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RADICAL REALMS:
A MATERIALIST THEORY OF FANTASY LITERATURE

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

By
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Abstract

This dissertation offers a materialist theory of fantasy as the literature of estranged cognition, an entirely novel perspective that challenges all of the existing criticism on fantasy literature by proposing an outlook that emphasizes not *impossibility,* but *infinite possibility.* During the late-Victorian period, the form of the fairy tale shifted from the *literary fairy tale* to 'fantasy.' Three formal characteristics reveal that fantasy literature derives from the fairy tale: an indication, thematically or formally, that another dimension has been entered; the making and remaking of genres—stories—in dialectically overdetermined configurations; and a textual conflation between physics and ethics that results in estranged cognition. The making and remaking of genres provides a point of contact between SF and the fairy tale, resulting in radical fantasy. In radical fantasy the reality effect of the fairy tale becomes most obvious, because the reality effect of the tale is determined by scientific, empirical reality. So the fairy tale, through radical fantasy, begins to exhibit something like a cognition effect. But no matter how rigorous fantasy worlds may be, they are bound, like the fairy tale, by an ethical dimension that limits the constructed, rational basis of the tale. Fantasy *estranges cognition* by positing an infinite possibility that challenges the limits of even the most imaginative scientific rigor. Estranged cognition exposes the true limits of what can be thought and in this way points towards political understandings that look through and past *both* particulars and wholes. This dissertation pursues estranged cognition as it manifests in the work of Joanna Russ and Samuel Delany, culminating in the final chapter, which synthesizes the entirety of my findings through a reading of China Miéville's BAS-LAG Trilogy. There estranged cognition uncovers a hidden textual promise of a better future, one not bound by particulars or wholes, a truly new way of organizing our collective political situation.

What Is To Be Imagined? Introduction and Literature Review

The popularity of fantasy has risen sharply in recent years, an increase fueled by talented writers determined to change the way fantasy is written and by the proliferation of fantasy in multiple mediums—the novel, the graphic novel, the video game, and film—changing the way fantasy is disseminated. Fantasy, which I will regard chiefly in its literary manifestation throughout, has never been unpopular, regardless of how one defines fantasy (the definitions are many, and often reflect reading tastes more than an earnest assessment of a wide range of fantasy texts—a point to which I will return). J.R.R. Tolkien is often held to be the progenitor of modern fantasy, yet other 'high epic' fantasies similar to Tolkien's developed separately across the Atlantic in America—represented quintessentially by Terry Brooks' SHANNARRA series—signaling a cultural phenomenon that is not limited to the stories, myths, and folklores of any one nation. Moving back and forth across the Atlantic, fantasy authors proliferate: Michael Moorcock, Ursula K. Le Guin, Samuel Delany, Joanna Russ, Ekaterina Sedia, Angela Carter, China Miéville, Neil Gaiman, J.K. Rowling, Jeff Vandermeer, Christopher Priest, Tanyth Lee—the list continues and continues. But this cultural phenomenon, fantasy, is not limited to America and Britain, the centers of Western, capitalist, and patriarchal power: writers such as Michel Encinosa Fú, Jorge Luis Borges, Salman Rushdie, Samit Basu, Nalo Hopkinson, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni reveal that fantasy is open to all imaginations, not just the imaginations of those at the multiple centers of privilege. Despite this optimism, most fantasy literature continues to be produced in the West—big budget Hollywood films such as *The Lord of the Rings* or *Harry Potter* require expensive and technologically sophisticated special effects, and online games such as *World of Warcraft* or *Final Fantasy* require disposable income and an excess of leisure time, all necessities readily supplied at the centers of cultural and economic production.

Criticism follows closely on the heels of literary production, especially when the literary production takes place at such a frantic pace, indicating that something has captured, despite the banalities of production and consumption, the attentions and the imaginations of diverse groups of readers and writers. Rather than continuing to read fantasy literature through the concept of *impossibility*, this project offers a new way of understanding fantasy literature and its relation to *infinite possibility*, opening the genre to a broader readership, not just to those interested in feudal settings, moral challenges, or quasi-religious realities. Most fantasy criticism can be lumped into one of two groups categorized by *object*—mythopoeic or paraxial. In this dissertation I lay siege to the citadel that is mythopoeic fantasy, because the criticism surrounding mythopoeic fantasy *excludes* radical fantasy, a recognized sub-genre. I will focus on radical fantasy as it manifests in its sword and sorcery or secondary world creation variant, both market niches associated with the most banal, reactionary, and nostalgic elements of fantasy literature. My object remains a particular type of fantasy literature, the popular and mass-marketed, the Tolkien-spawned babble of languages, races, worlds and creatures, the fairy tale worlds of knights, fairies, vampires, and princes that become, in radical fantasy, tales of renegade historians, colonized sprites, railroad laborers, and disenfranchised dependents.

Further, it is radical fantasy that makes the materialist theory of fantasy I offer in this dissertation possible, because the advent of that particular sub-type of fantasy sheds light on all of fantasy literature, revealing that the genre has been overrun by an unchecked Romanticism that views finitude—the impossible—as the ultimate horizon. Rejecting finitude, this dissertation embraces *infinite possibility*. Thinking within this paradigm, fantasy can no longer be considered non-cognitive. Instead, fantasy is meta-cognitive; this is the sense in which I use *estranged*

cognition in the next chapter, a function present in all fantasy literature but most pronounced in radical fantasy.

From radical fantasy emerges a critical narrative that overturns the traditional Marxist critical narrative that portrays all fantasy as reactionary and, therefore, bad. In many cases, Marxism reduces the fantastic to stereotypes drawn from the positive content of fantastic subgenres like 'sword and sorcery' and 'secondary world creation'[1]. *Historical Materialism's "*Symposium on Marxism and Fantasy" addresses the historically marginal status of fantasy in Marxist criticism, but the 'Symposium' ultimately only raises more questions than it answers. In his 'Editorial Introduction' China Miéville argues that "'real' life under capitalism *is a fantasy"* (42); beneath this hyperbolic claim Miéville demonstrates how, following Marx's elaboration of commodity fetishism, the experience of real life as a fantasy is directly related to the omnipresent status of the commodity, to the economic realities of *capital*. Miéville continues, arguing the fantastic *as a mode* is especially fruitful for thinking this 'real' fantasy world we live in; this is contrary to Darko Suvin's *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, a landmark text that denigrates the fantastic and seriously doubts the ability of the *genre* to escape its obscurantist roots and reactionary tendencies. The Marxist tradition eventually reaches an impasse, one side overemphasizing mode, the other overemphasizing genre.

But any materialist consideration of fantasy literature must come to grips with the Marxist contention that real life under capitalism is experienced as a fantasy. When one commodity can be exchanged for another indiscriminately, those commodities lose their use-value, their original intention vis-à-vis the material world; when a table, for example, "emerges as a commodity, it changes into a thing which transcends sensuousness. It not only stands with

[1] Suvin and Jameson make their claims in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979) and *Archaeologies of the Future* (2005), respectively. Suvin later softened his claims, see *Extrapolation* 41.3 (2000). Jameson's 2005 publication says little about Radical Fantasy: see Jameson, *Historical Materialism* 10.4 (2002).

its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas (Marx, *Capital* 163). It is important to note the dual character of the commodity. On one hand, it is a material, sensuous thing, something we could all see, touch, hear, taste and smell if it were before us, a thing to be *used*; but the commodity-form obeys an immanent logic, the inner logic of capital itself: *expand and exchange*[2]. In this sense the commodity form, though emerging from the actual commodity, is sharply distinguished from physical reality and material relations.

So though it is hyperbolic to claim reality is a fantasy, the 'fantastic form' of reality, which emerges directly from the properties of the commodity, a sensual thing, is radically separated from the physical demands of that reality—the 'fantastic form' takes on a life of its own, a distinct inner life that occludes the fact there ever was a reality. If we are to ever claim reality back from the 'fantastic form' yoked to us by the inner logic of capital, this 'fantastic form' must be pursued to its logical ends; these are the political stakes of this analysis.

From Fairy Tale to Fantasy

The term *fantasy* arose as a name for a new type of fairy tale that emerged during the Victorian period, a term that became popular because it divorced this new type of fairy tale from its humble origins, because it prevented this new type of fairy tale from being identified pejoratively with 'didacticism' or 'children's literature.'

The fairy tale begins in the seventeenth century, undergoes significant transformations during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and acquires its mature form during the beginning of the twentieth century. In her essay "Fairy Tale and Fantasy: Archaic and Postmodern," Maria Nikalojeva acknowledges a historical link between fairy tales and fantasy, but her essay,

[2] See Freedman, *The Incomplete Projects* (2002). "In order to survive the potentially fatal crises of overproduction (and underconsumption) that thus inevitably result, capitalism must constantly expand—both intensively…and extensively…" (5).

otherwise excellent, maintains that the fairy tale is an archaic genre. Though she quotes Jack Zipes, the foremost historian and critic of fairy tales, she does not seem to appreciate the subtleties of Zipes' work. Throughout his many books on fairy tales, Zipes maintains that the fairy tale is a modern genre; he traces its origins, time and time again, to Madame D'Aulnoy, a French countess of the late seventeenth century. Madame D'Aulnoy's invention is not, however, entirely novel—she adopted the *oral folktale,* which for centuries were told and retold by the peasantry, and created the *literary fairy tale,* an aristocratic and *written* version of the tales exchanged by the peasants and serfs. The *literary fairy tale* was then transformed during the eighteenth century in accordance with the Enlightenment project of rationality; it is during this period that the fairy tale acquires a narrowly didactic character and is used as a tool to educate children; Zipes argues that during this period the fairy tale is *instrumentalized*[3]. But as Zipes demonstrates, under the guidance of Romanticism the fairy tale becomes "revolutionary in form, revolutionary in statement" (*Breaking the Magic Spell* 42).

Michael C. Kotzin discusses the changes to fairy tales during the Victorian period in his book *Dickens and the Fairy-Tale.* He writes,

> The cause for which the Romantics spoke came to have greater urgency as the conditions which provoked them to defend the fairy tale intensified during the Victorian period. Earnest, artless, middle-class Evangelicanism increased its influence; the educational theories of the Enlightenment were succeeded by those of its even less imaginative descendant. Utilitarianism, and the age of the city, industrialism, and science came fully into being. These conditions of England were objected to by Carlyle and by such followers and admirers of his as Ruskin and Kingsley. In discussing the fairy tale these men followed the Romantics by stressing its imaginative value in the new world. But they also reverted a bit to the position of the enemy: the educational values they pointed to in the tales, while not usually as simply and exclusively instructional as those the Enlightement advocated, are more conventionally moral than those which had been defended by Wordsworth and Coleridge (Kotzin 46)

[3] Fantasy also comes into fashion during this period

The Victorian fairy tale mixed Romantic elements with the less imaginative elements of the Enlightenment and this diluted the most radical elements of both the Romantic and Enlightenment worldviews, resulting in a new form during the Victorian period. This form is modern fantasy. Fantasy is not, then, a new mode; but it *is* a new genre.

The rise of the term 'fantasy' in the twentieth century effaces the historical specificity of fantasy as a type of fairy tale, and the resulting confusion about the form and function of fantasy literature has led to a plethora of often contradictory critical viewpoints. From the liberal humanist standpoint, which draws from Jungian interpretations of archetypes and myth, fantasy is a *mode* best exemplified by the genre mythopoeic fantasy and primarily therapeutic in function; from a new historical standpoint, which draws from Foucault, Freud, and Marx, *the fantastic* is a modern genre that begins with the Gothic and primarily political in function. Viewed historically, however, fantasy is a form of the fairy tale, changing in accordance with the dominant political and historical paradigms. Mythopoeic fantasy and radical fantasy are the major types of fantasy during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, respectively, and an understanding of their shared history reveals striking similarities and differences.

Where mythopoeic fantasy creates 'new mythologies' through a dynamic process that transforms the poetics of myth, radical fantasy uses the same dynamic process to critically examine scientific knowledge and cognitive discourses. The frameworks of both radical fantasy and mythopoeic fantasy involve an estrangement in space-time, a radical textual disjunction from empirical reality, which is why any study of fantasy involves not the analysis of single texts but the analysis of constellations of texts identified by proper names: Nevéryon, Bas-lag, Ambergris, Narnia, even—Middle-earth. Formally, radical fantasy and mythopoeic fantasy both *revise* stories and imagine changes to those stories that have immediate political significance, a

dynamic process that demands the *radical* transformation, by the storyteller, of pre-existing stories. Finally, each possesses a function that engages our deepest transformative longings and desires, our hopes for a non-alienated existence and concrete equality.

Though I will continue to use the terms *framework, form,* and *function,* these terms loosely correspond to what Brian Attebery terms *content, structure,* and *reader response.* In *Strategies of Fantasy,* Attebery distinguishes between fantasy as a formula, a mode, and a genre. Attempting to attenuate a divide that exists in the critical interpretations of fantasy literature, Attebery offers two definitions:

> 1. Fantasy is a form of popular escapist literature that combines stock characters and devices—wizards, dragons, magic sword, and the like—into a predictable plot in which the perennially understaffed forces of good triumph over a monolithic evil
> 2. Fantasy is a sophisticated mode of storytelling characterized by stylistic playfulness, self-reflexiveness, and a subversive treatment of establish orders of society and thought. Arguably the major fictional mode of the late twentieth century, it draws upon contemporary ideas about sign systems and the indeterminancy of meaning and at the same time recaptures the vitality and freedom of nonmimetic forms such as epic, folktale, romance, and myth. (Attebery 293-294)

Number one constitutes the formula. It is here as formula that fantasy literature most resembles its predecessor, the *literary fairy* tale, but Attebery asserts that fantasy-as-formula "is essentially a commercial product….as a commercial product, its success depends on consistency and predictability" (294). Number two constitutes the mode, which Attebery calls the 'fantastic;' "the fantastic mode, by contrast, is a vast subject, taking in all literary manifestations of the imagination's ability to soar above the merely possible" (294). Attebery is keen to assert that "the modal approach offers insights necessary for understanding the specific forms—genre or formulas—taken by the fantastic within a particular historical and cultural milieu" (294).

Unfortunately, modal criticism also leads to ahistorical accounts of fantasy literature that unequivocally equate the genre with a specific worldview. By restoring the historical link between fantasy and fairy tales, I reveal that the fairy tale is a dynamic genre that changes its form according to the position of the author and actual historical possibilities.

Attebery admits that he is less than scientific in determining the center of the 'fuzzy set' that is fantasy as genre. Attebery derives his understanding of 'fuzzy sets' from George Lakoff and Mark Johnson; he writes, "fuzzy set theory proposes that a category such as 'bird' consists of central, prototypical examples like 'robin,' surrounded at greater or lesser distance by more problematic instances such as 'ostrich,' 'chicken,' 'penguin,' and even 'bat' (305). Fantasy then, conceived as a fuzzy set, requires a center from which every other example can be said to deviate. Attebery determines the center through an informal poll: "Calling on acquaintances who have written scholarship on fantastic literature, I produced a list of forty titles and asked them to rank those titles on a scale of one to seven. A score of one described the work as *quintessentially* fantastic….and seven, *by no means* fantasy" (305; italics in original). Following Attbery's survey, "with a 1.07 representing near unanimity, *The Lord of the Rings* stands in the bullseye" (306).

Of course, there are characteristics of Tolkien, "his use of interpolated songs and tales, his invention of multiple languages, his borrowing from Celtic and Finnish folklore," that are not "particularly common among non-formulaic fantasies" (307). Instead, Attebery offers three fundamental ways in which a fantasy work should resemble *The Lord of the Rings:* "in content, structure, and…reader response" (Sandner 307). The content of the fantastic, for Attebery, involves the impossible, "some violation of what the author clearly believes to be natural law" (17 qtd in 307). He admits other critics define the impossible differently, but he still asserts that

fantasy "demands a sharper break with reality" (307). I will continue to refer to *content* as *framework* because the framework mediates between text and world; the framework of fairy tales and fantasy always breaks with empirical reality.

I also replace structure with form, which frees considerations of form from overly specific structures derived from specific examples. The structure of fantasy, following Attebery, is comic. He writes,

> It begins with a problem and ends with a resolution. Death, despair, horror, and betrayal may enter into a fantasy, but they must not be the final word. Much fantasy does not have what we could a 'happy ending.' Indeed, the fantasist often seems to start with the idea of such a resolution and then to qualify it, finding every hidden cost in the victory. Le Guin's Ged pays a price in each of the three volumes of her Earthsea triology: first his pride, then his self-sufficiency, and finally his powers and nearly his life. Similarly, Frodo is rewarded, at the end of *The Lord of the Rings,* with pain and exile…but in each case the problem initially proposed by the narrative has been solved, the task successfully completed (307)

The structure of *The Lord of the Rings* is the structure of the traditional fairy-tale, ending in the establishment of a new order through what Tolkien terms in his lecture "On Fairy-Stories" *eucatastrophe.* Attebery asserts, "this eucatastrophe is essential in producing the effect in the reader that is the third commonly shared property of fantasy," "joy," "consolation," "emotional pay-off," "wonder" (308). Though radical fantasy certainly involves stock quest structures drawn from fairy tales and resolves its major conflicts, none end in the establishment of a 'new order.' A new order is certainly suggested, but the fruition of this new order is usually thwarted by the material realities of each fantasy world. The specific eucatastrophic structure Attebery identifies results when the relationship between fantasy and myth is over-emphasized, when the fairy tale is mythologized. The comic structure of mythopoeic fantasy represents a specific content inherited from the revision of myth in a fantasy setting. This process of revision indicates the

form of fantasy, which at its core involves the telling and retelling of stories, generic overdetermination.

The specific type of *reader response* demanded by a particular text reflects the *function* of that text; by choosing function instead of reader response, I emphasize the political over the therapeutic. In mythopoeic fantasy, the *reader's response* involves the sublime, a sense of wonder and awe that leads to a sense of 'recovery.' The concept of the sublime employed in mythopoeic fantasy is primarily Romantic in origin and reflects the political projects of Romantic thinkers. Unlike estrangement, which makes the familiar disconcerting and reveals the ideological construction of the familiar, wonder is meant to "restore [familiar objects] to the vividness with which we first saw them" (308). There is something unsettlingly nostalgic and ultimately hollow about this interpretation of desire, as if there actually existed such a time anywhere but in the products of our imagination. Estrangement, conversely, aims at the immanent characteristics of the familiar in the here and now. Though Atteberry admits that the concept of estrangement in Marxist literary criticism is similar to the sublime sense of wonder he identifies as the third major feature of fantasy, he effectively bars estrangement from fantasy literature. Estrangement is not simply an 'alternative formulation' of the sense of wonder; the political stances reflected by each are indicative of very different worldviews, one essentially Romantic in orientation, the other a dialectic of Romantic and Enlightenment influences. Both estrangement and the sublime involve "penetrating illusion," "but rather than making familiar objects seem disconcerting or alien, [Tolkien] thought fantasy could restore them to the vividness with which we first saw them. He called the process 'recovery'" (Atteberry 308). Wonder and estrangement both penetrate illusion, but one revives ideology where the other strips ideological illusion bare.

Critical Lacuna

Fantasy critics are easily distinguished by their choice of object, a choice that alters the nature of their respective studies more than those studies are changed by any particular ideological investment on the part of the author. Most fantasy criticism focuses on what is called 'paraxial fantasy,' fantasy that begins in the real world and then subverts the rules of the real world. As Mark Bould notes, these accounts ignore fantasy sub-genres such as secondary world creation, in which a fantasy world is created, or sword and sorcery. Reacting to this critical omission, Marek Oziewicz has offered the first theory of fantasy literature to deal with fantasy primarily in its world creating, swashbuckling, epic forms. But Oziewicz assumes this type of fantasy literature to be monolithic (his title, *One Earth, One People,* also reflects Oziewicz's monolithic thinking). It is not. A materialist criticism would move back and forth between particulars and wholes, monoliths, but current materialist criticism of fantasy relies too heavily on the concept of impossibility. My stance against impossibility is a militant one; instead, I prefer to think in terms of infinite possibility, acknowledging Cantor set theory as my aegis. Because it thinks infinite possibility rationally, fantasy is the literature of estranged cognition. This is the main premise of my dissertation, but in order to illuminate this premise I must first reveal the critical lacuna that necessitates a materialist theory of fantasy literature.

Oziewicz emphasizes the spiritual aspects of fantasy literature to the detriment of the material. In *One Earth, One People* he adopts Attbery's 'fuzzy set' and, in an overtly ideological maneuver, places 'mythopoeic fantasy' at the center. Since he, like Attebery, places Tolkien at the center, Oziewicz acknowledges

> the need to measure other works against this standard before calling them fantasy, as well as the recognition of the impulse behind Tolkien's work as the closest to fantasy as a mode. To put it in other words, if Tolkien *is* fantasy, then all other works are *in some ways* fantasy, shading imperceptibly away from this generic center (27).

Unlike Attebery, Oziewicz is very specific about what constitutes the fantastic mode. According to Oziewicz, "Attebery suggests that under the modal approach we may study an incredible breadth of works of art, historic and contemporary, as long as they are all 'manifestations of the imagination's ability to soar above the merely possible," and "he sees the mode of fantasy operating in literature as a special 'way of…telling stories'" (25). Attebery's conception of mode is broad enough to contain many types of literature, but Oziewicz limits fantasy to "a worldview, a mode, and a cognitive strategy which assume the existence of the supernatural" (36). He then argues mythopoeic fantasy, the center of fantasy as a mode, to be the ultimate literary expression of this worldview. Oziewicz assumes, of course, that fantasy as a mode is not susceptible to historical change; he cannot recognize how mythopoeic fantasies, by revising myth, especially religious myth, also resuscitate and transform particular, historically located worldviews. Radical fantasy does not deal with the supernatural so much as it deals with the *super*-natural, phenomena which ordinary, normal science—empirical, positivist science—cannot grasp. Radical fantasy reflects a scientific worldview that contests, from within, the scientific worldview of positivism and empiricism. This decidedly non-mythic approach is similar in form to mythopoeic fantasy, radical fantasy revising SF where mythopoeic fantasy revises myth, but the actual contents differ greatly.

Oziewicz recognizes the 'reality effect' at work in all fantasy, but he limits this reality effect to the belief in a spiritual reality. Early critics also include, conversely, the mundane and the banal as elements providing a sense of reality. In his essay "The Faerie Way of Writing,"

Joseph Addison develops a historical theory of fantasy literature that relies on the concept of the sublime to explain the immanent processes of fantasy texts. According to Addison, "there is a kind of poetry wherein the poet quite loses sight of nature and entertains his reader's imagination with the characters and actions of such persons as have many of them no existence but what he bestows on them" (Addison 21). Addison uses this observation to establish the immanent character of his criticism: enlightened men may no longer believe in fairies and spirits, but fantasy presents these characters and races as if they were real, as if they were natural. Held up to the extrinsic truth of scientific rationality the creatures created are not empirically real, but within the fantasy text the creatures are presented in such a manner as to appear real; considering Shakespeare's fairies, Addison concludes "we cannot forbear thinking them natural… if there are such beings in the world, it looks highly probable they should talk and act as he has represented them" (Addison 23). In his neo-modernist attempt to shore up any disunity, Oziewicz reduces the reality effect of fantasy literature to the belief in a higher spiritual unity; contradicting Addison, this would not feel real to many people.

Defending his holistic approach against relativistic approaches, Oziewicz dismisses an entire tradition of literary criticism, from Tzvetan Todorov to José Monleón, failing to notice that the major difference between his criticism and theirs is a difference in object, not perspective. Though paraxial fantasy and mythopoeic fantasy can and do overlap, mythopoeic fantasy is better understood as historical successor to the fairy tale and paraxial fantasy as a modern genre with roots in realism and the Gothic. Todorov calls paraxial fantasy 'the fantastic.' For Todorov:

> the fantastic occupies the duration of [an] uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous. The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event.
> (Todorov 136)

Todorov attempts to articulate how the fantasy text internally generates a moment of hesitation through the establishment of *ground rules* which can then be violated. But Todorov has trouble accounting for texts like Kafka's *Metamorphosis* that do not establish ground rules to violate and instead pretend, for the duration of the text, that what has occurred is normal, and above all, real. When explaining *The Metamorphosis,* the hesitation that Todorov argues is constitutive of fantasy depends clearly on knowledge of 'the laws of nature' and the 'category of the real'. So although he attempts an internal understanding of the processes of the fantasy text, Todorov must inevitably make recourse to an extra-textual reality, nearly contradicting his claim that "we can no longer believe in an immutable, external reality, nor in a literature which is merely a transcription of such a reality" (Todorov 136,137,138). Fantasy, for Todorov, is determined by an external understanding of what is real and what is not that internally regulates the production of an inexplicable moment—an internal juxtaposition of the real and unreal—which causes the reader to 'hesitate.' This hesitation is only possible in paraxial fantasy because only paraxial fantasy begins in the real world; without this empirical start, hesitation is stymied before it can begin.

The critics who follow Todorov also share similar reading interests. Rosemary Jackson's *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* and Jose Monleón's *A Spectre is Haunting Europe* both attempt to reconcile the historical inadequacies of Todorov's criticism, but both continue to neglect 'high fantasy', world creation, sword and sorcery, and the epic. Jackson is faced with the task of navigating between extra-textual, external influences and the internal operations of the text, both creating different criteria for what is real and what is unreal, to which she applies a therapeutic function: "fantasy characteristically attempts to compensate for a lack resulting from cultural constraints: it is a literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as

absence and loss" (3). Absence and loss circulate in a register that is artistic and extra-artistic simultaneously; fantasy, in a circular manner, returns desire to the absences and losses, the unreal, which made desire, hence fantasy, possible in the first place. Monleón conceives of fantasy as "an artistic discourse that would measure and define the cultural and political boundaries between reason and unreason" (Monleón 48). The function of the artwork is to elaborate an understanding of the real/unreal with real, immediate effects on the cultural and political manifestations of the unreal. One might go so far as to argue that the truth which circulates in a fantasy text, organized around the dialectic real/unreal, reason/unreason, is simply another form of the same truth as it is constructed on a wider political and cultural level.

Todorov, Monleón and Jackson all write about paraxial fantasy—not world creation, not sword and sorcery, not high epics. Mark Bould's critique is especially useful because he recognizes this fact. About Jackson, Bould writes, "Jackson's erasure of the distinction between phantasy and fantasy…results in, or perhaps derives from, a reconstitution of texts as Freudian psyches which innocently and unintentionally express 'unconscious drives' and are thus 'particularly open to psychoanalytic readings' (6). Although Jackson recognizes the historicity of fantasy texts, by connecting fantasy to phantasy she opens her theories to interpretations that confuse the entire history of phantasy with the specific history of fantasy texts. According to Bould: "Jackson's exclusion of the vast majority of literary fantasy in favor of paraxial fantasy would seem to confirm this [the erasure between phantasy and fantasy]"(62-63). Jackson's fantasy is fantasy set in the real, ordinary world, and then through some means the unreal is introduced to upset the order of the real, while most literary fantasy—this is Bould's point as well as the Romantic's point—makes a *radical* break with consensus reality, so much so that it

is impossible to conceive of the real/unreal in the text by any criteria that references the reality taking place outside the text.

The same criticism stands against Monleón, who frames his anaylsis as "an ideological reading rooted in the concrete historical circumstances from which the fantastic emerged and evolved" (vii). This is important because Monleón, unlike Jackson, stresses that the emergence of the fantastic corresponds directly to the spread of bourgeois reason, objectification, and instrumentalization:

> not until nature became objectified, and not until the supernatural was equated with the unnatural, could fantastic literature emerge… the fantastic is not, therefore, fantasy. In fact, there must first exist a world like 'our world, the one without devils, sylphides, or vampires,' before this genre can appear. (8)

Monleón recognizes that unreason is a category created by bourgeois reason and that this category extends to every level of the social; in fact, unreason in the text, as an operation of the text, is directly related to the ideological construction of the unreal in the material world. Like Jackson and Todorov before him, Monleón attempts to understand 'fantasy literature' and 'fantasy' according to a schema that necessitates that 'fantasy literature' be involved in shaping, transforming, and sometimes subverting 'fantasy,' and vice versa. So despite separating 'the fantastic' from 'fantasy' on a historical level, on a formal and theoretical level the two are nearly indistinguishable, clouding the object of Monleón's analysis.

My object is clearly identified: the most base and popular forms of fantasy literature, high epics, sword and sorcery, and world creation. But I also wish to understand my object from a radical, materialist position. Thankfully, there exist enough examples of radical fantasy that the siege against the citadel of mythopoeic fantasy is possible. This siege is political; the future of our collective imagination is at stake. Through radical fantasy I reveal how fantasy literature has become the literature of estranged cognition, a change that requires the continued support of

writers, readers, and critics, especially if mythopoeisis, holism, and homogeneity are to be prevented from colonizing our imaginations *tout court.*

Estranged cognition begins with Darko Suvin's concept cognitive estrangement. According to Suvin, sf 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" (7-8, emphasis deleted). Estrangement signifies that the text, although presenting an alternative fictional world, still interrogates the empirical world critically. Derived from Bertolt Brecht, estrangement bears a didactic and a political responsibility in the creation of a cognitive fictional novum. Brecht writes, "A representation which estranges is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it unfamiliar" (*Short Organon For the Theatre* 192). Without cognition estrangement cannot be critical because the created world cannot show how it is connected to and extrapolated from empirical reality. But the subject of sf remains empirical reality, so Suvin's definition is insufficient to the study of any fictional world that demands radical separation from empirical reality.

Modifications to *cognitive estrangement* become necessary. Carl Freedman's *cognition effect* signals, more so than the utopian impulses analyzed by Zipes or the long tradition of literary estrangement, a more intent focus on the immanent processes of the text. The *cognition effect* limits judgments based on the cognitive status of the text to the internal reality of the text itself, not relying on "any epistemological judgment external to the text itself on the rationality or the irrationality of the latter's judgments, but rather… the attitude *of the text itself* to the kinds of estrangements being performed" (*Critical Theory and Science Fiction* 18; emphasis in original). In actuality, Freedman does not pursue the cognition effect to its logical ends. Though Freedman

is absolutely correct to argue that any text which displays a "cognition effect" can rightly be called sf, he does so by severing the link between text and world. That link is the locus of estrangement, the moment when the text reflects our reality in such a way that our vision of reality is altered significantly. Analyzing Tolkien, Freedman maintains that *The Lord of the Rings* does not achieve a cognition effect because lived life in Middle-earth is mythic and not a result of real interactions between intelligent species. Tolkien would object, I conjecture, that the mythic elements of *LOTR* do in fact determine cognition, our knowledge of the world, and that the content of *LOTR* is as ostensibly real and cognitive as any work of science fiction.

China Miéville pursues the logic of the cognition effect in his "Editorial Introduction" and analogously reveals how the concept is related to conceptions of the possible and the impossible: "In a fantastic work, the artist pretends that things known to be impossible are not only possible but real, which creates mental space redefining—or pretending to redefine—the impossible" (45). Miéville relates fantasy to our collective consciousness of the unreal, going so far as to argue that science fiction is only one way of doing the fantastic, thereby negating the historical specificity of Suvin's arguments, which clearly delineate the history of sf from the history of fantasy in general. Not only does Miéville abandon the didactic tendencies of his theoretical predecessors, in his attempt to synthesize Romantic tendencies and to relate those to Marxian fantasy he also abandons the concept of *genre*. This fact supports Istvan Csicery-Ronay, Jr. conclusion that Miéville's and Bould's theories are dangerously close to being something other than Marxist[4].

Like Miéville, Samuel Delany focuses on the impossible, offering only a few sentences about fantasy in *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw*, just enough to garner a sense of how he might theorize fantasy. For Delany, subjunctivity is essential to determining whether a text is fantasy or not:

[4] See "Lucid Dreams, or Flightless Birds on Rooftops?," *Science Fiction Studies* 30.2 (2003).

"subjunctivity is the tension on the thread of meaning that runs between (to borrow Saussure's term for 'word':) sound-image and sound-image" (31). In literature subjunctivity can be classified into four different types. First is reportage, and reportage states merely, *this happened.* Naturalism "makes certain dictates and allows certain freedoms" and stated subjunctively states *this event could have happened.* Sf operates according to the subjunctive *have not happened,* which unlike the *could not happen* of fantasy is limited by a delineation of the possible and the impossible according to a set of criteria collected from observation and perception. Delany's examples of the fantastic include, however, any story containing "elves, witches, or magic in a non-metaphorical position, or at some correction of image too bizarre to be explained by other than the supernatural"(32). Delany follows the thread of language from its external situation into the reality of the text, but Delany offers little explanation as to how the subjunctive *could not happen* relates back to external reality. What remains clear is that fantasy is about the impossible, what *could not happen*.

Bould's 'jerry-rigged' theory comes closest to my own. Bould terms fantasy the literature of 'paranoid ontologies'—a rigorous and totalizing paranoia, as in the reality/cognition effect, coupled with a fierce overdetermination; unlike Bould, I propose a *specific* political function for fantasy, a function emerging from the immanent failure of the paranoid fantasy totality, to use his words. Bould does express the wish "to redress the balance from the therapeutic towards the political" (75), but his overt concern with redefining the subject indicates a preoccupation with matters extending beyond the page, Bould bringing fantasy and fantasy too close, too fast. Bould posits another subject, an overdetermined subject: "a subject , then, is not to be considered as a singular point, a monadic intersection, through which all hailings pass, but as a cluster or cloud of positions, constantly shifting and repositioning in response to each new

hailing"(77). Following Bould's logic, this new subject is also a *paranoid subject* because it organizes the various hailings in a totalizing manner. The role of fantasy (paranoia) is to organize this overdetermined subject into a coherent whole: "paranoia can be used to describe the force which holds the fuzzily-determined subject together, the shuttling between the vast array of subject positions on offer, which must in some way be reconciled…if the subject is ever to feel unified or whole. This is the role of fantasizing" (80). Once Bould establishes clearly what fantasizing means in reality, he is quick to assert that "fantasy fiction, in both its broad and narrow sense, draws upon this force, this continual location and dislocation" (81). There is much work to be done before the balance is redressed from the therapeutic towards the political—even Bould cannot discuss fantasy literature without first discussing fantasy, two entirely different phenomenon—and this dissertation does that work.

But to do this work well the concept of impossibility must be abandoned. Fantasy critics will be shocked to hear this, fantasy long having been understood to deal in probable impossibilities, but this viewpoint limits the political effectiveness of fantasy literature, the radical and critical estrangements that can be produced through the imaginative creation of another reality, another when, another where. I bring Badiou to my aid in this introduction but do not let his small showing fool you: Badiou's work has been my constant aid. Rather than thinking in terms of possibility, Badiou has taught me to think in terms of infinite possibility. In his "Philosophy and Mathematics: Infinity and the End of Romanticism," Badiou calls for an end to Romanticism because he believes that the Romantic speculative gesture has contributed to the continued thinking of finitude. Instead, if we operate under the mathematical break that is Cantorian set theory, a break that thinks infinite infinities, then finitude loses all significance. Badiou writes:

> mathematics has shown that it has the resources to deploy a perfectly precise conception of the infinite as indifferent multiplicity. This 'indifferentiation' of the infinite, its post-Cantorian treatment as mere number, the pluralization of its concept (there are an infinity of different infinities)—all this has rendered the infinite banal; it has terminated the pregnant latency of finitude and allowed us to realize that every situation (ourselves included) is infinite. (29)

Thought through infinite possibility, not impossibility, fantasy becomes the literature of estranged cognition. This has important political consequences. If real life is a fantasy, the concept of finitude has revealed that it is incapable of thinking fantasy (literary or real) coherently. If we wish to understand and move beyond this fantasy world, we must think in terms of infinities of infinities, asking ourselves how these infinities estrange and transform the foundations of everything solid, all fixed and fast relations.

In the next chapter I outline the framework, form, and function of fantasy literature, analyzing the shifts that occur in each and the relation of those shifts to the shifts in capitalist production. I begin by pursuing radical fantasy because it is in radical fantasy that estranged cognition is most pronounced. From radical fantasy I work backwards, revealing that all types of fantasy share in common an abhistorical framework, a framework estranged in space *and* time; an overdetermined form; and a function that estranges cognition, whether the reader understands cognition to be spiritual, emotional, or strictly scientific. I explore a wide range of fantasy texts in this chapter, displaying these three characteristics in each, while theoretically I devote myself to a dialectical synthesis of Darko Suvin's *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* and Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacrum and Science Fiction.* Baudrillard understands that real life is a fantasy, but by thinking Baudrillard and Suvin in conjunction under the aegis of infinite possibility, I assuage the worst of Baudrillard's cynicism.

In the final three chapters I explore specific examples of estranged cognition in the fantasies of Joanna Russ, Samuel Delany, and China Miéville. Taken separately, each chapter stands alone; taken in conjunction, the chapters weave a dialectical narrative.

In the first chapter, "Cyborgs, Heroines, Fantasy and SF: Donna Haraway and *The Adventures of Alyx*," I explore the work of Joanna Russ through the feminist theory of Donna Haraway. Haraway's emphasis on overdetermination works well with the theme of overdetermination I use throughout this entire dissertation. For Haraway, the subject never occupies a single, whole position, and is instead always occupying relational positions—never man or woman, but man/woman; never human or animal, but human/animal; never man or machine, but cyborg. In this way, Alyx is a cyborg, refusing to relegate herself to any of the roles provided for her by society. But in becoming this cyborg, all fixed referent is abandoned in the dynamo of overdetermination. This is the first term in my narrative-dialectic: the complete dominance of infinite possibility, no fixed handholds, no railings, no seat-belts.

Oppossed to this, I pursue a singular thinking in "The Excesses of the Modular Calculus: Text-Sex-Market and the Politics of S/M in Samuel Delany's NEVÈRŸON Series." Though overdetermination figures prominently in the NEVÈRŸON Series, I focus on dialectical reversal, specifically the reversal of the slave/master dialectic as it manifests in relation to depictions of texts, sex, and markets in the series. The S/M relationship beteen Noyeed and Gorgik becomes an exemplary model for a reorganization of the slave/master dialectic, and this reorganization at the sexual level points to a genuine reorganization at the textual level. Unlike the Russ chapter, which succumbs to overdetermination, this chapter focuses on a specific point, S/M, and manipulates that point, forcing it to change. Yet a criticism can be levied: by focusing on the singular in this way we run the risk of totalizing forms of thought (manipulative forms of

thought). This is not a fruitful way to think infinity either, but when the two are synthesized the truly amazing occurs.

The final chapter, "An 'Argument in Time': Messianism and Redemption in China Miéville's BAS-LAG Trilogy," synthesizes wholes and parts, emphasizing relations and belonging, showing that the political takes place precisely at the intersection of the two. This is the major import of the BAS-LAG Trilogy: by portraying overdetermination and totalization together, Miéville thinks a perpetual politics, a politics built on the intersections of race, sex, and class, built where those categories coincide with seemingly unlike categories. In this way Miéville creates a perpetual engine of political intervention: 1+1=1(+1=1(+1=1…)). These fantasies all estrange basic categories of cognition—race, sex, class—and in doing so formulate understandings beyond race, sex, class. Thinking this beyond is our political responsibility, and we cannot think it unless we abandon the specter of finitude. This dissertation is a first step towards an infinitely hopeful worldview with real political consequences; Miéville's Iron Council leads the vanguard.

That Perilous Other-Realm: Fantasy and Estranged Cognition

After only some brief introductory remarks, I commence this chapter with an extended metaphor drawn from China Miéville's fantasy novel *Perdido Street Station*, comparing a construct designed to sweep floors to another construct designed to repeat the formula Good versus Evil—fantasy. This construct becomes self-aware, sentient, in the same way fantasy becomes cognitive, materialist, radical. Radical fantasy and mythopoeic fantasy share the same lineage, mythopoeic fantasy emerging from the literary fairy tale, radical fantasy from mythopoeic fantasy. Fairy and folk tales, following Jack Zipes, exhibit certain formal similarities, especially the telling and retelling of stories, the grammatical positioning of the tales in a far-when and never-where, and the ethical dimension of the tales, whether that dimension manifests as a radical engagement questioning society or as a didactic moralism preserving the status quo. These qualities can also be found in fantasy literature, *only the form has changed.* Where we once had the telling and retelling of stories, we now have a generic overdetermination not bound by nationalistic tales or the colonizers fairies, a dynamo taking in every genre and every story, re-making those tales through the stuff of fantasy, through an encounter with infinite possibility. And where we once had the grammatical positioning of a far-when and never-where, we now have abhistorical time, a place not locatable on a globe or any known timeline, literally *a world apart,* a right angle to reality, a parallel world, that perilous Other-realm.

All that remains is the ethical dimension: in mythopoeic fantasy the ethical dimension remains connected to spirituality, to the non-cognitive, to myth, and story, and unity. Radical fantasy, conversely, directly connects the ethical dimension of the tale to the cognitive and political dimension, which I take here to also signify categories of race, class, and sex, all realities that shape how we, humans, know the world. Unlike sf, which relies on cognition to

build its realities and only occasionally and inadvertently questions the category of cognition itself, radical fantasy mimics cognition and in so doing exposes the very edges of what can be thought. So this is non-cognition, but of a different sort. Mythopoeic fantasy is non-cognitive because it harkens to a time before scientific rationality; radical fantasy is non-cognitive because it looks to the limits of scientific rationality, the limits of empiricism and positivistic thought. We might ask, what do we find beyond race, beyond class, and beyond sex? What new categories can be thought and why is it necessary to think these categories? The fantasies I explore in this dissertation answer these questions in inventive ways, each in its own way estranging cognition; this idea is the primary focus of this chapter, but it is best to begin with a story. For this I turn to metaphor.

A Quantitative Virus

In *Perdido Street Station,* a construct designed to sweep floors develops artificial intelligence. The process begins with a passing hint that there may be mechanical problems; the construct "sweeping up dust"—"loudly and inefficiently" (27). Then the construct mimics human behavior; when David and Lublamai confront Isaac about the horrid stench and layer of filth left by his avian specimens, the construct apes their stern, arms-folded pose. Isaac notices and attempts to change the subject: "stupid things losing it! It's got a virus! You'd better have it trashed or it will self-organize; you'll be having existential arguments with your mechanical skivvy" (118). The machine begins to self-organize as the result of a virus, an aberration in the system, something wrong at the processing core of the lowly machine. We learn more about the virus from the viewpoint of the repairman: "Viruses came in a variety of forms. Some simply closed down the workings of the machines….others, of which this was a perfect specimen, a beautiful specimen, paralysed constructs by making them recursively examine their basic

behavioural programmes" (234). A sentience waking in the sleeping construct, the repairman helps it along by feeding the construct's analytic engine new programs; the construct receives a program that frees it from having to thoughtlessly obey programs. The analytical engine powering the construct reaches a crisis state; the extraordinary happens:

> On and on came the flow, a relentless wash of abstract instructions, nothing more than combinations of yes/no or on/off, but in such quantity, such complexity, that they approximated concepts.
> And eventually, at a certain point, the quantity became quality. Something changed in the construct's brain. One moment it was a calculating machine, attempting dispassionately to keep up with gouts of data. And then awash in those gouts, something metal twitched and a patter of valves sounded that had not been instructed by those numbers. A loop of self-data was self-generated by the analytical engine. The processor reflected on its creation in a hiss of high-pressure steam.
> One moment it was a calculating machine.
> The next, it thought. (235)

Miéville weaves a common science fiction story[5]. Peculiar to *Perdido Street Station*, this science fiction story takes place in a fantasy setting. Bas-lag, Miéville's created fantasy world, contains many similar examples—intrusion fantasy, action/adventure, Dickensian urban realism—of stories retold in a fantasy setting, but this 'retelling' has not received the attention it deserves; retelling, as generic overdetermination, is at the very heart of fantasy literature, mythopoeic or radical, and the key to understanding fantasy literature's past in fairy tales, its present popularity, and its continued future appeal. Isaac's construct becomes a useful metaphor for the history of 'retelling' in fantasy literature because the self-organization of the machine reflects a qualitative change, the same qualitative change that I argue occurs within mythopoeic fantasy, resulting in radical fantasy. No longer interested in Final or Forgotten Realms, the

[5] The nine short stories in Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot* investigate self-aware machines; Ray Kurzweil's *The Age of Spiritual Machines*, a speculative non-fiction, envisages machines acting morally, much like their human creators; and in the James Cameron film *The Terminator* Skynet self-organizes and wages war against humans.

Other-realms of radical fantasy are aware, politicized and cognizant. Radical reams develop lives of their own; radical realms are self-aware.

In my metaphor, fantasy is the construct. Just as the construct is designed to sweep, so are fantasies and their predecessors, fairy and folk tales, designed with a purpose. In the folk tale, the purpose was to "express the manner in which [the common people] perceived nature and their social order and their wish to satisfy their needs and wants" (Zipes 5). To this end the tales "roam[ed] about from mouth to mouth" and were "transformed each time they [came] to rest in a storyteller's heart" (Bettelheim, qtd. in Zipes 4). The purpose of folk tales was, then, to express the desires of the common people through common stories, themes, and stock character types. Folktales, though not necessarily revolutionary, expressed the deepest concerns and desires of the lower classes in a form that provided a release through libidinal investment. During the period of early capital, fairy tales emerged and were qualitatively different than folktales in two major ways. First, the stories were no longer transmitted orally, and therefore, with the codificiation of print, the stories did not change to fit changing historical circumstance. The bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century then took these stories and rewrote them to express their own class interests and desires. Folktales were alive because they were transmitted orally and spontaneously expressed the wishes and desires of the serfs and peasants. Fairy tales on the other hand were designed with new, print audiences in mind, and the tales were designed to teach bourgeoisie children to be obedient and faithful.

Charles Dickens' commentaries on the political uses of fairy tales excellently demonstrate the didactic purposes towards which fairy tales were used. Writing to contest the influence of moralists like George Cruikshank who were rewriting fairy tales so that those fairy tales corresponded to their moral and political beliefs and could subsequently instill those values

in children, Dickens remarks, "But, to 'editing' Ogres and Hop-o'-my-thumbs, and their families, our dear moralist has in a rash moment taken, as a means of propagating the doctrines of Total Abstinence, Prohibition of the sales of spirituous liquors, Free Trade, and Popular Education" (Dickens 57). Dickens does not deny that fairy tales can instill positive values in children; quite the contrary. Dickens admits that "forbearance, courtesy, consideration for the poor and aged, kind treatment of animals, the love of nature, the abhorrence of tyranny and brute force—many such good things have been first nourished in the child's heart by this powerful aid [fantasy]" (56). Following the didactic nature of Dickens' interpretations, a fairy tale should have measurable public effects. For Dickens, when Cruikshank rewrites fairy tales he serves his own immediate and crass political interests.

Fantasy also has a purpose. In his lecture "On Fairy-Stories" Tolkien maintains an essentially romantic view of fantasy literature, emphasizing the sublime as the driving force behind all fantasy. Reacting to modernity, Tolkien imagined a world free from the fragmenting and alienating effects of modernity, but he also claimed that fantasy worlds must create "an inner consistency of reality" ("On Fairy-Stories" 60). This consistency is essential to the sublime effect because the reader must believe in the world for the duration of the enchantment to be awed by its Truth, but if one considers a consistent reality to be one based on scientific reason and not on spiritual belief, then one might feel cheated of the ecstatic returns Tolkien promises. This is the crux of the matter: for a materialist the 'inner consistency of reality' emerges from the real conditions of everyday life, not from the spiritual. The cognitively possible is simply the modern form of a reality effect that has always been part of the fairy tale, an effect that can be traced from folklore, through the fairy tale, and to modern fantasy; it is only in the latest form of the fantasy that the reality effect becomes, specifically, the cognition effect. In folklore the

fantasies were considered part of reality because there was no outside force that distinguished, in the way modern science does, between the real and the not real; in *Breaking the Magic Spell,* Jack Zipes reminds us that "water nymphs, elves, fairies, giants, dwarfs, ghosts were real in the mind of primitive peoples and had a direct bearing on social behaviour, world views, and legal codification" (6). No reality effect was necessary because no one doubted the reality of the beings that inhabited folklore; indeed, one might even imagine that these early people saw in the world around them the same creatures that populated the tales they told.

Critics have also noted, distinguishing the fairy tale from fantasy—a distinction that does not ultimately hold up to historical scrutiny—that "the fairy tale belongs to the mode of the marvelous, which has its own laws of verisimilitude that differ from those of accepted logic" (Chanady 3). These laws of verisimilitude establish the world of the fairy tale as a world that obeys rigorous, although not scientific, laws, leading to a situation that closely resembles Farah Mendlesohn's portal/quest in that "nothing surprises the characters, since magic is the norm" (*Rhetorics of Fantasy* 2-3). Tolkien draws from the marvelous to create a world that seems real, a world that follows its own rules, a world internally consistent; in his lecture "On Fairy-Stories," he writes, "[the author] makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is 'true': it accords with the laws of that world" (60). Here we have a reality effect, but hardly a reality effect that could be considered cognitive or scientific; instead, the sense of reality in Middle-Earth stems from a religious interpretation of reality. In an age and place that does not recognize Truth, instead recognizing only truths, the cognition effect reigns as the necessary tool to render any impossible world possible, necessary because there have been real historical shifts in the conception of what is real and what is not. The reality of the tale was easy for the folklorist to create because the reality of the tale was the reality of his empirical

world; for later fairy-tale writers, this reality effect could be created through recourse to religious models of reality or moral truth; for modern fantasy writers, what is real and what is not real is defined according to scientific rationality. Therefore, the reality effect in modern fantasy everywhere mimics the cognition effect of science fiction because modern readers cannot accept the reality of a world that does not at least *appear* to be scientific and cognitive. To create believable fantasies for modern readers, radical fantasy assimilates sf techniques and stories; but radical fantasy is not sf—it still contains the ethical dimension, an ethical dimension that unites the physics and ethics of the created world. No, to understand radical fantasy we must first understand fantasy and the quantitative virus at its heart. .

Like our construct, it is virtually impossible to determine how this virus begins. It could have resulted from a poorly designed program, some input card punched improperly. Tolkien's world creation project expresses contradictory desires—he wishes to create a separate world free from the influence of modernity, a world complete unto itself with maps, timelines, and histories, yet these maps, timelines, and histories allow scientific reason and modernity into fantasy despite the effort to exclude both. Or the quantitative virus at the heart of fantasy could be inherent to the form, a gear skipped deep inside the construct: the *game* has always been associated with fantasy, from the parlor games of Madame D'Aulnoy in the eighteenth century to the immensely popular and virtual *World of Warcraft*, and Tolkien's Middle-Earth has actively and directly inspired games such as Dungeons and Dragons, MUDs (Multi-User Domains), and video games. Brian Attebery notes the prevalence of formula in fantasy role-playing games (RPGs), arguing players "follow a sort of recipe for collaboratively 'writing' fantasy stories" (Atteberry 302). Though rote formularization at the level of story seems to be indicative of the virus in my metaphor, this is not the case. The formula has its roots in fairy tales and folklore, and though the

publishing industry is certainly responsible for the production of much formulaic fantasy, even the best example of fantasy literature—Tolkien, following Attebery's "fuzzy set"—follow a formula. The formula, rather than a descent into crass commercialization, represents the fundamental mode of retelling stories. Attebery ignores another type of formula prevalent throughout fantasy but most pronounced in the 'game,' namely the reduction of all qualities to abstract quantifications, a reduction that produces an overwhelming and ultimately brutalizing commitment to an endless stream of numbers.

Quantification permeates every moment of the RPG—a new player creates a character before anything else, choosing race, sex, and class first. Immediately, the player is encouraged to strive for the highest strength, the highest intelligence, the most hit points, and the most magic points, all qualities reduced to mindless numbers. Any *Dungeons and Dragons* player, any MUD player, and any RPG player know that the keys to success in a virtual fantasy world are higher numbers. Higher levels, more experience, more gold, spells that inflict more damage, and swords that grant their user the highest attack power—each of these aspects is systematically quantified. The formulaic story that defines the RPG for Attebery is merely an afterthought, a passing diversion on the path to the highest levels, the most strength, and the best armor and weapons. This is especially true of internet games[6]—MUDs, from text based games like Final Realms to the sophisticated visual and auditory immersion of *World of Warcraft*[7]. Miéville even makes allusion to the 'numbers game' in Perdido Street Station; Isaac and his friends are forced to hire 'adventurers,' a particularly sordid class of grave robbers who would do "Anything for gold and experience" (439). This mathematical virus threatens fantasy, a brutal quantification for which it is not prepared. In an epileptic fit, our construct—fantasy—begins to shut down.

[6] In our virtual world, William Irwin's "game of the impossible" takes on new meaning. See Irwin, *The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy* (1976).

Stuck between a viral quantification that reduces everything to numbers, going so far as to sanction murder as a method to improve those numbers, and an original program that reinforces a binaristic conception of Good versus Evil, fantasies begin to "recursively examine their basic behavioural programmes" (Miéville 234). Fantasy struggles to think for itself, and in struggling to think for itself it becomes entangled in its own original programming: Good versus Evil. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the program runs flawlessly. Frodo accomplishes his task; the host of men thwarts the efforts of Mordor; the king is returned to his throne. In an obvious textual conflation of physics and ethics, the Good are easily distinguished from the Evil by appearance alone, and the Good ultimately triumph over Evil based solely on the criteria that they are Good. One need only observe a character superficially to distinguish whether that character is Good or Evil. Peter Jackson's cinematic portrayal of the trilogy captures these superficial distinctions remarkably well—the forces of Mordor are ugly and dark, hence reprehensible, and the forces of good, notably the elves, are bathed in light, handsome, and pure.

Many subsequent authors stage their fantasies similarly, within the framework of Good versus Evil, but with surprising twists. In Dianna Wynne Jones' *Dark Lord of Derkholm*, the entire realm of Fantasyland is turned upside down to provide a show for pilgrims from Earth. This show disrupts the agrarian society of Fantasyland and for a while the land is overrun by a mock epic battle of Good versus Evil. There is no actual evil, nor any actual good, at least not in the archetypal sense; Evil is nothing more than a product performed by a tourist economy, an economy foisted on Fantasyland by the pilgrims from Earth. R.A. Salvatore, a popular American writer, stages his fantasy novels in the land of Faerŭn, a land populated with the same dwarves, elves and halflings found in Middle-earth. Salvatore's work is immensely popular because he introduces the first bad-guy turned good, the character Drizzt Do'Urden. Drizzt is a dark elf, the

evil counterpart to the elf. It is in his nature to be a vile, murderous creature, but Drizzt abandons his history, turns traitor, and aligns himself with Good, the strict dichotomy of Good versus Evil broken by his actions. And Mary Gentle writes *Grunts* from the viewpoint of the orcs, the henchmen of the Dark Lord and a race drawn from Tolkien's original representation: Evil is favored over Good and the orcs are magically delivered a cache of modern weapons to fight the heroes of Good. To make matters less black and white, the heroes of Good are as vile, if not more vile, than their Evil counterparts. Fantasy, from this angle, is broken, and the only possible new stories are ones that re-conceptualize the relation between Good and Evil.

Literature needs its repairmen. Folklore, romance, and fairy tales relied on storytellers to retell the same stories in changed form; in its modern form retelling is overdetermined and open to unforeseen changes. Though fairy tales, romances, and folklore are considered complete forms, the impulse to retell stories continues; only, the impulse changes form with the stories. For Tolkien the writer assumes the role of Secondary God to his created world, filling his world with elements ladled from the "Cauldron of Story." What is boiling in the pot? A stew of Arthurian literature, English folktales, and European sagas. The contents of the cauldron must be redefined; they are being redefined, constantly, and this dissertation showcases those redefinitions. Despite the assumptions of many critics, fantasy is not merely the imaginative replication of medieval superstition and irrational belief. As the modern continuation of the folk tale during late, global capital, fantasy is creative, changing, and contradictory because it expresses different class concerns at different times. Fantasy is comprised of many disparate and sometimes contradictory parts because fantasy, as a literature, is the overdetermination of *all* story, all tales, all styles, all discourse, and all genres. Generic overdetermination represents the last major shift in the fantastic impulse to tell and retell stories, a shift emerging from the same

process of quantification and instrumentalization that early fantasists such as Tolkien feared. Because of the quantitative virus a qualitative shift occurs, resulting in radical fantasy, the cure to the quantitative virus.

To briefly demonstrate the self-awareness and cognition of radical realms, I turn to Edwin Abbot's *Flatland,* the earliest example of what I am calling radical fantasy, the first shift towards a cognitive understanding of other dimensions, towards an imagination that questions the limits of positivist knowledge and empirical categories. Part geometry primer, part utopian literature, part science fiction, *Flatland* is a historical account of Flatland written by a denizen of Flatland, A. Square. Beginning as a geometry primer, the Other-realm of Flatland, purportedly existing in the second dimension, is explained according to the rules of non-Euclidian geometry. Unlike RPGs, A. Square does not attempt to hide these quantifications behind a story—the quantifications are the story. Then, like our construct, a qualitative shift occurs; this Other-realm is unlike every other Other-realm—it is given an internally rigorous cognitive effect that is only disrupted by the fairy tale impetus to textually conflate physics and ethics in a spectacular display of pure and infinite possibility. A. Square moves from the quantitative to more pressing issues—the status of women in Flatland, class relations in Flatland, and the political status of Flatland. Flatland begins to live a life of its own—it does not embody a single Truth, but rather embodies a multiplicity of truths, scientific, historic, economic, political, sexual, and even artistic. Ultimately, the society of Flatland questions the structures of Victorian England, but Flatland *never becomes* England, suggesting that there are infinitely possible ways in which a society could be organized.

Self-aware fantasy examines the material and historical truths of the created fantasy world; in this way radical fantasy is are cognitive, despite its non-cognitive, abhistorical

framework. Only radical fantasy turns an inverted lens on cognition, revealing that cognition is not one thing—in fact there are multiple cognitions. But before I elaborate estranged cognition in detail, we must first understand the special relationship between fantasy and capital. Fantasy is a modern genre and its archaic roots do not make it any less so; abhistorical time and generic overdetermination are characteristics of fantasy with close ties to capitalism and the link deserves further elaboration.

Fantasy and Capital

Fantasy imagines other and different realities where our empirical rules do not apply. Radical fantasy imagines other and different realities where our empirical rules do not apply, but the scientific methods and tools used to obtain those rules still function to help the denizens of radical realms understand their material place in their universe. These universes are staged in *abhistorical time*, which I will elaborate shortly through Mikhail Bakthin's concept of the chronotope. Abhistorical time and generic overdetermination intertwine in fantasy literature, the first an entry point into the dynamo that is the latter. Understanding how fantasy is a dynamo requires understanding how real life under capital is a fantasy, because the form of fantasy is overdetermined in the same way that the subject and commodity are during the era of late, global capital. Dialectically combined, these two concepts prepare us to understand how fantasy also provides a 'point of exit' back into the social, even during an age, following Jean Baudrillard, when critical reflection is not possible because there is no longer any distance between the image and the real. Though the logic of fantasy's *form* resembles closely the commodity-*form*, fantasy is staged at such a far remove from empirical reality, in an abhistorical *framework*, that critical reflection *is* possible. By no means should all fantasies be considered critical, quite the contrary, but *radical fantasy* inherits from sf, in addition to worldbuilding, didacticism and estrangement,

tools that make radical fantasy quite capable of a critical depth more awe inspiring to a modern reader than the well-wrought worlds of the Faërie realm.

Maria Nikalojeva's illuminating essay "Fairy tale and Fantasy: Archaic to Postmodern" provides an excellent starting point. There Nikalojeva recognizes the fundamental link between fantasy and fairy tales, and though she does not frame the conversation in these terms, she recognizes generic overdetermination and abhistorical time. For Nikalojeva, fantasy is an eclectic genre that "borrows traits not just from fairy tales, but from myth, romance, the novel of chivalry, the picaresque, the gothic novel, mysteries, science fiction, and other genres" (139). Because Nikolajeva recognizes that fantasy fundamentally relies on other genres, she can demonstrate, point by point, how the fantastic incorporates elements of fairy tales, such as characters and plots, or how the chronotope of fantasy, though inherited from fairy tales, is radically different from the chronotope of fairy tales; though the "once upon a time" chronotope of the fairy tale places the fairy tale in a grammatical past, the chronotope of fantasy involves warping space-time, whether through portal, time travel, or parallel reality, such that fantasy departs from space-time as we know it. This is this situation I continue to describe as abhistorical time.

Nikolajeva also insists on a definition of fantasy that defines 'paraxial fantasy' as indicative of the genre at large. 'Paraxial' fantasies begin in empirical reality but there occurs an event or series of events which cannot be explained according to the rules, scientific or otherwise, of empirical reality; to assume paraxial fantasy is representative of fantasy at large contributes to the same categorical confusion which views fantasy as a direct expression of the fantastic mode, foreclosing the possibility of defining fantasy as anything other than a mode. Nikolajeva maintains that fantasy must involve crossing the threshold between the real world and

the fantasy world, because of which the specificity of fantasy literature is sacrificed to the consideration of *fantasy* as it relates to the real world. Because Nikolajeva does not offer a clear historicization of fantasy, her essay assumes that fantasy is simply the modern *inheritor* of fairy tale themes and motifs, when in reality fantasy represents a qualitative shift in the history of the fairy tale. Nikolajeva's account would seem to fit with certain Marxist considerations of the fantastic, notably Suvin's and Jameson's. For Suvin, the fantastic is the modern inheritor of a long *non-cognitive* tradition that contains myth, folklore, and fairy tale, while for Jameson fantasy is marked by a pre-feudal nostalgia, magic, and the timeless battle of Good versus Evil. But these accounts ignore Nikolajeva's claims that fantasy also contains the Gothic, the supernatural, and science fiction; these genres did not emerge until the period of early capitalism and these genres are not necessarily *non-cognitive* in the strictest sense. The Gothic, and with it the supernatural, emerged as a direct result of the bourgeois rationalization process. The Gothic and the supernatural are not holdovers to an older period with a different form of material production. To maintain that the Gothic and the supernatural have a specific history their own is to maintain that the Gothic and the supernatural are *not* fantasy.

The Gothic and the supernatural are more closely related to realism than to fantasy. In his essay "Supernatural Realism," Srdjan Smajić argues "literary realism… is not haunted by supernaturalism as the parasitic or saboteurial harbinger of ideological, epistemological, and ontological disruption but instead openly collaborates with it, everywhere weaving into it its formal properties, thematic concerns, and critical self-reflections" (*Novel: A Forum on Fiction*). Because the Gothic and the supernatural are responses to the hegemony of bourgeois reason and reality, literary supernaturalism responds to and is part of literary representations of reality; the chronotope of the supernatural involves a disturbance in historical time. Tzvetan Todorov

reinforces this point: he analyzes the supernatural as a genre which, although related to the fantastic, is significantly different from the fantastic. This strengthens Todorov's claim for a generic understanding of the fantastic but general failure to include historical analysis causes the fantastic, in Todorov's hands, to still resemble a mode more than a genre.

Taken as a mode, the genres folklore, myth, fairy tale, the supernatural and the Gothic, constitute examples of the fantastic; taken as a genre, the fantastic is fundamentally constituted by these other genres: *fantasy is a literary genre formed through the abhistorical overdetermination of other literary genres that have, taken as commodity-forms, been radically separated from the material realities of their respective productions. Overdetermined* signifies that any particular embodiment of fantasy will be subject to a different number of generic determinations that have varying degrees of effect on the form of that particular embodiment; as Nikalojeva remarks, fantasy literature is dynamic at the level of genre. For example, Jeff Vandermeer's collection of oddities and miscellany *City of Saints and Madmen* and his fungal-noir *Finch* are both generically overdetermined; *Finch* contains the detective novel, sf, and the postcolonial novel, while *City of Saints and Madmen* contains historical documents, research and biological monograph. Within each text these genres interact in different ways and dialectically influence accompanying genres, but each becomes part of a greater whole, which in Vandermeer's case answers to the proper name 'Ambergris.' What remains is that different genres across a range of texts assert a determinant function in the specific fantastic 'Ambergris.' Though I will focus on Samuel Delany's NEVÉRŸON series in this section, fantasy as generic overdetermination is demonstrable in a wide range of fantasy texts, from J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series to Kafka's *Metamorphosis,* destroying all distinction between 'high' and 'low.' Notably, mass produced genres like fantasy world creation and sword and sorcery are more

easily incorporated into this notion of the fantasy than Anne Radcliffe's Gothic masterpieces or H.P. Lovecraft's horrors; in fact, the theory of fantasy pursued here *excludes* the Gothic and horror except inasmuch as the Gothic and horror are commodified and incorporated into the overdetermined form of fantasy literature. Commodified, genres become models to be tested on fantasy's abhistorical stage.

Genres are social products, commodities that circulate in a public sphere. A quick glance at the publishing industry and its obsession with classification would certainly seem to confirm this: many genres assimilated by fantasy are labeled 'genre fiction' for the purposes of marketing and exchange. That genre is so clearly a production of the culture industry allows the discussion of genre as commodity-form, and as commodity-forms "all commodities relate to each other as possessing an identical social essence as exchangeable things in the same magnitude" (Starosta 311). The commodity-form is the greatest spell cast by capital, the spell of commodity fetishism, the results of which are that the commodity-form lives a life its own without regard to the material realities that generated the form; "the commodity form, and the value-relation of the products of labour within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material relations rising out of this. It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things" (Marx 165). As the commodity-form dominates more and more through expansion and exchange, reality is occluded and replaced by the 'grotesque' ideas of enchanted commodities; the commodity-form "stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas" (Marx 163). Finally, the dominance of the commodity-form is ensured by the constant expansion of capital and the eventual dominance of the system of exchange[8].

The system of exchange destroys all particulars through equivalence. According to Shane Gunster, the Frankfurt school "was persuaded by Marx of the terrifying power of commodification to subsume all particularities, all nonidentity, all use-value beneath the all-encompassing category of exchange" (Gunster 47). The result of this integration is that "every thing comes to be perfectly integrated with every other thing" (Gunster 47). Commodity-forms are exchanged for other commodity-forms, and eventually all ties to material reality are severed in a whirlwind of commodity fetishism; all that remains are commodities to be exchanged. Genres, like commodities, also develop lives of their own and develop their own 'grotesque ideas'. This is the major prerequisite of fantasy literature, and best supports fantasy's status as a modern genre. Fantasy requires at least two genres that have been separated from reality as commodity-forms combine in a an overdetermined system; Tolkien's *Lord of The Rings,* for example, combines myth, legend, fairy tales, and the *Bildungsroman,* and each genre shares in common, when combined within the fantasy framework, an abhistorical relation to material reality; based on this shared assumption the genres communicate and share their 'grotesque ideas.'

According to Resnick and Wolff, students of Althusser, "An individual is the site, for example, of the effects of class, parents, jobs, religions, politics, literature, biology, and so on. So too is an enterprise, a literary text, or a political party" (174). Constituted by various influences, the subject in this instance is said to be overdetermined. The 'problem' with the concept of overdetermination is that, on the one hand, the specific influence of the economic and with it the specific contribution of Marxism to social understanding is effaced and replaced by a web of mutually determining determinations which forces the reassertion of the primacy of the economic over and against the concept of overdetermination, while on the other hand,

overdetermination sanctions an extreme, relativistic approach wherein every determination is reduced to a point of absolute contingency; "structural relations are replaced by 'conjunctures' and juxtapositions, an arbitrary configuration of 'over-determined' elements (the potentially useful concept of over-determination has increasingly become a cover for absolute contingency)" (Wood 76). A 'point of entry,' then, becomes necessary to understand fantasy from any position other than an absolutely contingent one—Marxist theory, for example, enters the overdetermined structure of the social through an entry point in the economic—but a 'point of entry' also implies a 'point of exit.' The only other possible solution is to maintain the base/superstructure model, asserting a dominance for the economic 'in the last instance' that runs counter to the emancipatory potential suggested by the concept of overdetermination. To understand the overdetermined structure of fantasy requires establishing a 'point of entry,' *which for the fantastic is abhistorical time*, and a 'point of exit,' *estranged cognition*

Abhistorical space-time designates the space-time coordinates, the chronotope, of fantasy; *abhistorical* suggests a radical divergence from the empirical space-time continuum. As a literary concept chronotope designates "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin 84). Every genre portrays a particular relationship between man and nature, and accordingly each genre offers a different interpretation of the relation man has to nature and time. The chronotope of the epic provides an example: "the world of the epic is the national heroic past: it is a world of 'beginnings' and 'peak times' in the national history, a world of fathers and founders of families, a world of 'firsts' and 'bests'. The important part here is not that the past constitutes the content of the epic" (Bakhtin 13). When submitted to unhistorical time, our point of entry into the fantastic, the presence of the epic in fantasy literature undergoes significant changes. In the case of *Lord of the Rings*, the

mythic impulses provide a 'point of exit'—a point at which the text exits unhistorical time and re-enters historical time. Marek Oziewicz's argument that mythopoeic fantasy creates a new mythology supports this claim; the new mythology takes the reader out of abhistorical time by reflecting on the material situations surrounding the reader.

Bakhtin considered himself as developing "a historical poetics," directly linking Bakhtin's work to Marxist literary theory (85). In "The Chronotope of Enchantment" Ingemark remarks:

> his [Bakhtin's] most extended discussion of the folkloric chronotope presents it as an idealized and essentially unified cyclical time in which man and nature, the individual and the collective, and birth and death are inseparable. The chronotope is divided by the rhythms of agricultural labor and orientated to future, collective growth, rather than instant, individualized gain…. In other words, it accords with the official communist vision of the pre-class folk. (2)

Marxist criticism is dominated by a historical poetics, and this historical poetics best captures the crystallized elements of a genre in relation to that genre's socio-economic history. Much of the confusion stemming from Suvin's use of estrangement results from a misunderstanding as to what exactly estrangement refers; estrangement in the sense used by Suvin designates a specific relationship to space and time, and is therefore closer in spirit to Bakhtin's chronotope than to Brecht's *Verfrumdung*[8]. This is evident when Suvin subjects his original categories—cognitive/non-cognitive, naturalistic/estranged—to time; in the temporal sphere 'cognition' designates 'pluridimensionality' and 'naturalistic' designates 'historical' (*Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* 20-21). The chronotope of sf is cognitive estrangement—which designates that sf breaks with historical time, but maintains a connection to historical time by maintaining that the estranged time of sf is pluridimensional in the same way actual history is. Using my terms, then, sf is *metahistorical.*

[8] This is not entirely true. For Suvin, estrangement serves a dual purpose, designating the framework as well as the function, a chronotope and *Verfremdung*. I will explore *Verfrumdung* further in the next section.

Myth, conversely, is dominated by *antihistorical time,* which differs significantly from unhistorical time. Freedman pursues the distinction between *antihistorical* and *abhistorical*, though he does not use those exact terms, in his short essay "A Note on Marxism and Fantasy." There he compares Tolkien's Middle-earth To Samuel Delany's NEVÈRŸON, noting that "Tolkien's world is one in which the great majority of the actual material interests—economic, political, ideological, sexual—that drive individuals and societies are silently erased, to be replaced by the dominant obsession of the entire trilogy, namely, the abstract and essentially vacuous metaphysical battle between good and evil" (263-264). The economic, political, ideological and sexual belong to the realm of *pluridimensional* time, but the abstract battle between good and evil, abstract and vacuous, is in its very nature *unidimensional.* The unidimensional tendencies of Middle-earth do not usurp the abhistorical chronotope; instead, the abhistorical chronotope of the fantastic provides a backdrop against which antihistorical time, conveyed here by the genres myth and epic, can be modeled and tested against other models. Nevèrÿon is similar to Middle-earth because like Middle-earth "the physical geography and anthropology of Nevèrÿon make it practically impossible…to locate Delany's invented empire in any known area of our globe" (266). Nevèrÿon and Middle-earth are both *unhistorical* "in the sense of belonging to no empirical period of actual history" (266). Even if Nevèrÿon is abhistorical, the series still wrestles with historical concerns, economic, political, ideological, and sexual, because an abhistorical text "functions as a fictional locus in which situations drawn from the real world can be modeled and theories about them tested" (270). Contra Freedman, I insist that Middle-earth and Nevèrÿon share a common chronotope: abhistoric time. The traces of the antihistoric in Middle-earth reflect the models chosen by Tolkien, not the chronotope of the fantastic. The situations modeled and tested in the fantastic are conveyed by the genres

comprising a specific example of the fantastic, and in examples which epic time reigns antihistorical tendencies are fore-grounded and dominate the abhistorical scene because those antihistorical tendencies provide a 'point of exit' through which fantasy comments on and reflects on actual reality. Nevérÿon simply posits a different 'point of exit' through which it re-enters the social—the material.

Considered through its 'point of entry,' however, abhistorical time, Delany's Nevèrÿon is not far removed from Tolkien's Middle-earth. Freedman notes Jameson's claim that the Nevèrÿon series represents "a major and unclassifiable achievement in contemporary American Literature" and adds that "any attempt to formulate an adequate Marxist theory of fantasy must somehow come to grips with the towering achievement of Samuel Delany's masterpiece" (qtd. in 269; 271). The theory of the fantastic pursued here has little trouble 'coming to grips' with the Nevèrÿon series: the series is generically overdetermined and organized in the last instance according to the unhistoric chronotope of the fantastic. Generically, Nevèrÿon is an agglomeration of critical theory, heroic fantasy, and even sf. Freedman is right to assert that "Delany's adoption of so many of the conventions and motifs of heroic fantasy is too substantial and extensive to be written off as merely epiphenomenal" (270); heroic fantasy is one of the primary genres comprising the overdetermined structure named Nevèrÿon. The epic time normally associated with heroic fantasy, however, is replaced with the *metahistorical* time of sf, and, by proxy, critical theory. The main thrust of the Nevèrÿon series is the tension created through the juxtaposition of antihistorical genres, notably heroic fantasy, and metahistorical genres, sf and critical theory; this tensions plays out against the backdrop of unhistorical time. Where Delany favors the metahistorical over and against the antihistorical, Tolkien concedes to the antihistorical. The antihistorical in Tolkien is a result of the genres Tolkien chose to create

Middle-earth in the same way that the metahistorical for Delany is a result of generic choices. These generic choices are the 'filling in' of the unhistoric space-time created by each author. The difference between Tolkien and Delany in this instance amounts to little more than the generic choices each author makes in constructing his abhistorical reality; these choices effect the manner in which fantasy re-enters the social. Here we have entered into the creation of a new reality through the precession of models, allowing us to complicate the Adornian view I have offered thus far through the work of Jean Baudrillard.

Baudrillard provides an excellent 'postmodern' account of the same phenomenon as Adorno, an account even more ruthless in its cynicism than Adorno is nostalgic in his pessimism. Baudrillard's conception of the hyperreal, a space where the distinction between the imaginary and the real collapses—an implosion fueled by the precession of models—expresses the extent to which exchange dominates all relationships. Baudrillard opens *Simulacrum and Simulation* with Borges' fable in which "the cartographers of the Empire drew up a map so detailed that it ends up covering the territory exactly (the decline of the Empire witnesses the fraying of this map" (1). In this fable Baudrillard finds an allegory of simulation, but the third order of simulacrum, the order of the hyperreal, reverses the process of Borges' fable. In the original fable, the territory precedes the map, whereas in the hyperreal it is the map, the model, that precedes the territory, and "it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map" (1). To sum up: "Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (1). All referents are liquidated in the era of simulation, but there is more, "worse" Baudrillard writes, "[the referents] artificial resurrection in the system of signs, a material more malleable than meaning, in that it lends itself

to all systems of equivalences… it is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real, that is to say an operation of deterring every real process via its operational double…" (2). The collapse between the imaginary and the real stems first from the liquidation of all referents, the real, and this liquidation allows the real to be replaced with signs for the real, imaginary models. Finally, these models reveal that there was no distinction between the imaginary and the real in the first place, only the endless precession of simulacrum, resulting in "a hyperreal henceforth sheltered from the imaginary, and from any distinction between the real and the imaginary, leaving room only for the orbital recurrence of models" (3).

Does this mean that fantasy is ultimately nothing other than an escapist literature that can offer no critical perspective on empirical reality, no positive vision or hope for change, instead only the endless precession of models? Baudrillard's cynicism is nearly inescapable here, every explosion or revolutionary crisis only exponentially increasing the generation and circulation of models, the dominance of exchange and the completion of control. Paradoxically, only worlds that occupy alternative space-times are authorized to make critical projections about reality because such texts exit themselves from the endless procession of models that contributes to the eradication of the distinction between the real and the imaginary in reality. Fantasy *mirrors* the endless precession of models formally, but fantasy also contains a 'point of exit,' pointing the way towards an exit from the fantasy dynamo that is capital.

Dynamo

Fantasy is amorphous. Its genealogical tree is broken, webbed and interconnected, at the same time a linear progression from folktales through fairy tales to fantasy *and* a complex series of dialectical relations that stem and connect with every major form, genre, discourse, and style throughout history. The earliest genres that find themselves embedded in fantasy's family tree

are the most obvious: myth, folktales, and fairy tales. Recent additions include the utopian novel, the historical novel, realism, postmodernism, science fiction, the detective novel, the western, the supernatural and the gothic, horror, the adventure quest, and allegory, to name a few. These are the stories we tell; in fantasy the author rewrites these stories the way we want to hear them, according to certain formulas, characters, and conflicts. The point is, however, that fantasy is a dynamo, a vortex that consumes every type of discourse. Here we will examine three particular manifestations of this overdetermination, three sub-types that reflect a predominance of myth, the novel, or sf. But there are infinite combinations—so though I discovered estranged cognition by studying the influence of sf on fantasy literature, all fantasy contains within it this radical core.

The major proponents of radical fantasy, Frederic Jameson and William Burling, correspond radical fantasy to the period of late capitalist production, both offering Marxist historiographies that interpret the modern and the postmodern as successive stages of cultural development that correspond to stages of capitalist production[9]. According to Burling, "the significance of Radical Fantasy can be understood only by an approach that recognizes innovation in form as a response to specific historical context affecting not just fantasy but the entire system of the arts" (337). While Burling is absolutely correct in a broad sense, he insists on drawing fine distinctions between the different stages of capital. Modernism and late modernism are followed by postmodernism and late postmodernism, and radical fantasy is the form of fantasy which corresponds to late postmodernism. While Burling is certainly correct to recognize that fantasy has changed since it arrived on the historical scene, these changes are indicative of changing generic choices by authors and not so much major changes to the form of fantasy or capital. So the fantastic of George Macdonald is not that much different, formally,

[9] Jameson's position is well-known. See *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991).

from the fantastic of Jeff Vandermeer; the difference is that, for Vandermeer, sf is an option from which he can choose, an option that reorients the fantastic towards radical, critical engagement by redirecting fantasy's 'point of exit' into the social. This also signifies little has changed to the basic structure of capital: "in order to maintain a definable postmodernity, one would need, at the very least, to argue that the logic of capital described by Marx had been rendered obsolete by identifiable political or technical innovations" (Freedman 26-27). Late capitalism is the *perfection* of early capitalism, not a significant *break*, a rupture. I must, despite the historical work done in those areas, dismiss any fierce periodization of fantasy literature. Because fantasy literature is a primarily modern phenomenon, the different types of fantasy are best explained according to the genres present in any particular embodiment.

There is more congruity between the mythic tradition and sf tradition of fantasy literature than incongruity. Even the mythic tradition, as evidenced by the insistence on 'world-building,' is not that far removed from postmodern concerns, namely the question 'what is a world?' If the postmodern is contained in the modern, then the modern versions of the fantastic must also contain, to an appropriate degree, some elements of the ontological concern Brian McHale associates with the postmodern. Every version of the fantastic, by virtue of the abhistoric chronotope, asks the questions, "What is a world? [...] What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects?" (Mchale 10). Then, to create these worlds, models from reality are tested against each other in the abhistorical time of the fantastic. Though the sf tradition represents the maturation of the world-building techniques of fantasy, even the earliest examples of fantasy were engaged in the abstraction, replication, and testing of models. I will continue to interchange 'genre' and 'model' over the course of this essay because genre designates the specific type of model used by fantasy. In this way, the

assimilation of generic models leads directly to the assimilation of the models used by a particular genre.

I identify three different traditions of fantasy based on the overlapping generic choices of the authors, but in no way should this be considered a comprehensive taxonomy. *In all cases the chronotope of the fantastic is abhistorical time.* First the mythopoeic tradition, the constitutive examples of which are the British fairy-lands of George Macdonald, J.R.R. Tolkien, Lord Dunsany, and C.S. Lewis and the individualized American epics of Terry Brooks, Robert Jordan, and Terry Goodkind[10]. Opposite this tradition the sf tradition; Mervyn Peake, Jeff Vandermeer, China Miéville, Ursula Le Guin, M. John Harrison, and Samuel Delany are some of the proper names belonging to this tradition. Finally, the novelistic tradition, especially as it manifests in Kafka, Jeff Vandermeer, and K.J. Bishop. The traditions are not mutually exclusive: for example, Tolkien emphasizes world-building in the same essay which he forbids sf to the fantastic, and Miéville and Vandermeer write in both the novelistic and sf traditions[11]. J.K. Rowling, Terry Brooks, Michel Encinosa Fú, Samit Basu, China Miéville, K.J. Bishop, J.R.R. Tolkien, Ursula Le Guin, Neil Gaiman, Franz Kafka—these names identify a range of fantastic writers which spans the globe and includes 'high' and 'low' art[12], but this global identification is only possible based on an understanding of fantasy as generic overdetermination.

The open-ended nature of the novel ensures that other genres and other chronotopes are incorporated into fantasy in a non-hierarchical manner. Where mythic fantasy determines things by offering a new mythology, the novel is democratic and pluralistic—an essentially Bahktinian view of the novel. Thus in a story like Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* there exist a host of generic influences, each of which is subject to the fantasy chronotope, abhistorical time. Since subject to abhistorical time, no particular genre dominates and each is transformed significantly through the

course of Kafka's story. Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* is an overdetermination of folklore, the novel, and the supernatural, and I will demonstrate how each is transformed through contact with abhistorical time.

The folkloric influences in Kafka's tale are well-documented. According to Iris Bruce, Kafka "makes extensive use of motifs and narrative devices drawn from the sacred, folk, and mystic Jewish tradition" (125). Bruce then proceeds to demonstrate how the folkloric elements permeate Kafka's multifaceted story, concluding that "in the context of the Jewish narrative tradition, then, *The Metamorphosis* emerges as a story about transgression and punishment, exile, and redemption"(Bruce 125). For Bakhtin the folkloric chronotope is marked by an insistence on the collective, labor, and future-oriented growth, but these aspects are bound by the cyclical aspects of folkloric time: "the mark of cyclicity, and consequently of cyclical repetitiveness, is imprinted on all events occurring in this type of time. Time's forward impulse is limited by the cycle. For this reason even growth does not achieve an authentic 'becoming'" (Bakhtin 210). Bruce marks this cyclicity when he notes that the story ends under the assumption that Gregor's sister is set to undergo a similar transformation as her brother. Following these observations, *The Metamorphosis* is a modern folktale. The folkloric, however, is undermined on two fronts. First, the open-endedness of novelistic time provides a polyglossia to *The Metamorphosis* which, although prefigured in folklore, is characteristic of modern genres. Second, the folkloric elements are not presented in a grammatical past. *The Metamorphosis* does not begin "Once upon a time, when Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from unsettling dreams, he found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin." The time of *The Metamorphosis* is seemingly the time of the empirical present, and the folkloric indeterminacy in relation to time—there is no actual time in folklore since time is cyclical—cannot conceive "precise differentiation

of time into a present, a past, and a future" (Bakhtin 207). Gregor wakes up *today* and realizes he is not what he was *yesterday,* his 'essential individuality' driving the process through which the present becomes distinguishable from past and future.

Novelistic time in *The Metamorphosis* is disturbed by the literalization of metaphor. Novelistic time is defined by "indeterminacy, a certain semantic open-endedness, a living contact with unfinished, still evolving contemporary reality (the open-ended present)" (Bakhtin 7). The opening sentences of *The Metamorphosis* confirm that what occurs is in the present, although it is clear this is not the present of the author or the reader because in their empirical present Gregor Samsa's transformation is impossible. The present tense of the tale is confirmed by the mechanisms through which we come to realize that Samsa's transformation is perfectly normal to the textual world of *The Metamorphosis;* as Samsa goes about his daily routine, he encounters bosses, workers, servants and his family, and the different viewpoints of these people shape the view the reader has of Samsa's transformation. Since the characters in the story are largely indifferent to the transformation, it is clear the transformation is normal to the world of the text. If this were folkloric time, set in a grammatical past, metaphor would be impossible; because subject to abhistorical time, however, the metaphor is literalized. According to Stanley Corngold, "Kafka's 'taking over' figures from ordinary speech enacts a second metaphorization…--one that concludes in the literalization and hence the metamorphosis of the metaphor" (82). The ''taking over' figures from ordinary speech' is a characteristic of the novel; ordinary speech is marked by polyglossia and only novelistic style can capture this polyglossia. The literalization of the metaphor has interesting effects. A metaphor, following Corngold, operates according to (A) the tenor of the metaphor and (B), "the things as which the tenor is designated" (85). Literalization changes the nature of (B): "if the metaphor is taken out of

context, however, if it is taken literally, it no longer functions as a vehicle but as a name, directing us to (B) as an abstraction or an object in the world" (85). In this way the monstrous vermin that Samsa become is not a metaphor; instead, it is an abstraction or a real object in a real world. Following the strictures of historical time, it is impossible for metaphors to be taken literally because historical time also conveys assumptions about the nature of reality. Only in unhistorical time can the literalization of the metaphor be complete, and this is similar to the process through which the mythic tradition breaks with allegorical representation. Novelistic time, like folkloric time, becomes part of the setting in the specific example of the fantastic which is *The Metamorphosis.* The stylistic open-endedness of the novel, foreclosed by the cyclical time of folklore, is expressed more and more through the continual alteration of Gregor's body. Corngold writes, "the continual alteration of Gregor's body suggests an ongoing metamorphosis, the *process* of literalization in various directions and not its end state" (86). Abhistorical time trumps novelistic time by literalizing the metaphor of the vermin.

When analyzing the difficulty of classifying *The Metamorphosis* as the fantastic according to his criteria of hesitation, Todorov reinforces the fact that Kafka's stories demand literal, not metaphorical, readings. For Todorov the fantastic is defined by hesitation and uncertainty; he writes, "the fantastic occupies the duration of [an] uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous" (Todorov 136). Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* defies the moment of hesitation by opening with the moment of hesitation and then never allowing it to close, never allowing the juxtaposition against empirical reality which Todorov believes such hesitation, such uncertainty, requires. Confronting the difficulty of classifying *The Metamorphosis,* Todorov writes,

> Kafka's narratives relate both to the marvelous and to the uncanny; they are the coincidence of two apparently incompatible genres…At first glance we are

> tempted to attribute allegorical meaning to "The Metamorphosis."…It is often said of Kafka that his narratives must be read above all *as narratives,* on the literal level. The event described in "The Metamorphosis" is quite as real as any other literary event. (141)

Todorov links directly non-metaphorical and non-literal interpretations, but he cannot see that these breaks are indicative of the unhistorical time characteristic of the fantastic; Todorov is still convinced the fantastic is deeply embedded in depictions of reality, of historical time, but this is not the case. Historical time in the fantastic is presented on an unhistorical stage, thereby becoming an element of the setting which is transformed by the unhistorical—"In Kafka, the supernatural event no longer provokes hesitation, for the world described is entirely bizarre, as abnormal as the very event to which it affords a background" (141). The supernatural is merely another element of *The Metamorphosis,* and to search for an explanation of *The Metamorphosis* as supernatural, novelistic, or folkloric must contend with Kafka's literal metaphors and non-allegorical presentations.

Also part of the novelistic tradition, K.J. Bishop's *The Etched City* oozes generic tensions, the text an overdetermination of the western, heroic fantasy, the artistic novel, and magical realism, each transformed by abhistorical time. Because it is a recent novel, and one perhaps unknown to many of my readers, some summary is necessary. Bishop interwines two stories, Gwynn's and Raule's. Both, we learn, were once comrades in a failed revolution, and both have decided to move to Ashamoil to ply their respective trades: Gwynn is a killer; Raule is a doctor. Raule practices in the poorest part of Ashamoil, treating bandits and the poverty-stricken. There she encounters many strange and inexplicable oddities, from deformations to outright transformations, all of which she approaches as a scientist, cataloging, preserving, searching. Gwynn fares better. He hires himself out as a mercenary and earns a reputation as a fearless and unflinching gunslinger. Gwynn falls in love with an artist named Beth, and between

the hypnotic effects of her art and the hallucinogens he consumes regularly, Gwynn spirals out of control and loses his group on reality, ultimately calling into question his strict and unbending atheism.

These generic tensions provide the main undercurrents of the novel: the opposition of faith to reason, the changing face of the world in an industrial age, and the role of God, faith, and magic in a modern world. Heroic fantasy plays a minimal role, indicated only by the position of the rebels in relation to the Army of Heroes. *The Etched City* begins with an unhistorical situation that situates itself historically in relation to the previous age of Heroes. This age is over, however, and the world is a modern one, where "windmill turbines on the wasteland turned the power of air in motion into the power of light" (378). The elements of the western present an age of industrialization, one wherein uncharted territories are closing and the city is becomes more important than the country. The main tension of *The Etched City* can be described as the tensions between antihistorical genres like myth and magical realism and historical genres like the western and the artistic novel. The artistic chronotope is achieved through the urban environment and cosmopolitan style of *The Etched City:* "in the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope" (Bakhtin 84). Different viewpoints—from captains of trade and industry to forlorn Reverends and junkies wandering the streets—all contribute to the artistic whole which is *The Etched City.* The artistic chronotope is identified by the same semantic open-endedness as novelistic time; indeed, the two are mutually related, the artistic a version of the novelistic.

Myth, conveyed by religious and national myth, dominates fantasy. In America, the mythic tradition takes on an individualistic character; the fantasy worlds of Terry Brooks, Robert Jordan, and Terry Goodkind all draw from myth, folklore, and fairy tale to create new creatures, political and magical systems, geographies, and epic adventures[13]. This 'individualized' mythic tradition is not mythic because it borrows from ancient or modern myth sources; paradoxically, the 'individualized' myths attempt to sever ties to mythic sources by creating new lore, new beasts, new geographies, and new gods. Instead, this tradition is mythic because everything occurs in epic time—taken in the Bakthinian, not the Brechtian sense. Epic time is a time of heroes and gods, warriors and wizards, and the results of the battles and tribulations present a salvaged morality, one not made by the common people of the world, the ones who feed, build and support. The individualized tradition is non-cognitive according to Suvin's parameters because the antihistorical, epic chronotope persists. Terry Goodkind's Sword of Truth series is representative. There the main character Richard Rahl wages a war to save his homelands, first against the interior threat of Darken Rahl, who raped his mother, and the exterior threat of Emperor Jagang, a dream penetrating wizard who begins to resemble a caricature of the Communist hordes over the course of the series. Respectively, Goodkind's epic pursues certain American morals—self-sacrifice, hard work, independence—all with Richard as embodied representative. Richard, the hero, makes history, not the people, but ultimately he is only another model on the abhistoric stage.

The British tradition draws from a wide array of sources that bolster a sense of national identity. Arthurian Romance, folklore, and fairy tales provide a foundational mythos that bolsters the English spirit and provides a mythical identity comparable to classical myth or Norse saga. When Tennyson turns to Arthurian Romance to explore the dilemmas of his age he is

seeking a symbol adequate to bolster England in new, changing and frightening times. Tolkien, in Modernist fashion, adapted this idea to *LOTR*. *LOTR* draws from a vast reservoir of myth, lore and tale, and these are assimilated in the service of truth. Tolkien believed in original unity, and believed the modern world was fragmented. *LOTR* attempts to heal this fragmentation, in albeit a constricted way; this recovery of lost truth through the artistic whole is not what makes *LOTR* mythic. Returning to Freedman and Suvin, the mythic elements of *LOTR* are related to its position in epic time, the time of heroes and gods, right and wrong, light and dark, truth and lies; in short, the artistic resurrection of a lost wholeness made by the gods and elite, not the ordinary people. This mythic, *non-cognitive* attitude of the text towards the world it presents can be found in George Macdonald, George Eddison, J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Phillip Pullman, and even William Morris[14].

George Macdonald's *Phantastes: A Faërie Romance for Men and Women* is an overdetermination of travelogue, folk-fairy tales, and myth. The story is standard: a normal human finds himself displaced to a fantastic realm in which he is unaware of the rules. This unawareness leads to a series of conflicts—evil fairies shaped like trees, trolls, and phantom maidens—through which the hero emerges unscathed to tell his tale. According to Suvin, travel, implied or actual, to a place or through time, is the "paradigm of the aesthetically most satisfying goal of the SF voyage" (5); diametrically opposed, Tolkien forbids the travel tale because it usually contains reference to empirical reality, which he argue breaks the enchantment. Macdonald realizes, well before Tolkien, that no genres are forbidden to the fantastic. As a writer of travelogue, the protagonist of *Phantastes* resembles Rapheal Hythloday, or an archaeologist visiting a new world. Every detail is recorded, down to the alabaster marble and the titles of books in the library of the Fairy Palace. Moreover, the mythic elements and

remnants of folk and fairy tales remain evident: the denizens of Macdonald's fantastic realm are all drawn from folklore and fairy tale, and mythic time is reflected through the protagonist's perception of the fantastic realm. As the protagonist aligns himself with goodness and virtue, as he proves himself in fairyland, the protagonist begins to perceive the fairies and elves in their true form; as he strays from the virtuous the land of the fairies becomes more and more mysterious. His shadow doggedly pursues him, a manifestation of his darkest attributes, and when it catches him it kills him, after which he wakes up in Primary reality, unharmed[15]. As the hero becomes virtuous, the world becomes tangible and intelligible; as his shadow overcomes him, he is barred from perceiving the fairy world; this is a model of mythic time.

Mythic exhibits peculiar characteristics when subject to abhistorical time, because all connection with allegory is severed by abhistorical time. This best explains why Tolkien, Pullman and others claim they are not writing allegories. Despite the persistence of religious themes, *LOTR* is not an allegory: "Tolkien strongly resisted the reduction of Faërie to an allegorical expression of religious truths (as in Spencer's *FQ)"* (Gray 95). Mythic time develops a separate life in the fantastic, and transformed, non-allegoric mythic time dominates the fantastic. If Tolkien is considered indicative of the entire fantastic and not just one way of doing the fantastic then it is easy to understand how the fantastic is judged to be non-cognitive; however, other fantasy traditions are not so easily labeled.

This brings us, finally, to sf. The chronotope of sf is metahistorical, which is hidden away in Suvin's formulation *cognitive estrangement;* estrangement indicates a radical separation from space-time, but by virtue of cognition metahistorical time is linked solidly to historical time. The disparity between estranged time and historical time is what authorizes sf to project critically, but, as expected, abhistoric chronotope transforms the metahistorical chronotope significantly.

Contra Farah Mendlesohn's claims in *The Rhetorics of Fantasy*, the fantastic is never identical to sf[16]; instead, the fantastic parodies and models sf according to the abhistoric chronotope.

As an immediate contemporary to Tolkien who nonetheless writes in the sf tradition, Mervyn Peake provides an excellent example of the relationship between fantasy and sf. Peake's Gormenghast novels are primarily an overdetermination of the gothic and sf—the first two books are oppressively gothic, while the final is surprisingly sf. The first two books focus mainly on the illogical structures of Gormenghast castle and how these structures reinforce the rigid austerity of Gormenghast's rituals. The gothic chronotope depicts an ossified past, in this instance indicated through the walls of the castle, its strict boundaries, and the rigid austerity of ritual and tradition. But Titus resists the sublime unity of ritual and tradition and does not accept the ossified past of the Gothic. Titus desires to break with his past, and in *Titus Alone,* pervaded by sf, technology, and futurist themes, Titus succeeds to do just that. Early in the third book, because he does not comprehend the new things surrounding him, Titus finds himself in trouble with the local magistrate and the magistrate deems him insane. Titus, rejecting the constrictions and unity of the old world, finds himself in a world of explosive progression. This is not the comfort of home; this is an entirely different place. This new world, a new world without an apparent order and a new world in which death plays a constant role – Peake was exposed to the concentration camps – is the world of progression and order.

Titus rejects this new order, partially because he cannot fit into it due to circumstance, and partially because he is exposed to the atrocities and lunacies of this new order. As Tanya Gardiner-Scott writes, "scientifically controlled death and madness… are aspects of the same evil" (80). The magistrate confirms Titus is mad and, unfit for Gormenghast or the future, Titus finally decides to leave. In the final scenes of *Titus Alone* the forlorn and world weary Titus

stumbles upon and views Gormenghast's castle. Faced with the decision to go back, Titus continues on. Had Titus returned to Gormenghast the sf chronotope would not be subverted; there would be a clear back and forth between the historical situation and the new world of progress and the future, the new world which Titus does not understand and which does not understand him. Titus realizes there are many other worlds and many other options, and at the end of the last novel he embarks in search of new worlds and new times. This is Peake's legacy to fantasy literature: recognizing the madness of the dynamo, Titus rejects it entirely, effectively issuing the challenge to imagine other realities, other organizations of man, time, and labor.

Estranged Cognition

Darko Suvin's *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* is a landmark text in science fiction that has recently, with the growing popularity of fantasy literature, come under intense scrutiny for its denigration of fantasy literature. Despite this scrutiny, any materialist consideration of fantasy must wrestle with, in extended fashion, the concepts presented by Suvin, transforming those concepts in order to better understand fantasy literature, to not simply dismiss fantasy as a 'black ectoplasm.'

For Suvin, SF constitutes a long literary tradition united centrally around the dialectical interaction of estrangement and cognition in the narrative; this dialectic distinguishes SF from 'naturalistic' or empiricist fiction—mimetic fiction—and SF from 'non-cognitive' literature, folklore, fairy tale, fantasy, and myth. Suvin also reveals a close kinship between SF and the genres which preceded it. He lists: "the classical and medieval 'fortunate island' story, the 'fabulous voyage' story from antiquity on, the Renaissance and Baroque 'utopia' and 'planetary novel', the Enlightenment 'state [political] novel,' the modern 'anticipation' and 'anti-utopia'"(3). Folklore, fairy tales, fantasy and myth share a kinship with SF inasmuch as each of

those genres relies on a formal framework that estranges the author's (and reader's, we might add) empirical reality, but SF "differs very significantly in approach and social function from such adjoining non-naturalistic or metaempirical genres" (4). This difference is, precisely, that SF is cognitive and folklore and myth are non-cognitive, specifically as cognition signifies a scientific and materialist understanding of the empirical world *and the relation of man to that world*. Like SF and unlike the structurally related genres of folklore, myth, and fantasy, radical fantasy inverts the dialectic of estrangement and cognition that defines science fiction. No matter how scientific or rigorous a radical realm may be that realm still remains putatively non-cognitive because *all* fantasy worlds maintain a textual link between physics and ethics. Though there is cognition at work in radical fantasy, this cognition must encounter the infinitely possible that defines the fantastic; when cognition encounters infinite possibilities, beliefs, abstractions, concepts, and ideas replace material and rational explanation, questioning the sub-stratum material from which those beliefs, abstractions, concepts and ideas sprang.

More should be said about the relationship between SF and radical fantasy. I already mentioned, in a broad sense, that radical fantasy is part of the longer literary tradition of SF. I base this argument on the cognitive principles used to create non-cognitive fantasy worlds; simply put, cognition implies that it is "the activity of the protagonists, interacting with each other, physically equally [sic] unprivileged figures, that determines the outcome" (Suvin 11). This is opposed immediately to the non-cognitive, wherein "ethics coincides with (positive or negative) physics" (11). In a fairy tale, for example, an earthquake might announce the death of an important figure, but this implies the physical realm favors certain actors for some supernatural or metaphysical reason. There is a connection between physics and ethics in radical fantasy, but this does not mean that the realm unambiguously favors certain entities over others.

The inhabitants of the radical realms, equally unprivileged, begin to make their own history; this feature renders radical fantasy cognitive.

The most significant difference between radical fantasy and SF manifests in the relationship each shares with 'zero degree' reality, a relationship which reveals that even the most cognitive radical fantasy is staged at an infinite remove from what we know to be possible, factually and actually. According to Suvin, "In a typology of genres for our cognitive age, one basic parameter would take into account the relationship of the world(s) each genre presents and the 'zero world' of empirically verifiable properties around the author (this being 'zero' in the sense of a controlled reference point in a coordinate system, or of the control group in an experiment)" (10-11). Comparing the created world to the 'zero world' of empirically verifiable reality establishes the locus of estrangement in a genre. So though the cognitive aspects of the "zero world" remain intact in SF—scientific reasoning is scientific reasoning—the framework of SF is estranged in time. In radical fantasy the formal aspects of cognition remain intact because the inhabitants interact with their environment in equally unprivileged ways, but the content of that cognition, expressed in essays, discourses, and stories as the material history of the created world, reveal that radical fantasies are set in a never-when, a never-where, estranged in space-time; therefore, impossible. A cognitive approach to a new place produces new knowledge; this knowledge is severed from empirical reality—estranged in space-time, non-cognitive, *abhistorical*—but still shaped according to the cognitive principles that shape empirical reality. But in addition to designating a literary framework, estrangement also refers to a literary function, Bertolt Brecht's *Verfremdung.* Suvin informs us that "the approach to the imaginary locality, practiced by the genre of SF is a supposedly factual one" (6). Radical fantasies do not take a factual approach, rather an anti-factual approach, but imaginary (infinite) and empirical

(finite) possibilities intermingle in radical fantasy to create a contrast that produces literary *estrangement.* To create believable realms radical fantasy must use same cognitive models that shape actual reality, but in subverting these models to its abhistorical framework, those original models are made grotesque, unfamiliar.

Through radical fantasy it is revealed that fantasy literature is the literature of *estranged cognition*. I dialectically invert Suvin's definition of SF, establishing two fronts on which my argument must be waged. First, Suvin's definition is meant to suggest a long literary tradition, and radical fantasy exhibits the pertinent features significant to that tradition—a dialectical interaction of cognition and estrangement. Second, radical fantasy exhibits enough discontinuity with much of what is considered SF that it is misleading to consider radical fantasy from any vantage, theoretical and historical, except that of *the fantastic. Non-cognition* in radical fantasy refers, then, to the *locus of estrangement,* and not to a wholesale denial of the possibility of narrative cognition, but this narrative cognition *is* estranged (*verfremdung)* by the non-cognitive, abhistorical framework of the fantasy.

Suvin postulates "a spectrum or spread of literary subject matter which extends from the ideal extreme of exact recreation of the author's empirical environment to exclusive interest in a strange newness, a *novum*" (4; italics in original). Suvin creates a set of opposites here, what on one side, "the exact recreation of the author's empirical environment," could be considered realism, and what on the other side, "exclusive interest in a strange newness," could be considered fantasy. To call these two extremes realism and fantasy introduces some confusion, because realism and fantasy are both specific genres, and genres, among other things, emerge from real historical conditions. To avoid confusing 19th century realism with the entire history of mimetic writing, Suvin calls the exact recreation of the author's empirical environment

'naturalistic' writing. The genres exclusively interested in strange newness are certainly all fantasies in that they are not beholden to empirical reality, but it is the narrative presence of cognition that sharply distinguishes fantasy from sf for Suvin.

The set "exclusive interest in a strange newness" can be further subdivided and another spectrum can be postulated, the cognitive on one end, non-cognitive on the other. The cognitive tradition of literary estrangement includes, we learn from Suvin, "Iambulus and Euphemerus through the classical utopia to Verne's island of Captain Nemo and Well's island of Dr. Moreau…Lucian through Cyrano to Swift's mini-Moon of Laputa" (5). The non-cognitive tradition is equally pedigreed, extending from mythological antiquity, through folklore, to fairy tales and fantasy, from Homer to Lovecraft and J.K. Rowling. The cognitive tradition is often associated with travel, implied or actual, through space or through time; according to Suvin, this is the "paradigm of the aesthetically most satisfying goal of the SF voyage" (5). In this new place or time, whether a far-off ocean island, the next valley over, a planet light years away, or a distant future, Suvin insists "the new framework is correlative to the new inhabitants" (5). This qualification reveals the cognitive aspects at work: *for Suvin, cognition implies much more than modern scientific rationality*. Cognition also signifies the awareness of a material universe not predetermined by a controlling Idea or a supreme Good. The new framework is correlative to the new inhabitants because the new inhabitants *made* their framework, and their framework made them. Non-cognitive estrangement, conversely, portrays situations and events which humans cannot control, situations attributed to supernatural or metaphysical causes and not physical, material ones. Where SF Fairylands, defined by the dialectical interplay of cognition and estrangement, reports events as if they were factual, in this way producing an ironic realism,

non-cognitive estrangement reports events that in their very nature seriously undermine any attempts at factual reportage.

A quick study of fantasy reveals similarities to both ends of the spectrum, cognitive and non-cognitive, necessitating the distinction between mythopoeic and radical fantasy. Mythopoeic fantasy includes the portal/quest: Terry Brooks' Shannarra series, Robert Jordan's Wheel of Time series, Terry Goodkind's Seeker of Truth series, C.S. Lewis's Narnia, J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth, George Macdonald's Faërie, and Phillip Pullman's Dark Materials series, which, despite Pullman's atheism, is still closely aligned to the overtly religious texts of say a Lewis or Tolkien. According to Mendlesohn, in the portal/quest the protagonists enter a world of wonder where nothing is the same and where the actions are driven by higher motivating forces. In this sense, the portal/quest is non-cognitive as defined by Suvin. In secondary creations of the portal/quest variety, history is not made by the inhabitants of those worlds; rather, history is determined in advance by concerns which transcend the everyday concerns of the world's inhabitants. However, portal/quest fantasies still display a minimal congruence with SF: the portal/quest is defined by the exploration and discovery of a new place. This place is not locatable on a map nor is it part of the physical material world, but the sense of estrangement created by the discovery of a new place is a formal aspect that the portal/quest shares with SF; not so with other, non-secondary type fantasies.

Portal/quest fantasies display a cognitive nucleus that rubs against the grain, so to speak, of the non-cognitive conflation of physics and ethics within the narrative. The paradigmatic portal/quest, *LOTR*, demonstrates a cognitive, world-building attitude that cannot be explained away by mere reference to the allegory of Good vs. Evil. It was not enough to discover a new place, Middle-earth, so Tolkien continued to do with his discoveries what man has always done.

He studied the new place like a curio, drew detailed maps, studied the cultures of that place with the patience of an anthropologist, and recorded never-heard languages for study by future linguists. He did this in a style factual and encyclopedic, a style which never questioned the reality of the place, never offered its wonders as impossibilities but, instead, as possibilities we simply had not considered. Regretfully, Tolkien only dabbled with cognition; he was convinced his secondary creation, Middle-earth, in order to be True, had to reflect the Truth, religious or otherwise, he understood as constituting primary creation. The earliest attempts at sub-creation are non-cognitive because they do not offer historical and material visions of the worlds created in each; instead, the early texts were infused with a Romantic nostalgia for myth. Though this mythic tradition of sub-creation creates imaginative worlds which express a deep desire for a reality that is non-alienated and whole, the mythic tradition ignores the effects of material determinations when considering a world and its inhabitants.

Immersive fantasies are modern precisely in the sense that they do not rely on supernatural or metaphysical explanations for what occurs; in this sense and this sense alone immersive fantasy and SF fairylands are the same. The protagonists of immersive fantasy are not filled with a sense of wonder by the world they inhabit; instead, the world they inhabit is the ordinary, mundane world, and the protagonists approach it as such. Mendlesohn quotes Irwin's 'quiet assertion' as necessary to the immersive fantasy: "There are no authorial expectations about how astonishing this all is…[and characters express] straightforward observations, expressing interest rather than amazement" (Mendlesohn, 60). As her primary examples, Mendlesohn includes China Miéville's *Perdido Street Station* (though the entire Bas-Lag series certainly fits as well), Steph Swainston's *The Year of Our War,* and K.J. Parker's *Fencer* trilogy. Though no list is ever complete, I would also add K.J. Bishop's *The Etched City,* Jeff

Vandermeer's *City of Saints and Madmen,* and M. John Harrison's Viriconium series. These texts all share in common a certain attitude towards the fantasy world, such that the protagonists are "questioning and extrapolating beings" (63). Like the early portal/quest practitioners, these writers create detailed maps, histories, and other types of information about the world, most of which is never published. Noticing this tendency towards encyclopedic knowledge and scientific rationalization, Mendlesohn reminds her readers, "Fantasy that is this logical and this concerned with creating a science of the fantastic is usually termed *rationalized fantasy"* (63).

Suvin has little positive to say about 'science-fantasy' or rationalized fantasy; quoting James Blish, he agrees that in such fantasy "plausibility is specifically invoked for most of the story, but may be cast aside in patches at the author's whim and according to no visible system or principle…a blind and grateful abandonment of the life of the mind" (Suvin 68). Suvin opposes rational fantasy to supernatural fantasy; the latter relies on a higher logic, and would include Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, while the former creates a sham cognitive logic that can be thrown out or kept with little concern for the rules of the world. Both immersive fantasy and portal/quest fantasy use fictional encyclopedic and scientific knowledge to create a texture of reality, so the appearance of these characteristics alone is not enough to determine whether one is more rational or supernatural than the other, whether one is more cognitive. Most important to determining the cognitive aspect of a text is the flow of historical time and the relation of men to that historical time. In this way a text creates a "cognition effect," a process imminent to the text.

But can this cognition effect generate a political propedeutic? In the chapter "Simulacra and Science Fiction" from *Simulacrum and Simulation,* Jean Baudrillard begins by listing the three order of simulacra and identifying the imaginary that correspond to each successive phase.

The first order is "simulacra that are natural, naturalist, founded on the image, on imitation and counterfeit, that are harmonious, optimistic, and that aim for the restitution or the ideal institution of nature made in God's image" (121). For Baudrillard, the imaginary that corresponds to this order of simulacra is *utopia.* The second order of simulacra "are productive, productivist, founded on energy, force, its materialization by the machine and in the whole system of production—a promethean aim of a continuous globalization and expansion, of an indefinite liberation of energy" (ibid.). The imaginary that corresponds to this order is *science fiction.* Finally, the third order of simulacra is "the simulacra of simulation, founded on information, the model, the cybernetic game—total operationality, hyperreality, aim of total control" (ibid). Baudrillard does not know what type of literature corresponds to this third order. He asks, "is there an imaginary that might correspond to this order? The most likely answer is that the good old imaginary of science fiction is dead and that something else in the process of emerging (not in fiction but in theory as well)" (ibid.). Baudrillard explores some possibilities, the novels of Philip K. Dick and J.G. Ballard's *Crash,* but these novels are still science fiction, despite their *images* of the hyperreal. The imaginary that corresponds to this third order is the same imaginary that produces radical fantasy. My secondary argument is that radical fantasy, constructed formally through informative models, represents the literature of the hyperreal. Secondary worlds do not reference the real world; they only reference themselves. The game of simulation is complete, but this is no cause for cynicism or hopelessness. The estranging power of the imagination remains a constant liberating force, so when the models used in sub-creation are cognitive and rational, those models are made new in a self-referencing cycle of cognition and estrangement.

The distance between the image and the real allows, according to Baudrillard, for an ideal or critical projection. This distance is necessary for the estrangements of utopia and SF; ideal or critical projections are possible in utopia and SF because the formal frameworks of each genre allow for critical reflection on empirical reality. In utopia, the formal framework is created through an estrangement in *space.* Utopia is a place that could be fixed on a map of the world, but it is a place about which no one knows anything. Because it is exotic but still possible, imaginary but still real, the estranged framework allows for critical interpretation. The framework of SF is created through an estrangement in *time.* A similar situation results: because it is exotic but possible, the estrangement is effective in allowing for critical interpretation with real political meaning. The framework of sub-creation, on the other hand, is created through an estrangement of *space-time,* and with the estrangement of space-time follows the destruction of all material referent. How, then, do SF fairylands estrange cognition? Precisely by foregoing actual referent, the impossible makes itself felt as a force that transforms the very notion of cognition itself.

Much like Baudrillard, Suvin argues that the locus of estrangement in SF—the long literary tradition, not the specific genre—has, in its history, shifted once from space to time. In this way Suvin includes More's *Utopia* as proto-SF: the cognitive aspects of the text are fully developed, and the locus of estrangement—Utopia is a far-off island—is in known, geographic space. Mature SF maintains its cognitive aspects by considering the nature of a place and its relation to the nature of the inhabitants, but the locus of estrangement is in time: the new societies in Samuel Delany's *Trouble on Triton,* for example, are separated from us by time, but those societies can be understood in a way that is consistent with the philosophical and material bases of modern scientific reason. The major shift from 'mature SF' to radical fantasy occurs at

the locus of estrangement, and this ensures that radical fantasy is SF because it displays the necessary dialectical interplay of cognition and estrangement; only it is SF marked by a significant difference.

So a reader would not approach radical fantasy—I will use Jeff Vandermeer's Ambergris as my primary example throughout the remainder of this chapter—the same way that reader would approach sf. A cursory gland at Samuel Delany's *Trouble on Triton* reveals the abhistorical distinction. Triton is a moon in our solar system; therefore, the reader can safely assume that certain laws, especially physical and material ones, still apply. Ambergris does not exist at all, and this hesitation over its existence extends through everything written in or about Ambergris. Things which *we* might consider extraordinary happen in Ambergris, like a festival that ends in horrific and violent bloodshed, but for the inhabitants of Ambergris these events remain ordinary; there are no magicians in towers, no evil forces plotting the destruction of the world, and no heroes pure enough to resist the temptations of evil. The reader knows Ambergris is not real, but it is not supernatural or metaphysical either.

Consider "Dradin in Love," a short story set in Ambergris. Dradin is a young priest recently returned from a proselytizing mission in the jungle, and he wishes to meet a woman whom he is too timid to approach. Instead, he enlists the service of a dwarf named Dvorak (not the dwarves of Tolkien, but a short human). Dvorak, instead of helping him, devises a plan to sell the young priest to a race of subterranean creatures, the mushroom dwellers, who inhabit the sewers and dark places of Ambergris. But all of this seems normal enough: the mushroom dwellers are not doing the bidding of an evil magician, and everyday people conduct business in the manner fitting to city dwellers. Despite this, it is immediately clear to the reader that this is not the normal, everyday world they know, the one they would see if they were to only step out

their doors and walk down the street. This is unsettling, because the world seems to operate by rules we understand: Dradin is standing in the street and sees a woman he admires in the window of the Hoegbotton and Sons, Distributors warehouse; there is commerce and trade; people are engaged in everyday activities, not chasing monsters or protecting the realms from evil.

A plethora of information begins to emerge which we do not recognize: names of places, names of companies, the existence of species we do not recognize, customs and practices which are alien to us, and even the names of published texts which do not exist in the author or reader's empirical reality. This stream of information—in the opening pages of the story we learn about Voss Bender's Fifth symphony, the Festival of the Freshwater Squid, Madame Lowery's Crochets and Jessible's Jewelry Store, Borges Bookstore, *The Hoegbotton Series of Guidebooks & Maps to the Festival, Safe Places, Hazards, and Blindfolds,* and *The Refraction of Light in Prison,* a book written by a group of Truffidian monks while they were incarcerated—is more than a domestication and cataloging of Ambergris. As the allusion to Borges reveals, estrangement occurs when these artifacts and places, all part of a system of signs portraying the inhabitants of Ambergris interacting with and changing their world freely, are held analogously to the system of signs that is reality.

Before an estrangement can occur there must be a point of familiarity, and the factual style of SF, and with it SF fairylands, creates this familiarity only to make the unfamiliar that much more shocking. The opening pages of any sub-creation should cause the reader to hesitate in the same way Tzvetan Todorov argues, in *The Fantastic,* the reader of the fantastic hesitates when confronted with phenomenon he cannot explain. The approach is factual, but the operational doppelganger created by the author will never pass, no matter how detailed or rigorous, for the real thing. Despite this, the new world created cannot be attributed to either

natural or supernatural cause: the ontological status of the fictional, secondary world must be accepted axiomatically for the duration of the text. Because the locus of estrangement in secondary creation is space-time itself, the sense perceptions, exacting measurements, epistemologies, discourses, and material determinations which shape our shared empirical reality and our interpretation of that reality are formally estranged by the global novum, the uncanny Earth, the Perilous and Other realm. This attitude of estrangement, shifted from space to time and then to space-time, is the formal framework of all fantasy.

Radical fantasy is, then, a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an infinitely possible simulation of models constructed from the author's empirical environment. Most of the previous sentence is taken from Suvin's well-known definition of SF; in fact, the first half is exactly the same as Suvin penned it in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* because radical fantasy is, following my argument, Mendlesohn's axiom, and Suvin's long literary tradition, sf. However, the interaction of cognition and estrangement in SF fairylands differs significantly from the same interaction in sf, and this is indicated by my choice to use "infinitely possible simulation" where Suvin uses "alternative." Suvin uses alternative loosely, but it is clear he means alternative in space or time; therefore, the imaginative framework remains concretely attached to the myriad possibilities of the author's empirical reality. Instead, I chose "infinitely possible simulation" to indicate the hyperreal relationship between fantasy worlds and empirical reality. As reality is more and more dominated by the fantastic form of the commodity, critical projections become impossible in texts which reference that same reality. Secondary creation generates a 'real' simulacrum by introducing more and more impossible material—books, places, even entire essays written by fictional inhabitants of the world, as in

"The Hoegbotton Guide to the History of the City of Ambergris" by the historian Duncan Shriek (one of many curios contained in Vandermeer's *City of Saints and Madmen)*—and through this contact with a 'real' impossibility our cognition as shaped by the material forces of empirical reality is estranged. This estrangement takes place at a fundamental level, within the fabric of space-time itself.

SF is cognitive because "it does not ask about The Man or The World, but which man?; in which kind of world?; and why such a man in such a kind of world?"(Suvin 7). Answering these questions requires a cognitive stance, Suvin's is philosophical materialism, but when the world is a simulacrum of the real instead of merely alternative in space or time, cognition in the text must begin at a base level. In a fantasy world it is impossible to answer these questions without first creating the knowledge that would help the philosopher and scientist answer them, and this knowledge must be created from the same models which are used to depict empirical reality. Between naturalistic writing and SF there is an empirical connection through time, so certain assumptions about what is natural to empirical reality can be assumed natural to the setting of SF, such as the laws of physics, for example. Any shared assumptions between the secondary creation and empirical reality are always tinged by the estrangement in space-time, so though it may appear the laws of physics apply in a secondary creation (what goes up comes back down), the physics of a secondary creation are only an impossible simulation of physics as they apply to empirical reality. I said the locus of estrangement in fantasy is space-time: to be more specific, because the *framework* estranges space-time, the *formal* estrangements occur through the knowledge, discourses, and determinations that shape and create the reality of the secondary world. The cognitive assumptions that we retain about physical reality are estranged through the apparently domesticating accumulation of information which indicates an

(im)possible material existence. The *formal* estrangements of fantasy do not operate according to known cognitive principles; instead, fantasy questions the bases of modern rationality and scientific thought through novel space-time estrangements that require *the rethinking of cognition itself*. In this way, secondary creation is directly the literature of estranged cognition.

The novelty of the estrangements produced by secondary creation and their unique relation to scientific rationality and cognition can best be understood when compared to the other genres which rely on estrangement as a formal framework. Those genres include SF (in the narrower sense), myth, folktale, fairy-tale and fantasy. These genres are divided by Suvin according to their cognitive possibilities, so the four latter genres are classified as non-cognitive. Myth is non-cognitive, according to Suvin, because "myth claims to once and for all explain the essence of phenomena" (7). Myth does not view the norms of any age as historical and mutable; therefore they are non-cognitive. Early secondary creation succumbs to this mythic impulse. Tolkien, for example, desired his Middle-earth to be a reflection of the timeless values and beliefs he knew to be true in empirical reality; the tales of Middle-Earth are meant to reflect a more genuine reality than the one Tolkien perceived around him. SF fairylands break this final, purely ideological link with empirical reality and the inhabitants of the world begin to make their own history. The new and changing norms of a secondary world are not extrapolated points in time, but the new and changing norms do operate according to one principle, and it is this principle that makes the worlds cognitive: the new norms are a direct result of the material relationships the inhabitants of the world share with their world.

Folktales are denigrated by Suvin for other reasons: "[the folktale] simply posits another world besides yours where some carpets do, magically, fly, and some paupers do, magically, become princes, and into which you cross purely by an act of faith and fancy" (8). Though a

carpet may fly in a non-cognitive secondary creation, the reason that carpet flies is usually the result of an ill-designed technological prognostication: it is a carpet engineered to fly. This explanation veers us dangerously close to the same technological prognostication Suvin criticizes in Wells and Verne, and like him, I must argue that such explanations, pseudo-scientific explanations for magical occurrences, represent a less mature form of fantasy. In its mature form—radical fantasy—a magical carpet would be developed through discussions of the theories surrounding the possibility of carpet flight, careful documentation of the experimentation phase on flying carpets followed by their introduction into the market, and even, in the most mature forms, the diaries of the engineer who discovered how to make a carpet fly. These explanations do not stymie imaginative possibilities; rather, the imaginative possibilities multiply and direct our gaze towards the different material determinations of fantasy worlds and how these differences affect the material existence of the inhabitants of that world. The mature stage, wherein the inhabitants of the world become the recorders and observers of their world, where the impossible scientist's diaries impossibly become real, is the most advanced stage: the pseudo-scientific explanations are not as important as the real, material interaction between the inhabitants and their world. To illustrate what I mean, I will turn briefly to "'The Hoegbotton Guide to The Early History of Ambergris' by Duncan Shriek."

This detailed text is a long, highly footnoted (137!) essay written by the aging historian Duncan Shriek for the Hoegbotton Travel Guide to the city of Ambergris. Part baedeker, part scholarly and erudite, the essay details events from the founding of Ambergris by Cappan Manzikert I to the sinister period uncomfortably remembered as "The Silence" under the reign of Michael Aquelus, some 70 years later. Shriek draws from a wide range of sources: historians Mary Sabon and James Lacond, police reports, and even Maxwell Glaring's *Midnight for*

Munfroe. His primary source, however, is the journal of Samuel Tonsure, a Truffidian Monk who gained Manzikert's trust and converted the ruler to Truffidianism. Cappan Manzikert, fleeing tribal warfare in the Southern Sea, sails his whaling fleet up the river Moth until the navy reaches an area where a natural harbor has formed. Disembarking cautiously, the landing party finds a city occupied by a peculiar humanoid race they decide to call 'gray caps,' based on their overtly mushroom cap shaped heads. Cappan Manzikert, based on what he views everywhere as a civilization in an extreme state of decay, eventually decides to form a civilizing party. Manzikert and his men enter the city and slaughter every gray cap they can find. In the fighting, Manzikert, Tonsure, and Manzikert's bravest men pursue the grey caps underground; Manzikert is returned a day later, deranged and claiming to have been gone for a month, his eyes plucked from the sockets. Under the reign of the next two rulers, Manzikert II and Manzikert III, Ambergris flourishes. Michael Aqeulus, the illegitimate son of Manzikert II, takes the title of Cappan after Manzikert III's death. Like his predecessors, he was a good leader, and under his reign Ambergris reaches a population of 30,000. Then the city is attacked mysteriously: Aquelus, leading the squid fleet home after the squid harvest, returns to find Ambergris entirely empty. Everyone has disappeared but there is no sign of struggle. At a stone altar Aquelus finds the only clue: a set of eyeballs and Samuel Tonsure's journal. Seventy years later, it seems the gray caps have finally had their revenge. Shriek's essay does not stop here. He continues, drawing conclusions from Tonsure's journal that another city exists below Ambergris, and he devotes the last section of his essay to demonstrating which parts of Tonsure's journal he believes are fake and which parts he believes are real.

On the formal level, Ambergris is everywhere dominated by the precession of models, which Baudrillard argues, is characteristic of the hyperreal. Baudrillard argues that the hyperreal

is The most obvious examples is the essay by Duncan Shriek; Shriek's essay imitates a model, but the model does not have an empirical referent. What each text references is the Other-realm Ambergris, and Ambergris is self-referential. Vandermeer completes this self-referentiality by textually performing his own madness. A portion of *City of Saints and Madmen* is derived from a case study in a mental hospital in Ambergris. The nameless man in question clearly recalls cities like New York and New Orleans, but for the doctors of Ambergris he is clearly mad. Nonetheless, this madman becomes a renowned writer in Ambergris, and his novella *Dradin In Love* is an Ambergrisian cultural treasure. Squidologist Fredrick Madnok even references the novella in his treatise on the freshwater squid; in the endnotes he comments, "Written by a madman, if you can believe that, and yet still read today" (Madnok 42). Vandermeer consciously removes himself as author from his position in real, empirical reality and creates his authorial reality as function of the precession of models because the mind of the author remains a distinct connection to a specter of the real, the final referent through which allegorical interpretation can be authorized.

Ambergris is not an allegory for reality; instead, it is its own reality built from a system of signs, and in this sense fantasy world creation exposes the fact that there is no reality anymore, only the precession of models. Other examples include the broadsheets and pamphlets, the innumerable texts alluded to and cited over the course of *City of Saints and Madmen,* the photographic pictures of weapons used by the gray caps, and the varying generic influences, including SF, realism, and the detective novel, throughout the various texts set in Ambergris. In Ambergris these models do not maintain links to empirical reality—even on a formal level, the generic presence of a detective novel set in Ambergris is not allegorically connected to its real world counterpart, is not a truth reflecting mirror of the original. Instead, it is an operational

double, everywhere imitating certain operations of the detective novel (or the historical essay, or biological treatise), but eventually the fantasy paradigm of the detective novel must be studied in relation to the historical and material circumstances of the citizens of Ambergris and not in relation to the Modernist period and the literature of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett

Compare George Macdonald's *Phantastes*. Macdonald's faerie realm surpasses his empirical reality in beauty and splendor, and all needs and desires are fulfilled by fortuitous and unknown means. The beauty of the faerie realm is a mirror held to reality, a mirror in which the ugly, dullness of reality is confronted by the vibrant luster of the reflection. The mirror is vibrant because the mirror reflects a truth that remains unspoken. Or, as the protagonists reflects on the poetic sublime of the mirror, "There must be a truth involved in it, though we may but in part lay hold of the meaning" (73). Thus when the protagonist of *Phantastes* enters the seemingly abandoned palace of the faeries, he finds avenues of alabaster marble gilded with silver that never tarnishes. The luster is so brilliant he reports, "It was like frost-work, and too dazzling, in the sun, for Earthly eyes like mine" (79). The protagonist is not shocked by these riches; rather, these riches move his soul to ecstatic delights, directly mimicking the sublime effects nature had for the Romantic mind. In "The Early History of the City of Ambergris," a similar scene occurs during which the founders of Ambergris encounter streets and buildings gilded with gold. Shriek quotes an excerpt from the journal of Samuel Tonsure upon first viewing Cinsorium: "The buildings visible beyond the increasingly scanty tree cover were decorated throughout by golden stars, like the very vault of heaven, but whereas heaven has its stars only at intervals, here the surfaces were entirely covered with gold, issuing forth from the center in a never-ending stream" (Shriek 112). The beauty and splendor of these gold decorations does not function as a mirror as it does in *Phantastes:* instead, ironically, it is later learned that what the founders of

Ambergris thought was gold is actually a lichen-like organism used by the gray caps to create art. Wryly, Shriek reports: "*not* only was it not gold, it wasn't even edible." The golden streets and buildings of Cinsorium do not reflect a deeper, hidden truth, because the golden streets and buildings of Cinsorium can be explained according to observation and study from the perspective of the fantasy world. Ambergris is its own mirror, and the only truths it knows are its own.

Shriek's essay is historical, employs methodical doubt as to the veracity of its sources, and depicts a word rational and intelligible through scientific and historical models. Duncan Shriek is not a real person, but he is a real historian in the city of Ambergris. His approach to history, though commercialized to fit the needs of the Hoegbotton Company and its constituency, strives towards rational explanation of events coupled with methodical doubt. Shriek peruses sources and checks the veracity of those sources, even admitting "our historical sources are few and often inaccurate; indeed, one of the most infuriating aspects of Ambergrisian history is the regularity which with truth and legend pursue separate courses" (Vandermeer 104). The historians of Ambergris are keen enough to desire the reasonable separation of actual fact from legend, and the critical stance towards the sources in question implies more than wondering whether they are legends. Historians are trained to introduce doubt when considering sources and validity of information, and this doubt is methodically tested against other known factors. When Shriek considers his source he does just this, and in this way Shriek's actions, cognitive and scientific, estrange cognition and scientific rationality as we understand it in empirical reality. Humans, for example, have not had to account historically for other sentient races, but if they had, how might have this altered the historians method? How might this have altered medicine? prisons? economics? politics? Through Shriek, Vandermeer imagines the changes necessary to account for another natural race, Shriek the scientists cataloging and studying the

fungi-like denizens who live underground, the grey caps, the mushroom dwellers. Unfortunately, Shriek's source material comes primarily from human explorers who were frightened by the customs and appearances of the mushroom dwellers[10]. As Shriek analyzes the historical documents, he always keeps in mind the historical situation of the original writers (all fictional), and the still changing historical relationship between the city and the mushroom dwellers. Cognition is estranged because it is removed from any and all referent which could link it to empirical reality, but the inhabitants of fantasy worlds still relate to that world in a way which maintains the philosophical fundaments of modern science.

Ambergris may be a world of wonders, but there are scientists, historians, and philosophers, all denizens of Ambergris, who study their world and draw from their studies results which can be falsified according to their observations of their world. A citizen of Ambergris can venture through space and time, and never will they encounter our earth, primary creation, and its truths. The denizens of Ambergris are left to create their own truths, those truths according with the lived experience of Ambergris as a reality that is its own double, its own mirror. Second, the precession of models without referent is formally dominated by the *hyperreal*. Duncan Shriek's essay is one example in many. There Shriek alludes to and quotes from many different sources. None of these sources exist, either in reality or in fiction, but each adds a texture of reality. The referent of these sources is not Earth, and a radical break is made with primary creation. The sources reference the reality of Ambergris.

A historical document from a future society might bear many direct cognitive links to empirical reality, but a historical document from an impossible society can only be a simulation of the actual study of history in empirical reality. Duncan Shriek, our fictional historian, is still

[10] In *Shriek: An Afterword* (2006), we learn that Shriek also spent many years underground living hidden among the mushroom dwellers. There he beholds a gruesome technology, part machine, part human, part fungus, a machine that transforms and estranges, again, cognition.

what we might consider a modern thinker—he proposes hypotheses and examines those hypotheses through methodical doubt—but nothing in the history of empirical reality can prepare the reader for the content of his essay. That content, which might astound the reader, is all perfectly normal to Shriek, and he does not admit legends, nonsense, or supernatural explanations. Cognition, which in many ways is a latent presupposition in many of our daily activities, is where estrangement occurs. Shriek's essays might offer versions of the technological prognostication Suvin criticizes in Verne and Wells and other 'science-fantasies,' but only if Shriek's essay is considered as the locus of cognition. In SF fairylands, the content of cognition is the locus of estrangement, while a material, scientific understanding of how the inhabitants of a world might relate to and change that world is the locus of formal cognition.

It should be possible to conduct a survey of the ways in which fantasy estranges cognition; the remainder of the essays in this book will accomplish just that, investigating race, sex, and class as categories of cognition while projecting further categories beyond race, beyond sex, beyond class. The unforeseen corollary to estranged cognition is that it defers the place where fantasy enacts estrangement. It is not that the text abandons cognitive principles in favor of irrational world-views; it is rather that the estrangement of cognition produces the text's estrangements at such a far remove from empirical reality that the only *possible* explanation which comes to us is an explanation for which the *foundations* of our own cognitive principles have not prepared us. The question fantasy asks is not, *is this or that object logical or illogical according to the textual paradigm?* The question it asks is, *by what processes, cultural or political or otherwise, do we come to know what counts as logical or illogical?* The question is fundamental to radical fantasy; only by estranging the principles on which reason is founded do

Radical Other-realms exert their proper influence over the dialectic of cognition and estrangement.

Cyborgs, Heroines, Fantasy and SF: Donna Haraway and *The Adventures of Alyx*

Meet Alyx, thief, murderer, wife, mother, pirate and Trans-Temporal Agent. Do not let her diminutive build fool you; despite her small size, she never backs away from a fight, not even with a man twice her size—contending with Gunnar's machismo in *Picnic on Paradise,* Alyx kicks Gunnar so hard that he cowers and dare not contest Alyx's leadership based solely on physical strength and size, perpetuating what Samuel Delany describes as "the totally insane 'I will only respect you when you can knock me down' argument" ("Alyx" 202). Gunnar reckons that since Alyx is not only small but also a small *female*, he—renown for his daring, machismo, and heroics—must take on the role of strong, dominant male and lead the party on Paradise to safety. But Alyx has a job to do; she has never submitted to any man—not her husband, not the pirate Blackbeard, not the wizard who claimed to be God, nor any other. Alyx is a strong heroine precisely in the sense that she makes her own rules and refuses to play by the rules of others, especially the rules of men, according to which she is nothing but a poor, defenseless woman, a lesser species, outcast and other. This strange woman, Alyx, this woman covered in scars, unconcerned for the rules of culture, patriarchal or matriarchal, this hybrid woman-machine—this cyborg—remains strange to the men in her life because she refuses to act like either a man or a woman, always inhabiting the space in between man and woman, what we might call the differential site, and neither of those whole identities, man or woman, encompasses the truly radical and overdetermined hybrid that Alyx is; she *is* the differential site, and as such Alyx is more than woman, more than human, more than animal, more than machine; all these, and much more. Because other, initially as woman, Alyx is able to link up, learn from, and *become with* any companion species she encounters. This alone explains Alyx's malleability and resolve: because Alyx refuses to occupy the binaristic model provided for her by society,

man/woman, and chooses to inhabit the space *between* man/woman, the differential site, Alyx comes into contact with myriad sites and myriad wholes, all of which shape and reorganize Alyx as differential site. Alyx's identity is never fixed but always changing; in Donna Haraway's language, this makes Alyx a cyborg.

In the same way that Alyx occupies a differential site and as such is open to the myriad configurations of identity, the queering of identity, so is *The Adventures of Alyx* a differential site at the generic level—*The Adventures of Alyx* combines science fiction and fantasy in their full forms, creating a binary opposition between which the actual tale takes place. The fantastic, unlike SF, allows for an abhistorical setting to begin Russ's adventure, a place not already constrained by the facts of patriarchal and capitalist domination, a place that is, literally, a history apart, a world unknown, a history not recorded on time's line. Gene Wolfe's essay "Alyx Among the Genres" is an excellent of analysis of the sword-and-sorcery and science fiction influences throughout the Alyx stories. Wolfe's erudition shows, and he without a doubt establishes that the series is both science fiction and sword-and-sorcery. Wolfe seems, however, to favor SF over fantasy. Wolfe reads the Alyx stories as a formative phase in the consciousness of a feminist author, corresponding to Delany's description of Alyx as "a figure of proto-feminist consciousness" (203); and he reads the sword-and-sorcery phase of Russ's career as the formative years of a science fiction writer, such that the Alyx stories are "an account of the development of a feminist consciousness" and "an account of the birth of a science fiction writer" (5). Following this reading, Russ develops a mature feminist consciousness at the same moment she becomes a science fiction writer. Accordingly, it becomes convenient to forget Russ's roots in sword and sorcery, in fantasy. Alyx emerges from the infinite folds of infinite possibility—she has neither origin story (only a passing mention of a husband, no talk of mothers

or fathers, origin-less) nor limitation (Alyx can adapt to any situation). If Alyx is originless it is because her origins are overdetermined; her identity claims are multiple. This overdetermination is mirrored at the generic level in *The Adventures of Alyx*, so rather than viewing the Alyx stories as a birth from a lesser state to a higher state, from fantasy to SF, I argue that Alyx is more than a proto-feminist and that *The Adventures of Alyx* is more than a prenatal fantasy. Alyx is not constrained by origin stories because she exists in a time placed outside of origin stories—abhistorical time. Alyx breaks from the constraints of patriarchal society—on her own—precisely because she exists in this time apart Just as Alyx becomes cyborg—blurring the strict categorization of woman, human, machine, animal, barbarian—the text itself is a cyborg, a site where the infinite possibility of difference is transubstantiated.

My use of cyborg is taken from the work of Donna Haraway, a biologist and cultural theorist whose work dovetails excellently with the themes of human, animal, machine, and gender that appear across *The Adventures of Alyx.* Specifically, I will use Haraway's conception of the companion species to analyze Alyx, what makes her unique, what makes her more than just the stereotypical male fantasy hero recast in woman's guise—what makes her more than a mere proto-feminist figure—and to complicate the relationship between science fiction and fantasy by interpreting both genres as companion genres, as mutually 'innapropriate/d others,' a complication that reveals *The Adventures of Alyx* to be, in accordance with my feminist reading, a cyborg text that is neither fantasy nor science fiction yet *both* fantasy and science fiction, a genuine novelty produced through the interaction of two particulars, two inappropriate/d others, without the need to to check that novelty against the patriarchal demands of the text of reality. The meeting of fantasy and science fiction in *The Adventures of Alyx* is, in this sense, woman's work.

A reading of the similarities and differences between Joanna Russ's fiction and theory and Donna Haraway's theory has never been attempted, though Haraway mentions both *The Adventures of Alyx* and *The Female Man* in "A Cyborg Manifesto." My reading requires, then, a significant amount of time devoted to introducing Haraway's ideas and developing the concepts she invents and uses there so that I may freely use them in my own analysis. How is Alyx human, animal and machine? How is she a cyborg? And why is this cybrog birthed in abhistorical time? Fundamentally, what are the originless origins of the cyborg, that feminist figure developed by Haraway? I also compare Haraway's and Russ's critical theories, a comparison that establishes the major similarities and differences between these two thinkers. The object of this analysis remains, however, Alyx's adventures, and Alyx is born outside of time, in a time of infinite possibility, a fact that has important effects on Alyx as a feminist figure and on *The Adventures of Alyx* as a genre; Alyx is the quintessential feminist figure according to Haraway. Alyx is the cyborg, but by rooting this cyborg in fantastic time, abhistorical time, Russ creates Alyx as a science fiction hero who emerges from a sword-and-sorcery setting. Why must Alyx emerge from such a never-where, never-when? In the end the use of fantastic time reveals itself as a critique of the historical constraints of a historical continuum trapped by its origins in language, labor, and tools, all organized according to patriarchal, hierarchical domination.

Heroines: Haraway and Russ

Five phrases or concepts appear in the previous section that must be defined further, each elucidating an important aspect of Haraway's work: cyborg, companion species, significant otherness, differential site, and inappropriate/d others.

I begin with the cyborg because the cyborg is where, ironically, Haraway begins. Ironic precisely in the sense that although Haraway's thought originates around the concept of the

cyborg, the cyborg is purportedly origin-less; the cyborg "offers freedom from constraining humanist stories of 'original unity, fullness, bliss and terror'" (*Critical Humanisms* 174). Haraway rejects origin stories because origin stories perpetuate the kind of binaristic thinking that Haraway's project seeks to undermine. For example, Haraway references the idea that before the 'Fall' man lived in a natural and Edenic state; then, because of language, tools, knowledge, etc., a split was introduced, culture was formed, and man was split from nature, forming the divide nature/culture; original differentiation from a presupposed unity. Haraway prefers, of course, the term *natureculture*; part of her project is to reveal how splits such as the nature/culture split are factitious fictions, objects made by discourses; in reality, there is no split; or rather, the split is the site where natureculture takes places, a site much closer to the experience of lived reality than the necessary yet fictional analytic division of nature from culture. Of course, actual history is shaped by just such dualisms, just such binaries: "human/animal, organism/machine, physical/non-physical, mind/body, public/private, nature/culture, men/women, primitive/civilised" (Easthope 73). Accordingly, "the image of the cyborg is directed against a range of dualisms" (Easthope 73), and the most essential dualisms are the binaries of subject/object, of Self/Other.

A cyborg is neither subject nor object; or rather, the cyborg is both subject *and* object, a lived experience of overdetermination, the place of its being in the *and,* not in either of the poles. A machine is an object: an object of a technoscientific discourse that, in its positivistic manifestations, maintains a distinct barrier between the human as subject and the machine as object. The cyborg is, however, both human and machine, reorganizing human nature at the interface of human and machine, reminding us that "nature is made, but not entirely by humans; it is a co-construction among humans and non-humans" ("Monsters" 66). As human and machine

the cyborg is both subject and object, never existing comfortably as either, only comfortable when situated as a relation between subject and object. The cyborg exists within the contradictions of nature/culture, subject/object, and human/machine; "Cyborgs can be figures for living within contradictions…alert to the emergent historical hybridities actually populating the world at all its contingent scales" (*Companion Species Manifesto* 11). As a figure living within contradiction, the cyborg becomes an important archetype for any woman living in a patriarchal world because that woman is forced to live within the contradiction man/woman; but the cyborg is also a figure available to anyone living the realities of late capitalism and its bio-technic controls and powers because "we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are all cyborgs" ("A Cyborg manifesto" 150). But rather than reverse the contradictions and institute what Easthope terms the maternal phallus, the cyborg figure never ossifies into a consistent whole that could be equated with the phallic figure. The cyborg feminist is the feminist who, chiasmatically, lives *within* patriarchy yet acts within the space of her difference *against* patriarchy, taking the gap, the split, as the moment to produce a new, positive, and non-totalizing identity. *Critical Humanisms* says it best: "As the 'illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism,' the cyborg has the potential to overcome the rigid distinctions between man-woman, nature-technology, public-private, and reproduction-replication" through "certain technologies of the self—'partiality, irony, intimacy and perversity'" (175).

Haraway later downplays the significance of the cyborg, its origin-less story perhaps too much for either fans of critical theory or science fiction to accept, and begins discussing the cyborg as a type of *companion species*. A companion species is any possible other with which one lives and 'becomes with' in a relationship built on a partial connection that dismantles the

binary self/other in relation to the companion species; "species incorporate aspects of the other into what they have become" (*Humans, Animals, Machines* 5). The concept of the cyborg is extended through the concept of companion species, and a companion species can be a dog, a cat, or a group of tourists on an alien resort planet. Dogs are, for example, tied into "myriad histories of living labor, class formations, gender and sexual elaborations, racial categories, and other layers of locals and globals" (*Companion Species* 97). Dogs and humans 'become with' together, humans altering dogs according to lines of race, sex, and class, but dogs also changing humans at the naturalcultural level: "it is a mistake to see the alterations of dog's bodies and minds as biological and the change in human bodies and lives, for example in the emergence of herding or agricultural societies, as cultural, and so not about co-evolution" (*Companion Species* 31). Companion species cross the divide nature/culture just as easily as cyborgs cross the divides black/white, man/woman, or gay/straight, and Haraway emphasizes the moment of shared difference, the point of contact that is lived experience. This co-evolution is a 'being-with.' As Haraway states, "'becoming with' is 'becoming wordly.' *When Species Meet* strives to build attachment sites and tie sticky knots to bind intra-acting critters, including people, together in the kinds of response and regard that change the subject—and the object. Encounterings do not produce harmonious wholes, and smoothly preconstituted entities do not ever meet in the first place" (287). 'Becoming with,' constitutive transformation of both subject and object, both self and other, takes place at what I have been referring to as the differential site, and the differential site is defined by a relation of *significant otherness.*

Haraway does not use the term differential site, but I am using it here to signify the site of conjunction between any two opposites or between any number of the other multiple conjunctions that can be drawn according to any relation of partial belonging. When both

companion species celebrate and take part in the partial connections that form both in relation to each other, become self and other, both neither self nor other, those subjects can be said to exist in a state of significant otherness, to exist at the differential site. The differential site is a hybrid, existing between any two species, or between subject and object, or between other and self. Haraway gives the hybrid moment a positive content, but she takes care not to create a situation in which this positive content could be considered the reconstitution of the whole. In this way Haraway practices an anti-identity politics:

> At the center of Haraway's critique of identity is the 'exclusion through naming' that emerges with the construction of any unity, including the supposed unity of all women as 'woman,' with its erasure of differences among women and the conditions of their lives across lines of race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity, at the least. (Schneider 67)

Instead of an easy unity, Haraway offers a vision of difference and multiplicity able to account for the multiple divisions of race, class, and sex that cross the divisions of race, class, and sex. A subjectobject crossed by multiple divisions in this way is the hybrid par excellence, and in Haraway's language remains a relation between particulars, one to the other, a companionship of 'partial connections' and 'relational subjectivity.' Discussing mathematician Marilyn Strathern, Haraway adopts the geometer's mind as a blueprint: "Instead of opposites, we get the whole sketchpad of the modern geometrician's fevered brain with which to draw relationality. Strathern thinks in terms of 'partial connections;' i.e., patterns within which the players are neither wholes nor parts. I call these relations of significant otherness" (8). So thinking in terms of these partial connections, thinking at the differential site, we must remember that "people are made to live several non-isomoprhic categories simultaneously, all of which 'torque' them in an intersectional world" (Gane and Haraway 138). Humans are the product of many different social categories, and living between those categories is what makes humans

hybrid—living at the differential site, noting the myriad 'partial connections,' we, as hybrids, establish relationships with companion species that are defined according to significant otherness. To think otherwise is to succumb to human exceptionalism, "the premise that humanity alone is not a spatial and temporal web of interspecies dependencies. Thus, to be human is to be on the opposite side of the Great Divide from all the others" (W*hen Species Meet* 11). There is no Great Divide; this is a false dichotomy; we become who we are not as distinct unities defined against other distinct unities, us and them, but as sites crossed by many overlapping allegiances, determinations, and relationships, including love, that cross lines of species, class, race, sex, kin and kind.

The trick is navigating these partial connections. Occupying the differential site can be painful and alienating, and allegiances are demanded from strict identity positions. For example, a black woman might feel demands from both of her identities while realizing in many situations that those two identities might make contradictory claims on her as subject. Bell Hooks argues that questions such as "whether feminist struggle to end sexist oppression is more important than the struggle to end racism and vice-versa" are "rooted in an either/or thinking, the belief that the self is formed in opposition to an other" (29). Borrowing the term from feminist theorist Trinh Minh-ha, Haraway refers to the groups left *out* by binaristic and hierarchical thinking such as the opposition between self and other as 'innapropriate/d others.' According to Haraway, the phrase inappropriate/d others "referred to the historical positioning of those who cannot adopt the mask of either 'self' or 'other' offered by previously dominant, modern Western narratives of identity and politics" ("The Promises of Monsters" 69). About the class struggles of the early twentieth century one might say, then, that despite whatever achievements the worker's organizations made across race lines through the issue of class, the black man, as the other's other, remained

the inappropriate/d other of the worker's movement. Living as a cyborg in a world and society that is defined by strict divisions, hierarchies and binaries, parts and wholes, can be difficult to navigate, but both Haraway and Russ advocate the refusal of binaries and the development of non-binary ways of thinking and being.

Russ recognizes an extensive list of inappropriate/d others. She notices, succinctly, the multiple divisions of race, sex, class, and gender; she writes,

> Women's lives are the buried truth about men's lives.
> The lives of people of color are the buried truth about white lives.
> The buried truth about the rich is who they take their money from and how.
> The buried truth about "normal" sexuality is how one kind of sexual expression has been made privileged, and what kinds of unearned virtue and terrors about identity this distinction serves. (*Feminisms* 109)

In "O.K., Momma, Who the Hell Am I?" Russ also notes the pressure that exists for women who belong to 'conflicting minorities':

> There is enormous pressure on these women (as there is on all Human beings, I suspect) to 'place' themselves—that is, to choose for themselves a single identity that will be recognized by some group and to discard what doesn't 'fit.' The problem in their cases is that such a choice is simply not possible. All feminists of color face at least two conflicting pressures of this sort, and feminists of color who are lesbians as well or in the working class as well or who belong to some other oppressed group as well face even more complex pressures. (321)

Russ's use of the *as well* performs the differential site, the partial connection, because "belonging to what I shall call 'conflicting minorities' makes it impossible to ignore the interactive nature of different oppressions" (326), an impossibility that is written into the body in the form of Haraway's cyborg. But there is, as Haraway notes, more at stake than different oppressions. The very foundation of the subject takes place at a site of conflict between subject and object, a conflict on the individual level as the foundational recognition of Self and Other. We are all cyborgs, following Haraway's vision, hybrids living partial connections in significant otherness with companion species, able to recognize the mutual webs of oppression that form the

identities of self, other, and inappropriate/d other. Both Haraway and Russ agree, however, that the terms offered by society must be refused: "In a society that insists [inappropriate/d others] must be one thing or another, between groups that insist they cannot bring their whole selves anywhere, they solve the 'problem' by refusing its terms" (Russ 323).

To refuse the terms is to introduce new terms, and though those new terms may generate their own specific set of contradictions, genuine novelties can be made that do not succumb to *mere* binaristic ways of thinking. Through the concept companion species and the attendant concepts of 'partial connections,' cyborg, significant otherness, and inappropriate/d others, one can begin to see how Haraway takes the step of moving forward, of forming genuine communities out of many disparate particulars, particular to particular, and not particular to whole. Innappropriate/d others are, like the cyborg, companion species from whom we learn and are shaped by as much as we teach and shape them, and to live this is to *not* demand a unitary identity from anyone, especially not yourself. As Haraway states, Minh-ha offers "another geometry and optics for considering the relations of difference among people and among humans, other organisms, and machines than hierarchical domination, incorporation of parts into wholes, paternalistic and colonialist protection, symbiotic fusion, antagonistic opposition, or instrumental production from resource" (*The Haraway Reader* 70). In significant otherness built on partial connections, "Looking, listening, and living attentively in concert with another species as 'companions,'… might just give humans new forms of relationship practice to use productively both among themselves and with a 'menagerie' of emergent others" (*Live Theory* 24). Haraway's vision, a vision of partial connections and relational subjectivity, offers an alternative to hierarchical modes of thought by thinking myriad connections. Like Russ, Haraway's "texts do not wage all-out war against the heterosexist, patriarchal linguistic system

because they are grounded in an awareness that they themselves are part of the same symbolic order" (Cortiel 221). Living with and among emergent others as companion species raises many questions, but "answers to these questions can only be put together in emergent practices; i.e., in vulnerable, on-the-ground work that cobbles together non-harmonious agencies and ways of living that are accountable both to their disparate inherited histories and to their barely possible but absolutely necessary joint futures" (Haraway 7).

Human-Animal-Machine

Back to the adventure!

I will use the terms from the previous section freely in the following analysis. This analysis will be a specific analysis of Alyx's origins, the many companion species that Alyx encounters along the way, and the various ways in which she reacts to those companion species. From the beginning Alyx is a cyborg, living without origin, and her cyborg status allows her to navigate the many differences of sex, class, and race that she encounters during her adventures. We will examine Alyx's violent streak, Alyx's relationships with other women—Edarra and Iris—and Alyx's relationships with men—her husbands, the wizard-god, Blackbeard, the Machine, and Gunnar. I will approach each tale separately, beginning with a short summary of each and then moving into an analysis centered on the knot of themes human-animal-machine. Alyx survives because she adapts and changes, because she lives in significant otherness with all those she crosses, for better or for worse, and because she recognizes her many partial connections. Alyx is a full-fledged cyborg, a genuine femaleman.

"Bluestocking" is the first story in the adventures of Alyx. In it we learn something of Alyx's origins, her profession, and her relationships with other women. After leaving the religion of Yp, Alyx becomes a pick-lock on the streets of Ourdh. One day she is offered a large sum of

money by a young lady, Edarra, who wishes to escape Ourdh after having been forced into an arranged engagement with "a landlord of the richest and the largest sort" (7). Alyx recognizes a unique opportunity to make money and leave Ourdh, so she agrees to be Lady Edarra's bodyguard. The two flee Ourdh aboard a ship, and the majority of the tale is set aboard the ship: Edarra cleans, cooks and patches, the duo encounters sea-monsters, they kill would-be pirates, and both eventually reach a region of relative safety. The tale ends as the duo encounters a fishing vessel from a small village, at which time both women begin to seriously discuss the prospects of marrying a fisherman from the village.

Very little is said about Alyx's origins. There is no known city of Ourdh, and there is no known god named Yp, so despite the historical feel of the setting, the setting occurs outside of recorded time, in another time, an abhistorical time. We learn that Alyx once had a daughter and that she once had a husband, but these stories give us very little about her origins; Alyx's life begins *en media res*. She does not have parents; she does not have a back story. Compare Samuel Delany's Gorgik: "The Tale of Gorgik" tells us about Gorgik's childhood, his slavery, his removal from slavery and his tutelage in the courts, and his eventual rise to Liberator. One could construct a detailed account of Gorgik's psycho-sexual dramas from this detailed material. Unlike Gorgik, Alyx needs no history; she is the first woman, created without origin. On the first page we learn:

> It is common knowledge that Woman was created fully a quarter an hour before man….Indeed, legend has it that the first man, Leh, was fashioned from the sixth finger of the left hand of the first woman, Loh, and that is why women have only five fingers on the left hand. The lady with whom we concern ourselves in this story had all six her fingers, and what is more, they all worked. (1)

The story insinuates a creation *ex nihilio,* one fitting to our origin-less cyborg. It also seems that in this abhistorical setting people have six fingers per hand and not five fingers per

hand. In what universe of infinite possibility have we found ourselves, this universe where sea-monsters cradle their young before they are slain and people have six fingers per hand? Alyx is, without a doubt, a creature from another historical continuum, another when and where; Alyx is a cyborg without origin, not from any place that could or would reference our earth and our history. The stories begin deep within the fantastic; because within the fantastic the cyborg becomes a figure for the navigation of infinite possibility. Furthermore, one can presume that Alyx was not born from a human being—what earthly woman still has all six fingers on her left hand? Alyx is not born. No birth, no origin—she is a cyborg. It is no wonder, then, that Alyx rejects the god Yp.

The relationship between Lady Edarra and Alyx has been interpreted as one in which Alyx saves Edarra, as she does so many other young women. This trope, saving the young girl, certainly permeates *The Adventures of Alyx*. Kathleen L. Spencer notes that "the rescue of the female child…forms an important element in [Russ's] own feminist utopia" (167). Furthermore, Spencer identifies five criteria that define these relationships: "the physical removal of the child from a life-threatening situation in a patriarchal world" (167); the rescue of the child from the psychological crippling of a culture which devalues her as female" (167); "the rescue from compulsory 'heterosexuality'" (167); "the rescue of the self" (168); "the rescue of the mother through some significant gesture of reconciliation with the woman who had earlier been seen only as the teacher and enforcer of patriarchy's limits" (168). Examining Edarra's and Alyx's relationship, all seem to hold true except the third. Spencer notes "traces (but only traces) of both the maternal and the erotic" (169), a furtive moment between the two women disturbed by the memory of a "Fafnir-no, Fafh—well, something ridiculous" (27), an allusion, of course, to the Fafhrd of Fritz Leiber's LANKHMAR series. Spencer ignores the ultimate fact that the story ends

with the two women discussing which of the men in the fishing village they will marry. As Spencer only implies, the two women inhabit the space between heterosexuality and homosexuality, the differential site, but this site is only one of many partial connections: man/woman, human/animal, upper class/lower class. Because Alyx is a cyborg, and because Edarra is engaged in a 'becoming with' with Alyx, Edarra comes to occupy the same hybrid space as the cyborg. Only Edarra's origins are directly influenced by the patriarchy; she is not origin-less. In this way the figure of the cyborg leads the way in imagining a post-gender world.

We might complicate Spencer's argument further by contesting the figure of Alyx as mother. First, there is the issue of the inappropriate/d other—the sea-monster the two encounter on their voyage. The sea-monster holds its child, the perfect picture of a protective mother, yet Alyx and Edarra kill the sea-monster. This women's solidarity movement does not go far: they only advocate for *human* women; a clear case of human exceptionalism. In this story of origin-less origin, daughter and mother bond over the death of other mothers and daughters. Alyx comments, "It was an animal…that's all" (14). It hardly seems a coincidence that "the bulbous face and coarse whiskers of the creature" and its dog-like bark bear a close resemblance to the seal-women of "The Second Inquisition" (13), the final tale in the Alyx series. Alyx and other women like her pay for this original affront to this fantasy species, this origin-less rejection of this foreign mother and child. The category of woman, even in hands as adept as Spencers', too easily comes to represent a unity that can only exist at the exclusion of what is not like it.

As a relationship between companion species, then, Edarra and Alyx both come to live in an area defined by the partial connections of sex, class, and region. As origin-less cyborg, Alyx occupies the space between man and woman, but she also exists between classes and regions. Alyx was once a governess, we are told, yet since that time she has fallen into the folds of the

under-classes: Alyx joins up with thieves, cutthroats, pick-lock, and lowlifes. She pursues no honorable work and does not look for a proper place in society. Furthermore, Alyx is not from the city but she has learned the ways of the city. All of this is testament to Alyx's abilities to adapt, to become with in any environment or with any companion species. She is the ultimate hybrid and she always occupies the differential site.

Edarra is altered by these various aspects of Alyx in several ways. Edarra, never married, actually learns how to become a woman in response to living with Alyx-as-man. Alyx relaxes, while delegating all of the duties on the boat, including cooking and cleaning, to Edarra. Edarra takes on these roles because someone has to, and Alyx-as-man is content not to take on any one domestic role. But this relationship, femaleman to female, is suddenly disturbed when it is intersected by class. Pirates intend to take the boat, but Alyx, seasoned fighter and accomplished thief, refuses to let them take it. A woman other than Alyx might have backed off, convinced she could not face the men, but Alyx has experience facing men in violent situations; it is her *profession.* Edarra follows Alyx's lead and also kills a man; Edarra is very pleased with herself; with this power she need not fear any man ever again. But this is not because the two fulfill their humanity through 'womanly violence,' "the physical expression of aggression and anger that is entirely natural to a woman's character" (Vest 158). It is no secret that men, women, transgender and other peoples of all races, nations, and classes are all perfectly capable of violence. So are monkeys, lions, and wolves. Alyx's use of violence is, however, an effect of her class position, not her sexuality, and this perhaps better illuminates the sense in which her violence should be interpreted as *systematic* violence. Vest certainly seems to be saving men from their own violence by implicating women as well. However, it must be understood that at most times in feminist discourses the category 'men' is a metonymic representation of the entire

system of patriarchal subjugation, hierarchical domination, and capitalist exploitation. What in other circles might be called the 'white' power structure; another metonymy. These metonymies point to ways in which these groups are favored by these systems, but no specific man is ever equal to the metonymic one. We are only subject to its lures.

"I Though She Was Afeard Till She Stroked My Beard" is a story of piracy and romance with the pirate Blackbeard. The tale begins with Alyx married, presumably to the lout she met on the sea with Edarra. The husband in question attempts to beat Alyx, at which time she proceeds to kill him. Alyx then seeks refuge aboard a pirate ship and wins the favor of the captain, Blackbeard. From him she learns many things, foremost among those sword-fighting. Alyx refuses to play a subordinate role, and in the penultimate scenes attends Blackbeard to a business meeting on land. On land, her class status—pirate/thief—is not as important as her sexual status—woman—and she is made to suffer for being a woman.

I interpret this tale first and foremost as a tale of Alyx exploring something other than her feminine side. Alyx is also a thief, so she presumes that she can find equality aboard the pirate ship because she knows the rules of this particularly sordid class of people. She certainly has not found equality at home. Her husband abuses her because Alyx as cyborg refuses to be either man or woman. So Alyx's time aboard the pirate ship reflects her engagement with one of her many other myriad partial connections. For a brief moment, Alyx and Blackbeard are companion species. She learns from him; makes the most of her partial connections. And once she has learned what she can, she leaves him, because she cannot and will not love him.

"The Barbarian" is an interesting tale because it exhibits the folly of human exceptionalism and returns us to the issue of the inappropriate/d other in the form of the animal. In this tale, Alyx occupies the differential site human/animal in order to defeat the 'wizard's'

human exceptionalism, his patriarchal hubris, his silly pride. Alyx attacks the dichotomies man/woman and human/animal simultaneously, giving rise to the unexpected 'we' that ends the tale. The fat man, the wizard, approaches Alyx at the bar, wowing her with stories of amazing feats: "I can make you live long. I can ensure your happiness. I can determine the sex of your children. I can cure all diseases. I can even…turn this table, or this building, or this whole city to pur gold, if I wish it" (59). The fat man shows her one final toy, a small box that shows her an image of her husband, suffering. Alyx studies the cube, "*Must be some sort of small machine…But magic? Bah! Never believed in it before; why now?*" (60), and eventually concedes to the delight of the fat man that "it's magic!" (60). The fat man's human exceptionalism shows; he assumes Alyx and her peers are not that far removed from monkeys, telling Alyx, "So I pick one of the monkeys who seems brighter than the rest and train it. I pick you" (61). And thus begins a period of Alyx's life when she is in the employ of a fat man she does not like. The fat man is confident that his technological capabilities are magic-like enough to keep Alyx fooled, but Alyx, cyborg that she is, refuses to be fooled. Alyx is human-animal-machine, woman-ape-cyborg, a combination that will not be fooled by a fat man pretending to play god. Alyx also calls on her other companion abilities, her skills as a thief and murderer. To enter the fat man's keep, Alyx must disarm a series of traps, all mechanical, and she must devise a way past the fat man's personal defenses, because, as he tells her: "I wear an armor plate, little beast, that any beast might envy, and you could throw me from a ten-thousand-foot mountain…my armor plate has *in-er-tial dis-crim-in-a-tion*, little savage, which means that it lets nothing too fast and too heavy get through. So you cannot hurt me at all" (81). Alyx then gouges his eyes and break his back over a table, noting that "this all takes place inside the body" (82). The fat man assumed that he was far enough removed from primitive culture that he could

effectively differentiate human from beast and man from machine; the fat man is human, all too human, and Alyx defeats him by occupying the differential site of human-animal-machine, woman-ape-cyborg. This affirmation of partial connections and significant otherness eventually manifests in Alyx's attitude towards her husband. She returns to him at the end of the tale, and without spite or pity she tells her husband that they won "because he was a fool. And because *we* are not" (Italics mine; 85).

All three of these tales are stock and trade fantasy tales. Though "The Barbarian" has elements of advanced technology and alludes to SF short stories such as Frederic Brown's "Arena," the dungeon crawl elements of the story—Alyx's entrance into the wizard's keep to slay the keep's master—place the story squarely *between* SF and the fantastic. Wolfe calls "The Barbarian" transitional: "'The Babarian' serves as a kind of transition from the fantasy milieu of earlier tales to the full-fledged science fiction of *Picnic on Paradise*" (11). By the end of the tale, Alyx has "become a science fictional heroine" (12). Following the general nature of my chiasmatic reading, Alyx may become a science fiction heroine but she is, *as well*, a fantasy, sword-and-sorcery heroine. *The Adventures of Alyx,* as generic hybrid, occupies the differential site between genres; therefore, it would be wrong to approach Alyx's adventures as either fantasy or science fiction; this is not an either/or situation.

Wolfe is still certainly correct that *Picnic on Paradise* is, authentically, a work of science fiction. Accordingly, all mention of Ourdh, Alyx's home, disappears, and we are told that Alyx is of Mediterranean descent. True science fiction, Alyx's roots do not occur in abhistorical but rather in metahistorical time—Alyx exists in the space-time continuum as we know it. Alyx has found herself in the future by accident, inadvertently shipped to the future in a batch of seawater by the scientists of the Trans-Temporal Agency, into which she had been thrown by the Tyrian

Prince for attempting to rob him. This SF future is Alyx's afterlife—she has died and has reborn in another world, as another Alyx. Like the first, they are both cyborgs, origin-less and singular. As the Trans-Temporal authorities tell Alyx, there is only agent and you are her. Alyx transcends all time because she live at the differential site, constantly harboring partial connection that she approaches through a relationship of significant otherness, bonding kin and kind across multiple lines of race, class, sex, and species. This is the lesson of "The Second Inquisition": even Morlocks, other species, are our mortal messmates, blurring the boundary between human and animal, human and machine, to even further degrees.

The plot of *Picnic on Paradise* is straight-forward. Alyx is employed by the Tran-Temporal Agency to guide a group of tourists on the alien planet of Paradise to a safe zone where they can be ushered away from the 'commercial war' preparing to ravage Paradise's otherwise tranquil beauty. The first safe zone is destroyed when they reach it, so Alyx must spur the lazy tourists on to a much further destination; her job is to keep these 'babies' safe on their picnic, and she does not let anyone stand in the way of her performing her job. The Trans-Temp Agency knows Alyx can do this job because Alyx is a hybrid; she will find a way to bring her companion species into the differential site, and only those who most obstinately refuse to recognize that there even *is* such a site perish. Gavrily comes out unscathed, keeping his head low and minding his own business—following the leader; the Nuns trifle but do no lasting harm nor come to untimely deaths; Maudey, Iris' mother, dies early on; Raydos the artist is blinded, his mechanical appendages of sight ultimately not able to help him; and Gunnar, who I mentioned previously, is never able to accept Alyx or the Machine as companion species—this is why he hastens the Machine's death. Consequently, Alyx kills Gunnar. But Alyx does not react to this death with her usual sadistic glee. For the first time in her life, Alyx loses something that

really matters to her, and it is not a daughter or a girlfriend, not a husband or a son, but a thing—the Machine, her cyborg companion. Though Alyx's relationship with Iris is an important one, Alyx's relationship with the Machine has not deserved the attention it receives. The Machine is a man, physically, but he is a machine, mentally; like Alyx he is humanmachine, machinehuman; in short, a cyborg.

Machine is a perplexing figure, and only by understanding Alyx as cyborg can the full import of the relationship between Alyx and Machine be understood. The Machine is introduced as "an idiotic adolescent rebel and he wears that—that Trivia on his head to give himself twenty-four hours a day of solid nirvana, station NOTHING, turns off all stimuli when you want it to, operates psionically" (93). Machine refuses normal society; for this he is seen as other to normal society; the other members of the tourist group, for example, exclude Machine from their group, an arrangement that seems natural to the picnic-goers and acceptable to Machine. Additionally, Machine thinks of the human body as a machine; when the Nuns attempt to administer drugs to Iris to help her cope with the loss of her mother, Machine remarks that the Nuns are "messing up the machinery" (158). Machine is a cyborg; as a cyborg he knows there is little distinction between subject/object, human/machine. Machine's name is also a performance of his position between subject and object: he is a person, a subject, but he presents himself as an inanimate object. Alyx later calls herself the Project, proclaiming that "the Project loves the Machine" (192). The Project can love the Machine because they are both subjectobjects, both cyborgs. Alyx's previous relationships demanded that she fill the role of woman, but Alyx is a femaleman, a cyborg figure, a subjectobject. When Alyx loses her husbands and her children, it does not affect her deeply; she remains stoic and practical. The opposite is true when Machine dies. Alyx breaks down: "She thought *I never lost anything before.* She cried out in her own

language" (207). Alyx then takes inordinate amounts of the pleasure-inducing drugs carried by the Nuns. For the first time in her life, Alyx experiences love and love's loss, a feeling she is only capable of achieving in conjunction with another cyborg companion.

Ultimately, Iris nurses Alyx back to mental and physical health, in much the same way that Alyx nursed Iris after Iris' mother, Maudey, died; "it is Iris more than any other member of the group who keeps Alyx going" (Spencer 170). These two women form a lasting relationship as companion species, occupying their significant otherness and celebrating their partial connections, recognizing that "each woman has something to give the other" (171). Alyx teaches Iris to embrace her inner-cyborg, and Iris teaches Alyx the cyborg to adapt to a new, alien society. The two walk in step and learn from each other as companion species. It is this theme—two woman as companion species—that connects the final tale in *The Adventures of Alyx* to the previous tales.

"The Second Inquisition" is unlike every other story in *The Adventures of Alyx* precisely because Alyx is nowhere to be found. Instead, the tale is narrated by a female teenager and follows her experiences one summer with a strange, woman boarder. This woman has 'coppery features,' 'reddish black' hair, and is 6'4" tall. In this small American town, the woman is an absolute outsider—though many have speculated, one suspects that this mysterious woman could be Iris. She is tall, and she matches the non-race specific of the picnickers offered by Alyx early on in *Picnic on Paradise*. Spencer is right to observe that "the visitor is a disturbing influence in the narrator's life, exciting but also frightening" (171); the woman murders a man with the girl's help, exposes the girl to texts forbidden by her parents, has sex in the backyard where the young girl can witness, and includes the young girl in Trans-Temporal conflicts and intrigues. The two women become, together, companion species.

In the final tale, Morlocks become a metaphor for the inappropriate/d others created by and excluded by the fantastic and science fiction. When faced with the truly alien, the truly monstrous, it becomes easier for humans to bond across previously divisive line of race sex, and class, accounting for the other's other, for the infinite possibilities of infinite partial connections with infinite companion species. The woman visitor, when asked whether she is a Morlock, replies "I am a Morlock on vacation…there are half a thousand Morlocks and we rule the worlds" (240). In the climactic scenes of the final tale a new species is introduced: the seal-woman. It is my contention that the seal-woman seamlessly connects the first and the last tale of *The Adventures of Alyx,* first as sea-monster, second as part of the Tran-Temporal Authority. In a wild struggle, the woman from the future kills the seal-woman, but this does not seems to be a cause for celebration. The sea-monster/seal-woman is the inappropriate/d other, and *The Adventures of Alyx* issues the challenge to think the possibility of this other's other.

Critics are unable to decide whether this final tale is an example of SF or not. Spencer, for example, states that "it is not, properly speaking, SF" (171), while for Wolfe the tale is a classic time travel tale. It is my assertion that the final tale hangs suspended between fantasy and science fiction, and it is this partial connection that makes the text a cyborg. In "The Second Inquisition" we learn something of the narrator through her reading history: she begins with *Green Hats: A Romance,* and then later reads H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine,* this text obviously prompting her to ask the boarder if she is a Morlock. Wolfe sees in the narrator's reading selections a progression that reflects the growth of the author as well; beginning with the mass-produced romantic pulp, the narrator, like the author, then finds greater satisfaction from the intellectual challenges of science fiction. This type of thinking continues the either/or mentality that this essay strives against; the fantastic and romances like *Green Hats* become the other's

other. Samuel Delany recalls attending a conference where he was rudely judged for being a SF writer; Delany did not let this affect him because, as he writes, "as a black man living in racist America, I have been inured to a certain kind of second-class treatment all my life: it was not new" (pg?). Compared to mainstream fiction, SF is an oppressed minority. Some thinkers attempt to restore the dignity of SF by defining it against other oppressed minority literatures such as the fantastic and romance, but this type of thinking only perpetuates hierarchies and domination. *The Adventures of Alyx* breaks with hierarchies and domination by being both fantasy and sf, equally, as companion species. Despite time-travel, "The Second Inquisition" introduces the idea of infinite possibility through its experimentation with space-time and the generation of alien and monstrous identities, cross-breeds, that are part human and part animal. The third sketch shown to the narrator at the end of the tale reflects this infinite possibility: "and my third sketch…shows a goldfish bowl full of people in black. Behind that is a smaller goldfish bowl full of people in black, which is going after the first goldfish bowl, and behind the second is a third, which is going after the second, and so on" (268). The first goldfish bowl is a metaphor for the Other, yet behind that Other are consecutive and infinite others, innapropraite/d others, all offering new points of contention and new partial connections that can only be successfully navigated by the cyborg, by one who thinks with and becomes with companion species.

The lesson of the inappropriate/d other is also important for genre criticism. As SF gains in serious appraisal and consideration, as SF becomes a fixed unity as a genre, there arises a need for that genre to incorporate fresh material so that it does not become what Russ calls petrified, despite the fact that "the commercial possibilities of a totally petrified genre are enormous, as the eternal life of the Western film testifies" (52-53). To prevent genres from becoming petrified one must 'rummage among trash,' because "The crude, stupid, obvious novelties can begin a

whole cycle" (53). By introducing fantasy elements, Russ initiates a new cycle that refreshes and renews SF through fantasy. The fantastic introduces the element of infinite possibility, which correspond to the innate infinity contained within ideas such as partial connections, cyborgs, companion species, and inappropriate/d others. The other is infinitely displaced, but in order to harness this infinite displacement one must stand at the point of displacement, stand against new and totalizing unities. This is Haraway's point about the category 'woman': the category drives home a strict notion of what constitutes woman and is usually accompanied by the exclusion of inappropriate/d others. The same can be said for SF as a unity. To say that *The Adventures of Alyx* is either fantasy or science fiction is to implicitly support the either/or mentality that establishes literatures as bad or good based on the way those literatures correspond to preconceived notions of literature and the canon. *The Adventures of Alyx is* the space between sf and fantasy; *The Adventures of Alyx* is a generic cyborg.

I will make a few general remarks about Russ's opinions on science fiction and fantasy before concluding. In "Towards An Aesthetic of Science Fiction" she says little about fantasy: "science fiction is not fantasy, for the standards of plausibility of fantasy derive not from science, but from the observation of life as it really is—inner life, perhaps, in this case" (112). To be fair, hers is an essay devoted to the aesthetic of science fiction, not of fantasy; although fantasy often does derive its standards of plausibility from inner-life, it also draws those standards from many other sources, including religious or spiritual conviction, modern scientific rationality, or the genre expectations of sword-and-sorcery or the detective novel. The point remains that the fantastic is about infinite possibility, a feature I have reflected in the figure of the inappropriate/d other, the other of the other, continuing indefinitely like so many goldfish bowls within goldfish bowls.

Russ is also emphatic that SF has a primarily *didactic* function. She does not mean, of course, the moral didacticism of the Victorian era, but she is not apologetic either. She calls SF, "explicitly, deliberately, and baldly didactic" (113). In interview she reinforces this view emphatically, "SF was born didactic!...It's got representative protagonists…the human beings there may represent certain attitudes or types, but there are obviously not 'individuals' in the sense that characters in the great realistic novels are" (*Wounded Galaxies* 189). One might argue that the representative figures of SF are the others of the full individuals represented in the great realistic novel, such that the study of the fantastic becomes about exploring the other of the other, the inappropriate/d others, figured prominently by the seal-women/sea-monsters. The inappropriate/d other is the literalization of infinite possibility, such that what *The Adventures of Alyx* teaches us, didactic as it is, is to live in the space of partial connections, the differential site, so as to always be aware of the other's other, attendant to the necessary cultivation of significant otherness between companion species, co-evolving and becoming with, not petrifying into fixed identities. This project is immediately political because it seeks ways to build community from the many partial connections that define us all; Russ' specific literary success is to have woven this political project into both the content and the form of *The Adventures of Alyx.* This is no small success; *The Adventures of Alyx* should not be dismissed as an early, premature stage of Russ's development. That kind of thinking leads to either/or mentalities.

It is only fitting to conclude with Alyx and her ability to make the most of the partial connections that define her. Someone less resilient, someone less adaptable, would surely have perished long before Alyx, yet Alyx's main resource remains her ability to occupy the differential site between myriad identities: her sex, her class, her status as human, as animal, as machine, all these and many more. Because cyborg, Alyx inevitably outsmarts or outgrows her

binaristic antagonists in every tale. Husbands want her to be the wife; daughters want her to be the mother; pirates want her to act the lady in public; egotistic fools want her to be the pet, the beast, an animal. Even Alyx and Machine have troubles brought about by Alyx's multiple identities. When Machine performs his sexual advances by rote, Alyx becomes perturbed. Though Alyx is machine, she is more than machine as well; she is human and has human emotions, emotions she hides from Machine by speaking Greek. Joyously, Alyx is nothing anyone expects her to be because she defies every possible category. She becomes with everyone she meets, changing herself and changing them, and in this way, Alyx is the prototypical cyborg. Finally, Russ has done this heroic feminist figure the double honor of allowing her to exist in an SF/Fantasy text that is formally overdetermined in the same way as Alyx, subject of the content, is overdetermined. This congruence reveals that *The Adventures of Alyx* is not merely an early step in the development of a feminist critic and science fiction writer; instead, Russ reveals how the divisions maintained between SF and fantasy reflect patriarchal domination and hierachical thinking, the systems that are responsible for the divisions of race, sex, and class, making her entire oeuvre quintessentially feminist.

The Excesses of the Modular Calculus: Text-Sex-Market and the Politics of S/M in Samuel Delany's NEVÈRŸON Series

Return to Nevèrÿon, that distant when and where, abhistorical never-never land, fantastic prehistory built around the city-state Kolhari, a sprawling, ancient overdetermination of models drawn from deconstruction, psychoanalysis, Marxism, science fiction, sword-and-sorcery, epic fantasy, fairy tale, the discourses surrounding AIDS, and S/M, all ordered according to the modular calculus. Samuel Delany uses the modular calculus, to which I will return in more detail, to create an enchantment; the modular calculus is a literary tool for creating distant worlds that, in its science fictional manifestation, moves "closer to accurate functional explanation" (377; *Flight from Nevèrÿon*). As we approach functional explanation, mythic fantasy becomes materialist fantasy, the technique of enchantment shifting from quasi-religious, spiritual belief to rational, scientific belief—the logical and material creation of the belief in another world, another when, another where; only this *never*-when, this *never*-where, Nevèrÿon, is estranged in space-time, and precisely in that sense Nevèrÿon is abhistorical. In the abhistorical *the could not happen,* which defines fantasy for Delany, is portrayed as real and possible, and in this sense the fictional world begins to take on a life of its own. Any modular calculus sufficient to the infinite possibilities of abhistorical time will have to account for *the could not happen*; indeed, the most intensely magical moments of the series—Pryn raising the lost city of Neveryóna and glimpsing the legendary dragon Gauine; the school master encountering the dark god Amnewor along Nevèrÿon's shadowy borders; and a gay, black man encountering the one-eyed slave-cum-warrior Noyeed on the streets of 1980's New York—admit no functional explanation, perhaps not even functional speculation. The modular calculus must create algorithms that can account for infinite possibilities; these possibilities are the *excesses* of the modular calculus. As a guiding grammar to the fitting grammar I have just established, that the modular calculus generates

excesses, I will limit my investigation to the overdetermined knot text-sex-market, revealing in the end how the S/M relationship between Gorgik and Noyeed combines all three and challenges, from within, the limits of what can be thought about love and the Law.

Recalling the preface to *Tales of Nevèrÿon,* Delany reminds us, through Ernst Bloch, that "the real genesis is not at the beginning but the end, and it only begins when society and existence become radical, that is grasp themselves at the root" (11). We should not make too much, then, of beginnings; but since Delany's tales end in the same place they begin, blurring beginning and end, exposing how each contains the other, the exact nature of Bloch's prophesied end will remain an unfulfilled mystery unless we start at the beginning, a beginning that will in time return us to the end: the Culhar' fragment. It is also necessary to my general argument—that the series analyzed in this book are all materialist fantasy—to begin with the Culhar' fragment because the fragment serves as a portal into Nevèrÿon, establishing that we have entered abhistorical time. This interpretation indicates that Nevèrÿon is indeed a *never*-when and a *never*-where; not a *distant*-when nor a *distant*-where, neither in time nor in space, but an absolute fiction that abuts the *now,* revealing the immediate nature of abhistorical time—its close distance, distant closeness to actual reality. How else could Noyeed, Gorgik the Liberator's one-eyed lover, cross the distance between Nevèrÿon and New York? Nevérÿon parallels our own world, dismantling the binaries of now/then, here/there, fantasy/reality. But I move too quickly: this pursuit will lead us hastily to the textual excesses of the modular calculus. First I must end, pause, and begin again, return to the beginning for those readers unfamiliar with Nevèrÿon.

We enter Nevèrÿon through the Culhar' fragment. The Culhar' fragment is "an archaic narrative text of some one hundred or so words" (Steiner 12), a text so old and translated into so many different languages that "we do not know for certain *which* script it was initially supposed

to have been written in; nor can we be sure of its presumed geography" (ibid. 13; italics in original). Recalling Carl Freedman's comments and my previous remarks about Delany, "the physical geography and anthropology of Nevèrÿon make it practically impossible…to locate Delany's invented empire in any known area of our globe" (266); Nevèrÿon is *abhistorical* "in the sense of belonging to no empirical period of actual history" (266). Rather than placing the series in mythic time—the time of beginnings and ends, good and evil, an ahistorical time—the Culhar fragment initiates a fiction; rather than attempt to persuade the reader of the veracity of the fiction, Delany simply creates another fiction to account for the first, each consecutive fiction elaborating on, commenting on, and critiquing those before it and, eventually, those after it. Tales are woven within tales, overdetermined, and the Culhar fragment is revealed as the (post)modern fantastic equivalent of the fairy tale "once upon a time," "happily ever after;" the tales circulate in never-never time, a once upon an ever after.

The first installment in the series, *The Tales of Nevèryon* (1979), a collection of loosely connected tales, introduces characters and themes to be found throughout the entire series. We are treated to "The Tale of Gorgik," the history of the slave turned revolutionary, the Liberator; the themes of power, sex, money, and writing are explicitly handled in "The Tale of Old Venn"; and we also hear tales about Small Sarg, flaxen haired barbarian, about Madame Keyne and the troubles of the rising Nevèrÿon middle-class, and one final tale of Sarg and Gorgik's daring escapes and dashing heroics, a final and minimal touch of the swashbuckling one might expect from sword-and-sorcery. *Neveryóna* (1983) follows the young mountain girl Pryn to the city of Kolhari, where she meets Gorgik and Madame Keyne, and from Kolhari to the south, where Pryn eventually encounters the mythical dragon Gauine in the sunken city of Neveryóna. The third installment, *Flight from Nevèrÿon* (1985), tells, like the first volume, separate yet overlapping

tales: the first about a young smuggler obsessed with tales about the Liberator; the second about a mummer and his friendship with the Master of Kolhari University. "Appendix A" is an intense and emotional investigation of AIDS in New York City through the device of the fictional plague consuming the fictional city of Kolhari, and "Appendix B" elaborates Samuel Delany's interpretation of psychoanalysis. *Return to Nevèrÿon* (1987), also titled *The Bridge of Lost Desire,* is the final book in the series; though it introduces notable new characters, Clodon and Urdrog, the final return to that distant when and where grants Gorgik the space to reflect on his earlier days—the Liberator grown old, soliloquizing desire over the gaps in memory, talking until he frustrates his over-eager audience and lover, Urdrog, a quiet story-telling that tapers until at least we return to "The Tale of Gorgik"—happily—and Steiner's "Appendix"—ever after.

And we return, again, to the Culhar fragment; the beginning was contained in the end and the end was contained in the beginning. In "*Return to Nevèrÿon*: 'A Derridian-esque' Meditation," Wendy Galgan asserts that by beginning and ending in the same place Delany has successfully enacted an odyssey, an undeniable clue, for Galgan, that the series is an *epic*: "by beginning and ending the series with "The Tale of Gorgik,"[Delany] follows within the structure of his narrative the traditional definition of an 'odyssey,' which is a journey that begins and ends in the same place" (77). Though Galgan maintains that the series is an epic, she still understands sword and sorcery to be a dominant generic influence; she writes "the series does…adapt some of the traditions of the epic, molding and changing them to fit…the linguistic modalities inherent in what Delany calls 'this most despised sub-genre of literary production, sword-and-sorcery'"(77). What these modalities are and how they affect the epic trappings that appear throughout the series remains unclear; I can, however, begin to gently dismantle Galgan's assertion at the formal level. Galgan asserts the series is an epic by focusing on positive

content—Homeric hero, the odyssey—while ignoring that, formally speaking, the epic is one of many genres and discourses, all overdetermined, that comprise Nevèrÿon. Additionally, sword-and-sorcery has always claimed an intimate connection with the epic; Delany magnifies this connection in order to deconstruct the contradiction between high and low represented by the genres epic and sword and sorcery, respectively. For example, in "Nevèrÿon Deconstructed" Kathleen L. Spencer reveals how the strict generic conventions of sword-and-sorcery are systematically undermined; "the knowledgeable reader is likely to come to this work with an unusually specific set of expectations—and Delany systematically undermines every one of them" (134). Delany undermines the epic expectations in the same way by placing epic elements in a sword-and-sorcery setting, a setting that, Spencer reminds us, "must have no connections, however faint, with real history" (135): a profane realm, of lust, desire, fucking and murder. Just as sword-and-sorcery is raised to the level of epic, so is epic lowered to the level of sword and sorcery, that "most despised sub-genre of literary production" (Delany *Silent Interviews,* 129).

My formal critique of Galgan's epic classification—that the epic is one of many determinations used to shape the abhistorical reality of Nevèrÿon—also applies to the mythic interpretations of the Nevèrÿon series; those interpretations are, however, sophisticated enough to warrant, in addition to my formal critique, historical critique, the former incapable of resisting the seduction of the discourse of myth-making without the assistance of the latter. In "'Across Never': Postmodern Theory and Narrative Praxis in Samuel R. Delany's NEVÈRŸON Cycle," Sylvia Kelso argues that in the NEVÈRŸON cycle "[Delany's] involvement with postmodern theory flowers in a narrative praxis that can affiliate the conflicting axes of sexuality, history, and race, to produce a new (form of) mythology" (ital in original; 290). Kelso recognizes the influence myth-making has throughout Delany's oeuvre, seeing in Nevèrÿon a mythic

culmination, asserting that "it takes the NEVÈRŸON cycle to raise a phoenix from the ashes, to produce rather than demolish a mythology" (290). Additionally, "to this mythmaking, 'high' postmodern theory is crucial" (290), a statement Kelso makes but never considers the implications of: Delany's use of postmodern theory should also indicate the extent to which the idea of myth-making itself is deconstructed throughout the series, a deconstruction tied to the "series' first narrative strategy," the systematic disappearance of the experienced reader's every expectation about the sword-and-sorcery subgenre" (290).

Robert Reid-Pharr makes very similar claims in his essay "Disseminating Heterotopia." According to Reid-Pharr, "It is not the substance of the message, but the form in which it is transmitted, that casts it as myth…The emphasis is on form not substance, process not content" (2). Unlike Kelso, Reid-Pharr believes that Delany does not set out to create new myths or to destroy old ones, but rather to demonstrate that myth is a form of communication; he writes that myths are "modes of communication, or formulae, that work to support 'common sense' notions of right and wrong, native and foreign, self and other" (2); and, furthermore, Delany's work "is driven by a desire to demonstrate that, as a form of communication, myth can neither be destroyed, nor transcended, nor ultimately even domesticated" (2-3). Unlike Galgan's claim that the series is an epic, neither Kelso nor Reid-Pharr rely on positive comment to bolster their claims; instead, they posit myth-making in a more purely formal way, a formal abstraction that cannot be countered by simply positing another formal abstraction, the generic overdetermination of the fantastic. To mediate between these two abstractly equal formal claims I turn to historical analysis.

Taken historically, we can distinguish myth as a discrete genre from myth-making as a process that is found in many very different types of art, from fantasy to realism, modernism and

postmodernism. In *Fairy Tale as Myth,* Jack Zipes offers a template to distinguish the ossification of myth from the liquification of myth, the two opposing poles between which Nevèrÿon, as myth, is staged. Zipes begins by discussing the book *Myth and Reality* by Mircea Eliade, arguing that for Eliade the folk tale emerges "when the tale abandons its clear religious 'initiatory' responsibility" (2); Eliade, Zipes continues, "tends to regard the folk tale as the profane conveyor of the religious experience" (3), a religious experience that was first fulfilled in a sacred way by myth. Zipes takes care not to frame this as a historical shift from one type of art to another, from myth to folk tale; instead, "myths and folk tales blended very early in the oral tradition, and in many modern oral and literary narratives it is very difficult to tell them apart" (3). Myth and folk tale are, however, often viewed separately, one high the other low, one sacred the other profane, yet Zipes' point is that fairy and folk tale undergo a process of mythicization; as fairy tales become "codified, authoritative, and canonical" (4), those fairy tales become myth, "become natural and eternal" (6). This codification no longer serves religious purposes; instead, this codification serves the interests of the ruling class by insisting that the authoritative versions are the versions in which these tales have always been told—a genuine mystification of the origins of the folk and fairy tale—when in reality the tales have been told and retold to suit the purposes of author and audience. This telling and retelling is stymied through mythicization, and new fairy tales, strange fairy tales—antimythical fairy tales—are often rejected because they violate the codes and formulas commonly associated with ossified fairy and folk tales: "We are safe with the familiar. We shun the new, the real innovations" (6). Zipes warns, finally, that "only innovative fairy tales are antimythical" (5). In the sense outlined by Zipes, the Nevèrÿon series is not mythic because in its very nature it defies ossification and codification—one need only consider that the common tropes of sword-and-sorcery are systematically undermined

through the four texts. Delany's myth-making is simultaneously a myth-destroying; the loosening and destruction of all hard, fast, and fixed bonds and the shaping of new bonds, new forms. If the Nevèrÿon series is mythic, it is only by virtue of it being antimythic as well.

Having established the necessity of historical critique, the formal critique becomes easier because, as I hope you have inferred, mythic and antimythic qualities can be ascribed to many different types of literature; of course, one could cite specific examples of myth from the positive content of the Nevèrÿon series to prove its status as myth, but the positive content of Nevèrÿon is locked in a formal overdetermination that overlaps and combines the content from many types of stories and many types of discourses. How do we make sense of this vast, sprawling overdetermination? The modular calculus, with its fitting and guiding threads, reveals a point of exit that will allow us to illusively glimpse, for an elusive moment, the real of Nevèrÿon, and this elusive illusion, once glimpsed, will guide us, me and you, reader, to the *excesses* of the modular calculus.

The modular calculus first appears *as* Delany's *Trouble on Triton,* and again in appendix B of *Trouble on Triton* as part of Ashima Slade's lecture series *Some Informal Remarks Towards the Modular Calculus.* The appendix to *Tales of Nevèrÿon* addresses the modular calculus, *Neveryóna* itself is a modular calculus, and so is appendix A to *Flight from* Nevèrÿon. What, then, is a modular calculus? Delany first *mentions* the modular calculus in his essay "Shadows" from *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw,* describing it as a modeling system that challenges the notion that the model must contain something of the original, answering Kathleen Spencer's question, "to what extent can a model actually succeed in mastering the thing it models?" (129), with a resounding: *not at all*. This is the first piece of the puzzle: following the modular calculus, "there is *nothing* identical in a picture and what it depicts. There is *nothing* identical in the model and

what it is a model of" (52). So, for example, though Nevèrÿon is constructed from models taken from reality, those models are not reality at all; instead, those models are a fun-house mirror reflection of reality, distorting and transforming. Since I will focus largely on the theoretical models, it is best we take those models as our example. The modular calculus of Nevèrÿon is guided by critical theory at every turn, as epigraph, prologue, supplement, and appendix, creating what Robert Fox calls "a situation of language reflecting upon language" (109). But the tales do more than "elaborate, demonstrate, the theoretical statements" (109); instead, they transform, distort, and radically alter the theoretical statements that serve as the guiding threads of the Nevèrÿon tales. These distortions and transformations reveal the real of Nevèrÿon, a real that challenges and estranges the original theoretical models themselves.

What I have created is my own modular calculus, a modular calculus of interpretation, a model of a model of a model, one that will surely generate its own excesses but can still account for Nevèrÿon's excesses, the model of the model of the model necessitated by the very existence of those calculated excesses. But to fully understand my interpretive modular calculus we must first understand fitting and guiding grammars. According to Delany, "the modular calculus is an algorithm or set of algorithms…that can be applied to any fitting grammar to adjust it into a guiding grammar" (376). I have already implied a fitting grammar for my interpretive modular calculus: Nevèrÿon is overdetermined and this overdetermination generates excesses. This fitting grammar allows for any number of guiding grammars, some slipping quickly into Rube Goldberg machinations that could, in messy and convoluted ways, account for and depict the phenomenon I wish to model—"the modular calculus…reduced to a fantasy at one with a magic that not only lets you see through walls but also assures you that you will understand what you see when you do" (377; *Flight*); my guiding grammar will prove to be, conversely, both more

accurate and functional, if only "we allow a certain critical margin into the notion of the modular calculus" (377). This critical margin provides my guiding grammar, a grammar I will pursue literally, focusing on the intersection text-sex-market, deconstruction-psychoanalysis-Marxism. All three converge around a singular element: S/M—sado-masochism, the slave/master dialectic, the binary that binds revolutionary potential.

The S/M relationship between Gorgik and Noyeed becomes an exemplary and prescriptive model for revolutionary power, the promise of alternative organizations of sex, love, and power not bound by the binary juxtaposition of slave and master. First, I will approach separately the three primary elements of my guiding grammar, texts, sex, and markets, and elaborate on each through the philosophies of Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, and Karl Marx, respectively. Specifically, I will follow my cluster text-sex-market to its origins, to a cluster of competing origins: the archetrace, the absent father, labor. From there I will demonstrate how non-binary thinking and the logic of the market force us to reconsider our relationship to the Law, the absent Father, in a way that begins to resemble Judith Butler's opposition to the patriarchical structure of kinship in *Antigone's Claim.* Like Antigone, Gorgik speaks in and speaks against sovereign power, against the Law and the Father, suggesting within the Law and against the Law new ways of being. Gorgik speaks against the Law through his sexual predilections, S/M, while speaking within the Law as the Liberator, the freer of slaves, as a player in the real game of power between slave and master. Gorgik's desires transgress the Law, refuse to internalize its strictures, and in doing so demand new strictures, within and against.

Arche-writing is the transcendental origin of the system of writing, a system of signifiers of signifiers, an origin that Derrida meditates on in order to erase. Arche-writing defines a field of transcendental experience, and "this experience is only accessible…after having…isolated the

specificity of the linguistic system and excluded all the extrinsic sciences and metaphysical speculation, one asks the question of the transcendental origin of the system itself" (61). In order to avoid the objectivism that plagues the question of origins, Derrida both makes use of the transcendental origin and calls that origin into question; the "arche must make its necessity felt before letting it be erased" (61). Derrida posits the origin, arche-writing, only as a derivative and immanent function of the *trace,* the disappearance of the origin from the system altogether, within the system. More so, "this trace is not only the disappearance of origin—within the discourse that we sustain and according to the path that we follow it means that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a non-origin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin" (61). Everything begins with the trace, the moment of difference that is writing, and from this trace the origin is only inferred; the origin never existed on its own terms and is only a function of the non-origin. The concept of arche-writing destroys its own name, because "if all begins with the trace, there is above-all no originary trace" (61).

The Nevèrÿon series explores the origins of writing, playing origin against non-origin in a way that goes beyond the transcendental concept of the origin, deconstructing the notion of the original itself by portraying the origin of the origin as a function in a system of signs. The Culhar' fragment is, ostensibly, the oldest known written document, therefore it should be clear that it represents arche-writing—the origin of all writing. In proper form, the Nevèrÿon series decenters the origins of writing, instead constructing the Culhar' fragment from its trace, its disappearance from the system it originates. At first we are led to believe that Old Venn invented writing—in "The Tale of Old Venn," Norema and the other children of the Ulvayn islands are sent to study with an old eccentric by the name Venn. Venn has traveled the entire breadth of Nevèrÿon and she is famous for a number of inventions; a truly remarkable woman, she even

manages to invent a system that allows for the expression of decimals, a system she forms at the behest of her friend and teacher Belham, who when studying the properties of the circle is unable to account for pi. From Venn the children learn a system that allows them to represent things and places with certain graphemes, and the children are urged to devise their own systems to practice such writing: "they learned the marks Venn could make on pieces of dried vegetable fiber…some marks were for animals, some for fish, some for numbers; and some were for words (Norema's own contribution to the system…" (84). We are led to believe that perhaps Old Venn, the odd eccentric woman, invented writing—that we are witnessing the origins of writing in the Ulvayn and its eventual spread through Nevèrÿon. Just as quickly, however, the origin disappears: Venn states, "I did not invent this system. I only learned it…and I modified it, even as you have done" (85). The origin of writing seems to be, as we learn from S.L. Kermit, tokens that were "pressed into the curved outer surface of the still pliable clay bulla" (253), within which was contained a number of items that corresponded to the tokens: the origin of writing is closely related to the necessities of the market. Each of these moments is, however, a trace of the actual origins of writing. The origin that these traces imply disappears as soon as it appears, and the actual origins of writing are displaced in an ever-growing system of signifiers; eventually, even within a text based on another text that purports to be the origin of writing, the Culhar' fragment, all origins are displaced and can only be constructed retroactively from within the system. Eventually we must accept Lord Aldamir's observation, before the climactic scenes of *Neveryóna,* that there is no origin to writing, and that the commercial script Pryn masters is only one of many different types of writing: "in the same way that weaving has been invented many times and in several ways…so has writing" (331). The question of the origin of writing, and with it the Culhar' fragment, is continually displaced and deconstructed.

As a commercial script, the written text overlaps the market, revealing both to be involved in questions of power. I cannot overstress the importance of the market, as a physical place, to the sword-and-sorcery genre. Delany reinforces this importance in his interview "Sword & Sorcery, S/M, and the Economics of Inadequation;" he writes that in sword-and-sorcery "the market gave you a vision, not of the average citizen, but of the range of specific economic individuals, beggar and student, housewife and horse-dealer, farmer and potter, acrobat and army man, barmaid and baron…from which that average is drawn" (*Silent Interviews,* 132). But before we retroactively discern the answer to the question "what is the origin of value?"—its origins in labor already visible in the traces of Delany's description—we first must follow the trace of money within the text. In "The Tale of Old Venn," the introduction of money into the Rulvyn culture totally upsets that culture and the power relationships that make it a functional society. In this way, Venn catalogs the negative aspects of money, its displacement of real value and its ability to alter previously harmonious social structures. According to Venn:

> in time and space, where money is, food, work, and craft are not: where money is food, work, and craft either will shortly be, or in the recent past were. But the actual place where the coin sits is a place where wealth may just have passed from or may soon pass into, but where it cannot be now—by the whole purpose of money as an exchange object. When money came among the Rulvyn, something very strange happened… (93)

Venn continues, providing a long, first hand account of the changes that occur to Rulvyn society after money is introduced, leading to what Venn considers an oppressive kinship system based on ownership, financial power, and patriarchal authority. Of course, not all opinions are as negative as Venn's. Zwon the Potter expounds the virtues of money to his young assistant Bayle, urging Bayle to "think of the people it connects! It makes all of us one" (163); "Yes," Zwon continues, "though others argue, I'm convinced it's an entirely good thing. Ah, my boy, I

can remember when it was all trade" (163). Zwon then connects money to the invention of writing and the invention of the loom, telling Bayle that "you sit there, and they surround you. You don't know what the world was like without them" (164). What the texts establish here is a trace—the trace of the origin of value—and from this trace the real origin of value, what disappears when money is present in space and time, can be retroactively discerned.

A short analysis of the New Market in Kolhari will bring us closer to this retroactively discerned origin. A peculiar interaction occurs between Madame Keyne—an obvious allusion to John Maynard Keyne, the twentieth century British economist—and Pryn as Madame Keyne takes Pryn on a tour of the construction site that will become the New Market. I say peculiar because it is unclear whether Pryn understands the full import of what she is shown. Madame Keyne reveals to Pryn the true source of her power, the true source of her wealth, in an attempt to dispel the illusion that Madame Keyne will become wealthy by renting the stalls in the New Market. Throwing a gold coin to the ground, Keyne beckons one of the workers to retrieve the coin; after he has, she rewards him with an iron coin. Satisfied, she tells Pryn, "you see how money that goes out comes back to me? And, you must admit, it costs very little. So now you have the whole system of enterprise, profit, and wages laid out for your inspection, girl" (156). Yet Pryn believes that Madame Keyne lost money in that transaction, prompting Keyne to respond, "if you think I *lost* in that transaction, then you do not know what the enemy is, nor, I doubt, will you ever" (156). It is, of course, in Madame Keyne's best interest to mystify the actual enemy, capitalist production, because it is through her manipulations of that enemy that Keyne has become wealthy. The origin of this wealth? Delany's *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* can aid us on this account. Analyzing the gentrification of Times Square, Delany attempts to rectify the common misconception that new wealth will be generated through rent,

that "the ultimate success of the building as a habitation is pivotal to the building's future economic successes" (149). This is the misconception that prevents Pryn from understanding what Madame Keyne is attempting to teach her; Pryn believes that Keyne's success will be determined by her ability to rent spaces in the New Market. The truth of the matter is, however, that "millions and millions of dollars of profits will be made by the parent corporation just from the construction of the building alone, even if no single space is ever rented out" (150-151). Therefore, the act of constructing the New Market is far more profitable than the act of renting its spaces, because it is in the act of construction that labor, the origin of all value, generates a surplus. This is the source of Keyne's wealth and power.

Marx begins *Capital* by analyzing two features of the commodity, its use-value and its exchange-value. Use-value is simple and foremost: "the utility of a thing makes it a use-value" (303). Exchange-value is more complicated because, as Old Zwon's comments reveal, exchange-value combines "the labour of the joiner, the mason, the spinner, or of any other definite kind of productive labour" (305), putting "out of sight both the useful character of the various kinds of labor embodied in [commodities], and the concrete forms of that labour" (305). All are reduced to a single, abstract element, a common element that is represented abstractly through money, through exchange value: "the common element that manifests itself in the exchange-value of commodities, whenever they are exchanged, is their value" (305). Money is, then, an abstract representation of value, the substance that all commodities have in common. But what is the origin of this value? Marx continues, "that which determines the magnitude of the value of any article is the amount of labour socially necessary, or the labour-time socially necessary for its production" (306). Surplus-value—Keyne's wealth—is generated when the laborer is forced to sell his labor-power as a commodity; inevitably, the laborer generates much

more value than his own labor-power is worth, and this discrepancy results in an easy surplus for the capitalist. Madame Keyne does not need to rent the stalls of the New Market because her surplus-value is generated through and in the act of labor itself; in building the market and using labor-power to generate surplus value, money comes to Madame Keyne much quicker than it flows away.

We have examined both text and market place in some detail, and at this point we must not forget Delany's admonishment that "without sexuality, without textuality, the market, like the sword-and-sorcery subgenre itself, is incomplete" (*Silent Interview,* 131). Examples of sexuality, homosexual and heterosexual, 'normal' and 'perverse,' abound: Small Sarg's reluctant acquiescence to Gorgik's advances in "The Tale of Small Sarg," and Gorgik's insistence Small Sarg wear the slave collar, because, Gorgik explains, "if one of us does not wear it, *I* will not be able to…do anything" (154); Pryn's attempt to shake off a pregnancy scare while traveling south with a young smuggler in "Of Night, Noon, Time, and Transition;" the same young smuggler's discovery of "the truth of the secret center" in "The Tale of Fog and Granite,"; and Clodon's hesitant recruitment into the sex trade along the Bridge of Lost Desire in "The Tale of Rumor and Desire." There are many more homosexual relationships than there are heterosexual relationships. Nari and Zadyuk, Pheron's close friends in "Appendix A" of *Flight from Nevèrÿon,* are examples of the latter, but as Jes Battis shows in "Delany's Queer Markets: *Nevèrÿon* and the Texture of Capital," LGBT relationships proliferate across the Nevèrÿon tales, rightly exposing "the embededness of the market within the motions of sexuality (and vice versa)" (478). In "Discourses of Autobiographical Desires: Samuel Delany's NEVÈRŸON Series," Georgia Johnston notes, much like Battis, that ""these texts, in their repetition of sexual representation, create knowledge and discourse systems alternative to those of heterosexual

patriarchal culture" (49). Though some of my conclusions will no doubt be similar to Johnston's and Battis', where they focus on binaries and market logic, respectively, I will link sexuality in Nevèrÿon to the psychoanalytic interpretation, a link that Delany fosters, even if only to force the concept into erasure.

Delany's depictions of the Rulvyn through the character of Old Venn explicitly portray the phallus as a symbol of power, and Delany makes direct comment on and analysis of Lacanian psychoanalysis in "Appendix B" of *Flight from Nevèrÿon.* According to Venn, the rult "is a special, wooden carving that Rulvyn fathers make and give to their infant sons….Girls do not get them. Indeed, girls are not even supposed to touch them" (107). Arkvid, Venn's husband, proposes the idea of rult envy—the girls are jealous of and envy the rult because they do not have one, a jealousy that takes place "in the dark places of the mind, below memory" (110). Arkvid goes further, insisting that it is "not so much the rult itself, but the power, strength, and magic that the rult embodies" (111). Rult envy resembles penis envy, but just as Arkvid separates the physical rult from what it represents, its power, strength, and magic, so does the Lacanian conception of the phallus separate the physical penis from the symbolic penis. The phallus is then, the symbolic representation of the Law, the Law's stand-in in the symbolic, necessary as a stand-in because the Law itself—the signifier, the Name of the Father, the Master—precedes signification and never fully appears within signification. More so, "The Name of the Father is a vector of the incarnation of the Law in desire" (Lacan, "Note sur l'enfant" Autres écrites, 373). Therefore sexuality, the field of desire at the bodily level, operates through and in the symbolic register established by the Absent Father, and our unconscious desires are internalizations of the Law itself, "which imposes itself on desire and therefore creates it, beyond the grasp of any individual, conscious decision" (Leupin 4).

Delany heavily criticizes this internalization of the Law because it leads to a situation in which one type of sexuality, heterosexual and normal, is viewed as the norm from which all other types are deviant; such is the Law. In *Silent Interviews* Delany writes,

> The Law is imposed, of course, on all sexual situations….But the reduction of that imposition to a circular argument where S/M is censured by the Law precisely because it carries, reveals, manifests, and reproduces the Law's own hidden and embarrassing truth—that it functions at once as the Law's own hidden and embarrassing truth—is a contradiction that calls for some firm demystifying analysis. We simply must challenge this view that various sexual acts carry the Law innately within them, momentarily to write out their truth for the historically sensitive reader (140-141)

Delany's point is, of course, that although, yes, there is a Law, and, yes, this Law imposes itself on desire and informs all sexual relationships, that, no, the structure of the Law is not innately given and is, instead, subject to historical change; the Law is not an immutable force. If the Law is an innate given, then the sexual differences portrayed in psychoanalysis are essentialized; "thanks to a certain number of conventions, prohibitions, and inhibitions that are the effect of language and can only be taken from that fabric and register" (Lacan 33), the sexual relationship continually fails in a dialectic of desire's fulfillment and repression, desire "creating obstacles to its realization just to survive" (Leupin 4), creating the situation where there is no sexual relationship between man and woman. So the norm requires the deviation as obstacle to the continuance of desire, but, as Butler writes in *Antigone's Claim,* "the perverse is announced to be essential to the norm. The problem…is that the perverse remains entombed precisely there, as the essential and negative feature of the form, and the relation between the two remains static, giving way to no rearticulation of the norm itself" (76). Unless the norm is also subject to change, real, historical change, the basic parameters of the Lacanian enterprise seem hopelessly essentialist.

In *Flight from Nevèrÿon* Delany openly challenges orthodox interpretations of psychoanalysis. In sections 4.11, 4.231, 4.31, and 4.42 in "Appendix A" Delany begins to make his position clears vis-à-vis the characters Nari, Zadyuk, Pheron, and the Master. First Delany notes that the Master would probably reject concepts such as "the unconscious," "transference," "repression," and "infantile sexuality," while Delany "believe[s] these theories to be basically correct" (189); at any rate, many such fables abounded throughout Nevèrÿon. Though Nari would find concepts such as "penis envy" and "sublimation" plausible and Nadyuk would find the theory of "repressed homosexuality" plausible, Delany rejects these concepts; at any rate, many such fables abounded throughout Nevèrÿon. Pheron, conversely, would argue that he experiences "penis envy" but not "sublimation"—"I go right for it!"(188)—and that homosexuality is not at all repressed! Delany, through Pheron, directly challenges the Law, especially inasmuch as it manifests as a heterosexual norm that regulates the normal and so-called healthy interaction between man and woman. Delany elaborates his position explicitly in "Appendix B" finding the problem with psychoanalysis to be the particular way in which it *uses* language. Delany writes,

> The masculinist bias in the language of patriarchal society and culture in general, and in psychoanalytic terminology in particular, from 'phallus,' 'castration,' and 'There is only one libido, and it is male,' to 'absent father' and the exemplary 'he,' is not the producer of the problem. But it most definitely stabilizes responses and patterns of response *to* the problem—response now of individuals, now of groups (364).

The problem is, of course, that and though we may grasp at desire symbolically—there being no other way to grasp—this grasping only causes us to lose desire ever more. The language of psychoanalysis, then, taken from a masculinist and patriarchal culture, portrays the absence of desire in terms that prevent the thinking of desire from positions that are not straight, male, and heterosexual.

This is Antigone's dilemma according to Judith Butler: Antigone formulates her desire in a way that counters the normative formulation sanctioned by the Law, sovereign power, but Antigone can only pose her counter-desires in the symbolic register provided and regulated by the Law. In Sophocles' *Antigone,* Antigone, daughter of the incestuous relationship between King Oedipus and his mother Jocasta, defies the law of Thebes by providing the traitor Plyneices, her brother, a respectable burial. Butler relies on Antigone's story as a counter-myth to the Oedipal story, claiming that Antigone suggests new forms of kinship, new ways of organizing society that do not essentialize patriarchal and heterosexual norms. According to Butler, Antigone's

> words, understood as deeds, are chiasmically related to the vernacular of sovereign power, speaking in and against it, delivering and defying imperatives at the same time, inhabiting the language of sovereignty at the very moment in which she opposes sovereign power and is excluded from its terms. What this suggests is that she cannot make her claim outside the language of the state, but neither can she claim she to make be [sic] fully assimilated by the state (28)

The Law is present and active—not even Antigone is outside the Law—but this does not mean that the Law cannot be challenged from within. Indeed, "the Law of the Father…sets limits upon the variability of social forms and…in its most conservative form, mandates an exogamic, heterosexual conclusion to the oedipal drama" (75), and Antigone's story offers the possibility of radical resolutions to the oedipal drama, resolutions that do not conform to the language of masculinist and patriarchal society.

Gorgik also performs a similar chiasmic resistance, operating within and against the Law. Gorgik's sexual predilections—someone involved must be wearing the collar or otherwise he will not be able to perform—are shaped in and through the system of slavery, but his desires are something decidedly other than the social structure authorized by the system of slavery; "it is through S/M sexuality…that Gorgik stages political interventions within the gendered order of

his own world" (Battis 480). In "The Game of Time and Pain" a group of passing nobles 'borrow' several mine slaves as a source of entertainment. In this situation, "these nobles were free, free to do anything, anything to us" (43). In this situation, the collar represents absolute control, control over the one wearing the collar by those who do not wear the collar. Though Gorgik's need of the collar suggests a power relationship of slave and master, this relationship is not the same relationship as that of actual slaves and masters. In fact, Gorgik realizes that his sexual needs are as different from the real situation of slavery as they can possibly be. After surreptitiously catching one of the nobles placing the collar around his own neck, the two recognizing each other's shared perversion, the noble re-collars Gorgik; "And just as I had recognized the sexual in his placing it about his own neck, I knew that, though lust still reeled in his body and still staggered in mine, this gesture was as empty of the sexual as it is possible for a human gesture to be" (55). Gorgik realizes that though his desire is shaped by the collar, he is not free from the collar until he can harness the power the collar has over his desire. Gorgik recollects, "I knew I would not be content till I had seized that freedom and power for myself, even though I knew I had to seize the former for every slave in Nevèrÿon—before I could truly hold the latter" (56-57). Within and against the Law, of slavery, Gorgik's desire takes on an immediate political significance. Though his desire is shaped by the institution of slavery, Gorgik knows he will not be truly free to take control of his desires unless the Law is overturned completely, unless every slave is made free.

So the Law, in the form of slavery, imposes itself on Gorgik's desires, but the form imposed is not innate and can be challenged. This is exactly what Small Sarg fails to recognize. Small Sarg thinks that Gorgik's sexual needs signal that Gorgik will become a dictator, his sexual orientation, for Small Sarg, an innate expression of social authority. Small Sarg rants:

> Every one of you—duped *fools!*....You think you have a Liberator? Can't you hear the voice of a tyrant in the making? Before you sits a man whose every word and act is impelled by lusts as depraved as any in the nation, who would make a slave of all and anyone to satisfy them, calling such satisfaction freedom! (77).

Sarg views Gorgik's sexual desires as directly translating into his political desires, failing to recognize that an S/M session between consenting adults is a very different situation than the play of power that occurs in a political situation. Sarg makes the primary mistake that Delany criticizes, assuming that S/M, "functions at once as the Law's own hidden and embarrassing truth" (Delany, *Silent Interviews,* 140). If S/M is the hidden truth of the Law, then S/M must in some way also be an incarnation of that very same Law, the Law waiting in hiding to reveal itself again. But as Delany has insisted, this is simply not the case, and Small Sarg's interpretation mystifies more than it explains.

A better interpretation would insist that Gorgik's relationship with Noyeed overturns every expectation about the relationship between slave and master as that relationship is formulated according to the Law of the Absent Father. Not only are these relationships not the same, Gorgik and Noyeed's relationship overturns the dialectic slave/master and reveals how the master is the slave to the servant, completing the internal logic of the dialectic. It should not be difficult to move from sado-masochism to the dialectic of slave and master, both equally implied by the marks 'S/M,' and I insist that the main S/M relationship of the Nevèrÿon series, the relationship between Noyeed and Gorgik, is also a literalization of the slave/master dialectic.

I will bring Slavoj Žižek's comments on the Slave/master relationship into the conversation, his interpretation consistent with the Lacanian interpretation. Žižek writes:

> In the dialectic of Master and servant, the servant (mis)perceives the Master as amassing *jouissance*, and gets back (steals from the Master) little crumbs of *jouissance*; these small pleasures (the awareness that he can also manipulate the Master), silently tolerated by the Master, not only fail to present any threat to the Master but, in fact, constitute the 'libidinal bribery' which maintains the servant's

> servitude. In short, the satisfaction that he is able to dupe the Master is precisely what guarantees the servant's servitude to him (45).

Žižek demonstrates the slave/master relationship as it is determined according to an internalization of the Law that favors a hierarchical organization consistent with the demands of sovereign power. What I suggest, conversely, is that the relationship between Noyeed and Gorgik offers an S/M relationship wherein the servant amasses *jouissance,* and the Master gets back crumbs of that *jouissance* from the slave. With this libidinal bribery, the servant maintains the Master's servitude, a position in direct contradiction to the Master's discourse as traditionally articulated by psychoanalysis. This interpretation, above all else, explains why Gorgik and Noyeed easily switch between the position of master and servant; the binary S/M and the power implied in that binary are deconstructed and dispersed in a semiotic fog. "The Tale of Fog and Granite" makes the idea of the dispersed and decentered S/M relationship palpable through the imagery of the fog, a fog that permeates every road, alley, valley, and mountain in and around Kolhari. It should be no wonder then that the tale begins with Noyeed totally supplanting Gorgik as collar-wearer; as Noyeed tells Gorgik, "I will be your mark. You will be my meaning. I will be your sign. You will be my signification" (6). The slave occupies the position of power, identical to the Law as mark and sign; the master becomes a function of the slave.

This reversal of the S/M dialectic has immediate importance for our own age, caught, as it is, between a system of patriarchal and heterosexual normativity and the desire to invent new systems and new languages that can allow for alternate sexualities without labeling those sexualities as perverse, as deviations from an innate and static norm. Lacan famously remarked to the revolutionaries among his students, "what you yearn for as revolutionaries is a master. You will have it" (Séminaire XVII, 239). These comments imply that the system of slaves and masters, based as it is on the dictates of the unwritten Law, the Name of the Father, cannot be

changed. There will be a master and there will be slaves. Sexuality, however, rather than directly mimicking the unconscious dictates of the Law, creates a space wherein the structure of that Law, essentially patriarchal and heterosexual, can be overturned, tested, analyzed, and transformed. We need not fear the reinstitution of the Master, so long as we challenge the language of the Master, a language that has unfortunately dominated the formation of sexual identities and the formation of social authority. By recognizing that there is no single determination and that, in fact, the elements text-sex-market determine and are determined by each other, the logic of the text and the logic of the market can be changed through a reorganization of the logic of sex (as does a reorganization of the logic of the text or the logic of the market effectively change the other two elements). The excesses of Delany's modular calculus, especially regarding S/M—sado-masochism and the slave/master dialectic—result, then, precisely from an overdetermination of text-sex-market that challaneges the limits and assumptions of any normative and essentialist logic. Love will set us free from the Law, but this love will not be the normative sanctioned love between man and woman. Nor will this love be perverse: as the S/M love between Noyeed and Gorgik reveals, the object is to deconstruct the very notions of normativity and perversity, challenging both and the ways in which their mutual interaction stabilizes and reifies the Law of the Father. One thing remains certain: if we wish to explore models that contest the hierarchical conceptions of power which continue to dictate the forms of text, sex, or market in reality, there will always be sufficient reason to return to Nevèrÿon, again.

An 'Argument in Time': Messianism and Redemption in China Miéville's BAS-LAG Trilogy

China Miéville's reputation continues to grow, popularly and academically, and this growth reflects a trend to classify and to analyze Miéville as a science fiction writer. For example, he has won the Arthur C. Clarke Award—a yearly award given to the best *science fiction* novel of the year—three times: in 2001 for *Perdido Street Station*, in 2005 for *Iron Council*, and again in 2010 for *The City and the City*. In addition to these prestigious awards, Miéville continues to be welcomed as a guest of honor at SF conventions and conferences, popular and academic alike. The editorial board of the science fiction journal *Extrapolation* devoted its entire summer 2009 issue to Miéville, a further indication of Miéville's academic popularity, and the contributors to this special issue explored Miéville's work from a wide range of theoretical and political positions, addressing issues related to specific texts, themes discovered across the entire range of Miéville's published work, and theoretical problems related to the difficulties Miéville's work poses for fantasy and science fiction criticism. Surely, some of Miéville's texts deserve to be analyzed as science fiction more than others, but one of my contentions is that the full import of the BAS-LAG series—*Perdido Street Station* (2000), *The Scar* (2002), and *Iron Council* (2004)—cannot be recognized unless it is interpreted as a fantasy series, as a modern fairy tale in framework, form, and function.

The function of Bas-Lag remains my ultimate concern, a function revealed through the complex interaction of physics and ethics through the course of the trilogy, culminating in a messianic event. I will rely primarily on Walter Benjamin's conception of messianism, supplemented by Alain Badiou's notion of the singularity, to reveal how the present takes on meaning by referencing itself to the concerns of the past—concerns that threaten to disappear irretrievably. The Bas-Lag trilogy represents an artistic messianic event, an artistic unity that

flashes up, just as, historically, "a memory…flashes up at a moment of danger" (Benjamin 255). The development of this event can be traced across the three books of the trilogy in a cumulative narrative, beginning in *Perdido Street Station*, continuing in *The Scar*, and climaxing in *Iron Council* as a genuine political singularity. The Bas-Lag trilogy becomes, dialectically, a messianic 'argument in time' for a possible revolutionary practice, an argument both hopeful for the future and committed to the past, a portent from an inaccessible point in space/time that reveals the weak messianic potential of present reality in its immediacy, the traces of the historical and artistic anticipation of the Other, the hope placed in the present by the past, and the knowledge that "our coming was expected on earth" (254).

Portals and Stories, Framework and Form

The imaginative framework of Bas-Lag distorts space/time and transplants the reader to another dimension. In this dimension all metaphors become literal manifestations and the impossible demands to be interpreted as real; so though the political tribulations are closely modeled after our own—capital and globalization, class conflict and the navigation of overlapping identities and allegiances—those models are imaginatively transformed through their contact with the infinite possibility, a contact that estranges the original models. 'Possibility mining,' developed in *The Scar*, distorts space/time and provides, in a sense, the portal into Bas-Lag.

The descriptions of possibility mining appear a little more than halfway through *The Scar*; Uther Doul, hero of Armada and the Lovers' champion, explains possibility mining to Bellis in the words of the Ghosthead Empire, an ancient empire that managed to harness the power of possibility mining. Doul quotes, "'we have scarred this mild world with prospects, wounded it massively, broken it, made our mark on its most remote land and stretching for

thousands of leagues across its sea….We have found rich deposits of chance, and we will dig them out'" (435). Doul opts for a non-metaphorical interpretation of 'chance' here; this is not merely a poetic description of a physical phenomenon that the Ghosthead Empire does not fully understand. No, there is exactitude to this speech; the Ghosthead Empire has literally scarred the world, and, in scarring it, they have discovered how to harness the possibilities that could have been but are not. Doul continues, "A cataclysm like that, shattering a world, the rupture left behind: it opens up a rich seam of potentialities" (435). This rich seam of potentialities does more than describe the physical state of Bas-Lag; rather, amidst a world that we know to be empirically impossible, Miéville constructs the chance, however fleeting, that such a word *could* exist. According to the principles of possibility, "for every action, there's an infinity of outcomes. Countless trillions are possible, many milliards are likely, millions might be considered probable, several occur as possibilities to us as observers—and one becomes true" (435). Possibility mining becomes a meta-discourse about the real possibility of Bas-Lag, a portal into Miéville's Other-realm, bringing into reality what reality denies, what reality constructs as impossible, and countering that impossibility with the infinite variety the human mind can imagine as real and possible. By accepting every possibility as real, possibility mining undermines the dichotomy possible/impossible—revealing the infinite play between the two terms—and demonstrates that even the most impossible portrayals contain within them concrete and abstract possibilities, all combined in infinite and real arrangements.

Possibility mining is, in substance, no different than C.S. Lewis's Wardrobe, J.R.R. Tolkien's *Red Book of Westmarch*, or the "Once Upon a Time" of the fairy tale—each device establishes a portal into the fantastic. Lewis' wardrobe needs little introduction—in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* the children enter the wardrobe to find themselves transported into

Narnia. This portal does not display the same scientific—we might say science fictional—sophistication of possibility mining, but the two devices, the wardrobe and the alien physics, both establish the framework of the fantasy world in relation to empirical reality. The pseudo-historical framework of Tolkien's Middle-Earth is established through *The Red Book of Westmarch*, an entirely fictional manuscript written by hobbits that Tolkien grants a spurious historical existence. Both the wardrobe and Tolkien's manuscript accomplish the same purpose as the "Once upon a time" of the fairy tale, only in changed form. For example, though the *Red Book of Westmarch* places Middle-Earth in an indistinct pseudo-historical past and not the grammatical past of the "Once upon a time," both establish the opening of a vast and timeless world, a world not constrained by the actual events of real human history. About fairy tale openings, Tolkien writes, "As for the beginnings of fairy-stories: one can scarcely improve on the formula *Once upon a time*....That beginning is not poverty-stricken but significant. It produces at a stroke the sense of a great uncharted world of time" (Tolkien 89). Possibility mining, drawing from the lessons of quantum physics, opens an uncharted world of *space-time* to the reader. The differences between "Once upon a time," Tolkien's Red Book, and Miéville's science fictional portals—grammatical, historical, scientific—reflect the growth and maturation of both authors and readers of fairy tales. All evoke a world apart, a history apart, a timeless place—abhistorical time—but only rational fantasies, including world creation, construct the possibilities of their fictional worlds through what could be considered cognitive frameworks. These rational fantasies are not, however, *identical* to science fiction by virtue of this cognitive framework; no matter how scientific or rigorous a fantasy may be, the infinite possibilities and arrangements of the fantastic continue to defy modern rationality and logical thought.

So possibility mining bridges the actual, empirically possible and infinite possibility of the fantastic. Miéville would disagree. For him fantasy is defined according to its *impossibility,* and within this framework an impossibility will be portrayed as real. In his 'Editorial Introduction' to *Historical Materialism's* 'Symposium on Marxism and Fantasy,' Miéville argues that the fantastic mode is defined by the impossible; the impossible of science fiction, strictly speaking, is the *not-yet-possible,* while "what is usually considered fantasy, by contrast, has as its impossible the *never-possible."* (45; italics in original). The ruling seems to confirm "left antipathy to the outright-fantastic, in art and thought" (45), but Miéville continues, arguing that "if the predicates for a fantasy are clearly never-possible *but are treated systematically and coherently within the fantastic framework,* then its cognition effect is precisely that normally associated with sf" (45; italics in original). Miéville reinforces this view in interview with Joan Gordon: "the point might be to be both as *incredible/impossible* and as *rigorous/scientific* as possible. In which case the cardinal sin isn't to be a "fantasist" and use magic, but to be *internally inconsistent*" (interview 368). According to Miéville, then, fantasy is never-possible but behaves systematically and coherently in a way that mimics the cognition effect usually associated with sf. But the never-possible is not a passive element in this equation; the never-possible has a form its own, but we have been unable to think the form of this irrational rationality, this impossible possibility. Following the lesson of possibility mining, to state that fantasy deals strictly in the impossible is only a half-complete position; properly speaking, Bas-Lag creates infinite possibilities that question the very foundations of possibility itself, the very foundations of cognition and rationality.

But the process by which the cognition effect—which belongs, rightly, to science fiction and not to fantasy—and the worldbuilding techniques that accompany it come to be part of

fantasy indicates the *form* of fantasy literature: the telling and retelling of stories. Telling and retelling has always been part of folklore and fairy tale; as evidenced by the classification systems for folk tales and fairy tales, Vladimir Propp's morphological system and the Aarne-Thompson system, folk and fairy tales use similar characters, figures and plots. The folk tales of the peasants were altered by first an aristocratic and later a bourgeoisie audience, resulting in a new genre that Jack Zipes calls the *literary fairy tale.* According to Zipes, the fairy tale is "a *literary* text which experimented with and expanded upon the stock motifs, figures, and plots of the folk tale" (*Breaking the Magic Spell* 7); because literary and produced by a different class, the fairy tale represented "a shift in the narrative perspective and style which not only obliterated the original folk perspective and reinterpreted the experience of the people for them but also endowed the contents with a new ideology" (8). Fantasy world creation also tells and retells stories, and something of the telling and retelling continues into Bas-Lag, though in changed form.

More than a retelling, the modern fantasy writer *remakes* certain stories in a fantasy setting, thereby granting even the most prosaic realism the spark of an impossible desire. Miéville's 'weird fiction' involves the remaking of stories from popular culture, including but not limited to science fiction and folklore. *Perdido* contains elements of Dickensian urban realism and the pulp action-adventure; *The Scar* is a sea novel in the tradition of Herman Melville and Joseph Conrad and contains elements of the superhero comic book; and *Iron Council* allegorizes the Paris Commune. Across each text there are innumerable sub-genres which figure less prominently: newspapers in the form of Runagate Rampant; scholarly works like Krüach Aum's treatise on the avanc; folk stories and folk tales, the Crawfoot stories Tanner tells Shekel; whispers and tall tales about Jack Half-A-Prayer; rumors about the ancient

Ghosthead Empire; Bellis' letter; Vermishank's account of Calligine's experiments with flight; Judah's pictures of Iron Council that circulate New Crobuzon; the *mise en scéne* play about Jack's demise at the beginning of *Iron Council*; and the map that prefaces *Perdido.* Even the novel, the original baggy monster, is only one determination of Bas-Lag: "Jack," a short story set in the Bas-Lag universe, makes an appearance here as the single determinant of Bas-Lag working against the novel as the encompassing form.

The generic influence that has received the most attention in Miéville's Bas-Lag is science fiction, but even this influence is dramatically altered when it enters the abhistorical and overdetermined form of the modern fantastic. Mark Bould's statement that *Perdido Street Station* is "a science fiction story in a fantasy sub-creation" indicates much more than just artificial intelligence, alien empires, and scientific breakthroughs, much more than just science-fictional content (310). Farah Mendlesohn's observations in her *Rhetorics of Fantasy* are useful here because she indicates two formal aspects that are assimilated into Miéville's fantasy model by the generic overdetermination and remaking of science fiction in the Bas-Lag universe. Those two issues are "the technique of world-building per se, and the relationship of the actors to the built world" (63). Combined, these formal aspects generate "a coherent world, one that makes sense in its own terms, and within which the actors can predict the consequences of their actions on the world" (63). If Mendlesohn is correct, then the modern fantastic is not after all an historical form of the fairy tale because in such a world as she has described there is no longer a textual conflation of physics and ethics. Instead, the physics of the world favors neither and the only outcomes depend on the actions of those involved, not their spiritual or ethical destiny. The relationship of ethics to physics in the Bas-Lag trilogy is not so simple that the death of the Mayor be accompanied by a pathetic drizzle, but physics and ethics are still closely related in

Bas-Lag, because it is precisely where the impossible reveals itself as distinct from physically possible that abstractions become the models for the fantasy reality.

Physics and Ethics

Scientific knowledge in Bas-Lag is accumulated and dispersed in much that same way that scientific knowledge is accumulated and dispersed in reality: older theories are replaced by newer, more accurate ones; the ideological tendencies of knowledge are made manifest through the interaction of the State and the University; and new generations of scientists propose new theories and hypotheses that undermine state-sanctioned knowledge by providing new and revolutionary ways of viewing the physical and material world.

Scientific knowledge operates first and foremost as a cumulative process; beginning from pre-existing knowledge the scientist must learn that knowledge to discover its weaknesses, weaknesses that reveal opportunities for new theories. Consider Isaac Dan der Grimnebulin's opinion of Berchambrang's *Hydrophysiconometricia:* "It brought home to him, again, how much mainstream science was bunk, how much 'analysis' was just description—often bad description—hiding behind obfuscatory rubbish" (28). Berchambrang describes the watercraeft ability of the vodyanoi, a species of anthropomorphized frogs who can shape water to redirect rivers or to create aquatic homunculi. Isaac, studying watercraeft to determine how it relates to crisis theory, cannot rely on the Berchambrang's insights because he is exploring new ground; Isaac is working on a new theory that could possibly better describe the phenomenon, describe it scientifically, and the shortcomings of older theories point the way towards that new theory. The process is cumulative, indicative of what Thomas Kuhn terms normal science, development by accumulation, "the piecemeal process by which these items have been added, singly and in combination, to the ever growing stockpile that constitutes scientific technique and

development" (2). Despite his renegade status, Isaac's new theories are in conversation with the entire history of scientific theories in New Crobuzon.

This accumulation of knowledge does not, however, progress smoothly from old theory to new theory, because there also exist forces—institutional forces—that stabilize and reify knowledge by demanding that scientific advances correspond to the mentalities and machinations of the ruling classes. The State and the University in New Crobuzon are intimately connected; Montague Vermishank, Director of Science at New Crobuzon University, works very closely with the State, producing knowledge to be used as a weapon by the state. When Isaac and his friends confront Barbile, a scientist who was working on the Slake-Moth project for the government, she admits that Vermishank was involved. She states, "'He's the boss….He's the head of the project" (359). Isaac is surprised, but then Barbile exposes that Vermishank's involvement with the government runs even deeper: "He's mainly an administrator. He's in charge of all the biohazard stuff: Remaking, experimental weapons, hunter organisms, diseases…" (359). Vermishank's knowledge is put into direct service by the military and the government, and because Vermishank accepts these purely ideological uses of the knowledge he has studied and created, the University is as implicated in the control and subjugation of the people—at home, in New Crobuzon, and abroad—as the government. On the outside, cast out from the University for his heretical and renegade ideas, Isaac realizes "that he had underestimated Vermishank's involvement with the state" (359). The University, the State, the Prison and the Military all operate to control lived life through ideological uses and interpretations of knowledge that perpetuate the status quo by denying validity to that which would upset the status quo.

Isaac, marginal but tolerated, makes a new discovery that completely challenges the institutional controls over knowledge, placing his scientific discoveries outside the realm of normal science; that discovery is crisis theory, its mathematization and actualization. Isaac explains the fundaments of crisis theory to Yagharek:

> see, potential energy's all about placing something in a situation where it's teetering, where it's about to change its state. Just like when you put enough strain on a group of people, they'll suddenly explode. They'll go from grumpy and quiescent to violent and creative in a moment. The transition from one state to another's affected by taking something—a social group, a piece of wood, a hex—to a place where its interactions with other forces makes it *own energy* pull against its current state.
> I'm talking about taking things to a point of *crisis* (169).

According to crisis theory, everything that exists is always already in a state of transformation fueled by its own self-opposing trajectory. When actualized, the crisis engine exploits the latent contradictions, contradictions that exist even in the material, for the purposes of harnessing the energy released by those contradictions to create more and more energy; crisis energy is perpetual energy. Hence the crisis engine, used to defeat the Slake-Moths, is powered by a contradiction: "Three-fifths of a second after the circuit had snapped into life, the crisis engine arrived at two simultaneous conclusions: $x=y+z$; and $x\neq y+z$" (633). Nothing in the normal accumulation of science within the appendages of the State, the University, the Military or the Prison could possibly prepare a New Crobuzonian scientist for the epistemological break necessary to understanding crisis theory; in fact, 'the powers that be' dismiss the idea of crisis theory, arguing that it is at best impossible and at worst a threat to the security of New Crobuzon. Isaac finds the world around him transformed by his theory in the same way that revolutionary science for Kuhn demands the transformation and subsequent reinterpretation of the objects in question; Kuhn writes, "the scientist who embraces a new paradigm is like the man wearing inverting lenses. Confronting the same constellation of objects as before… he nevertheless finds

them transformed through and through in many of their details" (122). So although Isaac recognizes there are three points "within which all scholarship, all knowledge, is located" (166)—the occult, the material, and the social—by virtue of his discovery of crisis energy Isaac must view those same objects as fundamentally different than before.

Isaac makes a scientific breakthrough on par with Galileo's heliocentric model of the universe. Just as the church opposed Galileo's findings for ideological reasons—they feared his discoveries would undermine the authority of the Church—so too does Isaac's discovery cause a response from the State and the economic powers that back it. Despite the threat of the slake-moths, "the heads of Arrowhead mines, Sedner's Bank of Commerce and the Paradox Concerns…. Messrs. Penton, Sedner, and Ghrashietnichs" (405), are more troubled by the rumors of a completed crisis engine than they are troubled by the impending destruction and extinction of New Crobuzon's populace. The honorable businessmen are concerned about the Moths, but they are much more concerned about Isaac, eager to know "what's being done to counter, ah…'this threat to our great city-state'" (405). The parties involved are insistent that "any preposterous *fake engines* that Mr. der Grimnebulin might have fabricated to fool the credulous should…be summarily destroyed" (406). The institutions in power, especially the economic powers, are highly concerned about crisis energy because, one, it undermines the ideological interpretation and dissemination of knowledge through the University, appendage of the State, and, two, the fact of crisis energy would contradict their entire regime, question their power, and provide a scientific basis for revolution in New Crobuzon, because crisis theory breaks with the dominant interpretations of science in New Crobuzon, revealing those interpretations to be ideological and not scientific.

Joan Gordon and Carl Freedman both offer interpretations of crisis theory that link the fantasy phenomenon to its real-world political counterpart, assessments that link fantasy physics to real ethics. In his essay "Speculative Fiction and International Law," Freedman interprets crisis theory as a metaphorical representation of the dialectic, a representation rooted in the Marxist theory of contradiction. He writes, "The theory of crisis energy presupposes the ontological priority of the indispensable Marxist category of *contradiction,* i.e., of 'the tendency,' in Bellis' own words, 'of the real to become what it was not'" (246). The physical world of Bas-Lag is structured according to a Marxist interpretation of the natural world, a 'dialectic of nature,' Engel's notorious and often maligned concept: "Isaac's research, in other words, shows the inner reality of matter and energy to be dialectically structured" (246). Moreover, the dialectic provides the tools with which the proletariat can counter the economic exploitation of capital, and for this reason the economic powers are *frightened* by the advent of crisis energy, a scurrilous proposition and unlikely rumor that they wish to see destroyed and forgotten. Freedman notes this point as well when he remarks, "only Isaac's dialectical perspective enables the tapping of crisis energy necessary to destroy the slake-moths—who, not accidentally, amount, on one level…to an allegory of capital" (15). Crisis energy cannot be understood simply as a metaphor for quantum physics; no, the physics of Bas-Lag require an ethical engagement, and this ethical engagement is a hallmark of the fairy tale genre.

Gordon's interpretation of crisis theory, very similar to Freedman's, reveals that crisis energy is not inherently radical and revolutionary. In her essay "Hybridity, Heterotopia and Mateship in China Miéville's *Perdido Street Station*," Gordon interprets various elements of New Crobuzon—the Construct Council and the Spike, especially—as heterotopian sites, sites that are imbued with dynamism, difference, growth and change. For Gordon, crisis energy

becomes equivalent to heterotopian energy; she writes, "Crisis energy is heterotopian energy, dialectical energy, dynamic energy. It is 'always-already-in-transition,' an interactive conversation among its components" (466). Crisis also signifies, according to Gordon, the process through which the Construct Council comes into existence; beginning from piles of refuse and discarded machinery, the Construct Council self-organizes, drawing disparate elements to it that are formed "into a vast, powerful, unitary intelligence," "a crisis heterotopia, a sacred place where members of society are transformed" (465). Citing other examples of crisis energy at work in the novel—including the Spike, Mr. Motley, and the eclectic group of outcast friends led by the renegade scientist der Grimnebulin—Gordon concludes that the entire novel is a conversation of dialectics, appearing "as a totalizing Theory of Everything that incorporates dynamic change" (468). Furthermore, "It may be that this dynamic change, allowing for sensitive dependency among the multifarious parts of the heterogeneous whole, saves totalizing from becoming totalitarian, bridging the gap between Modernism's totality and Postmodernism's diffusion" (468). Here Gordon has unlocked the indifferent secret of crisis energy: crisis is not only a liberating force that functions against institutional and ideological hegemony in the novel, but also an oppressing force that can function to justify and legitimate tyrannical force.

Gordon fails to recognize that at least two of the major sites she identifies as heterotopian sites, sites where crisis energy is at its maximum, are both sites where crisis is used for totalitarian and homogenizing purposes; those sites are the Construct Council, the self-organized machine intelligence that inhabits the Griss Twist dump, and the Spike, the military hub of Perdido Street Station. Gordon notes that the Council, "linking with other machines, and with people as well, it is social, forming an interactive conversation" (466). The Construct Council is anything but an interactive conversation, a fact supported by textual evidence: the machines and

people that the Construct Council binds to it are stripped of free will and incorporated into the mechanism and subjugated to the control of a hive brain, like the Borg of *Star Trek*. The Construct Council issues orders, the other constructs and people follow the orders, going out and taking in new data, and then return this data to the brain so that the brain can grow in size and power. This may be crisis energy, but it is perverted crisis energy, put into the service of a machine who wishes to become an unstoppable, mechanical god. According to Isaac, "the Council don't care about killing off humans or any others, if it's…useful. It's got no empathy, no morals….It's just a…a calculating intelligence. Cost and benefit. It's trying to…*maximize* itself. It'll do whatever it has to—it'll lie to us, it'll kill—to increase its own power'"(624). The Construct Council is attempting to maximize its power, and if the Council can harness crisis energy it would become an unstoppable malignant force, driven by a need for self-maximization. The idea of a city in the thrall of the Council upsets Isaac: "He thought of [the Council] linked up to the little crisis engine, building more and more of the engines on an ever-increasing scale, connecting them up to its own fabric….all doing the bidding of that vast, cold intelligence, pure conscious calculation, as capricious as a baby" (625). About the Spike, Perdido Street Station, Gordon argues that "its diffuse, motley, hybrid, chaotic nature is what makes the heterotopian space of Perdido Street Station the hub of the city, geographically and novelistically" (467). There are two sides to any such heterotopian energy, and the Spike represents the totalitarian side. Just as the Construct Council desires to become a god, a MechGod, so too was the Spike constructed with a similar purpose in mind. We learn, early in the novel, that "the architect had been incarcerated, quite mad, seven years after Perdido Street Station was completed. He was a heretic, it is said, intent on building his own god" (64). Though we can interpret crisis energy as dialectical energy, the energy of radical change driven by inherent contradiction, we should not

forget Sherryl Vint's admonishment that crisis energy "lends itself too easily to a binary way of thinking—releasing energy and resolving tension, returning to a state of equilibrium—rather than enabling the dialectics of possibility" (287). Crisis can lead to change, but it also can lead to the reinstitution of the status quo.

Crisis energy can be, then, both radical and conservative, a dual nature that contributes to a political equilibrium in *Perdido Street Station*—an equilibrium reflected in the fact that no political solutions or changes are forthcoming—and establishes the first terms of a dialectic that find its contradiction in the excessive physics of *The Scar*: possibility mining. This dialectic can be viewed another way. As a Marxist, Miéville adheres to a meta-narrative and a concept of totality that would be considered outdated by certain 'postmodern' schools of theory. However, Miéville is not convinced that "hybridity, uncertainty, blurring identities, fracturing, formal experimentation, or the blurring of high and low culture should be ceded to postmodernism" (Gordon 363). On could assume, quite safely, that these two seemingly opposite positions can be dialectically juxtaposed so as to generate a third term, one that takes both the totalizing aspects of crisis energy seriously and the detotalizing aspects of possibility mining seriously. This dialectic is played out between *Perdido Street Station* and *The Scar,* forming a thematic connection between the first two books of the trilogy. If crisis energy can be represented through the equation 1+1=1, then possibility mining can be represented through the following equation: 1+1+1…+1+1…+1…etc., an endless and infinite repetition. As one might expect, the third term of this dialectic, *Iron Council,* brings together the best of both crisis and possibility, generating a new equation: 1+1+1=1(+1=1(+1=1….)). This new equation has radical consequences, but to understand fully those consequences we must first understand the internal contradictions of possibility mining.

As portrayed in *The Scar,* possibility mining is constructed according to overtly political models, but these models manifest in *The Scar* in contradictory forms, a revolutionary form that emphasizes heterogeneity as a basis for political unity, and a reactionary form that threatens to undo any and all sense of stability or unity, senses necessary to any committed political action, through the endless free play of a heterogeneous mass waiting to be ruled. Sherryl Vint summarizes the dual nature of possibility mining succinctly; she writes, "the metaphor of possibility mining recognizes the importance of retaining our ability to imagine otherwise….At the same time, however...*The Scar* reminds us of the risk of falling into a 'vague, pluralist reality' and forgetting our need for responsible praxis in the material" (288). The message is clear: without possibility we forego the ability to imagine alternative models to the one in which we leave. Where crisis theory makes the realization of those alternatives possible by teasing out the inherent contradictions—all possibilities are already contained in what is—possibility provides the matrix through which we come to know that there are, in fact, many other possibilities other than the one which came true. Vint's position is opposite the position taken by Freedman, who concludes that "possibility mining in *The Scar* generates no collective triumph like the defeat of the slake-moths but (in a consequence of the individualism at the heart of all pluralism) only the individual martial prowess of Uther Doul" (15). Taken together, these two positions on possibility mining reveal its positive and negative aspects. Without crisis to supplement it, possibility mining does degenerate into a vague pluralism, one in which no real collective action is possible, instead only the endless recycling of endless possibility. However, without possibility mining to supplement it, crisis theory becomes subject to hierarchical binary oppositions, unable to account for the myriad possibilities that do, in fact, constitute reality.

Two instances make clear the dual nature of possibility in the Bas-Lag universe. First, Tanner Sack's acceptance into Armada reveals that Armada is structured around principles of difference and possibility; because structured this way, the truly radical can occur: a Remade can become a full and accepted citizen in Armada. Remade in New Crobuzon are prisoners who have been biologically refashioned, sometimes according to the crime—as is the case with Toro, the militant gang leader in *Iron Council,* who killed her child and, as punishment, had her child's arms grafted to her head—sometimes to fulfill a certain purpose—as is the case with the Remade from *Perdido Street Station* who are refashioned with backwards facing heads so that they can effectively combat the slake-moths—and sometimes for arbitrary and artistic reasons—as is the case with Mr. Motley, who we can only assume continues to remake himself for obscure reasons. Remade in Bas-Lag, as a *created race,* serve to splinter and subdivide the social field. As Foucault argues in "Society Must Be Defended," race "is a way of fragmenting the field of the biological that power controls" (255). Certain fragmented groups are designated "abnormal," a designation that allows "normality" to flourish in contradiction to the abnormal other: "the death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) is something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer" ("Society Must Be Defended," 255). New Crobuzon uses Remade to control the social field. The expectations about Tanner as Remade – criminal, abnormal, unhealthy, other – are systematically undermined throughout *The Scar*. In Armada, unlike New Crobuzon, Tanner Sack is accepted as a valuable and important member of the community. As Tanner recalls, "I was going to be a slave in the colonies….The Lovers gave me life…and a city and a home….New Crobuzon can kiss my arse…I'm an Armada man, a Garwater man. I'm learning my Salt. I'm loyal" (94). Tanner feels this way about Armada because Armada is structured around principles of difference and

possibility; Armada is a place where "renegades meet…and overlap like scales, make something new," a place inhabited by the "outcasts and escapees from *everywhere*" (103).

But *unbridled* possibility is *dangerous*, a pathologically destructive force. To support this position I argue that Torque and possibility mining are versions of the same phenomena. Uther Doul's comments in *The Scar* do not support this position, but the descriptions of Torque and possibility mining suggest that the two are somehow related. According to Doul, "There are some who say that when they landed, the force of it was enough to unleash the chaos of Torque, up from the vent. That's fable. But their arrival was violent enough to smash open the world—reality itself" (385). Though Doul certainly knows much more about possibility mining and the Ghosthead Empire than anyone else, his knowledge stems from broken records separated from him by a historical gulf, so we must question whether his testimony is as reliable as he believes it to be. What he does know he pieced together from many sources, so it seems plausible that he could be incorrect. On one level, though, the nigh realities generated as Armada nears the Scar, an ontological rent in Bas-Lag, are not as ghastly and nightmarish as those generated by Torque. As Armada approaches the Scar, people begin to notice odd occurrences: ""hands changing in the instant they were raised….Objects put down were discovered again inches from their place….Things that were dropped and broke and then were not broken" (*The Scar* 591). Descriptions of Torque, conversely, resemble surrealist landscapes, complete with melting buildings and monstrously transformed animals; sharing the heliotypes taken by Sacramundi with Yagharek, Isaac point out places and things warped by Torque: "'Those things in the background like melting statues used to be houses…the thing you're looking at, as far as they could work out, is descended from the domestic goat….It killed two of the militia (229). Furthermore, Torque is also about possibilities that were not: "The Torquescape was insinuatory,

and fervent, and full of presences… and spliced impossibilities" (IC 408). Possibility mining is precisely about the possibilities that were not and could not be; that is, a mélange of overlapping and splicing impossibilities. Both Torque and possibility introduce an undecidable element into the equation.

Neither Torque nor possibility can be trusted. About the Scar, the Brucolac warns Uther Doul, "You know the forces that would spill from something like that. You know we couldn't possibly face them….It would mean the end of us all" (The Scar 215). According to Isaac, Torque is at the furthest possible remove from crisis energy, "Torque is *rogue power*. We're not talking about crisis energy here, right? Get that *right* out of your head. Crisis is the energy underpinning the whole of physics. Torque's not about physics. It's not *about* anything. It's…it's an entirely pathological force" (230). Both torque and possibility generate equally uncontrollable impossibilities, lending credence to my suggestion that they are embodiments of the same force; each is a different version of "the *cancer-sibling*….'the force that cannot be trusted'"(233).

The Iron Council's contact with Torque reveals that the Iron Council embodies the best elements of both crisis and possibility. The best elements of crisis, if you will recall, are those elements that resist binary, hierarchical thinking and continue to tease out the inherent contradictions in matter and thought. Taken as a literalized metaphor for politics, crisis energy supports revolution and the overthrow of capital; The Iron Council has the motive and means to enact just such a revolution. Consider the moments just before the moment of crisis, as recorded in *Runagate Rampant*: "This is not three strikes, or two strikes and a half. This is one strike, with one enemy, with one goal" (238-239). The three striking parties—the railroad workers, the prostitutes, and the indentured Remade—do not tire because the strikers have happened upon

crisis energy, the making-one-of-three in action and thought. *Runagate Rampant* states, essentially, that 1+1+1=1. Consequently, there is no binary thinking here; crisis results from the *excess* of possibility. Because the Iron Council begins in the moment 1+1+1=1, any additional ones brought to the situation only contribute to the perpetuation of crisis; the perpetual train is perpetual because it constantly generates crisis. It takes all comers, fReemade and freeanole, savage and civilized, and folds those possibilities into its being. By virtue of the third, then, the generation of crisis by harnessing and accepting all possibility, Iron Council can be written mathematically in the way I suggested earlier—1+1+1=1(+1=1(+1=1…))—a perpetual engine. If the train is perpetual, then Judah Low's intervention, his capture of the train in a time golem, is just as much a betrayal as Ann-Hari believes it is. But this cessation literalizes Benjamin's messianic cessation of time, in this way making of Iron Council a promise to all generations, a promise those generations must take up and fulfill.

An Argument in Time

I am pursuing this line of inquiry—an investigation of the Bas-Lag trilogy as a weak messianic trust placed in us—because it makes an excellent addition to the tradition of Miélvillian scholarship that draws from the work of Marxist utopian philosopher Ernst Bloch. Furthermore, this addition is necessary because, as I will show, it serves as a corrective to the teleological *temptations* of Bloch's work, a temptation that would no doubt plague any assessment of the relation between the present and the future, while offering a similar, hopeful relation between the past and the present. In this way, I suggest that Bloch and Benjamin be read together on a utopian continuum of past, present, and future.

Carl Freedman, Sandy Rankin, and Sherry Vint all offer Blochian interpretations of Miéville's fictional universe. Though I will not visit each in detail, I will touch briefly on each

to demonstrate how they situate themselves vis-à-vis Bloch. In "To The Perdido Street Station: The Representation of Revolution in China Miéville's *Iron Council*" Freedman emphasizes the revolutionary potential of the hope principle as an always latent element in any social formation, the comprehension of which Bloch considers the primary work of the imagination: "to comprehend such potential in our future is for Bloch the chief function of the aesthetic imagination, including—emphatically including—the imagination of the fantastic" (246). Following this, the perpetual train becomes "a metaphor for the preservation of revolutionary hope through such deeply unrevolutionary eras as that in which the novel was written" (244). In her essay "Agash, Agasp, Agape," Rankin views Bloch's philosophy as a necessary corrective to "rational, strategic Marxism," asserting that "if an assertion of, a fidelity towards, a real-possible individual and collective *jouissance,* anticipated in and by Miéville's Weaver, is to warrant scholarly and other kinds of attention, we need…Bloch's *weird* speculative philosophy, a vastly hopeful Marxist philosophy" (249). One suspects that her attempt to correct rational Marxism might appear to a rational Marxist such as Freedman, whom she directly names, to be overstated, especially since he also relies heavily on Bloch's "vastly hopeful Marxist philosophy." Nonetheless, both focus on the element of hope, namely, how Bas-Lag embodies *our hopes* for a better world. Finally, Vint's essay, "Possible Worlds," focuses on the Blochian concept *heimat* and introduces the ideas of anticipation and consolation into the discussion. Vint maintains that the future horizon is the *heimat,* or home, a term that refers "to our nostalgic desire for an unalienated existence, an alternative social existence often believed to have existed in the past" (281). Continuing, Vint distinguishes between a reactionary conception of *heimat* that seeks "to purify things into some ideal, imaged state in the past" and a revolutionary conception of *heimat* as the 'not-yet-conscious.'

Vint also references Miéville's remarks in interview about the consolatory nature of most mainstream fantasy, especially if Tolkien is considered the progenitor. It is worth visiting those remarks in some detail. Miéville states,

> to me, consolation is about an aesthetic which *eases* the relationship of the reader to reality, which smooths over contradictions. Walter Benjamin said somewhere that the purpose of historical materialism is to rub history 'against the grain.' It seems to me that consolation does the opposite—it smooths away. If you have a big happy ending you might be saying 'The status quo was benevolent, and has been restored' (373)

Vint seems to associate consolation with an idealized image of the past, while anticipation is always associated with the future. According to Miéville, however, consolation is any attitude that might dispense with contradictions and loose ends. The future can be consolatory; it is not enough to simply state that the Iron Council is a symbol of hope in a time without hope because it offers a vision of the yet-to-come. One might insist that if the not-yet-conscious, the yet-to-come, does in fact permeate and inform even the most banal and mundane cultural artifacts, then one need not worry because it is, after all, coming. Of course, I do not mean to imply that the three critics I have mentioned succumb to this impulse; instead, I draw attention to the consolatory mode of the future-oriented vision to reveal that there is also an anticipatory mode of the backward-looking vision. Rather than constructing a simple binary—consolatory image of the past on one hand, anticipatory vision of the future on the other—this final chapter teases out the inherent consolation contained in any future-oriented anticipation and the inherent anticipation contained in any consolatory image of the past. To view Bas-Lag as an argument in time requires the understanding of a different kind of anticipation, an anticipation not indexed towards the future but indexed towards the past, towards the redemption that the past hoped we would be, "a secret agreement between past generations and the present one" (254). To elaborate this historical anticipation I will return to an actual example of a messianic

cessation of happening; afterwards I will elaborate this cessation in its proper Benjaminian context.

I turn, then, to the Paris Commune. In addition to constituting a primary model in *Iron Council,* the Paris Commune constitutes a messianic cessation of happening. Freedman notes the Paris Commune as one of many allusions in *Iron Council*—others include the American West, or the October Revolution—and fittingly reminds us of Marx's concluding statement from *The Civil War in France:* ""Working men's Paris, with its commune, will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its murderers are enshrined in the great heart of the working class." In his essay "The Paris Commune," Alain Badiou quotes the firsthand commentary by Villiers de l'Isle Adam, though that attribution is contested: "For the first time workers can be heard exchanging their appreciation on things that hitherto only philosophers had tackled. There is no trace of supervisors; no police agents obstruct the street hindering passers-by. The security is perfect" (261). For Badiou, the true significance of the commune is that it "*for the first and to this day only time, broke with the parliamentary destiny of popular worker's political movements*" (272). Taken as a singularity, the Paris Commune is a messianic cessation of happening that only has meaning inasmuch as it indexes the present and our own concerns. As we morally and intellectually stagnate in age where there seems to be no real alternative to capitalist production and parliamentary democracy, as we struggle to establish new strategies, new alternatives, and new societies in an absolutely unforgiving political climate, as we search for leaders, models, and adequate theoretical frameworks to the inherently contradictory world around us, we need only recall that the past has provided us with examples of alternative and radical societies, that the past has faced down and defeated, if only for a brief moment, the

powers of so-called democracy and capitalism, and that this moment in the past trusted in us, the present, to finish what it began, to not let the Communards have been murdered in vain.

If the victors are allowed to construct history as they see fit, then they will have all been murdered in vain, "for even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins" (255). This is where Benjamin's philosophy comes into play, because historical materialism is that which "brush[es] history against the grain" (257). Benjamin writes: "A historical materialist cannot do without the notion of a present which is not in transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop … historical materialism provides a unique experience with the past" (262). "History," Benjamin writes, "is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now" (261). Whereas historicism merely accumulates data and sides with the victor, the historical materialist stands with history "at his feet," aware that all previous historical experiences have not simply happened in empty time but have happened in order to fulfill our own time. According to Benjamin, "our coming was expected on Earth. Like every generation that preceded us, we have become endowed with a *weak* messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim… historical materialists are aware of that" (254). The historical materialist does not view history as the accumulation of what was; instead, the historical materialist recognizes that the past has a hold over us, that the past expected our coming. In this way, the Paris Commune expected us, leaving us an argument in time to resolve at a future date—now.

It is clear how historical events relate to messianic time, but this says little about how the messianic manifests in the artwork. Again, Benjamin provides a guiding thread: "the currently effective messianic elements of the work of art manifest themselves as its content; the retarding elements, as its form. Content makes its way toward us. Form holds back, permits us to

approach" (213; "The Currently Effective Messianic Elements"). Until now I have demonstrated how form permits us to approach: we arrived in Bas-Lag through its framework, related to it through its remade form. Now we exit with the content, with the cessation of the revolutionary movement. This moment is the messianic artistic moment, and it requires precisely that we believe in the Iron Council, that we believe it is real and not simply a metaphor for something else. The metaphorical read is an easy way out, the allegorical way, and it does not establish how the hopes of the Iron Council should be interpreted as real, as hopes we can share. Like the Paris Commune, only artistic and not historic, the Iron Council represents a break with parliamentary destiny as well; and if we can imagine such a movement, even in a world, Bas-Lag, where the divisions of race, sex, and class are magnified to a monstrous degree, then no doubt those artistic ideas can serves us as well as the lessons of history, reminding us that change is possible and necessary. The Iron Council places an artistic faith in us; it is about our situation and provides a template for thinking our way out of that situation.

The final moments of the Iron Council reveal another intersection of ethics and physics, of messianism and golemetry—because, make no doubt, to view any artwork as messianic requires an ethical engagement, an admittance of belief, a *decision* in the argument. Like crisis theory, golemetry can be studied at New Crobuzon University, and it is from a student at NCU, Pennyhaugh, that Judah learns to refine his skills. So although Judah Low's talents are learned from the Stilt-spear, he learns a great deal from Pennyhaugh as well. According to Pennyhaugh, golemetry is a complex interaction with matter, an *intervention* and an *argument.* Pennyhaugh lectures:

> what we do is an intervention…a reorganization. The living cannot be made a golem…the unalive, though, is inert because it *happens to just lie so.* We make it meaningful. We do not order it but point out the order that inheres unseen, always

> already there. This act of pointing out is at least as much assertion and persuasion as observation (205).

This 'pointing' is also an act of assertion and persuasion. Golemetry does not merely describe phenomenon; in describing it, golemetry also forces matter to change according to a prescriptive mandate, a persuasive assertion not reflected in the inert organization of the matter in question. There is no physical model in empirical reality that can account for golemetry, but there are other models—political and ethical—that capture the true essence of Bas-Lag's arguable physicality. When Judah captures the Iron Council in the time golem he binds the inert material of space-time around an argument; fantasy physics and messianic time intersect.

Judah is also aware that golemetry can order material other then the inert and physical. He ponders Pennyhaugh's lectures: "Golemetry's an argument, an intervention, so will I intervene and make a golem in darkness or in death, in elyctricity, in sound, in friction, in ideas or hopes?" (208). The Iron Council, then, is an intervention in hope as much as it is an intervention in space-time. To make of the Iron Council just such an argument requires, of course, preventing the Iron Council from reaching its final, spectacular, and bloody end at the hands of the New Crobuzon militia; however, if this end is reached then the legacy of Iron Council becomes subject to the interpretations of the victor, the interpretations of the power structures that control and shape knowledge in New Crobuzon. Instead, the Iron Council, as time golem, resists the interpretation of the victors by forming "a clot in diachrony" immune to the manipulations of the victor (541). This brings us to the final moments of the perpetual train, its formation and stasis as an argument in time.

Let us revisit those final moments before stasis, as Cutter witnesses time reshaped by Judah's will: "crude, vigorous, ineluctable, the precision of that parcelled-up time *reshaped* time, was an argument *in* time,/ reshaped the time itself, and made it/ a time golem" (541). Here we

have the literalization of a messianic cessation of happening through the physics of Bas-Lag, an ending incomprehensible without the proper ethical stance to accompany it. Consider Nicholas Birns' interpretation of the cessation: "it is anyone's guess what Miéville actually means here….It can seem a gesture of the author throwing up his hands, less in resignation than in participatory solicitation. You figure out what this means, Miéville seems to say to the audience; you make something of it" (207). Birns recognizes that any interpretation of this moment must reference Miéville's political positions, but his own ethical blinders make it impossible for him to engage the moment for what it really is: a messianic and revolutionary cessation of happening, an argument across space and time with real consequences for the ways in which we approach our reality and the revolutionary alteration of that reality. In dismissing Miéville's political orientation, Birns misses the primary thrust of the entire trilogy. Such indifferent interpretations are inadmissible, and the critic who interprets such matters indifferently—throwing up their hands in whatever, resignation or solicitation—has succumbed to the interpretation of events as decided by the victor. Birns does not directly state anything that would lead me to believe that he does, in fact, side with the historical victors, but the position becomes clear in his assessment of Ann-Hari, the prostitute turned revolutionary leader; he writes, "it is clear the Ann-Hari's revolution is not going to succeed, and that there are aspects of it that are fundamentally unpromising; she is also potentially authoritarian" (209). By portraying Ann-Hari as potentially authoritarian, Birns negates any and all revolutionary hopes that Ann-Hari and the council might contain, preferring instead to adhere to the dominant interpretation of events and the continued attempts to dismiss revolution as producing authoritarian regimes.

Birns inadvertently highlights the fact that any messianic event, any cessation of time and the interposition of an argument, persuasive and assertive, can serve both the entrenched powers

and the revolutionary vanguard. This tension is portrayed in *Iron Council* as the tension between Weather Wrightby's messianic vision and Judah Low's messianic vision. Weather Wrightby is head of the Transcontinental Railroad Trust and he considers his attempts to construct the transcontinental railroad to be a divine mission: "he knows his plans are holy" (2), and he will stop at nothing to implement them. At the end of the novel, Wrightby reminds Cutter that he *is* the agent of history, that his railroad brings history with it, a history built on the backs of enslaved Remade, oppressed workers, and annihilated races and villages. He states: "No: that other thought, of iron stretched from sea to sea, that was mine. The continent cut open. From New Crobuzon west. That was mine. That's history" (523). Consider Judah Low's very similar statements: "we're bringing a *cargo.* We're bringing *history*" (429). Both Wrightby and Low consider themselves as harbingers of history, revealing that the history we choose is determined by the side we take in the argument. We can consult Benjamin here, who was aware that in addition to the historical materialist view of history there exists another view of history that he terms historicism. Therefore, in interpreting the Iron Council as an argument in time there are two possible positions, the first, which indexes the concerns of the Iron Council to the concerns of the present, empirical concerns, and the second, which is defined by an indolence of the heart, acedia, a sadness, "the nature [of which] stands out more clearly if one asks with whom the adherents of historicism actually empathize. The answer is inevitable: with the victor" (256). It should be clear which side the trilogy takes in this perennial argument.

In conclusion, then, I leave you with the final portrayal of the Iron Council, a scene that demonstrates the importance of the Councilors to maintaining revolutionary hope, a hope that could not have been maintained if Judah Low had not intervened: "Women and men cut a line across the dirtland and dragged history out and back across the world. They are still with shouts

setting their mouths and we usher them in. They are coming out of the trenches of rock toward the brick shadows. They are always coming" (564). And they will not arrive until we are all prepared to accept the history the Iron Council brings. In perpetual homage to the perpetual train and the redemptive hope it has placed in us, we must present ourselves to the Iron Council in the same way as the citizens of New Crobuzon do, "play around them…come to them….pray" (563), and know that the redemption promised New Crobuzon is also a redemption promised to us.

Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation I have constructed a theme of infinite possibility made manifest through *estranged cognition*, the primary function of fantasy literature. But this function also relies on the form and framework of fantasy—without abhistorical time, without generic overdetermination, fantasy would not be able to generate the imaginative excesses that make estranged cognition possible.

Fantasy must first be understood as the modern form of the fairy tale. This means that to understand fantasy one must first understand the fairy tale and then understand the transformations that occurred during the late Victorian period and lead to the eventual formation of fantasy literature. Four characteristics stand out. The first two are framework and form: fairy tales are placed in an estranged framework, a framework estranged for the normal space-time continuum; and the form of the fairy tale revolves around the telling and retelling of stories, a narrative overdetermination. Third, fairy tales create a reality effect: it does not matter if fairies are not real, but for the duration of the text they are presented as if they were. Fourth, fairy tales have a function: in addition to teaching children how to behave properly, fairy tales are also expressions of desire for real change and concrete equality.

These characteristics change as we move from fairy tale to fantasy. The framework removes itself from empirical reality, instead positing multiple and often overlapping realities, each as real as the next, yet at an impossible and radical remove from empirical reality. The telling and retelling of stories becomes the making and remaking of genres in a vast, overdetermined system, generating excesses uncontrollable by that system. The reality effect begins to take on more and more cognitive characteristics, fantasy striving to create fantasies that feel real even to modern, scientific readers. For the readers of mythopoeic fantasy, cognition is also determined by the spiritual, so for this reason mythopoeic fantasies seem real to them; but it

is impossible to see how mythopoeic fantasy estranges cognition without first approaching that concept as it manifests in radical fantasy, a type of fantasy literature wherein the reality effect most decidedly becomes the cognition effect. Unlike sf, which generates estrangements that are still cognitive, fantasy produces estrangements at such a far remove from what we know to be real that those estrangements question the very foundations of reason, modern science, and cognition.

But to read fantasy literature in this way requires undermining most of the current scholarship on the matter: fantasy is not, nor was it ever, about *impossibility.* Impossibility signals a horizon to our existences, finitude. This concept is essentially Romantic, and Romanticism has for too long held uncontested sway over future possibilities and the way we interact with those possibilities. Our world is a varied one, built on a vast sea of infinite infinities, and fantasy manipulates those infinite infinites in the attempt to recombine those infinites until something new and unexpected has formed. This new and unexpected arrival *appears* non-cognitive because nothing in empirical experience can prepare us for the infinite combinations of infinite possibility, but fantasy is an imaginative process, and the excesses produced by fantasy literature reveal just how involved the imagination is in cognitive processes. We are not simply determined by material circumstance; we interact with material circumstance through our imaginations and our actions, combining each until we produce something new, something hopefully better. This dissertation shows how fantasy literature is involved in the project of thinking these novums, novums that are not impossible, despite what the critics have written. These novums demand we look towards infinite possibility, because only by grasping the reality of infinite possibility can we begin to think our way out of this real life fantasy, capital.

Which brings us to the immediate political stakes of a materialist theory of fantasy literature. Real life under capitalism is a fantasy. We experience it this way because the commodity-form itself is a fantasy. But if Romanticism, and with it finitude and impossibility, is incapable of thinking fantasy adequately, then those theories are also inadequate to thinking our way out of the situation that is capital. Marxism synthesizes elements of Romanticism and the Enlightenment, and it is precisely by dropping Romanticism that this analysis is not Marxist. But this analysis is materialist, taking into account historical shifts and asserting that it is absolute necessary to contend with the reality of capital and its attendant realities of race, sex, and class. If finitude is the horizon, however, these categories become fast and fixed; no matter how hard we struggle, we will not be able to think beyond our immediate particulars. Political action requires thinking beyond particulars, but it also requires not succumbing to wholes, to totalitarianism and domination. Infinite possibility provides a concept that allows the thinking of parts and wholes in infinite variations. As a manifestation of infinite possibility, estranged cognition as I investigate it here looks beyond the fixed categories of race, sex, and class, focusing on the elasticity of those categories and the different ways in which they can be organized. This type of thinking requires an understanding of the movement between particulars and wholes, and how that movement generates surplus, excess, crisis—infinite possibility.

My primary concern throughout has been a theory of fantasy literature as the literature of estranged cognition. I begin with radical fantasy, where the cognition effect reveals itself most obviously, and then working backwards show how the component parts of radical fantasy—its framework, form, and function—can be found in all types of fantasy literature. I also relate the framework, form and function of fantasy literature to the realities of capitalist production, showing how each aspect has been fundamentally altered by the historical situation. Finally,

against the pessimism of Jean Baudrillard, estranged cognition is shown to be the corrective to the fantasy age in which we live—the corrective to the hyperreal, the virtual, the simulation, the attendant hopelessness.

This is why I end the dissertation on a triumphant note—infinite possibility is infinitely hopeful as well. We see this in China Miéville's BAS-LAG trilogy. Miéville rearticulates race, class, and sex in relation to the global, capital empire and offers new strategies for the possibility of common political action through hybridity, plurality, and revolution. Though in each text the Empire, represented by the city-state New Crobuzon, eventually triumphs, Miéville links the struggles of the hybrid, the plurality, and the revolution to the physics of Bas-lag, revealing that, despite its failures, Bas-Lag's multitude is physically predetermined to triumph over the homogenizing influence of Empire. To succeed, the hybrid, the plurality—the revolution—*must organize around a universal commonality of difference*. Prescriptive and prophetic, this commonality of difference reflects on global realities and captures the desire of the multitude to immanently transcend the institutionalized strictures of sex, race, and class. These strictures are the limits of cognition because these strictures shape cognition, but this does not mean we cannot posit an irrational rationality beyond these strictures. To posit this irrational rationality is to estrange cognition, and by estranging cognition fantasy literature aids us in *thinking* imminent transcendence, pointing towards a society not mechanically determined by particulars *and* free from the tyranny of the monolithic whole.

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Vita

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