogs," responding "I didn't either," and concluding that this gap in information demands "a more thorough survey mission to the place" (4). His sentiment will be modified as the consequences of this decision develop, but still curious, he consoles himself for the time being that "at least" with reference to Semley, "we know what she is" (4). Ketho, giving the game away, comments "I wish there were some way of knowing *who* she is." (4). After a line break, the narrative proper begins: "She was of an ancient family, a descendant of the first kings of the Angyar, and for all her poverty her hair shone with the pure, steadfast gold of her inheritance" (4). In addition to being a notable shift in tone and narration style, this is clearly an answer to Ketho's question. It establishes the almost grammatical function of the line-break as not only breaking the narrative in space and time—as is typical of the use of a line-break—but also as separating parts of a discourse, question and answer in this specific example. The joined effect suggests a relationship between the layers of narrative constituting either end: the SF uncertainties of clinical information on the one side, and the individual characterization and lineage-charting on the other, more typical characterization in a more fantastic narrative. (Rocannon's hair and family, for example, remain unstated in his layer of narrative). Rocannon's proposed survey may be somewhat premature, as the answer to Ketho's question is the story that brings Semley to the museum, told from her perspective and in the style suited to its telling.

Semley's story, itself, hinges on the primary SF/fantasy affordance in the prologue and a recurring one throughout the remainder of the text: the 8-year travel time between Fomalhaut II and this League station. This SF conceit—time-distortion as a result of space-travel—is not new to this text, but Le Guin places it in a context that draws out a different set of narrative opportunities than the pure pursuit of a Suvinian *novum* would. Semley *experiences* the consequences of this SF conceit without the scientific framework to understand it, and the result from her perspective is completely magical—something akin to a fae bargain or monkey's paw in which unanticipated consequences result from reckless treating with misunderstood powers. Semley, dissatisfied with the discrepancy between the storied legacy of her house and its deteriorating material conditions (“the windows were unglazed, the stone floors bare” [4-5]), resolves to regain a lost treasure of her family, a jewel priceless before, but now the value of a kingdom, “a necklace all of gold, with the blue jewel set in the center” (6). As her quest develops, details emerge that are simple world-building if isolated at this level, but act in counter-point to information given at upper layers to develop the gap in understanding Rocannon laments. As these details accrue, the function of Semley's quest as a *sustained* answer to League-SF-offworld gaps in information is reinforced. For example, the diminished state of her line is a direct result of the interference of the League in their world's development. The League emissaries, “Starlords” to the Angyar, “had interfered with all the old ways and wars,” and now “the Angyar had sat in idle shame in their revelhalls, watching their double swords rust...their daughters marry poor men...having no dowry of heroic loot to bring a noble husband” (5). The untaxability of the Fiia is explained when she visits them to pursue her missing jewel, and the interruption of the previous hierarchy that now favors the Gdemiar is explained when she follows the trail to their caverns.

Semley's negotiations with the Gdemiar take the form of a kind of riddling with an insidious power—a faery bargain or deal with a demon—but are amplified by the dramatic irony available from the upper narrative layers. “We will take you to the place where the treasure lies,” they explain, and to her question about the length of the journey, answer ambiguously: “A very far journey, Lady. Yet it will last only one long night” (15-16). Menacingly, the chief Gdem grins as he gives his vague answer: “His lips drew back and back” (16). As the Gdemiar drop clues that Semley does not understand the full consequences of her request, the reader has access to SF conceits that partially explain them: Semley will need to travel through space to retrieve her treasure, losing sixteen years of objective time in the process. However, it is not Semley's ignorance of space-travel or relativity that precipitates the tragic consequences of her quest: it is the duplicity of the Gdemiar. We have seen that the Fiia can adequately explain a non-monetary system of value without recourse to formal economics, and in fact, the structure of the prologue so far has privileged the details of this layer of narrative over the clinical reductions seen above. A sixteen year sleep, a gap in perception, is likely explicable within the framework of Semley's experience, but the explanation is simply refused. Which is not to say that such an experience is compatible with the framework by which Semley understands the world. It is certainly a departure from what she would understand as typically possible. Whether understood as magic or the intrusion of a SF *novum*, the consequence is the experience of an impossibility.

When Semley prepares for her journey, her framework, consequently, diminishes in comprehension until she reaches a point of un-narratability. Riding railcars toward the ship (“some kind of cart,” moving on “bars of polished iron,” (13)), she undergoes preparations for lightspeed travel, but “what was done in those next hours Semley could not have retold” (16). Primed to consider possible SF explanations, the reader understands hypodermic injections of

some required chemicals and harness-straps to secure passengers in zero gravity, but to Semley all is “haste, jumble, noise strangeness” (16). The understanding available to the reader of the points at which her experience fails to grasp the new information is possible only by reference to the SF understanding Semley is missing. She experiences space itself as “blank night, or was it mist, or nothing at all?” (17). This layer of narrative demonstrates, here, a fixed fidelity to her perspective; it has mentioned lightspeed ships before, but refuses to do so when telling her portion of the story. The connections are available as gaps for the reader to fill in with information from other layers—something impossible for her. As it would be: these structures, devices, and experiences are not simply new, they are not from her world. The world-planet distinction here resumes its significance. Semley’s narrative world, not just her medieval planet, does not contain such things unless interfered with by other worlds, worlds characterized not only by different technology, but different styles of discourse. At this point of transition, then, it reaches a self-imposed limit. Semley travels outside of what she is capable of retelling, and the narrative follows stylistically with emptiness, night, and strangeness. Not *estrangement*, which would demand a resolution exploring the consequences of the new, nor simple wonder at a marvel with symbolic significance. The significance is an imposition, and the cognitive consequences unavailable; neither an isolated SF or fantasy discourse could demand its own narrative silence so effectively, but together they outline a gap in knowing realized structurally.

We arrive with Semley at the League museum, but (as the self-imposed rules of the narrative have established) *cannot* experience it from her perspective: we know too much. Instead, the book shifts again to the layer of narrative linked to Rocannon—exactly back to this layer, in fact, at the same quote: “I wish there were some way of knowing *who* she is..” (17). Le Guin here mimics the major effect of her prologue in its structure, wrapping the temporal flow of

the text into a loop just as Semley is about to discover the time she has lost on her journey. If we cannot experience the museum as Semley does, the text does, however, allow her narrative layer to bring with it certain features. A parallel effect is achieved to the dramatic irony that expands the Gdemiar's duplicity and the Fiia's poetic appraisal of sunlight. Though Semley does not understand lightspeed travel, we know better. Now, Rocannon and Ketho do not understand Semley or the significance of her quest, but we know better. Ketho, commenting on her beauty, calls her "a beautiful alien type," then "a beautiful woman," and finally "a goddess," before catching himself in embarrassment (18). For his part, when she turns "her splendid face to him," Rocannon bows "down very deeply, going right down to the floor" and asks, "In what way can we of the Museum serve the lady?" (18). Even the narrator seems to have been shaded by this type of discourse: when she responds, "her voice ran like a brief silver wind" (18). Unsure of her nature and her purpose here, Ketho and Rocannon appeal to old stories, and the narration provides language appropriate to those stories. Le Guin's genres are not only mutually present, but in conversation, though that conversation has gaps.

Rocannon takes up the mantle from Ketho in giving the game away, here, explaining to Ketho that he feels, "meeting these people from worlds we know so little of," that he has "as it were blundered through the corner of a legend, a tragic myth maybe," which he fails to "understand" (20). In his expression, the gap in understanding and the effect of encountering—or entering—an unfamiliar kind of story (myth, tragedy, legend) are directly linked. A final transition through line-break confirms the dialogic relationship between the layers of narrative, into which characters can move, but not without consequences for those layers:

“...I wonder...I wonder what her name is.”

“Semley the Fair, Semley the Golden, Semley of the Necklace...” (20).

This shifts to the final sequence in the prologue, with Semley returning to find nearly two decades have passed as if by magic, her husband dead, and her daughter her own age. She leaves her necklace with her daughter, and disappears into the woods “like some wild thing escaping” (22). She completes the tragic trajectory of the story, but also demonstrates the taxing consequences of travel to another kind of narrative, having lost her place in her own story. Her escape into the forest is another push into a liminal space, a narrative boundary like the lightspeed ship sequence, this time a permanent one. This doubled effect, that Semley’s experience of the time-distortion is no less true for her lack of familiarity with spaceships, is available in the gap afforded by placing two genres in conversation, and Le Guin employs this structural gap to convey limitations of perception and the violent intrusion of one world’s power into another.

By the conclusion of the prologue, Le Guin has established relationships and dialogues between layers of differently-trope narrative and effected an iteration of a dangerous bargain by way of time-distortion. Recognizable fantasy tropes receive added significance in relation to ‘off-story’ SF information, but why choose time-distortion as the primary trope to employ? What is the connection between temporal manipulation and the variances between perspectives offered by the different layers? One indicator throughout Semley’s narrative is the concern with ‘old stories.’ Her father, indifferent to her return to ask for information about the necklace, responds “How do I know? Old tales...the story’s over here...” (9). Similarly, the Gdemiar, reluctant to divulge their part in the necklace’s disappearance, qualify what they do tell with “but these are very old tales” (12). This concern with old tales and the reliability of information available in them recalls the curious phenomenon from the opening of the novel, where a League traveler may find their “own doings of a few years back have become the gestures of a god” (3). Because

of the SF conceit of time-distortion, the text can explore concerns with how stories receive and preserve information—old tales losing some fidelity in mythologizing and guidebooks losing some fidelity in reduction. In a multi-valenced structure, this text can move characters in and out of types of story—conveniently made concrete by the SF *novum* of interplanetary travel, and applied toward a tragic shade of a sense of wonder.

Semley's disappearance into the forest not only aligns with the fairy story structure the prologue resonates with, it completes a transition that she has undergone as part of her travels. Pursuing the legacy of her family as recorded in legends, she effectively enters those legends herself, the disappearance and miraculous ageless return place her as a figure of mythic significance. She has not only travelled out of her life's immediate framework upward into the science-fiction layer of the text, but also moved in depth, participating in the story-recording, truth-preserving concerns of her own native layer. The counterpoints (separated by line breaks) between the perspectives of Rocannon and Semley maintain not only the boundaries between the SF understanding and the fantastic, planetary one, but allow both to maintain their integrity. Over Rocannon's shoulder, the woman is a traveler from a world with deep ties to the mythic, over Semley's, the museum is not misunderstood as a kind of treasure-cave ("House of Treasures" (18)), but functionally *is* such. Contradiction is not threatened as a composite forms. As the narrator explains in the opening of the body of the novel "So ends the first part of the legend; and all of it is true" (25). Both perspectives fill in gaps for each other in a way only available to the reader, who can navigate between them.

The prologue of *Rocannon's World* features the most prominent links between the structure of the work and its thematic concerns, establishing through direct alternation of perspective and layering of narrative shells the composite nature of a story's truth. These

concerns persist, even when the narrative perspective settles around Rocannon himself, and finer instances of friction or intrusion between layers of narrative continue to pursue these concerns. A primary thread organizing the remainder of the narrative is Rocannon's increasing investment in his occupation of a planet (a narrative layer) he is stranded on—succinctly indicated in the section titles that shift him from the “Starlord” a stopgap term reinforcing his approximate fit in a world upon which he intrudes, to the “Wanderer,” a title given him in reference to a Fiia prophesy that he fulfils. Performance of a predestined role is a much closer fit in the narrative, and also recaptures the link between story and time-distortion: a prophesy is a story of events prior to their occurrence.

One of the clearest demonstrations of effects only possible through Le Guin's divided layers of narration concerns a protective suit Rocannon wears for most of the novel. She applies the opportunities of this off-world technology to demonstrate his attitudes toward the world of Fomalhaut. His “impermasuit” is a nearly invisible layer of material resistant to extreme temperatures and minor impacts, a *novum* were it not for its divergent narrative function in the novel. Instead of presenting interesting ramifications for the work to resolve, it poses an irresolvable intrusion from the upper layer to the lower. The SF explanation for this device follows the scene of its principle importance, and rather unsatisfyingly details its workings: “off, the suit was a handful of transparent stuff and semivisible hairthin tubes and wires and a couple of translucent cubes the size of a fingernail” (66). How the suit works is of secondary importance to what it allows Rocannon to achieve in the novel, particularly surviving an attempted murder at the hands of a character named Zgama. Captured by this indigenous rebel warlord during his search for a way of warning the League about their own rebels, Rocannon finds himself at the mercy of “the hospitality of this hall,” which Zgama refuses, causing him to instead bluff and

demand “Passing by the Hall of Zgama, I go south. Let no man stop me!” (57). Zgama’s response to this is to reaffirm “I am master here,” then punish Rocannon’s defiance by attempting to behead him—to no avail because of the impermasuit (57). His next attempt to demonstrate his superiority takes the shape of burning Rocannon alive, again fruitless because of the protection of the suit, though the two nights he spends unharmed by fire are exhausting for him. They are exhausting for Zgama, too, under “the strain of returning each night to the uncanny” (61). His immunity to fire, coupled with his defiance of Zgama (“I’ll make you shut your eyes!”) earns him the title of “Pedan” from others in the hall, a word close to *god* in meaning, and illustrative of the role he has adopted in the story—descending from out of the world with impossible abilities and upsetting the order he finds (58-61). The gap between SF understanding and the technology of the planet enable this misapprehended godhead, but this effect is doubly complicated. Rocannon, surviving fire and sword, behaves like a god, and the actual explanation for the suit is hand-waved away; we know it is not magic only because the SF layer of the text labels it such, with no more information forthcoming.

Certainly Rocannon’s will is crucial to his overpowering of Zgama, but so is the suit. His surviving the fire deifies him in the minds of the onlookers, and he has work to do later to explain to his companion that no magic has been involved: “no spells. It’s a very strong kind of armor” (64). However, this is true only in a very technical sense. Associations between Rocannon and a deity are frequent throughout the novel, and this scene resembles something out of a Norse myth cautioning against mistreating strangers. The gap in understanding that is clear to the reader does not *diminish* the reality-breaking effect of Rocannon’s suit—but instead applies it to the sense of his not being from the world he traverses. Despite his claims to the contrary, his narrative position resembles that of a god in a story more than he seems ready to

admit. Like the omitted space-travel scene from Semley's story, this suit represents an intrusion, a violation of the rules of this layer of narrative, which can only half-process it through the language of miracle. Other intrusions follow this pattern, as well, reinforcing the effect of off-world interference on the planet: the nuclear bomb that begins the novel proper is, in the words of Rocannon's friend, "beyond all imagining" (28), and the murder of Fiian at the hands of the same off-world rebels is a "desecration" (39). The *nova* of *Rocannon's World* are not the principle focus of its imaginative explorations, but instead reinforce the exploration of friction between different worlds and ways of knowing. Unlike the impermasuit, the narrative role it allows Rocannon to occupy is, for him and those witnessing it, an uneasy fit. On Fomalhaut, the people's tales have "no gods in their legends, only heroes," so Rocannon represents an intrusion, understood in terms of coming from off-planet or from outside the world (39).

Rocannon's potential detachment is reinforced by a structural one enabled by the time-loss that ruins Semley. Weighing his options early on, realizing he is trapped on the planet, he considers finding another ship and travelling to the League satellite to inform them of the rebellion that has begun to colonize Fomalhaut. He quickly dismisses the idea from a sense of personal investment in the world he is trapped on: "I'm not going to run off eight years into the future and find out what happened next!" (30). Rocannon's terms and motives here provide a strong indication of the structural goals of the work as a whole. He speaks of events on the planet as those in a story, but refuses to leave them because of personal investment. *Rocannon's World* establishes a structure of story-worlds aligned with various discourses and ways of knowing to pursue a narrative of understanding across difference. Seen *from above*, looking down upon the planet as from a League satellite, the story is one of a science-fiction envelope that offers descriptions tempting to see as explanations of the more fantasy- or saga-aligned events on the

surface of the world. From that surface, however, the intrusions and interference of beings from *outside* the world have places within the type of mythic narrative strategies that compose it, albeit as impossibilities. Neither approach is weighted as the *correct* explanation of events, and Le Guin avoids the available trap of a simplistic story of technological and scientific progress replacing understandings from earlier eras. Rather, the variations in perspective, with attendant variations in genre trappings, work toward a composite truth richer for the mutual inclusion of its constituent parts.

3.2 Genre Discussion with Criticism

Le Guin's treatment of the world of Fomalhaut as a kind of sub-narrative that Rocannon and others are capable of moving in and out of achieves one of Brian Attebery's defining characteristics of fantasy literature: a concern with the metatextual. He uses the example of the common fantasy trope of prophesy to discuss the foregrounding of structure typical of the fantasy genre: "prophesy says, in effect, 'here's the shape of the story you are about to read.' It subordinates the characters to the roles they are about to play" (Attebery 82). Prophesy as a trope reappears when he addresses *Rocannon's World* directly, here as an example of what he terms *science fantasy*. He describes this genre as a blend of the forms of both its constituents, and observes that "each time the cross is made, the result is a fictional form able to make use of the conventions of science fiction and those of genre fantasy to comment on one another and on the worldview implied by each form of storytelling" (106). Attebery's discussion shifts from structural observation to evaluative criteria when he examines this novel, citing it as an example of the blended genre less successful for not giving both discourses "approximately equal

weight,” important for a work to be able to manage “two kinds of structure independently yet simultaneously” (110-111). Le Guin seems to agree with him, at least as far as the impermasuit, as he demonstrates by quoting her critique that at the suit, “fantasy and science fiction *don't* shade gracefully into one another” (110). But this evaluation overshadows potential structural observations for how Le Guin’s novel, not by depending on prophesy, but by applying the SF conceits of time-loss in interstellar travel and scientifically magic armor, nevertheless manages to fashion a metatextual commentary and explore story. The poor fit of the suit matches the unstable interruptions of the League on the planet. Attebery’s synopsis of the work seems to attribute a balance to it that it does not really possess, while also critiquing it for its imbalance. Rather than two worlds exploring the difference between science and magic as understanding systems, *Rocannon's World* uses this divide as a starting point to explore many kinds of knowledge and knowledge-storage, and applies techniques afforded by the *specific* proportions of the genres at hand present in the text.

Observing the function of varying hierarchies of worlds in their connection to colonialism, David Higgins finds the proportions in Le Guin’s work functional for its divergent pursuit from other types of genre fiction that threaten reinforcement of problematic hierarchies. Higgins approaches Le Guin's early work as a response to criticisms of the genre of science fiction as a whole. In conversation with other theorists, he observes the potential for the genre to reinforce notions of imperialism in its emphasis on exploration and conquest of "outer" spaces (to present the argument broadly). Science-fiction, as with other cultural productions, can do the "dream-work," that makes imperialist social structures and behaviors imaginable and normalized (Higgins 331). Le Guin, though, is an example of the genre using its potentially problematic position to investigate these very concepts, exploring invented worlds that demonstrate the

consequences of neocolonial processes or imagining worlds with more equitable power structures--here, what Higgins refers to as a "strong cosmopolitanism" (335). Fomalhaut suffers because of the gaps in League understanding of its cultural mores, and the genre manipulation presents this colonial stand-in as a disruptive intrusion. Higgins locates the source of the effectiveness of Le Guin's work in interrogating colonial power structures at the structural friction of different genres as ways of knowing. He notices a blending of genre techniques, anchoring SF to one protagonist and elements of fantasy fiction to another, a "contrast of perspectives" that "jarringly juxtaposes the epistemologies of imperial center and periphery" (337). This alternation between types of narrative, he argues, is a performance of respectful acknowledgement of difference. Too great a focus on the SF could lend a sense of apologism to a work already quite sympathetic to Rocannon, if not the League.

Le Guin avails herself of narrative affordances that appear in the gaps of the genres she places in conversation. The consequences of impossibility receive a *novum*-esque treatment, but embedded in an understanding incapable of the cognitive estrangement required for a SF structure. Experiencing impossibility as a damaging intrusion is, instead, foregrounded. Yet the SF understanding persists in the reader while observing the experiences of wonder and fear in those lacking it. The events of *Rocannon's World* shift between forms of SF and fantasy to effect a kind of triangulation, demonstrating that systems of understanding fail to capture complexities if they are isolated. One layer up from the League-aligned narrator is a vast set of forms and intersections of ways of knowing constituting the reader's experience. Characters move downward and upward in the novel, and by its structure, Le Guin encourages the investigation of discourses and their limitations to persist outside of the story world of the book itself.

4 “AN INFINITE NUMBER OF TRUE THINGS”: SAMUEL R. DELANY’S *THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION*

Samuel Delany’s *The Einstein Intersection* presents something of a challenge for genre designation, given its deliberate refusal to occupy any specific genre, or indeed to tidily draw from sources of narrative material in conventional ways. If *Rocannon’s World* is akin to a fantasy story enveloped in science-fiction, Delany’s novel (published a year later) is more like a mosaic. His narrative material is not a wholesale sampling of the structures of science-fiction and fantasy, but instead an almost improvisational rearrangement of tropes, images, and concepts into a nearly unrecognizable configuration. The result of this narrative sampling, however, is not chaos, but rather a deliberate destabilizing of expected configurations of genre, which couples neatly with the novel’s concerns with destabilizing cultural norms, as well. An early example of the text’s omnivorous sampling establishes a connection between its protagonist Lo Lobey and the Orpheus myth, but by way of this introduction: “Let’s talk about mythology...you remember the legend of the Beatles?” (Delany 11). The storyteller, La Dire, proceeds to recount the story of Orpheus refracted through the spearhead of the British Invasion, with “the Beatle Ringo,” losing his lover and, with the rest, being “torn apart by screaming girls,” eventually restored “after a hard day’s night” (11). This story is a completely baffling haze of lyrics, historical figures, and overzealous audiences, but gains significance if not clarity with the accompanying explanation: “in the older story Ringo was called Orpheus” (11). Reader expectations are permanently suspended as pop music and history are inlaid into a myth that was familiar several sentences ago. We will come to learn that the loss of humans in the narrative universe of the novel compresses history and myth in the reception of its characters, but this is an early demonstration

of Delany's interest in destabilizing these categories of story—the use of the band is jarring, but works perfectly well to associate Lobey with a type of tragic bard figure.

The nature of Lo Lobey and the other characters further illustrates the attitude of the novel to its narrative sources. Somewhere between an alien and a classical god, Lobey is a new kind of being actively assembling self and identity from the remains of human culture and civilization. If his story has resonances with ancient myth, it is partially (and diagetically) because he has absorbed those cultural materials into himself, and acts accordingly. Already the difficulty of tidy synopsis of such a work is apparent, and the reduction that is a consequence of such a description is almost total. Lo Lobey travels across a wilderness from his home town, through a desert, to a large city over the course of the novel—in pursuit of a dead lover as fits an Orphic hero. But he does so interacting with what he does not understand are cultural abstractions and pursued by a villainous character congealed from old western television series. This chapter will explore the dizzying collage of Delany's work, not to wring from it more straightforward sense than it offers, but to examine the consequences of Delany's recontextualizing of mythic, SF, and fantasy tropes. The result is less a mix of genres than the attempted birth of something new, unaccounted-for by its narrative inheritance in the same way that the characters are not quite humans, aliens, or gods. As might be expected from a novel concerned with a kaleidoscopic reexamination of texts and contexts, Delany's work maintains several projects throughout. This chapter will focus on three: a technique of collage in the description of spaces, a punctuation of narrative with axiom or principle as a kind of active ordering of the world, and the on-the-ground intertextuality made available by his unique post-human, text-permeable characters, absorbing and rearranging the legacy of humanity (physical, cultural, textual) in its wake. Attention to each of these threads individually will enable a close

examination of key scenes in the novel where they intersect and demonstrate the work's goals. The intersections suggest an impetus throughout the work toward novelty of form and content, a mitigation of the need to push past old narrative forms to arrive at novel ways of telling stories suitable for new conditions and the value and pull of inherited narrative forms that retain their power.

4.1 Genre as a Myth-mosaic

The characters of Samuel Delany's *The Einstein Intersection* inherit story the way we inherit genes. Set, it is gradually revealed, some 30,000 years after humanity's self-annihilation, the novel concerns itself with the experiences and exploits of Lo Lobey and people he encounters, events that resonate with inherited narrative structures and brush against displaced tropes alongside the characters as they traverse a far-future landscape littered with human ruins. Lobey, the narrator and protagonist, is slow to explain these matters, though he concedes that his audience is (somehow) human: "you owned this Earth, you wraiths and memories" (26). Rather than explain himself as a semi-corporeal, semi-narrative being that has half-adopted the physical and cultural forms of long-dead humans, he instead informs us about his "machete," in which "a hollow, holey cylinder" allows him to "make music with [his] blade" (1). When he turns to himself as a subject, though the machete is enough a part of him to blur the distinction, he anticipates our question: "What I look like? Ugly and grinning most of the time" (1). Near the end of the novel, an artificial intelligence, admonishing Lobey for continuing to look in familiar places for unfamiliar things, says irritably, "you're a bunch of psychic manifestations, multisexed and incorporeal, and you—you're all trying to put on the limiting mask of humanity" (129). But at the onset, all we know about Lobey is that he is ugly and grinning. Delany allows

his protagonist to provide the details he does at the time he does to build an empathy with the characters before their alien-ness, the unique characteristics that allow the central project of the text to function, are made clear. One can imagine a similar disparity in a Guide entry like those in *Rocannon's World*. This opening is part of the expectation-frustration running throughout the work that situates it in a very tenuous relationship to genres of SF and fantasy, and which contributes to a destabilizing of social constructs highly generative of conversations about identity, sexuality, and story. What we need to know to understand the work's subversive recontextualization of stories and cultural values is that Lobey represents a kind of post-human entity whose psychological shape and identity are highly permeable by narrative structures—as if the myths left behind by humanity exert a force over their actions and selves in the same way that the radiation left behind mutates their bodies. Lobey is buffered by Orpheus, Theseus, and Ringo Starr. But for the work to function—for the recontextualization to matter for more than purely formal interest—what we need to know about Lobey is that he makes music and loves another character named Friza.

One of the elders of Lobey's village, La Dire, provides early clues about the nature of the characters, and also establishes one of the important SF conceits that allows their textual permeability to function at the plot level. Consoling Lobey about the loss of Friza (killed mysteriously by the antagonist of the work), she explains some of the difficulties of his species. "We've had quite a time assuming the rationale of this world," she explains, proceeding to recount the Beatles-Orpheus myth and to align that myth with Lobey, himself as a musician pursuing a dead lover (10). She even refers to him as "My Lo Ringo...my Lo Orpheus," as he plays a mourning dirge on his machete for the lost Friza (12). Assigning him the "rationale" of the Orpheus myth, she manages to let him mourn (which others in the village have failed to do),

and give him a task, “something to be done...to kill whatever killed Friza” (10). Her discussion of myth aligns Lobey and the remainder of the novel with an ancient narrative pattern, setting both expectations for the reader and the suspicion of their surprise and frustration: “In myths things always turn into their opposites as one version supersedes the next” (11). On this approach to his mourning, Lobey comments “when La Dire came, though, it was different” (10). His term contains significance that he refuses the reader for the moment, soon to be realized as a term for a kind of SF conceit about some of the characters. Throughout the novel, the word *difference* refers to the presence of superhuman abilities, justified within the narrative first as the effects of radiation mutation, then as more characteristic of the inhuman aspects of the semi-anthropomorphic characters. The character Spider functions late in the novel as a kind of sage, explaining significances previously only hinted at. He explains *difference* thus: “all any of us knows is what it is not...it isn’t telepathy; it’s not telekinesis—though both are chance phenomena that increase as difference increases...we have taken over their abandoned world, and something new is happening to the fragments, something we can’t even define with mankind’s leftover vocabulary” (111). La Dire’s early invocation of difference suggests she has employed hers in some way to set Lobey on his path, joining the notion of inherited myth structures and the essential qualities of the type of thing Lobey is. If those like him wear limiting, ill-fitting human forms and concepts, difference may be what does not fit, what is essentially post-human. Lobey’s introductory grief establishes some rules of the narrative universe he occupies, but moreso their fluidity.

Lobey’s difference is also essential to his sense of self and role in the story. He has a kind of clairvoyance through music, playing what others feel and hear as though pulling it from the air—and thereby giving shape and rhythm to it. “Music,” Lobey says after Spider

names a piece he has just played as a classical work Spider had been thinking of, “so that’s where I get my music from” (59). His difference, then, binds him to the narrative structures he inherits and enables him to proceed down his path and give shape to it. His path, prompted by La Dire, is to chase down the antagonist and murderer of Friza, a being of extremely powerful difference that styles itself Kid Death. The Kid is capable of remotely killing other different beings and also resurrecting them (“Everything I kill I keep” [51]). The pursuit will take Lobey from his village to a city on the coast, and, as a denizen of that city explains, “this close to an old place called Hell,” to fulfill his Orphic trajectory (123). Shaping/ordering and intertextuality are principle concerns for the entirety of the novel, and Delany enables the work to explore identity/self and its relation to social constructs and narrative forms through structural strategies in the rendering of those threads..

The first stage of the quest La Dire sets Lobey on marks one of the clearest examples of one of Delany’s collage technique, and intersects with other techniques as it develops. Lobey must hunt a gigantic, mutant bull plaguing his village. He and another elder, Lo Hawk, pursue the signs of the bull toward the “source-cave,” encountering it near one of the cave’s many entrances: “he was very noble...there were hands with horny hairy fingers thick as my arm where he should have had forehooves” (19). The image of the minotaur is immediate and irresistible, especially given the mythic priming that La Dire has provided. As the bull retreats into the cave and Lobey pursues, the mythic resonances persist, recontextualized and fragmented like the odd mythologization of the Beatles. Further, the spaces Lobey traverses in his hunt match the fragmentation of the intertextual references. The whole source-cave sequence has the structure of a collage—elements disjointed, fragmented, and rearranged—from mythic overtones to basic sense-perception. Post-human ruins provide the raw materials for a disorienting, jumbled

environment of displaced textures. Lobey enters the pit leading into the cave using “natural ledges of root, earth, and masonry,” (22) finding a wall “glistening with moss,” traversing “an oily rivulet whose rainbow went out under [his] shadow,” tripping “down a flight of shallow steps, once through a puddle...once over dry leaves,” and landing “at the bottom in a shaft of light, knees and palms on gravel” (22-23). This collage of materials continues as Lobey moves deeper and deeper into the cave “under the crumbling vaults”: “a metal floor-plate,” “stone under the soles of my feet, then cold, smooth metal,” “a grating,” “pipes” (24-25). Natural and manufactured materials collide in a jumbled space that disorients the reader as Lobey tries to track his quarry. The sequence lacks an establishing shot, an anchoring description of its layout to allow the reader to track movement through it. We are lost alongside Lobey.

This confusion of materials is made all the more disorienting by the sense-perception confusion through which Lobey experiences it. Small intrusions of light (“sun struck a wall,” “cracks in the high ceiling, here and there lighting on the floor,” “grey light beyond the grating” [22-25]) make the space a patchwork of visual legibility, and Lobey shifts frequently from description to sound-effect as he and the bull move around each other in the cave: “Clack! Clack! Clack! Snort!...Then a lot of clacks!” (23). The bull itself is a protean phenomenon, divided into glimpses and sounds by the mazy cave, with the effect of fragmentation and size-inconsistency. “His foot struck a meter from my foot, and from this close the sparks lit his raw eyes, his polished nostrils,” Lobey narrates before “his hand came between his eyes and me” (24). The bull is a fragmented swarm of body parts, only occasionally and partially visible, and never long enough to compose a full picture. As he moves toward Lobey, “he got bigger and bigger through the frame of stone” (27). The emphasis on sense-perception follows the bull to its death, as a shaft from Lobey’s crossbow vanishes into a “blind well of bone and lymph,” and

Lobey sees “the other eye cloud” (28). Delany has presented a kind of patchwork world here, earth and metal placed alongside SF and myth as constituent elements surprising in their proximity. Luckily for Lobey, the same abilities that allow him to shape his grief for Friza avail him here in this confusion. He uses his machete both to attack the bull and sound out the shape of his labyrinth via echolocation. He likely gets the idea from the bull before entering the cave, when it “suddenly roared from the opening in the rock and trees and brick, defining the shape of it with his roaring” (20). He catches the bull’s attention before their final tussle when he plays his machete: “the note blasted and went reeling through the room,” (27). And he finds his way out of the cave afterward similarly: “The tune now winding with me lay notes over the stone like mica flakes that would do till light came” (31). Significantly, Lobey plays notes and tunes, and the bull makes noise, a divide emphasized when an abandoned AI console in the cave begins playing “some chorus from Carmina,” but the bull just “glance[s] at it uncomprehending” (27). Noise and music both enable some sense of shape in the cave, but music seems to have an additional significance or value. One arguable difference between the two is order.

The computer, PHAEDRA (“Psychic Harmony and Entangled Deranged Response Associations” [30]), calls attention to an additional type of collage material at play in the source-cave, emitting cultural references completely disjointed from their contexts, but suitable for the events at hand. It compliments Lobey’s bull-slaying prowess in bullfighting terms “Olé! Olé! First the *verónica*, then the *paso doble!*” then laments the loss of the “*revueltas*, the maidens leaping over the horns...to land on the sweating back,” recalling ancient Minoan bull-dances with the appreciative and jarring ‘Mankind had style, baby!’ (28-30). Recognizing the immediate parallels to Theseus, it asks Lobey “what do you desire, hero?” then explains upon hearing he seeks the dead Friza: “you’re in the wrong maze.” (29-31). This statement confirms

the source-cave as a labyrinth in physical structure and in narrative purpose, and pushes Lobey from the Theseus-structure, the wrong maze, toward his more Orphic goals. A misplaced computer, explained with almost a parody of SF acronym-engineering, in a dank ruin of a cave-building complex calls attention to the similarly displaced myth tropes and structures composing the episode. Spatially, the computer is out of place, and its references are temporally disjointed. Spider, again much later in the novel, muses at Lobey, “One wonders if Theseus built the maze as he wandered through it,” which Lobey rejects, “defensive and dry” (114). Certainly, he has occupied the position of Theseus for much of this episode, and his sounding out of the cave’s disorienting jumble of materials (physical and mythic) have the structure of ordering into a collage what is initially chaos. The narrative structure of the episode reinforces Lobey’s abilities, granted by both SF alien-ness and intertextual reference to myth.

Another of the strategies Delany employs also depends on Lobey’s structural position, coupled with his ordering *difference*. Within the narration, Lobey appears to be able to give shape to the world around him—either literally as he sounds out environments like a bat, or at more abstract levels as he performs functions of characters in inherited narratives. As the narrator, his ability to shape the world is much more pronounced. He is recounting his own story, giving it shape and rhythm. Among the methods that he employs for shaping the story is a habit of shifting from narration to assertion, providing aphorisms or principles that he finds demonstrated by the events unfolding at the time. A review of some of the principles he asserts will demonstrate their organizing function. Back at the source-cave, he introduces its uncertain scale with the assertion that “some things are so small you don’t notice them. Others are so big you run into them before you know what they are” (20). This serves as a fitting consideration for an episode about a hunt for a size-changing bull in a labyrinth alternately vast and

claustrophobic. Explaining the relationship he had with Friza and his friends, he states “who-ever heard of La-ing or Lo-ing somebody you’re herding with, or laughing with, or making love with,” rejecting through intimacy a system of honorific titles that mark both gender and a certain supposed purity of genetic makeup: La for females; Lo for males (8). Interrupting these binary titles is a persistent concern, and one that extends the exploration of these strange entities’ unrepresentable nature to inquiry into social norms that are similarly restrictive for humans. Here, as elsewhere, the shift to aphorism signals a major thematic or social concern in the text.

The assertions also connect to other organizing strategies. Finding another entrance to the source-cave, this one with a television monitor, Lobey makes the odd observation that “Color television is certainly a lot more fun than this terribly risky genetic method of reproduction we’ve taken over,” linking his aphorisms to the unique experiences of post-humans, inheriting contextless television shows and physical traits from a dead species (49). Approaching his first experience of a city, he “reflected: to be turned loose by my lonesome in the woods is a fairly comfortable situation. Turned loose among stone, glass, and a few million people is something else,” linking his aphorisms to the collage strategy organizing his own experience of the world (94). Lobey is repeatedly told by characters offering their council that the inherited forms and systems of reasoning are insufficient for his purposes. What he seems to be attempting through his punctual aphorisms is a kind of organization—finding patterns of cause and effect and observing their conditions. His assertions sound out the shape of the world he is in, like his flute among twisting corridors of metal and moss. PHAEDRA does not tell him to seek new places, but specifically another maze, and this could be a kind of mapmaking of a maze at a broader level, connecting with ideas of body, gender, and narrative to invite rearrangement and investigation.

Lobey is aided by the structure of the novel in his task of developing patterns for his world. Though the protagonist, he is not the only voice available in the text. The very inherited texts that compose something like an atmospheric condition for his strange species orbit the narrative itself as epigrams at the openings of chapters and sections. A fluid barrier allows interaction between these layers of the text. Unlike *Rocannon's World*, where the layers of the text, though multiple, all fit within the fictive world at various elevations and from various perspectives, *The Einstein Intersection* draws directly into its text sources ranging from Sartre and Machiavelli to Bob Dylan and soda commercials. The work at times pushes to a kind of recursive limit as Delany's own writing journals about the text interrupt it. Many of these epigrams have the same aphoristic force as Lobey's own assertions. Prior to an episode in which Lobey speaks to an old lover about Friza, Par Lagerkvist informs us that "Love is something that dies and when dead it rots and becomes soil for a new love" (41). After a confrontation that sees Friza die a second time in front of Lobey, Ortega y Gasset contends "it is not that love sometimes makes mistakes, but that it is, essentially, a mistake," (91). And prior to a scene with Spider which reveals much about the significance of Lobey's journey, we read from The Revelation of John "But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love" (109). At a step back, some epigrams seem to comment on the writing of the work itself, such as John Ruskin describing "noble abstraction," as "taking first the essential elements of the thing to be represented...without caring about the mere literal accuracy of such expedient," which sounds like the kind of symbolic significance Attebery attributes to fantasy's impossibilities and certainly helps explain a concern with multi-genre narrative juxtapositions (53). John Ciardi's assertion that "A poem is a machine for making choices," follows immediately, suggesting a view of narrative materials as sets of choices Todorov would describe as discursive (53).

Lobey's ordering of his world parallels Delany's in his selection of pieces for the collage, and Delany calls attention to the choosing by his selection of epigrams.

Choosing among various textures of cultural referent to compose a hybrid narrative certainly relates to these assertions, and inclusions from the author's own journal similarly comment on the project itself and its goals. "*TEI* goes strangely," comments on the writing but remains evergreen as the reader pursues the work, and "I was trying to assimilate the flowers, the vicious animals, with Lobey's adventure," relates events in the novel to the experiences of the author as he tours Rome (7). The connection becomes even closer, as Delany associates the progress of the work with the development of his own identity. "I remember...saying to myself...you are too old to get by as a child prodigy...the images of youth plague me...by the end of *TEI* I hope to have excised them," he relates, "Billy the Kid is the last to go...Lobey will hunt you down, Billy" (103). The author's precocious success is tangled up in Lobey's quest, and the work itself seems almost a ritual of purification to move the author onward. Delany as an author would make for an interesting biographical study, but his inclusion of journals here renders him another character in his own work—operating at a different sphere of narrative like the narrator of *Rocannon's World*, but included nonetheless. His work is similar to Lobey's navigation of myth, a search for identity through collage of a wealth of inherited cultural material. Lobey asks Spider "*Who* am I?" and takes in the music of others to fuel his own expression (116). The intertextual permeability of *TEI* extends to its own exigency. The assertions of any of the voices attending the text, as well as Lobey's, work to give order to a world that contains a ritual reenactment of ancient forms, with individual selfhood at stake for character and entangled author alike.

The scene prefaced by The Revelation of John contains a dialogue between Spider and Lobey that points to buried significances in all of the structural strategies Delany applies, aphoristic world-shaping among them. Spider, pushing Lobey to the understanding he needs to fulfill his narrative role, reveals the source of the book's title as he encourages Lobey past a humanity limited perspective. He speaks of the intersection between Einsteinian relativity and Gödel's incompleteness theorem, emphasizing from the latter that "in any closed mathematical system...read the real world...there are an infinite number of true theorems...which...cannot be deduced from it," relating this to Lobey's experience thus: "which is to say, there are more things in heaven and Earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy...there are an infinite number of true things in the world with no way of ascertaining their truth" (111-112). Here, Spider gives added significance to the aphorisms punctuating the novel while defining their limit. Each of Lobey's or the peripheral texts' assertions are just such theorems—true, but infinite and underivable from the system they attempt to order. The shaping Lobey has been engaged in is effective, his points of order true, but they are insufficient for his purposes. As with *difference*, he must push past inherited forms of understanding to arrive at something suited to his inhuman nature. Thinking of collage, wherein assertions from different texts serve as materials to organize, this concern with breaking into new conceptions becomes shared by the novel itself: old structures are useful and necessary, but limiting if they are the extent of the exploration. Aligning with Ruskin, and speaking as much of the project of the novel as to Lobey, Spider demands Lobey tell him what he knows of myth: "a Gödelian, not an Einsteinian answer. I don't want to know what's inside the myths...I want their shape, their texture, how they feel when you brush them on a dark road" (113). Here, the difference resembles that between cognitively evaluating the significance of a lightspeed drive and the experience of losing two decades of your own story because of it. But

Spider demands a novelty that requires more than two discourses to achieve, what the myths *feel* like, but as they are passed on a road, moving onward.

To Lobey's despairing suspicion that the myths have trapped him in "a schematic for a reality I can't change," Spider replies "The labyrinth today does not follow the same path it did at Knossos fifty thousand years ago. You may be Orpheus; you may be someone else...the world is not the same...it's different" (114). For Lobey to succeed, he must push past old forms from which he has drawn shape, self, and ordering principles about the world; for the novel to succeed, it must similarly create something new in its rearrangement. The antagonist, Kid Death, is limited by the same parameters, and fatally: "The Kid can change anything in the range of his intelligence...but he cannot create something from nothing...he cannot order..." (115). Lobey can order, musically and through aphoristic principle, and the author-character can arrange various textual materials into a kind of remix, but both have to push past the limits of those materials to arrive at the suitably new.

At key moments in the novel, these threads of collage, narrative-permeability, and shaping collide in ways that demonstrate their combined function for the goals of the work. One details Lobey's first experience of the vast city of Branning-at-sea, and the other a confrontation between him and his quarry, Kid Death. As Lobey enters the city, far more populous than any place he has experienced before, his spatial-visual processing abilities and clairvoyance into the music of others are both overwhelmed. Entering "the crowd" of people at the city's gates, Lobey shifts characteristically into aphorism: "a jungle is a myriad of individual trees, vines, bushes; passing through, you see it, however, as one green mass. Perceiving a crowd works the same way" (106). Here, assertion and collage are combined as he details his disorientation: "first the single face here...then the swarms of elbows and ears, tongues scraping words from the floor of

the mouth” (106). The collage continues as he passes through the gate, “at which point a lot of things happened. I don’t understand all of them” (106). Instead of attempting a coherent reconstruction of the experience, Lobey offers “Here’s a fragmenting for you:” and describes the crowd in fractured terms, like “rivers of men and torrents of women, storms of voices, rains of fingers” (106-107). Anticipating Spider’s caution about the limitations of world-shaping, Lobey finds his principles insufficient to relate the experience of the population, instead providing a “fragmenting” that better captures the event, while still lamenting “it’s not fair to Branning” (107). At other points in the novel, Lobey has refused his audience contextualizing details that would explain some of the strange events he narrates, but here he is deliberately pointing to a gap, emphasizing his ongoing lack of understanding (“don’t understand” not *didn’t*) and ability to relate the whole. This moment is reminiscent of the narrative boundary Semley encounters in the caves of Gdemiar, outstripping her story’s framework in transition to another layer and genre of narration. But for Lobey, no diagetic alternative to his story-frame is available; he cannot move *up* in the structure of the narrative to reexamine the events (or allow the reader to do the same) with the tools of other types of expression. There is no Handy Pocket Guide to Cities of Post-human Crowds. Instead, he must shift his fragments of narrative, rearranging them to attempt triangulating an experience, or at least convey the fragmenting. Collage and assertion meet to demonstrate the limits of both strategies, and Lobey must press on to something new or fail to capture his experiences in narrative.

A similar conjunction occurs outside the city, when Lobey is thrown from a massive lizard he is riding to the edge of a cliff. Rain worsens his grip on the cliff edge, and as he struggles to hold on, Kid Death appears. About the rain, Lobey comments “sometimes painful catastrophes happen. Then some little or even pleasant thing follows it, and you cry. Like rain. I

cried” (83). Such an assertion calls attention to ordering, world-shaping, and the emphasis on familiar narrative tropes that follows suggests it functions as a kind of signal. After catching his attention, Kid Death explains the situation and his intentions: “I judge you can hold on there twenty-seven minutes before you drop...so I’m going to wait twenty-six minutes before I do anything...O.K.?” (83). The Kid’s precise estimation is explicable as part of his curious abilities, but also suggests a kind of plot-level clairvoyance reinforced by his subsequent statements. He asks the struggling Lobey “ever run into any good Westerns?” (83). Lobey asks what a western is and whether the Kid will actually wait to save him, and the Kid responds “It’s an art-form the Old Race, the humans, had...and yes, I am. Torture is an art-form too. I want to rescue you at the last minute” (83). Kid Death brings up genre specifically, then behaves in a way that aligns with a trope from that genre: the last-minute rescue. His precise timing suggests that he, like the others, is permeable by narrative tropes and forms, but his incorporation of them is villainous. He weaponizes them. His control over the episode continues to blend awareness of narrative beats with the immediate situation. Friza, whom he resurrects to further torture Lobey, attempts to climb out on a branch to rescue him, but the Kid “pointed at the apex of the bent tree. ‘Break!’ he whispered. It did” (85). Friza falls to her second death, and the Kid pulls Lobey to safety, predicting “You’re just about to yell at me, ‘You killed her!’ ...I killed her again is what really happened...” (86). Kid Death behaves throughout this confrontation like a film director, orchestrating the drama of the moment and commenting on the tropes he is employing to do so. He stands somewhat above the events he is causing, a step toward extra-diegetic scope, but his is not the only view *out* of the events, here. Lobey, upon seeing Friza resurrected, yells, and recounts the moment thus:

“Friza’!

That was a scream.

You and I know the word I shrieked. But nobody else hearing the rough sound... would have recognized it" (84).

Lobey speaks to the audience directly, commenting on their awareness of information in the narrative. The diagetic boundaries of this episode are unstable, like the selves the post-human characters exert in conversation with their human narrative inheritance. Kid Death enforces story beats as weapons, Lobey struggles with and against his Orphic trajectory, and this confrontation features insights variously available to each character, as well as the reader. Kid Death's position slightly above the events at hand recalls Rocannon's, though to different effect. Like the Kid, he is capable of detachment from the events, not wanting to travel offworld and (because of the delay) skip to the next story beat. The Kid is more comfortable with a detachable position from the narrative, but *The Einstein Intersection* has no upper layer for him to occupy, justified by SF conceits. His clairvoyance pierces the diagetic world of the story, and the closest thing to a League satellite in this novel, Delany's journal, speaks of him as an antagonist at that layer, too. Le Guin's alternate perspectives offer collaborative angles on truths that compose a greater whole; Delany's work is a collage with gaps through which the reader and writer can peer, anxious the characters can do the same, and which demand an innovation past claustrophobic archetypes and torturous tropes. Yet a similar empathy to Rocannon's drives the goals of this text. Empathy across difference can, in this kaleidoscope of self-substance, be turned inward, applied to the fragmented cultural anchors upon which identity can depend. Lobey's specific *difference* is a signal to this understanding, as he is able to express himself by empathetically tuning in to the music of those around him, giving shape and order in his art, but toward connection.

4.2 Genre Discussion with Criticism

Enumerating examples of variously successful blends of fantasy and science fiction, Attebery is much more appreciative of Delany's efforts with *The Einstein Intersection*. He also finds in the text a primary concern with identity facilitated by the appropriation of various cultural materials. "The way these beings find order in their irrational world," he writes of Lobey and company, "is to reenact human myths, from Orpheus to Billy the Kid" (Attebery 121). His chief praise comes from the use of Gödel as a device, which he describes as finding "the justification for looking beyond science within science itself" (121). Again, though, the binary SF/F system that Attebery champions is more useful for a survey of mixed-genre texts than a method for understanding this specific texts' structural innovations through mixing genres. It is not by drawing from the cultural aether that Lobey is able to work toward realization of an identity—after all, the mask Attebery cites is *limiting*. Lobey chafes against his narrative inheritance as soon as he understands its limiting potential: "It's fixed!...I'll fail!" (Delany 114). Rather, the protagonist and the work itself are compelled to find something new, something suitable for the needs of those unrepresented in the narrative inheritance framing the work. Again, measuring the proportions of genre in a work for evaluative purposes is less illuminating here than doing so to see what materials Delany applies, rearranges, then ultimately lays aside for new horizons, for Lobey's identity and his own. Parallels between entities uncomfortably adopting forms and roles that do not quite represent them and people working with inherited stories that are also unrepresentative of their experiences are also apparent. If we substitute a social system for a mathematical one, Gödel incompleteness theorem at the heart of the work also suggests lived experiences among the infinite truths that the system (cultural constructs or narrative legacies alike) fail to account for. If they cannot be produced from *within* the system,

one must look outside it for representation, the first step of which is just such a dizzying rearrangement of its fragments as the structure of *The Einstein Intersection* employs.

Other critics working on Delany tend to focus on the parallels between the author and the work, as well, noting themes of identity and comparing the narrative texts to other more biographical one. Charting a progression of identity development throughout Delany's early works, David Lunde focuses on the inclusion of journal materials into the periphery of *The Einstein Intersection*'s narrative, drawing a connection between "Delany's own struggle to come to terms with being black, gay, writer, and child prodigy," and "similar struggles for identity in the young protagonists of ...*The Einstein Intersection*" (Lunde 116). His comparison implies a connection between the bodilessness of the characters and the significance culturally attributed to bodies that impact the development of the writer's identity, but leaves this aspect relatively unexplored, instead treating the text as an allegory for Delany's development as a young writer. Delany, argues Lunde, "orders the experiences of his characters to lead them to a greater understanding and acceptance of themselves and the world/universe they inhabit. Through his incorporation of directly autobiographical concerns and materials, we see him working toward these same goals on a personal level by manipulating these projections of himself through various speculative possibilities" (118). One of the aspects of the text that leads him to this conclusion is the epigrams, "from works of literature and philosophy he had been reading," which alongside the journal entries demand "we must conclude that there is a personal significance to the story he is writing" (117). A biographical-allegory reading of the text, while interesting and fruitful, diverges in purpose from a more structural reading, meaning that the latter can develop insights missing from the former—chiefly that the inclusion of the journal entries also renders Delany a character in his work, and that the materials woven into the collage

are, themselves, finally insufficient for the development of identity shared by the protagonist and author-character. Lunde quotes the Gödelian conceit at the heart of the novel, but concludes that the power of its recontextualizing of various cultural material derives from its parallel to a shared sense of adolescence: “We, as readers, recognize our own adolescent struggles to understand and assimilate the culture and body of knowledge we have inherited and, finally, to know ourselves” (118-119). The struggle agrees with a structural reading, but not the result. The incompleteness theorem and the frequent admonitions of other characters contribute to a concern that no rearrangement of cultural materials, no collage no matter how inventive, is *capable* of representing these beings; something new is needed. Connections to the author’s own development of identity (which we will only extend to the fictionalized version available in epigraphs in the work) would be enriched by considering the parallel between narrative systems insufficient for representing alien lifeforms and social systems that fail to represent people who nevertheless navigate them. The structure of *The Einstein Intersection*, including its direct autobiographical inclusions, supports this conversation between its narrative forms and social forms enveloping the text.

Pursuing the parallels between the world of the text and its envelope, the connection with the writer’s identity becomes a goal for the structure of the work to reinforce. *The Einstein Intersection* invites the reader up, out of the text, to examine the constructs that envelop its writing and the reader’s experience as inherited forms, impactful, but subject to imaginative rearrangement and change. A drive for onward reconfiguration and development helps explain Delany’s contention at the end of the novel that “endings to be useful must be inconclusive” (Delany 120); the work continues outside of the novel, toward greater and greater potential for expressing the truths unmentioned by edifices, but peering through the cracks in the new collage.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER STUDY

The characterized author of *The Einstein Intersection* interacts with the narrative of his world in much the same way that Rocannon interacts with his. Both are observers of the narrative from slightly *above* it, Rocannon from having descended to the world at hand from a different discourse, and the *Einstein* author commenting from between chapters. Both thereby encourage the reader to consider the world almost in miniature, to see it as a construct governed by various structures and observe how those structures interact. Or, as Caroline Levine phrases the value of narrative as a whole, the works operate like “productive thought experiments that allow us to imagine the subtle unfolding activity of multiple social forms” (Levine 19). This ability to fashion a world from a discourse, this metatextuality, seems to be among the most powerful capacities of a work that places genres in conversation. Not limited to one or another of the genres drawn from, the metatextuality is strengthened by the mutual presence of conflicting, though true, means of perception & knowing. Because of the values embedded in the structures rearranged, this act is essentially one of investigation outside the terms of the text. As Levine argues, “if the political is a matter of imposing and enforcing boundaries, temporal patterns, and hierarchies on experience, then there is no politics without form,” and these texts demonstrate the truth of the reverse (3). Overlaying forms like genres onto one another allows observations about where they overlap and diverge, and a structural examination of the results lends insights into the overlap, divergence, and gaps in the view of the world each genre represents.

In Suvinian terms, far more than the invisible armor or musical clairvoyance, the *nova* of these texts are structural. The impossibility or innovation that drives novel explorations is the mutual presence of alternative and even conflicting discourses. Rocannon’s technology on

Fomalhaut does not prompt a reassessment of colonial relations or ways of knowing, his genre's discourse of rational encapsulation alongside the planet's old tales does. Lobey's psychic musicianship is important because it is an empathetic vehicle for ordering in a world limiting except in its gaps. Similarly, the sense of wonder and symbol Attebery attributes to fantasy's impossibilities are rendered the more impactful in *Rocannon's World* and *The Einstein Intersection* because they survive the rationalization omitted in purely fantastic texts. Godel makes Lobey's world *less* explicable, if anything, urging a formation of a new way of knowing, and Semley's tale is one of tragic deceit and harm at the hands of the powerful, however well she understands her lightspeed journey through the night. Neither text functions if shorn of one or another of the discourses it incorporates.

Considered as a game, a text blending genres in this fashion violates two sets of rules wholesale by their mutual inclusion. This is a kind of disobedience to convention, as Todorov conceives genre-formation, with radical possibilities for innovation. Either the rule sets, the discursive choices identifiable by convention as SF or fantasy elements, lean upon one another for mutual reexamination and inquiry, showing both their strengths and fault-lines, as in the case of *Rocannon's World*, or shatter upon each other to become the material for something new, but as-yet unconceived, as the closure-less ending of *The Einstein Intersection* suggests. One of the radical possibilities that *this* approach to genre affords is the potential to address a problem with genre itself: the threat of ossifying and embedding problematic assumptions and constructs. Attebery and Bakhtin agree about the inclusion of the social in the structure of genre. Attebery sees SF and fantasy as archives of perception, the one "so much a mirror of the writer's own time and place" that its texts serve as "documents of vanished worldviews," and the other recording "the way a culture conceives a formation of a self from assembled experiences, instincts, and

internalized cultural constructs” (Attebery 109-110). Widening out from genre and even narrative, Bakhtin contends that all discourse is a social phenomenon. But by placing genres in conversation, rather than working *internally*, as it were, these embedded values become resources for social inquiry. The colonialist reductivism scientific rational discourse threatens to conceal becomes a target for inquiry placed alongside storytelling traditions and lived experiences. Assumptions about the primacy of culturally valued texts or the uneasy fit of archetypes and formulas can be illuminated via a mathematical theorem. Either at the level of trope or genre-discourse, persistent, innovative transfer of forms, allows those forms to appear in bass-relief, and more granular rearrangement of their components can reveal gaps of representation where there were previously walls. Le Guin interrupts a hierarchy of ways of knowing by dropping the truth of her story somewhere between the gaps in the genres she uses to tell it; Delany pushes his character and himself narrowly through similar gaps to scrape off the patina of inherited cultural material weighing both down.

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