'Prism, Mirror, Lens': Metafiction and Narrative Worlds in Science Fiction

Candidate: Amanda Dillon

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University of East Anglia
School of Literature, Drama, and Creative Writing

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Abstract

While invented worlds are one of science fiction's most recognisable features, the narrative structure that creates and sustains these fictional worlds is seldom explored in science fiction criticism. This thesis investigates science fiction's narratological make-up and explores the narratological similarity between science fiction and the common literary technique of metafiction. To do so, a series of parallels are drawn between models of science fiction and metafiction, as well as text-world theory and modal philosophy. This thesis proposes that science fiction is inherently metafictional because of the way it foregrounds its world; that is, the science fiction world is a form of textual deixis. This thesis examines the multiple ways in which this deixis is accomplished. As such, this thesis progresses from texts that utilise a layering of proposed text worlds to a portrayal of narrative worlds using sophisticated narrative experiments and recursive structures.

This thesis also argues that science fiction is particularly well-suited for metafictional exercises, and that its underlying hypothetical structure allows metafiction and science fiction to fuse into 'performative metafiction'; that is, actualised literary theory. This performative metafiction engages with literary theory through the actualisation of textual components like the author, reader, and the text itself, rendering textual boundaries permeable or even erasing them altogether. At it reaches its limits, the metafictional science fiction text takes on a quality of the absurd, or spirals into ever more complex stylistic forms.

The texts analysed here probe the limits of both science fiction and fictionality in general. Ultimately, they all question what it means for a text to be 'science fiction', and in particular, what sciences may be fictionalised. In each case, these texts argue that the remit of this term may be expanded to include science fiction texts about the science of fiction – that is, narratology.

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Introduction:

'Artificial Things': Metafiction and Science Fiction

'It sometimes sounds as if the reading of "popular" fiction involved moral turpitude.' – C.S. Lewis, 'False Characterisations'[1]

'The Lake Was Full of Artificial Things,' Karen Joy Fowler's 1985 science fiction short story where virtual realities are used as psychotherapy, involves the main character, Miranda, visiting with a man from her past in order to gain a sense of closure about the relationship. Dr Anna Matsui creates new realities from Miranda's memories, enabling Miranda to speak to Daniel, her now deceased lover, in order that she should 'feel better about him'.[2] Miranda, however, is not content with the therapeutic effect of these virtual worlds her doctor creates. These worlds prove incapable of producing a true catharsis for Miranda: the Daniel in the virtual world is constructed only from her memories of him and therefore unsatisfying. As Miranda complains, 'I think I'm sick of talking to myself. Is that the best you therapists can manage? I think I'll stay home and talk to the mirrors'.[3] The use of mirrors in particular underlines Miranda's plight, as revisiting memories, which by their very nature must reflect Miranda's own personality and problems, is no better than self-talk. The self-referential nature of these virtual realities makes them implicitly problematic as a form of psychotherapy, at least for Miranda, as she can only face her internalised version of Daniel. At the climax of the story, the reality Dr Matsui creates intrudes upon the real world almost as a vision.

Though this story speaks specifically about those left behind by soldiers who have died in wartime,[4] and in particular to a wish to change history, it also exhibits a particular concern with concepts of reality. The story's title, taken from Wallace Stevens' poem 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction' (1942), serves as a framing device for understanding the story as having a deep-seated interest in realities. These 'artificial things' may, at first glance, seem to refer to the technology that Dr Matsui uses to create these alternate realities for Miranda, but

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[1] Lewis, C.S., 'False Characterisations', in *An Experiment in Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), pp. 5-13, p. 5.
[2] Fowler, Karen Joy, 'The Lake Was Full of Artificial Things', in *Artificial Things* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1986),pp. 1-15, p. 5.
[3] *Ibid*., p. 9.
[4] *Ibid.,* p. 13.

they can also be read as the constructed realities themselves. Dr Matsui explains to Miranda, 'In these sessions we try to show you what might have happened if the elements you couldn't control were changed':[5] the realities presented in these therapy sessions are distinct from the real world, are altered somewhat from what actually happened, and can therefore be seen as fictional. If, as Lubomír Doležel argues, all fiction implicitly suggests a break with the reader's world in some manner,[6] this understanding of the created realities as fictional can be pushed further, allowing the fictional world containing Dr Matsui and Miranda to be read as artificial. The title may refer, therefore, to the proposed 'storyworld'[7] of Dr Matsui and Miranda as well.

In this case, a series of parallels can be established between the world where Miranda interacts with Daniel and the world of Dr Matsui and Miranda, as well as both of these worlds and the generic 'fictional world' of which Doležel speaks. This is a fairly straightforward set of parallels: Miranda's comments about the virtual world she visits can be read as comments about fictionality in general. Her suggestion that she is really only talking with herself in these therapy sessions and may as well go home and 'talk to the mirrors'[8] suggests a level of explicit self-referentiality in the story, emphasised in particular by her mention of mirrors.

This understanding is complicated, however, when the story's status as science fiction is considered. Fowler's use of a non-existent form of technology, what Darko Suvin would label a 'novum',[9] suggests this story's reality is somehow separate from the reality of the known world. The specific emphasis on the worlds created through memory and imagination suggests an implicit knowledge on the part of the text that it, too, is as fictional as the memories

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[5] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[6] Doležel, Lubomír, *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 16. Robert Scholes makes a similar argument in his book *Fabulation and Metafiction*: 'Our fictions are real enough in themselves, but, as signs pointing to any world outside the fiction or the dream, they have no factual status. All thought, being fiction, tends toward this situation' (Scholes, Robert, *Fabulation and Metafiction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), p. 7).

[7] Herman, David, *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), p. 14.

[8] Fowler, Karen Joy, p. 9.

[9] Suvin, Darko, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 63.

Miranda attempts to recreate. This implicit self-reflexivity denotes an underlying metafictionality in the text.

In this thesis, I argue that the self-reflexive, or metafictional, undertone exemplified in 'The Lake Was Full of Artificial Things' is a microcosm of a larger stylistic and specifically metafictional trend in American and British science fiction. In particular, I argue that this trend capitalises upon the implicit ontological layering of the real world and the fictional world that is found in all fiction. This layering is a part of science fiction's 'deep structure' that enables it to perform literary theory in a science fiction context. Furthermore, I argue that the narratological make-up of the science fiction text creates a fertile ground for this kind of literary experimentalism, and in essence produces a fiction about the 'science' of fiction – narratology. In order to accomplish this, a parallel is drawn between the self-consciousness evident within the postmodernist movement in avant-garde fiction during the 1960s and 1970s and the self-consciousness present in the science fiction texts analysed here. This parallel allows the self-conscious science fiction text to be analysed along narratological rather than genre lines, as most critiques of the mode tend to do. As is argued later, science fiction's narratological structure is intrinsically important, as this thesis examines science fiction *as* science fiction, a mode narratologically distinct from types of related writing as well as the 'mainstream'[10] (here labelled 'amodal fiction').

This narratological analysis of several science fiction texts is accomplished by creating a series of parallels, which are outlined briefly below and in more detail in the first chapter. In short, these parallels evidence multiple equivalencies between the narratological effect of the science fiction world on the reader, the narratological effect of metafiction on the reader, the links between possible world theory, text world theory, cognitive poetics, and the underlying hypothetical structure of all fiction upon which science fiction capitalises. Simply put, both the narratological function of the science fiction world and instances of metafiction create multiple fictional 'worlds', which is due to the inherent layeredness of all narrative texts. This is a result of a text's implicit nestedness within the reader's world. The reader therefore reacts to the theoretical metatextual world created by

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[10] The opposition between science fiction and the mainstream will be largely taken as understood in this thesis. Roger Luckhurst describes the relationship between the 'ghetto' of science fiction and the 'mainstream' at length (Luckhurst, Roger, *'The Angle Between Two Walls': The Fiction of J.G. Ballard* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), pp. 13-16).

metafiction and the hypothetical science fictional world in much the same manner: they both foreground the fictionality of a text. Because of this, science fiction that exhibits an explicit interest in the real and unreal through the proposal of new worlds can be read as metafictional. At its most sophisticated, metafictional science fiction actualises its metafictional experiments and becomes something this thesis terms 'performed metafiction'. It is worth noting that these readings do not understand the metafiction in these texts as metaphorical or mimetic; instead, they are metonymic in nature.[11]

Genre vs. Mode

Though it is possible to 'enter' this series of equivalencies at any point, a useful starting point is the definition of science fiction. As an introductory measure, it is useful to begin with an understanding of what is meant when science fiction is labelled as a 'mode' in this thesis, as this term is intrinsically tied to definitions of science fiction. Understanding science fiction as a mode rather than a genre allows it to be narratologically aligned with other modes of writing, and means that the similarities between the narratological basis of science fiction and metafiction can be more easily linked.

Though the field of genre studies uses multiple means of categorising what are commonly labelled genres, few of these are wholly satisfactory when applied to science fiction. The same methods of categorisation have been used for the current fiction genres of mystery, romance, realism, and so forth, and the genres of writing, such as the letter, the novel, the poem, the play, etc. Popularly, genres are understood as a collection of elements or tropes, or 'inherited codes'.[12] Tzvetan Todorov argues that

> the recurrence of certain discursive properties is institutionalized, and individual texts are produced and perceived in relation to the norm constituted by that codification. A genre, literary or not, is nothing other than the codification of discursive properties'.[13]

This approach, with its roots in Russian Formalism, suggests that while there is an underlying form that explicitly denotes a genre, the genre can be determined

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[11] This idea of metonymic metafiction is expanded in chapters 2, 3, and 6.

[12] Fowler, Alistair, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 42.

[13] Todorov, Tzvetan, 'The Origin of Genres', translated by Catherine Porter, in *Modern Genre Theory*, edited by David Duff (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), p. 198.

through these 'discursive properties'. This approach to genre can be found as the basis to most definitions of science fiction, as will be argued in the next section.[14]

This approach is largely unsatisfactory where science fiction is concerned. While there are recognisably science-fictional 'icons' in what Damien Broderick understands as science fiction's 'mega-text',[15] each one of these icons is highly mutable. While aliens, technology, space-travel, futuristic worlds, and alternative realities are all discursive elements insofar as they provide a recognisable link to what is commonly understood as 'science fiction', they do not denote any particular narratological foundation. The overriding plot in a text may be that of a detective story, a romance, or a general adventure tale, despite the text's metaphorical set-dressing signalling science fiction. Though partially a product of genre cross-pollination, these surface elements may also be taken up and used by other genres. This is the case in ostensibly mainstream pieces of fiction like Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and Audrey Niffenegger's *The Time-Traveler's Wife* (2004), which use the identifiably science fiction tropes of human cloning and time travel, respectively, but neither novel is generally marketed as science fiction.[16] This suggests that while a genre may create a mega-text of iconography, the iconography cannot be transplanted and still necessarily result in a science fiction text. An element, it seems, does not make a genre. To borrow terminology from Chomskian linguistics,[17] these generic elements, conventions, and tropes are the 'surface' structure of a text.

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[14] It might be argued that a misreading of this Formalist approach to genre, at least insofar as science fiction is concerned, has led to a convention or trope-based understanding of genre. Though it is largely true to say that members of a genre share certain elements, the actual position is that the discourse these elements imply is the relevant element in identifying genre, rather than the elements themselves.

[15] Broderick, Damien, *Reading By Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 57-9. Broderick adopts the term 'mega-text' from Christine Brooke-Rose, who in turn adopted it from Philippe Hamon. Cf. Brooke-Rose, Christine, *The Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in narrative and structure, especially of the fantastic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 82, 243-5.

[16] For a somewhat polemic examination of the market pressures surrounding science fiction literature, see Delany, Samuel R., 'Letter to a Critic: Popular Culture, High Art, and the S-F Landscape', in *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction* (Elizabethtown, NY: Dragon Press, 1977), pp. 15-31.

[17] Cf. Chomsky, Noam, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1965), p. 16-18, p. 198-200 (ft. 12).

If science fiction is considered a mode of writing rather than a genre, however, this emphasises the text's deep structure rather than the emergent elements that make up its surface structure. This is not without precedent in the field of science fiction studies: Albert Wendland, in his often-overlooked book on the intersection of myth and science in science fiction called *Science, Myth and the Fictional Creation of Alien Worlds* (1980), argues that science fiction can be understood as a literary device.[18] This implies that, whatever science fiction is, it is something that has been added to a text to create a specific effect on the reader, much as metaphor, imagery, foreshadowing, and other common literary devices do. A mode of writing, however, generally occurs on the macro level of the text or in its deep structure, as Northrop Frye argues,[19] whereas these other literary devices are generally short-lived surface structures. While Frye anchors his modes in an understanding of the relative power of a text's hero, the use of mode in this thesis may be more usefully likened to a musical key signature. A musical key signature is a method of communicating to a musician and, by extension, the listener, the underlying organisation of a piece, namely the auditory reference, whether high pitched or low, major ('happy'), minor ('sad'), or modal ('ethnic' or 'primitive'). The use of the word 'modal' in musical terms, when not used in its strictest musical theory context, denotes one of the less typical scale formations; that is, it sounds strange to Western ears.[20] In a similar manner, then, a fictional mode, when used in the manner suggested here, denotes a type of literature apart from 'general' or 'mainstream' literature:[21] it metaphorically sounds different. A mode does not suggest a specific reading of a text, but instead the deep structure

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[18] Wendland, Albert, *Science, Myth, and the Fictional Creation of Alien Worlds* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), p. 3.

[19] Frye, Northrop, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 33-67, p. 366.

[20] All scales are technically modes, including the more 'familiar' ones such as the major or minor scale (named the Ionian and Aeolian scales, respectively). More commonly, however, the term 'modal', when applied to a scale, refers to one of the other five scale forms (Cf. Holst, Imogen, *An ABC of Music: A short practical guide to the basic essentials of rudiments, harmony, and form* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 13-16). This is significant to note because of the relationship between the common musical modes (major and minor) and common mode of literature (realism), as both of these are considered 'standard' and 'mainstream'. A piece of realism is therefore termed 'amodal' because it does not participate specifically in any identifiable mode other than the mainstream.

[21] Commonly called 'realist' fiction. This mode will be considered 'amodal' in this thesis.

of its narrative: is it a comedy, a tragedy, a fantasy, a piece of realism, a piece of science fiction?

The term 'mode' is used in preference over the term genre because of its implicit linguistic ties to the text's underlying narratological structure, and this follows much in the vein of Gérard Genette's distinction between genre and mode in 'The Architext'.[22] When looking at literature on the macro level, the deep structure might be considered to be the narrative structure of the text, and as this thesis will take a largely narratological stance towards science fiction, the term 'mode' is more appropriate than genre.

Defining Science Fiction

Unearthing what constitutes the make-up of a mode is difficult, and few modes of writing are more contested than science fiction. Science fiction has been defined as, in turns, a form of 'cognitive estrangement' by Darko Suvin,[23] modern myth by Ursula K. LeGuin,[24] something which 'has not happened yet' by Samuel R. Delany,[25] a representation of the future by Fredric Jameson,[26] a reworking of metaphors by David Seed,[27] an act of translation by Gwyneth Jones,[28] a mode or discussion by Farah Mendlesohn,[29] poiesis by Robert Scholes,[30] and the 'modern conscience' by Scholes and Eric Rabkin,[31] among

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[22] Genette, Gérard, 'The Architext', translated by Jane E. Lewin, in *Modern Genre Theory*, edited by David Duff (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), pp. 210-18, p. 213.

[23] Suvin, *Metamorphoses,* p. 15.

[24] LeGuin, Ursula K., 'Myth and Archetype in Science Fiction', in *The Language of the Night: Essays on Science Fiction and Fantasy*, edited by Susan Wood and Ursula K. LeGuin (London: The Women's Press, Ltd., 1989), pp. 61-9, p. 62.

[25] Delany, Samuel R., 'About Five Thousand Seven Hundred and Fifty Words', in *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction* (Elizabethtown, NY: Dragon Press, 1977), pp. 33-49, p. 44.

[26] Jameson, Fredric, 'Progress Versus Utopia; or, Can We Imagine The Future?' *Science Fiction Studies.* Vol. 9, No. 27. (1982) pp. 147-58, p. 150.

[27] Seed, David, *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 2.

[28] Jones, Gwyneth, *Deconstructing the Starships: Science, Fiction and Reality* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), p. 6.

[29] Mendlesohn, Farah, 'Introduction: reading science fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 1-12, p. 2.

[30] Scholes, Robert, *Structural Fabulation: An Essay on the Fiction of the Future* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), p. 18.

[31] Scholes, Robert and Eric S. Rabkin, *Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. vii.

myriad variations. In just this sampling, science fiction is at once seen as something inherently futuristic by both Delany and Jameson, various sorts of codified presents by Mendlesohn and Jones, a cerebral exercise by Suvin, and some sort of modern morality tale by LeGuin and Scholes and Rabkin. Furthermore, most of these definitions emphasise science fiction's surface structure, and some of these surface structures are not necessarily shared by all science fiction texts. Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren*, for instance, may well be considered a cerebral exercise or a discussion, and will be argued as both in the final chapter of this thesis, but it is probably not a manifestation of the 'modern conscience', at least not in the moralistic way that Scholes and Rabkin use the term. Likewise, while many of Kurt Vonnegut's works might be considered highly moralistic, they do not appear to be particularly mythic in nature. There is always an exception to the rule, and therefore the underlying element of science fiction must be buried deeper than these surface features. Furthermore, many of these definitions and others like them are not descriptive only of science fiction. Modern myth could easily also denote fantasy, as could Seed's metaphorical understanding. Even Delany's definition could easily apply to some amodal or realist texts since the events depicted in such a text still have not yet happened. Science fiction's distinctiveness must therefore come from some other facet of its narratological make-up.

Darko Suvin's influential but problematic identification of the 'novum' in science fiction as the item, event, or person in a narrative that creates in the reader an effect of 'cognitive estrangement', is useful to examine with regard to science fiction's narratological distinctiveness. The surface feature of the novum arises because of an internal structure that posits a reality where this novum exists, and implicitly denotes that this reality is in some way 'estranged' from that of the reader. The implied narrative structure is therefore linked closely to the world in which the events of the text take place, and the novum is a defining feature of this world. That is, it is the point of departure from the known world: a kind of narrative springboard. One of the many nova in Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), for example, is the technology that creates HAL, which demarcates the world of the novel as distinct from the world of the reader, and

thus makes this possible future world strange.[32] While Suvin's overall argument that science fiction necessarily stimulates the reader's cognition through this estranged world is problematic, the idea that a specific facet of the science fiction world is what separates it from the 'actual', reader's world is important to keep in mind.

Particularly of use to this thesis is also Tzvetan Todorov's understanding of what he labels the Fantastic.[33] Citing two texts in particular, Jacques Cazotte's *Le diable amoreux* (1772, *The Devil in Love*) and Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), Todorov identifies an inherent hesitation with regards to the reality of the events in both these texts on the part of the readers and the characters. This hesitation between what is real and what is impossible is what he labels the Fantastic.[34] While Todorov applies this term rigorously to what is often labelled the Gothic, this term also opens up a structural understanding of all modes of writing related to the Gothic. Science fiction, in particular, owes much to the development of the European Gothic and its mad scientist prototypes, such as in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and E.T.A. Hoffmann's 'The Sandman' (1816), as has been noted elsewhere by Victoria Nelson.[35] I would like to argue that science fiction, however, takes this hesitation present in the Gothic and does not so much resolve it, as Todorov argues,[36] as turn it into a moment of projection. This, it would seem, suggests that science fiction is not so much interested in the gap between the real and unreal, but the actual and the possible. The science fiction text does not linger long on the fence between real and unreal, but it instead moves to the liminal place of the possible and sustains that place through the text.[37] It is unwise to conflate these real/unreal and actual/impossible

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[32] Clarke's novel is one among many that were written as possible futures and have become alternate presents or pasts as time as passed. This also makes the worlds in them distinctive, arguably more so than with far-future narratives.

[33] The Fantastic and Fantasy are capitalised in order to differentiate them from the popular fiction mode of fantasy often involving surface structures like magic, elves, and so forth. As is the case with science fiction, fantasy and Fantasy are modes of writing, and Fantasy will be considered an umbrella term for various modes that imply an explicit break with the actual world (such as in the case of science fiction, fantasy, the gothic, horror, etc.).

[34] Todorov, Tzvetan, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, translated by Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 33.

[35] Nelson, Victoria, *The Secret Life of Puppets* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 8.

[36] Todorov, *Fantastic*, p. 172.

[37] The mode of writing commonly known as fantasy sits squarely on the 'impossible' side of the fence.

dualisms, and for the purposes of this thesis they will be considered separate, though related, pairs.

Much as Todorov applies his hesitation to the structure of a text from a standpoint of narrative structure, the liminal space of the possible seems to apply to the world of the science fiction text when it is combined with Suvin's concept of the novum. The novum therefore suggests the 'possibility' of the world depicted in the text, and the tension between the actual world and the possible world is sustained not through a lack of resolution but through understanding the text itself as the answer to a 'what if' question. The narrative is possible but not realised, thus positioning the text in the inherently liminal state of the possible.

If science fiction is understood as a fiction interested in what is possible, this suggests that it is in some way interested in hypothetical situations. Albert Wendland has said as much before, and suggests that science fiction 'is very similar to *scientific theorizing* ... a model in which hypothetical situations are analyzed'.[38] In this manner, the 'science' in science fiction is not merely the technology or space travel or aliens often apparent in these texts, but a literary version of a scientific methodology where proposals are tested in experiments. This also seems to suggest that the underlying structure of the hypothesis drives science fiction narratives, and Wendland goes on to say that 'SF is used as a literary device, as a tool for making statements'.[39] This, as was noted above, is an understanding of science fiction as a mode or type of writing rather than a group of emergent surface structures.

If Wendland's proposal that science fiction is a literary device is taken seriously and added to both Todorov's hesitation and Suvin's concept of the novum, then what results is an understanding of science fiction as a mode of writing that uses a new item (the novum) to create an inherent understanding in the reader that the portrayed world is hypothetical in nature. Therefore, the structural underpinning of the mode is, at least partially, the thought experiment in narrative form. In this manner, science fiction can be seen as a 'hypothesising' or 'speculative' mode. This is what Robert Scholes suggests in his book *Structural Fabulation: An Essay on the Fiction of the Future* (1975): 'All future projection is ... model-making, poiesis not mimesis'.[40] The representational, apparently mimetic content of the science fiction text is rooted in a poietic deep structure

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[38] Wendland, p. 3.
[39] *Ibid.*
[40] Scholes, *Structural Fabulation*, 18.

concerned first and foremost with the creation of a world. For example, the narrative presented in a text such as Brian Aldiss's *Helliconia Spring* (1982) is the answer to the question of what might happen if a planet had an extremely long year thanks to an unusual star formation. All of the events in the novel, such as the move of the humans from a primitive to more complex civilisation, the Bone Fever, and so forth are effects of the basic question upon which the novel is founded. Though the novel contains several nova (the Phaegors, the Bone Fever, the civilisation itself on Helliconia, among others), these all link directly to the hypothesis driving the narrative. Likewise, though this world does not directly resemble anything familiar, the basis of what runs the world itself is possible.

This focus on world-building as the basis for the structure of a science fiction text suggests that at least one of the major identifying features of the science fiction mode derives from this understanding of the presented world as created, hypothetical, and therefore consciously fictional. This world-building process can also be understood as a framing method in that it creates a space where the action may take place, which connects it to ideas of metafiction and text-world theory, as will be argued below.

Metafiction

Science fiction's apparent conscious fictionality inherently suggests something akin to metafiction. It is worth examining the body of work surrounding metafiction, particularly as it is described in postmodern literary theory, in order to see the ways in which metafiction and science fiction appear to align. Metafiction can be defined as a moment of self-consciousness in a fiction, when the literary equivalent of the 'fourth wall' is broken. In its most common form, metafiction appears as the text (ostensibly the author and/or narrator) speaking directly to a reader, typically about the action of the text, the process of writing the text itself, or the author/narrator's opinion of the text. This intrusion results in a moment of frame breaking.[41]

Metafiction, from a narratological point of view, can be seen as 'mimesis of process';[42] that is, the representation of the process of a text's creation. This

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[41] Goffman, Erving, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1974), p. 227.
[42] Hutcheon, Linda, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (New York; Methuen, 1984), p. 5.

breaks down the boundary of the 'hermetically sealed' text-world,[43] and foregrounds the fictionality of a narrative, which, according to Patricia Waugh, 'systematically draws attention to the [text's] status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality'.[44] The purpose of this activity, Waugh goes on to say, is to examine the construction of the worlds (fictional and otherwise) and to problematise reality.[45] Metafiction's interest in engaging with concepts of reality and specifically with the problematic status of fictional realities results in a narrative structure that foregrounds the boundaries between the fictional and actual world in order to break them down in what Peter Stockwell terms 'textual deixis':[46] a kind of 'pointing' of the reader's attention to a specific textual object in order that they read the text in a specific manner.[47]

According to Deictic Shift Theory, a reader presented with textual deixis (or indeed any other sort of deixis) is moved between levels of a text, inside or outside of the main narrative (which Stockwell calls a 'deictic centre').[48] This 'textual shift'[49] can result in a text that contains several different levels of worlds, whether nested one in another like Russian dolls or parallel and visited one by one, which Stockwell terms 'subworlds', and through these various deictic shifts that metafiction signals, readers can 'toggle' between these subworlds.[50] Metafiction's direct effect on a reader's phenomenology of the text is strongly linked to its interest in investigating realities, which will be elaborated upon below.

Thematically, metafiction has been described as self-reflexivity or self-consciousness in a text. This implies that these moments of frame-breaking not only systematically dismantle fictional worlds, but also comment on their make up and general existence. To this end, Mark Currie has relabelled metafiction 'theoretical fiction', a term he suggests more clearly surmises metafiction's action

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[43] Alter, Robert, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 16.
[44] Waugh, Patricia, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 2.
[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 90, 33-4.
[46] Stockwell, Peter, *Cognitive Poetics: An introduction* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 46.
[47] *Ibid.*, 41-5.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 46-7.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 55.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 140-2.

within a narrative.[51] That is, metafiction performs literary theory in a creative context. Similarly, Larry McCaffrey has described metafictional texts as 'fictions which examine fictional systems'.[52] For both Currie and McCaffrey, metafiction blurs the line between the critical text and the creative one, and in particular metafiction becomes a critical text nested within a creative one. In effect, this critical text becomes a secondary narrative world, and the structure of the metafictional text takes on a similar shape to that of the 'nested narrative'.[53] Both of these facets of metafiction – the nesting of narrative worlds and the implicit critical content – are exhibited in science fiction's narrative structure. Mas'ud Zavarzadeh notes that science fiction is one of the many types of fiction which '[unmask] narrative conventions and [turn] them into counterconventions in order to shatter the illusion of reality which is the aesthetic foundation of the totalizing novel'.[54] Science fiction by its very nature therefore seems to rebuke standard laws of fiction, not simply to reverse them but to critique them systematically.

Possible Worlds, Text-Worlds, and Narrative Layering

The texts analysed in this thesis methodically dismantle the fictional construct of the narrative world in various ways in order to critique themselves, their mode, and fiction in general. In order to understand this dismantling process, it is necessary to incorporate possible world theory and related text-world theory into the above readings of metafiction and science fiction. This is the final portion of the circle of equivalencies this thesis seeks to create.

As was mentioned above, metafiction and science fiction both operate through the creation and emphasis of a fictional world. In science fiction, the nature of the fictional world and its relationship to the actual world is a defining feature, while metafiction foregrounds the fictionality of the portrayed world. Both science fiction and metafiction rely heavily on an understanding of a fictional world as a 'text-world'. A text-world, according to Paul Werth, is a

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[51] Currie, Mark, *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1998), p. 52.
[52] McCaffrey, Larry, *The Metafictional Muse: The Works of Robert Coover, Donald Barthelme, and William H. Gass* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982), p. 5.
[53] Barthes, Roland, *S/Z*, translated by Richard Miller (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 90.
[54] Zavarzadeh, Mas'ud, *The Mythopoeic Reality: The Postwar American Nonfiction Novel* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), p. 38.

'mental construct' or 'conceptual scenario' used to make sense of information.[55] Within the study of fiction specifically, the text-world is the world inhabited by the characters of a given text. These text-worlds and the characters, places, and events in them, regardless of fictional mode, can be described as being 'nested' within the reader's world. These nested worlds are akin to what Gottfried Leibniz labels a 'possible world'.[56] Though the usage of the term 'possible world' to refer to a fictional world or text world is highly problematic, which various literary critics have pointed out,[57] its original usage as a term for the formulation of a hypothetical world where a particular supposition is true is incredibly apropos for this thesis. There are two major reasons for this. First, metafiction as a device is considered somewhat experimental, and this thesis means to take that description literally. That is, while metafiction may ostensibly be most interested in subverting textual norms, it often does so through a specific type of 'what if' question that asks what might happen if a text were somehow abnormal. Metafiction by its very nature proposes such a text-world, as is evidenced in the deictic understanding of the device which was elaborated upon above. Secondly, science fiction can be identified as that fiction that creates 'an entire universe, an entire ontology, another world altogether',[58] a world totally different from that as the reader and this concept runs parallel to that of the possible world. Science fiction's hypothetical world, like that of the possible world and metafiction, can be seen metaphorically as a literary thought experiment. The only real difference between metafiction's use of the possible world and science fiction's usage of it is that metafiction seems interested wholly in textual concerns, whereas science fiction tends to 'experiment' with traditionally scientific issues such as technology.

Though metafiction and science fiction appear to have similar underlying narratological structures, these structures manifest somewhat differently.

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[55] Werth, Paul, *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse* (Harlow: Longman, 1999), p. 7.

[56] Deleuze, Gilles, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, translated by Tom Colney (New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 68. Leibniz and Deleuze's reading of compossibility and incompossibility with reference to possible worlds will be expanded upon in Chapter 1.

[57] Cf. Ronen, Ruth, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 50-1; Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics*, p. 136 for those preferring fictional or text worlds; Currie, Gregory, *The Nature of Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 62 for a counter-argument.

[58] Jameson, Fredric, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 101.

Metafiction, for example, is generally temporary within the text, though its effects are far-reaching. These are short passages, a sudden break from the overall narrative world of the text to one including the author, or even the reader, and they often return to the main narrative world quite quickly. This, for example, is what happens in chapter 13 of John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969). This chapter (and the final few paragraphs of the preceding chapter) is a short break in the main narrative of the text when the narrator moves away from the main character Sarah Woodruff and frankly discusses issues of fictionality, creation, and authorial power with the reader, after which the narrator disappears again and the narrative continues on in Lyme Regis with Charles Smithson. The narrative 'pops' from N^1 (the world of Sarah and the fictional Lyme Regis) to N^2 (the world of the narrator) and 'pushes'[59] back again.[60] A narrative may do this several times over, but these instances of narrative intrusion are normally short-lived. The secondary narrative world is ephemeral and transitory, nested within the overall narrative of the text, and thus creates a layered effect. In science fiction, however, these narrative worlds by their very nature encompass the entire text. Science fiction's narrative worlds are book-ended with an implied 'what if' question regarding some change in the known world, and are implicitly nested within the reader and author's realities. The world proposed by the science fiction narrative is no less experimental than that of the metafictional intrusion; it is simply more prolonged. Both science fiction and metafiction depend structurally upon an understanding of their presented narratives as possible worlds and the implicit layering of a text within a reader's reality.

Metafiction, Science Fiction, and Possibility

Though science fiction is generally considered to be uninterested in self-reflexivity,[61] this link between the self-conscious commentary of metafiction and the foregrounded non-mimetic narrative of science fiction has been made before. Though he does not use the term metafiction, Fredric Jameson suggests this kind

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[59] The terms 'push' and 'pop' are borrowed from Peter Stockwell's illustration of deictic shift theory. A 'pop' is a movement away from the deictic centre of the text, and a push is a movement towards it (Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics*, p. 47).

[60] This notational system for differentiating between fictional worlds is further explained in chapter 1.

[61] Hollinger, Veronica, 'Science Fiction and Postmodernism', in *A Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by David Seed (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 232-47, p. 234.

of inherent self-reflexivity in science fiction in his 1982 essay 'Progress Versus Utopia; or, Can We Imagine the Future?'. He observes, like Hollinger, that science fiction texts are not generally 'reflexive and self-undermining and deconstructive affairs', but also that the concept of the future these texts put forth is now worn and 'dated'.[62] Though Jameson does not suggest a self-consciousness on the part of the text, he does imply an implicit awareness on the part of the reader that these texts do not directly represent anything.[63] It is worth noting, however, that Jameson's observation is incomplete: the traditionally postmodern understanding of self-conscious narrative can be found in science fiction texts.

Carl D. Malmgren, for example, has written two essays that identify several instances of metafiction within science fiction, which he calls 'meta-SF', in texts by Philip K. Dick, Ursula K. LeGuin, and Joanna Russ.[64] Though the analysis remains largely at the level of identification in both of his essays and his understanding of metafiction itself is somewhat unsubstantiated, he does define 'meta-SF' as moment when the text speaks about the relationship between the real and the unreal. Malmgren's readings of LeGuin, Russ, and Dick's work are largely metaphorical, and while he does identify several themes relating to issues of fictionality (when the pairings of fiction/truth and unreal/real are made equivalent), he stops short of identifying what makes these stories metafictional science fiction (or meta-SF) rather than straightforward metafiction on a large-scale metaphorical level. The mode-specific issues that a label such as 'meta-SF' implies are not dealt with; instead, he settles for overt megametaphorical textual ambivalences towards fiction and fiction-making. This is an unfortunate problem, as it makes it difficult for Malmgren to argue that these metafictional moments and texts say anything new or interesting.

Others who have identified metafiction within science fiction include Teresa L. Ebert. Ebert's 1980 essay on postmodern textual innovations in two of

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[62] Jameson, 'Progress', p. 150.

[63] This links directly to Jean Baudrillard's concept of the simulacra, which is discussed in relation to science fiction in his essay 'Simulacra and Science Fiction' (in *Simulation and Simulacra*, translated by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010), pp. 121-7).

[64] Cf. Malmgren, Carl, 'Meta-SF: The Examples of Dick, LeGuin and Russ'. *Extrapolation*. Vol. 43, No. 1. 2002. pp. 22-35; Malmgren, Carl, 'Philip K. Dick's *Man in the High Castle* and the Nature of Fictional Worlds', in *Bridges to Science Fiction*, edited by George E. Slusser, George R. Guffey, and Mark Rose (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), pp. 120-30.

Samuel R. Delany's novels is, like Malmgren's essays, largely concerned with identification of metafictional themes and passages in both *Triton* (1976) and *Dhalgren* (1975) and does not engage with what these passages appear to say. She suggests that both of these novels seem to purposely anchor themselves in a postmodern understanding of self-conscious fictions but set themselves against this more familiar metafiction in their use of the device, and as such seem to use metafiction for their own genre-specific purposes.[65] Similarly, Mark Bould and Sherryl Vint, in their book on the history of science fiction, even have a short section on what they label 'metafictional SF'. Like Ebert and Malmgren, however, the section remains at the level of identification, and relates examples from Barry N. Malzberg's *Galaxies* (1975), Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (1975), and multiple novels by Philip K. Dick. Bould and Vint anchor science fiction's metafictional turn in the increasing cross-fertilisation happening between contemporary fiction and science fiction in the 1960s and 1970s, but suggest this experimentalist trend was self-limited and fairly unusual much in the same manner that Hollinger does.[66]

This thesis would like to push past these sorts of analyses and make a concerted attempt to explore the various uses of metafiction in science fiction. In particular, it will uncover the narrative structure that underpins metafictional science fiction and examine how these science fiction texts capitalise upon the peculiar ontological status of the mode in order to perform metafiction which comments on and engages with both mode-specific issues and more general literary theory. This thesis approaches metafictional science fiction as more than a passing curio and instead, as an element which may be seen throughout science fiction, much in the same way that Patricia Waugh argues metafiction may be found throughout mainstream fiction.[67]

The New Wave

There is a final element that this thesis depends upon, though it is not part of this series of equivalencies. The vast majority of the texts analysed in this thesis were originally published between 1960 and 1980 in America and Great

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[65] Ebert, Teresa L., 'Postmodern Innovative Fiction and Science Fiction: An Encounter with Samuel R. Delany's Technotopia'. *Poetics Today*. Vol. 1, No. 1. (1980), pp. 91-104, p. 98.
[66] Bould, Mark and Sherryl Vint, *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 106-10.
[67] Waugh, p. 5.

Britain, and this time period roughly corresponds to what was called the 'New Wave' movement in science fiction. These dates are rough as the New Wave, while an identifiable movement, began and ended slowly, thus attaching to it a specific set of dates is difficult. Colin Greenland gives the New Wave a start date of 1964, corresponding with Michael Moorcock's takeover of *New Worlds*.[68] Damien Broderick, meanwhile, generally refers to the New Wave as the period between 1960 and 1980.[69] Rob Latham similarly anchors the movement in Michael Moorcock's editorship of *New Worlds*, and suggests that while interest in the New Wave petered out by the 1980s, some of it has been 'partially assimilated by the genre',[70] thus suggesting it has not 'ended', and that New Wave sensibilities continue to exhibit in contemporary science fiction.

The New Wave movement emphasised newness in stylistics, plot treatment, and ideas,[71] and led to a revitalisation of the mode. It may be likened to an attempt to 'elevate the literary and stylistic quality of SF',[72] and indeed many of the texts that came out of the movement are highly stylised, such as in the case of Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren*, Roger Zelazny's *Roadmarks* (1979), and Joanna Russ's *Extra(Ordinary) People* (1985). The New Wave can be seen as running parallel to the postmodernist movement that subsumed 'mainstream' fiction during the same period, and both movements are a backlash against a perceived 'exhaustion' in their respective modes.[73] Significantly, like the postmodernist movement and in particular its metafictional underpinning, the New Wave is the embodiment of a consciousness in science fiction writers about the debates surrounding their chosen mode of writing. This consciousness comes through in many New Wave science fiction texts in the form of literary self-consciousness; that is, metafiction. The texts analysed here that are not members of the New Wave movement from a chronological point of view therefore link to it

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[68] Greenland, Colin, *The Entropy Exhibition: Michael Moorcock and the British 'New Wave' in Science Fiction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 17.
[69] Broderick, Damien, 'New Wave and backlash: 1960-1980', in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 48-63, p. 48.
[70] Latham, Rob, 'The New Wave', in *A Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by David Seed (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 202-16, p. 214.
[71] Moorcock, Michael, 'What's the Argument?' *New Worlds SF*. Vol. 48, No 144 (1964), p. 2-3.
[72] Roberts, Adam, *The History of Science Fiction* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 231.
[73] Barth, John, 'The Literature of Exhaustion', in *Metafiction,* edited by Mark Currie (London: Longman, 1995), pp. 161-71, p. 162.

stylistically. New Wave stylistics, when used in this thesis, therefore refers not to the stylistics of the specific New Wave period, but a stylistics that invokes what might be called New Wave 'values' of literariness, experimentation, and newness.

The relevance of the New Wave to this thesis is therefore a stylistic rather than chronological one. Many New Wave writers have been left out (such as Philip K. Dick, Michael Moorcock, and Judith Merril) because their texts do not actively engage with literary theory in the way this thesis seeks to identify and analyse, and some of the writers included here (such as Douglas Adams) would not normally be identified with the New Wave but clearly employ New Wave stylistics and thematic characteristics. The texts analysed here create a specific prism through which the shape of metafiction within science fiction can be perceived.

Chapter breakdown

The overall structure of this thesis is of several thematic case studies, each subsequent one following logically from the one preceding. The first chapter sets out a standard methodology for understanding metafiction within science fiction from a narratological point of view. This chapter also examines the background of science fiction, metafiction, and possible world theory in more depth in order to substantiate this series of parallels. In addition, it provides a diagrammatic methodology for examining the relationship and interactions between narrative worlds, as well as providing a baseline of how metafictional science fiction and possible worlds work together from which to understand the texts analysed in this thesis.

The second and third chapter work as point and counterpoint, insofar as the second chapter explores texts which highlight their multi-worldedness, while the third chapter examines a text without this distinction. The second chapter looks at possible worlds as they are employed as metafictional devices within the science fiction of Kurt Vonnegut's novels. A close analysis of a passage in *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater* (1965) will provide a model of how these narrative worlds interact on the page and how they specifically comment on science fiction. This chapter then moves to an analysis of the interaction between Kilgore Trout and the internal author Philboyd Studge in the final section of Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions* (1973). These two analyses will be used throughout the

remainder of the thesis as a base-line because of the transparency of their use of possible worlds as a literary device and their fusion of theme and structure.

Having examined the standard method that science fiction uses to shift between fictional worlds, the third chapter will look at what happens when these normal textual boundaries are broken down entirely. This chapter forms a theoretical counterpoint to chapter 2. *Frankenstein Unbound* (1973), Brian Aldiss's novel about a world where Mary Shelley and the events and characters of *Frankenstein* (1818) coexist, is analysed as a novel that removes all boundaries between reader, writer, and text. Aldiss's novel uses the science fiction mode as a device that allows for the creation of a world where literary experiments may be performed. This idea of the performative metafictional science fiction text continues throughout the thesis, and is explored in several different ways in the following chapters.

The fourth and fifth chapters also form a pair, and these chapters centre around the use of implicit narrative worlds as metafictional devices. The fourth chapter looks at the use of time as a metaleptic device within the works of Joanna Russ. *We Who Are About To…* (1976) and the short story collection *Extra(Ordinary) People* (1984) emphasise their status as histories, and in both cases, also problematise history in a particularly postmodern way. The framing of these texts works to push these narratives into not merely a space occupied by future histories, but instead a world of possible histories. In doing so, Russ problematises science fiction's status as a 'future history', and thus moves them into a liminal ontological space where they should not exist at all. This movement thus foregrounds these texts' science fictionality and creates an implicit narrative world where the events in these texts happened.

The fifth chapter examines a subtler version of this positing of implicit narrative worlds. Parody, as Margaret Rose has noted, implies two parallel and equal realities: that of the text and that of the commentary the text makes on its antecedent.[74] Because parody and metafiction both create an internalised commentary within a text, the secondary world that parody creates may also be understood in the same manner as a metafictional narrative world. Much of the parodic humour evident in Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* series of novels pivots on an understanding of the commentary as an

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[74] Rose, Margaret A., *Parody/Meta-Fiction: An Analysis of Parody as a Critical Mirror to the writing and reception of fiction* (London: Croom Helm, Ltd., 1979), p. 107.

implied possible world. This chapter therefore aims to expose this subtle use of multiple narrative worlds within science fiction parody.

The final, sixth chapter is an attempt to apply all of the conclusions which have arisen from previous chapters in an analysis of Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren* (1975). This novel's complex, ouroboros-like form employs various manifestations of possible world theory within science fiction as well as many straightforward metafictional passages that inform the interplay of possible worlds in the text. This reading of *Dhalgren* suggests that the novel is about self-consciousness itself, and uses the science fictional form not only as an experimental space, but also as a metonym for the science fiction field as a whole. The complex interplay of narrative worlds in this novel therefore engages with theories of language and genre, and in particular the increasing separation of signifier and signified noted by Gilles Deleuze.[75]

As a whole, these chapters move from what might be considered fairly standard uses of metafiction and narrative worlds towards much more sophisticated ones. In the movement from *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater* to *Dhalgren*, language's ability to cope with the increasingly complex kinds of self-reflexive commentary slowly vanishes, and this commentary either vanishes altogether except as an implied narrative world (as in many of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* novels) or becomes so complex that it destabilises the presented fictional reality, turning it into the 'shocking incoherence … of assemblages'[76] seen in *Dhalgren*. In such a text, words actually become actualised objects. This actualisation is made possible through the use of the science fiction mode. Metafictional science fiction, therefore, is understood therefore not merely as a matter of cross-pollination but as a kind of science fiction that probes the boundaries of what it means to be science fiction.

This thesis' overall argument is that science fiction and metafiction coincide on a narrative level through their usage of possible world theory, and this similarity allows science fiction to be implicitly metafictional. The texts analysed in this thesis embody this metafictionality from both a possible world standpoint and a theoretical standpoint insofar as they do not merely comment on textual concerns, but make this commentary part of the fabric of their narratives. This is not meant

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[75] Lecercle, Jean-Jacques, *Deleuze and Language* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 22-6.
[76] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

to be an apology for science fiction, nor is it an attempt to shoehorn it into postmodernist or experimental fiction. This thesis is simply an investigation into the various metafictional undertones that arise when the similarity between the narrative structures of science fiction and metafiction are considered.

Chapter 1:

Mirrors: Science Fiction as Literary Experimentalism

'As long as the dominant criteria are believed to hold for all fiction, science fiction will be found inferior: deficient in psychological depth, in verbal nuance, and in plausibility of event. What is needed is a criticism serious in its standards and its concern for literary value but willing to take seriously a literature based on ideas, types, and events beyond ordinary experience.' – Robert Scholes[1]

I begin with this quotation from Robert Scholes because it condenses a common tension found between science fiction and critical literary theory. Scholes identifies critical objections that might cause a literary critic to belittle any text, regardless of mode: science fiction's characterization, its apparent lack of interest in experimental stylistics, and its generally Fantastic plots. Science fiction critics have occasionally defended these qualities of science fiction as essential to the mode. Gwyneth Jones, for example, suggests that science fiction's tendency towards thin, 'stock' characters stems from deference to plotting. As Jones puts it, 'characters […] are pieces of equipment'[2] that allow a science fiction narrative to take place. This kind of apologetic argument can be paired with a similarly common and problematic call from science fiction writers and critics for a 'new' methodology of analysing science fiction.[3] This is exactly what Scholes suggests above, and is a sentiment that Ursula LeGuin and Joanna Russ both voice in their respective critical work. Russ, for example, puts the situation quite simply in the following fashion:

> Is science fiction literature?
>
> Yes.
>
> Can it be judged by the usual literary criteria?

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[1] Qtd. in Gunn, James, 'Toward a Definition of Science Fiction', in *Speculations on Speculation*, edited by James Gunn and Matthew Candelaria (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005), pp. 5-12, p. 12.

[2] Jones, Gwyneth, *Deconstructing the Starships: Science, Fiction and Reality* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), p. 5.

[3] This drive to develop new ways of dealing with genre fiction is also the motivation behind Tzvetan Todorov's *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1973) (pp. 3-23).

No.[4]

LeGuin makes a similar statement: 'if science fiction is [...] a true metaphor for our strange times, then surely it is stupid and reactionary to try to enclose it in the limits of an old art – like trying to turn a nuclear reactor into a steam engine'.[5] David Seed adds to these comments: 'It we approach *Dune* with the same expectations we would bring to *Middlemarch*, the results will probably be a disappointment'.[6] All of these writers suggest that science fiction is distinctive and that its distinctiveness is something that makes existing literary theory ill-suited, or even incapable, of analysing it.

While this might be seen as critical hyperbole, it pivots upon one particular facet of science fiction: namely, science fiction's distinctiveness. This uniqueness – or, to further the musical metaphor used in the introduction, the peculiarities of science fiction's 'key signature' – constitutes the centre of this methodology. The following does not attempt to be the final word in debates over the definition of science fiction, much less present a definitive answer to the question of what makes science fiction so 'special', but instead it makes a concerted attempt to examine the mode from a slightly different critical angle from those commonly used in science fiction analyses. For example, science fiction is commonly read from a social or cultural angle, an approach that, in particular, often attempts to pin down science fiction's relationship with the Cold War and technological history. As Darko Suvin argues, 'history and society' are what make up the science fiction text's 'very structure and texture'.[7] While it would be unwise to set aside historical readings of science fiction and other commonly noted trends, such as utopian impulses or feminist re-envisionings of the future, this thesis will largely consider these approaches and others like them to be an 'understood' cultural background which influences the content of the mode.

This thesis investigates the underlying narratological structure and the accompanying stylistics that make up science fiction's distinctiveness. Stylistics

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[4] Russ, Joanna, 'Towards an Aesthetic of Science Fiction', in *To Write Like a Woman: Essays in Feminism and Science Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 3-14, p. 3.

[5] LeGuin, Ursula K., 'Science Fiction and Mrs Brown', in *The Language of the Night; Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*, edited by Susan Wood and Ursula K. LeGuin (London: The Women's Press, 1989), pp. 86-102, p. 99.

[6] Seed, David, 'Introduction: Approaching Science Fiction', in *A Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by David Seed (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 1-7, p. 2.

[7] Suvin, Darko, 'Introduction: The Sociology of Science Fiction'. *Science Fiction Studies.* Vol. 4 No. 13 (1977) pp. 223-7, 318-9, p. 223.

and narrative are the often undervalued in science fiction, usually passed over in deference to more 'culturally relevant' readings such as those noted above. Two noteworthy critical works that attempt to deal with narrative structure in science fiction include Albert Wendland's *Science, Myth, and the Fictional Creation of Worlds* (1980), and Peter Stockwell's *A Poetics of Science Fiction* (2000). Wendland's book operates on the supposition that science fiction as a mode of writing can be used by the author as a literary device, thus placing the 'location' of the distinctiveness of science fiction within the method of narration. Stockwell's poetics, however, locates this distinctiveness in the use of language in science fiction to create new worlds and new words. While each critic comes to somewhat different conclusions about science fiction, both rely upon an understanding of science fiction as a 'mode' of writing, whether on the macro or micro level, that invokes and requires a unique interaction between writer, reader, and text.

Science fiction's stylistics and narrative distinctiveness are often sidelined for precisely the reason that Scholes identifies in the epigraph to this chapter: science fiction's 'style' is considered largely unremarkable. According to Peter Stockwell, '[science fiction's] language has traditionally been very pedestrian, conservative, unimaginative, and unspectacular. Science fictional prose is stereotypically blandly descriptive to the point of banality'.[8] This statement seems particularly descriptive of science fiction from the early twentieth century. The science fiction texts from this period largely consist of formulaic novels and short stories. A trend towards making science fiction more literary replaced this in the 1950s,[9] which culminated in a loose collection of writers now labelled the New Wave. The New Wave stressed a uniqueness and freshness of style, plot, characterization, and reworkings of older science fiction plots and concepts, as noted in the introduction. Thomas D. Clareson suggests that 'the so-called 'New Wave' [was] essentially a revolution in style and technique more than anything else'.[10] As Fredric Jameson notes, however, the New Wave foregrounded

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[8] Stockwell, Peter, *The Poetics of Science Fiction* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), p. 50.

[9] Latham, Rob, 'Fiction, 1950-1963', in *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction,* edited by Mark Bould, Andrew M. Butler, Adam Roberts, and Sheryl Vint (Abingdon: Routledge: 2009), pp. 80-9, p. 83.

[10] Clareson, Thomas D., 'The Other Side of Realism', in *SF: The Other Side of Realism,* edited by Thomas D. Clareson (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Press, 1971) pp. 1-28, p. 2.

'dilemmas of perception and representation… [and] the problematization of the Real'.[11] These are interesting observations, as many other accounts of the New Wave movement concentrate mostly on content, commonly sexuality and Ballard's 'inner space'.[12] This 'inner space', unlike the much more common 'outer space' of much science fiction, generally describes science fiction texts engaged with psychological concepts,[13] such as in the novels of Ursula K. LeGuin and Philip K. Dick. This emphasis on content rather than style pushed the New Wave's narrative experimentalism largely to the side in the years since the New Wave, despite such remarkably complex narratives found in the works of Samuel R. Delany, Brian Aldiss, Joanna Russ, and various other New Wave writers.

If one looks directly at the narrative experimentalism rife in New Wave texts and those which seem linked to them stylistically, then various trends surface. Most important to this thesis is the trend of self-consciousness seen in these works that highlights its fictional status and underlying ontology, which can be applied to more contemporary works and even retroactively applied to older science fiction. This self-consciousness, or metafiction, can be found at both the macro and micro level, where it exhibits both much as metafiction does in mainstream and postmodern fiction, as well as a kind of metonymic performed metafiction. Metafictional science fiction appears to probe 'inner space' as well, but instead of examining the inner workings of the mind, these science fiction texts investigate their own narratological make-up: the inner space of science fiction itself.

Ontological Layering: Postmodernism, Science Fiction, Metafiction

The introduction to this thesis created a series of parallels between science fiction, metafiction, and possible world philosophy. Metafiction's reliance upon framing devices which move readers in and out of deictic frames in order to remind readers of its fictionality links it to the underlying narratological structure of science fiction texts, which draws readerly attention to the way these texts are disconnected from reality by foregrounding various nova within their plots and creating narratives that are based around hypothetical 'what if' statements. This

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[11] Jameson, Fredric, *Archaeologies of the Future: the Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions.* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 93.

[12] Ballard, J.G., 'Which Way to Inner Space?', in *A User's Guide to the Millennium* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996), pp. 195-8, p. 197.

[13] Prucher, Jeff (ed.), *Brave New Words: The Oxford Dictionary of Science Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 98-9.

trend in science fiction mirrors a similar one in postmodern fiction both chronologically and stylistically, and Brian McHale argues that the New Wave movement may be understood as a 'postmodernization' of science fiction.[14] Thematically and stylistically, New Wave science fiction and postmodern fiction crossover considerably, creating a liminal area where texts may appear to be members of both literary types. Texts such as Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren*, for example, can be read both as highly postmodern and as stylistically experimental science fiction.

The relationship between postmodern fiction and science fiction is broader than New Wave stylistics, however, and extends to all science fiction. The surface stylistic similarities are symptomatic of a deeper thematic and structural similarity linking the two modes of writing. According to Stephen Baker, one of the defining features of postmodern fiction is its concern with the 'ontological instability to which both readers and characters are subject to'.[15] Similarly, in his book *Postmodernist Fiction* (1982), Brian McHale elaborates on what he believes links postmodern fiction and science fiction: an 'ontological dominant'.[16] Peter Stockwell describes the 'dominant' as a 'super-foregrounded figure, around which the rest of the literary text is dynamically organised'.[17] Therefore, postmodernism largely concerns itself with ways of being and understanding being, and foregrounds these issues. This surfaces as a particular emphasis on the unsteady reality that fiction portrays: is it real, is it imaginary? Could it be neither? This underlying theme steeps postmodern fiction in metafiction. Postmodernism foregrounds its own fictionality and in doing so invokes questions about the reality of the reader, the characters, and the possible interactions between the two, and the relative significance of the author-figure.

Science fiction, McHale goes on to say later, is '*the* ontological genre *par excellence*',[18] and argues that science fiction and postmodern fiction have developed along 'parallel literary-historical tracts'.[19] Both types of fiction

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[14] McHale, Brian, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1987), p. 68.
[15] Baker, Stephen, *The Fiction of Postmodernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 6.
[16] McHale, p. 10.
[17] Stockwell, Peter, *Cognitive Poetics: An introduction* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 14.
[18] McHale, p. 59.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

investigate similar ideas in similar ways.[20] The foregrounding of ontology as the dominant of these fictional modes underlines a specific thematic relationship between science fiction and postmodern fiction, one with practical implications for the critic: critical approaches appropriate for postmodern fiction may also serve science fiction.

McHale also suggests that there is an implicit phenomenological flavour to the ontological concerns in postmodern fiction and science fiction. Citing Roman Ingarden's work on the cognition of literature, McHale argues that a text is made up of different 'layers' of realities:[21] 'Each of [a text's] layers has a somewhat different ontological status, and functions somewhat differently in the ontological makeup of the whole'.[22] The 'world' of a text, an aspect of narrative that David Herman labels 'storyworld',[23] which is roughly analogous to the 'text world' Joanna Gavins identifies,[24] is therefore not a single represented reality, but multiple interlaced and interactive realities that interact in some fashion throughout the duration of the narrative.[25] This is actually the norm for most texts; single-world texts are very rare.[26] Significantly, if a text's 'dominant' is an ontological one, a text will debate and problematise its ontological concerns through these layers of realties, most often through foregrounding the interaction of these layers.

This point is crucial when considering the relationship between science fiction and postmodern fiction, the underlying structure that allows both science fiction and postmodern fiction to create these worlds operates similarly to both possible worlds and text world theory. It is also wise to keep in mind that these ontological concerns are not new in fiction. As McHale argues, 'among the oldest

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[20] Mark Bould and Sherryl Vint note that many of the same exhaustive pressures may have influenced the New Wave much in the same way they influenced postmodern fiction (Bould, Mark and Sherryl Vint, *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 106).

[21] Ingarden refers to these layers as 'strata' (Ingarden, Roman, *The Literary Work of Art: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic, and Theory of Literature. With an Appendix on the Functions of Language in Theatre*, translated by George G. Grabowicz (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 30).

[22] McHale, p. 30.

[23] Herman, David, *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), p. 14.

[24] Gavins, Joanna, *Text World Theory: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 10.

[25] The differentiation between the terms storyworld, text world, and the term used in this thesis, 'narrative world', will be explored later in this chapter.

[26] Gavins, p. 73.

of the classic ontological themes in poetics is that of the *otherness* of the fictional world, its separation from the real world of experience'.[27] The implicit separation between the fictional reality presented in a text and the real or actual reality of the reader's world suggested by an ontological dominant further strengthens postmodernism's link with possible world and text world theory from a metafictional perspective. When metafiction is used, it is an indirect invocation of a fictional world separate from the main narrative world of the text, thus creating a multi-world narrative.

The self-awareness that partially defines postmodern fiction, at least according to Linda Hutcheon,[28] therefore allows for a text-based interrogation of the fictional world. In addition to the more 'traditional' form of metafiction, which is a momentary break in the narrative, a text can covertly engage with textual ontology through the action of its own narrative on a metaphorical level. Paul Werth labels this kind of 'sustained metaphorical undercurrent' a 'mega-metaphor'.[29] This is what McHale means when he says that science fiction is an 'ontological genre *par excellence*': science fiction is capable of engaging with textual ontology on both the micro and macro levels and this engagement is sustained throughout a science fiction text. Science fiction accomplishes this not through the iconography of its surface structure nova, but the ability to create new fictional worlds that is an integral part of the fabric of its deep structure. In metafictional science fiction, this is no longer a prolonged metaphorical 'undercurrent' but an actualisation of literary theory. At its most sophisticated level, metafictional science fiction does not engage with ontological issues on a metaphorical level but instead grants them a certain level of physicality.

If Brian McHale is correct, then science fiction and postmodern fiction share an interest in interrogating not merely ontology in general, but the specifics of their own literary ontologies. In postmodern fiction, particularly that which is popularly called 'metafictional', this concern often exhibits as fragmentary narrative or an attempt to rewrite history (a 'historiograph'[30]). It may also exhibit

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[27] McHale, p. 27.
[28] Hutcheon, Linda, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (New York: Methuen, 1984), pp. xvii-xviii.
[29] Werth, Paul, *Text Worlds: Representing conceptual space in discourse* (Harlow: Longman/Pearson Education Limited, 1999), p. 323.
[30] Science fiction appears to share this quality with postmodern fiction as well, both in its ability to rewrite the past through alternative histories and imagine the future. This will be considered further in chapter 4.

as seemingly self-conscious passages of text where an author or character appears to speak directly to the reader. In both cases, these instances of metafiction serve as literary devices for disrupting the flow of a narrative in order to foreground the fictionality of a text. This textual deixis shifts the focus of the narrative from one close to the deictic centre of a text (the 'main' narrative, here labelled N' or N-prime in analyses) outwards, towards other narrative levels (that of the author, for example).[31] Cognitively, therefore, metafiction works as a deictic device that shifts the attention of the reader from one method of framing of a text to another.

Linda Hutcheon describes metafiction as the 'mimesis of process',[32] suggesting that the foregrounded aspect of the text in metafiction is not only that of the frame or general textuality, but also the production of the text (that is, poiesis). This sort of metafiction commonly presents as the text speaking directly to the reader, discussing choices that have been made during the creation of the text. As a result, this intrusive authorial voice breaks down the usual fictional boundaries between author, text, and reader, destroying the literary equivalent of the theatrical 'fourth wall'. In this process, the 'hermetically sealed' world of the text[33] is made permeable through a process of frame-breaking that allows the author, text, and reader to interact. Some metafiction, and the metafictional science fiction explored in this thesis in particular, may be understood as poiesis rather than mimesis because they foreground the creative act. Unlike Hutcheon's phrase, which implies that metafiction is representational, looking at the metafictive act as poiesis moves it away from a mimetic function towards a metonymic function. As a result, metafiction in these texts is performative: rather than *representing* a text being systematically critiqued, it *is* a systematically critiqued text.

Narrative frame-breaking allows for an exploration of this narrative ontology both through asides in the narrative and as the main narrative itself. As was mentioned in the introduction, Patricia Waugh argues that metafiction 'draws attention to the text's status as an artefact' in order to interrogate the complex relationship between the reality of the text and the actual reality of the reader.[34] Metafiction therefore foregrounds a text's fictionality in an explicit manner, and

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[31] Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics*, pp. 45-6, p. 47, pp. 55-6.

[32] Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative*, p. 5.

[33] Alter, Robert, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 16.

[34] Waugh, Patricia, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 2.

therefore reminds readers of a text's artificiality. Wolfgang Iser suggests the presence of a similar drive in all fiction, as the text 'functions to bring into view the interplay among the fictive, the real, and the imaginary'.[35] Metafictional narratives may therefore be understood as foregrounding the complex set of interactions between these various worlds. In this fashion, metafictional narratives may be said to be conscious of their own existence, and the vast majority of work on metafiction implies this *a priori* claim.

The actual process of consciousness, while hotly contested amongst psychologists, philosophers, and scientists, helps to shed some light on how metafiction can be labelled 'self-conscious'. What I would like to argue here is not for any single version of the method in which consciousness arises, but that metafiction, as it is normally described, appears to line up with concepts of consciousness that involve what Douglas Hofstadter calls a 'strange loop': 'a majestic wraparound self-referential structure'.[36] Hofstadter first suggests this concept in his book *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (1979), and elaborates on it at length in *I Am A Strange Loop* (2007). The term 'strange loop' derives from a piece of self-referential mathematics from Kurt Gödel where an equation defines itself through the inclusion of itself.[37] Though the actual process whereby firing neurons suddenly become 'aware' of themselves and posit themselves in their world-view is sketchily laid out in these books (and likely best left to biological psychologists), and the link between Gödel's work and consciousness is somewhat loosely made, Hofstadter theorizes that self-consciousness itself comes from a self-referential process. In this process, an object becomes aware of itself and injects this knowledge into its own thoughts, creating a loop of thought. It is this self-referentiality, he says, that creates consciousness.

This looping process intersects with conceptions of metafiction. Mark Currie argues that metafiction arises as a kind of 'infinite logical regress' in

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[35] Iser, Wolfgang, *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 3.

[36] Hofstadter, Douglas, *I Am A Strange Loop* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), p. xiii.

[37] Hofstadter uses the examples of two mirrors placed facing each other and a video camera pointed at a television as illustrations of this internalisation of the self.

fiction,[38] a theory which is conceptually congruent to Hofstadter's 'strange loops'. If metafiction is seen as a literary strange loop, then it is possible to consider metafiction not merely self-reflexive, but in fact self-conscious to some degree. That is, metafiction is symptomatic of a text thinking about itself. Though he does not label this as 'consciousness', Michael Wood has made much the same argument in his book *Literature and the Taste of Knowledge* (2005). He suggests that literature thinks and can 'know' things, and it is reasonable to assume that at least some of what it thinks about and knows is its own existence as a fictional object. As Robert Alter argues, 'in the self-conscious novel, the act of fiction always implies an act of literary criticism'.[39] Therefore, if metafiction is a kind of fictional consciousness, the question then is what analysing this consciousness might tell us about the fiction itself. To that end, an analysis of metafiction within science fiction must intend, on one level, to interrogate what science fiction thinks about and why.

Metafiction in Science Fiction: Definition, Purpose, and the Science Fiction Ghetto

While critics such as Veronica Hollinger have claimed that this kind of blatant self-consciousness is not particularly rife within science fiction, it does exist, as the introduction noted. As a method of sampling common metafictional themes in science fiction, it is worth examining a handful of significant metafictional texts in science fiction. Each of the five texts examined in the following pages serve as examples of some of the major issues metafictional science fiction addresses: the definition of science fiction, science fiction's purpose in society, and the science fiction ghetto. These texts and their concerns form a critical backdrop for understanding the use of possible worlds in science fiction. The metafictional devices exhibited in these texts provide a basis from which the more sophisticated forms of metafictional science fiction extend.

James Gunn notes that 'the most important, and most divisive, issue in science fiction is definition'.[40] Given the overwhelming number of books and articles that attempt to address this, this seems an understatement. Definition is *the* issue in science fiction criticism *par excellence* and appears due, at least in

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[38] Currie, Mark, 'Introduction', in *Metafiction*, edited by Mark Currie (London: Longman, 1995), pp. 1-18, p. 1.
[39] Alter, p. 81.
[40] Gunn, 'Definition', p. 5.

part, to the difficulty of defining any genre of literature, as was mentioned in the introduction. Though ostensibly one of the most significant and immediately recognisable concerns within science fiction studies, the debate surrounding science fiction's definition is somewhat under-represented in science fiction itself, at least as a foregrounded concern.

Philip K. Dick addresses this concern in his novel *The Man in the High Castle* (1962)*, which takes place in an alternative reality where Germany has won World War II and involves a science fiction novel that postulates what might have happened if the Allies had won World War II. The slippage between the fictional and the real and the suggestion that the real may indeed be the fiction and the fictional the real is a recognisably metafictional theme. As Carl Freedman has noted, Dick's novel exists to 'interrogate the definitional structure of science fiction itself'.[41] As a case in point, there is a certain amount of ambivalence as to how to classify the book in Dick's novel, called *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, and Paul and Betty discuss its genre in the following passage:

> 'Not a mystery,' Paul said. 'On contrary, interesting form of fiction possible within genre of science fiction.'
> 'Oh no,' Betty disagreed. 'No science in it. Not set in the future. Science fiction deals with future, in particular, future where science has advanced over now. Book fits neither premise.'
> 'But,' Paul said, 'it deals with alienate present. Many well-known science fiction novels of that sort.'[42]

Betty clearly approaches science fiction from a system of genre classifications that utilises conventions as a method of definition (in this case, a story set in the future with some form of unknown science), owing to the misreading of Todorov mentioned in the introduction. Paul, on the other hand, suggests that there is a structural component to genre.[43] These are two common approaches to science fiction (one might consider genre conventions a typical 'popular' approach, and the structural approach the classic academic one). The passage suggests an

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[41] Freedman, Carl, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), p. 166.
[42] Dick, Philip. K., *The Man in the High Castle* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p. 109.
[43] It should be mentioned that while Paul does gesture towards a structural understanding of the mode, like Betty, he works from a top-down position, using the discursive elements of the mode (in this case, the 'alienate present') as a method of defining an underlying structure.

awareness of the debate over the definition of science fiction. *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* can therefore be seen as a metaphor for Dick's own novel, and like the fictional text, *The Man in the High Castle* involves an 'alienate present' rather than any future time or particular scientific advance that would normally define science fiction. As Carl Freedman notes, Dick's novel 'does not seem emphatically and obviously to present itself as science fiction',[44] and this suggests an attempt to address the debate of the definition of science fiction in a metafictional way through the presentation of a science fiction novel that is not overtly a piece of science fiction.[45] The above quoted discussion therefore forms a prolepsis in case of debate about what genre model Dick's novel fits. The awareness of this debate within the text suggests a consciousness of the debates surrounding the mode. In this manner, whatever else *The Man in the High Castle* seems to suggest through its alternate reality, it also directly engages with this major debate in science fiction, and therefore exhibits the self-consciousness that defines metafiction.

While issues of definition in science fiction form the basis for much of the ongoing debate in critical circles, it remains a fairly small area of metafictional concern for New Wave science fiction. Some recent science fiction refers to presumptions about science fiction conventions,[46] but this concern is conspicuously absent in most science fiction and may suggest that while definition is an important issue for critics of science fiction, it is not a major issue for writers of science fiction. Though this thesis returns to issues of definition in its final chapter, the majority of the novels and stories analysed here do not engage directly with definitional issues.

It is unsurprising in light of science fiction's comparative lack of concern with its own definition that one of science fiction's major preoccupations is instead its literary purpose. Linked tightly to issues of definition, metafiction involving science fiction's purpose explores how science fiction works on a reader

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[44] Freedman, *Science Fiction*, p. 165.

[45] Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren* also invokes this metafictional ploy (as analysed in chapter 6).

[46] These conventions are often a springboard for authors wishing to subvert readers' expectations and generic cliché, and these expectations are specifically broken down in Kage Baker's *In the Garden of Iden* (1997), and other novels from her 'Company' series. The novel's tragic heroine, the immortal cyborg Mendoza, even muses 'why don't we rise in rebellion, as in a nice testosterone-laden science fiction novel, laser pistols blazing away in both fists?' (Baker, Kage, *In the Garden of Iden* (New York: Avon Books, 1997), p. 7).

and within society as a literature. Whereas other modes of fiction often justify their existence on the basis of either a Platonic concern with realistic representation and thereby stake a claim as social commentary, science fiction cannot claim this as its purpose. Science fiction is not mimetic, at least not in the traditional sense outlined by Erich Auerbach in *Mimesis*.[47]

Science fiction has a few theories about its own purpose, varying from the educational to the palliative; indeed, Thomas D. Clareson notes that this 'didactic theory of literature' is a 'central, running debate in sf circles',[48] both critical and creative. Many of these parallel critical theories about science fiction's use as a literature come from both science fiction writer-critics and academics alike. While these metafictional 'moments' in science fiction are notable for their mere existence, science fiction's conception of its purpose differs fairly significantly from that of the academic community.

Brian Aldiss's 'Enigma' stories are particularly interesting in this case. 'Enigma 2: Diagrams for Three Stories' (1974), for example, is not actually a story of any sort, but an elaborate plan for all three 'Enigma' stories that have various links to science fiction, namely the 'tau-dream' concept that continues throughout the entirety of *Last Orders* (1979), a collection that contains all of the Enigma stories. In the introduction to these expansive plot summaries, Aldiss notes the following as the purpose of these stories:

> Each of these three stories deals with a confusion of identity. The theory behind the subject is that when an age has no firm identity, then the players strutting on the stage at the time are unable to be certain of their identity. How can they be certain when the cultural matrix about them is in a state of flux? So these were designed to be stories for our Grand Post-Renaissance Age.[49]

According to this passage, science fiction's purpose is connected to the historical context it is produced in, and specifically important in times of cultural 'flux'. This link to cultural fluxes lends evidence to the assertion that science fiction is an inherently postmodern literature (or at least a fiction well-suited for a postmodern society), much as Brian McHale argues in his book *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987).

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[47] Auerbach, Erich, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, translated by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 554.
[48] Clareson, 'Realism', p. 2.
[49] Aldiss, Brian, 'Enigma 2: Diagrams for Three Stories', in *Last Orders and Other Stories* (London: Triad/Panther Books, 1985), pp. 47-70, p. 47.

Willis E. McNelly also suggests this connection when he says that science fiction is a 'modern objective correlative',[50] thus underlining science fiction's ability to articulate otherwise inexpressible problems.[51]

In addition, some metafictional science fiction makes the argument that science fiction functions as an aid for those attempting to make sense of the world around them. In *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), for example, when Eliot Rosewater and Billy Pilgrim discuss their mutual interest in science fiction, an argument is made that supports science fiction's inherent helpfulness for people whose existence has become highly fragmented: 'They were trying to re-invent themselves and their worlds. Science fiction was a big help'.[52] The reason that science fiction is such a 'big help' is not elaborated upon; however, this reasoning may be extrapolated and condensed into two main ways in which science fiction is a 'big help' to those attempting to come to terms with a fragmented existence. First, science fiction might be seen as therapeutic for those whose lives have been changed in some way, and it allows for a kind of cathartic fellowship with science fiction characters as well as giving people a language with which to speak about their current state of affairs. This function of science fiction has been addressed before by critics, and is closely linked to ideas of definition in science fiction. According to Colin Greenland, 'science fiction, essentially the literature of altered circumstances, is the obvious place to seek a language for the unprecedented, especially since it offers as many anxious images as utopian ones'.[53] Interestingly, if science fiction is a method of making sense of a fragmentary world, this renders readings of science fiction as 'escapist' utterly moot, since escapist texts would surely be uninterested in these 'anxious images'. The 're-invention' Vonnegut speaks of would therefore not be of the 'anxious' world that Greenland describes, but a softer, more comforting one. A reader might read science fiction to escape their current predicament, but if their problems are in any way related to the construct of the text they are reading, they will likely end up addressing these issues due to the cognitive processing necessary to read and

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[50] McNelly, Willis E., 'Science Fiction The Modern Mythology [Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*]', in *SF: The Other Side of Realism: Essays on Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction*, edited by Thomas D. Clareson (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1971), pp. 193-8, p. 194.
[51] This issue will be returned to in chapter 6.
[52] Vonnegut, Kurt, *Slaughterhouse-Five, or The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death* (London: Vintage Books, 2000), p. 73.
[53] Greenland, Colin, *The Entropy Exhibition: Michael Moorcock and the British 'New Wave' in Science Fiction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 7.

understand science fiction.[54]

In addition to this underlying social and personal reflection, science fiction also might exist as a model of how to live in a world that changes so quickly and drastically. Rosewater says something very similar to Pilgrim later on in the same conversation:

> Rosewater said an interesting thing to Billy one time about a book that wasn't science fiction. He said that everything there was to know about life was in *The Brothers Karamazov*, by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. 'But that isn't *enough* anymore,' said Rosewater.[55]

Rosewater implies that fiction in general is a didactic tool, something that can enlighten its readers about life and the universe. If this assumption is true, then a book that covers everything about life is therefore a highly useful companion. Rosewater's second point, however, suggests that most mainstream fiction, even classic fiction, no longer functions as a guide: the world is too different and mainstream fiction is simply no longer enough. Science fiction, with its intrinsic interest in technological progress and the impact of these developments on the human race, fills in the gaps and therefore becomes a new tool for those seeking to adapt to a world that refuses to slow down.

Vonnegut makes a similar point in *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*[56] when Eliot Rosewater gatecrashes the Milford Conference.

> 'You're all I read anymore. You're the only ones who'll talk about the really terrific changes going on, the only ones crazy enough to know that life is a space voyage, and not a short one, either, but one that'll last for billions of years. You're the only ones with guts enough to *really* care about the future, who *really* notice what

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[54] Jones, *Starships*, p. 6.

[55] Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, p. 73.

[56] The argument that *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* is not science fiction might be made, thus suggesting that the quoted passage is not metafiction but a sort of intertextual commentary. I would argue, however, that *Rosewater* is an example of *economic* science fiction, particularly given the text's occasional suggestions that someone should write a science fiction story about money (Vonnegut, Kurt, *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater* (London: Vintage, 1992), p. 14). In this way, *Rosewater* is a piece of speculative fiction, even though there are no aliens, spaceships, futuristic technologies, or parallel realities. *Rosewater* is the story of a 'social experiment' (p. 161), which fits into the very broad definition of science fiction as hypothesis suggested by Albert Wendland (Wendland, p. 3). Cf. *Jailbird* (1979), where Robert Fender is said to be working on a science fiction novel about economics (Vonnegut, Kurt, *Jailbird* (London: Panther Books, 1979), p. 229).

machines do to us, what wars to us, what cities do to us, what big, simple ideas do to us, what tremendous misunderstandings, mistakes, accidents, and catastrophes do to us. You're the only ones zany enough to agonize over time and distances without limit, over mysteries that will never die, over the fact that we are right now determining whether the space voyage for the next billion years or so is going to be Heaven or Hell.'

Eliot admitted later on that science-fiction writers couldn't write for sour apples, but he declared that it didn't matter. He said they were poets just the same, since they were more sensitive to important changes than anybody who was writing well. 'The hell with the talented sparrowfarts who write delicately of one small piece of one mere lifetime, when the issues are galaxies, eons, and trillions of souls yet to be born.'[57]

Here Vonnegut addresses the crux of the problem surrounding science fiction's purpose: the drive for social relevance even at the cost of artistic interest. The text asks how a fiction that typically fails on so many traditional 'literary' levels (character development, stylistics, etc.) can still manage to be relevant to the world. Rosewater argues here that it is because science fiction concerns itself not with the minutia of everyday existence, but instead 'the really terrific changes going on', it is allowed to take a detour around 'literariness'. This social imperative overrides any particular artfulness or literariness that it might otherwise need according to literary critics, at least for Rosewater. This echoes what many science fiction critics have posited; that is, that science fiction is primarily concerned with non-literary issues and therefore does not pay as much attention to more traditional literary features, whether due to issues of 'space',[58] or because the world of the science fiction narrative is foregrounded rather than character.[59] Science fiction's need to be socially relevant therefore seems to come at the cost of artistry. Furthermore, Eliot seems to suggest here that a concern

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[57] Vonnegut, Kurt, *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater, or Pearls Before Swine* (London: Vintage: 1992), p. 11.

[58] Jones, Gwyneth, 'The icons of science fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 163-73, p. 171.

[59] Mendlesohn, Farah, 'Introduction: reading science fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 1-12, p. 8; Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics*, p. 19.

with artistic aspects of texts might even inhibit serious speculative engagement with these important social issues.

In *Timequake* (1997), Kilgore Trout defends the position of science fiction writers who eschew stylistics for important social issues in a similar manner.

> If I'd wasted my time creating characters [...] I would never had gotten around to calling attention to things that really matter: irresistible forces in nature, and cruel inventions, and cockamamie ideals and governments and economies that make heroes and heroines alike feel like something the cat drug in.[60]

Trout slyly condemns mainstream fiction for ignoring 'the things that really matter', explaining that science fiction is a fiction of ideas rather than of characters and events alone. The traditional concerns of fiction, like characterization and stylistics, are therefore portrayed as a distraction from the proper occupation of literature, in Vonnegut's opinion: to serve as a warning for its readers.[61]

This is not to say, however, that Vonnegut believes that texts involving intricate stylistics and highly developed characters were 'bad'. Instead, according to the following extract from *Rosewater*, it seems that science fiction writers simply have no time or space for these kinds of artistic matters due to the very nature of the ideas with which their fiction deals.

> In Milford, Eliot told the writers that he wished they would learn more about sex and economics and style, but then he supposed that people dealing with really big issues didn't have much time for such things.[62]

Significantly, Rosewater himself, science fiction aficionado extraordinaire, is aware of science fiction's failings, and particularly how they affect the reader. He clearly misses these qualities in science fiction – but, as he says in his earlier speech to the writers at Milford, he fully understands why a science fiction writer might ignore such things. The implied proposition here is that science fiction is a fiction of desperation, and as such must be completed and passed on to the consumer as quickly as possible.

The last significant concern of metafictional science fiction is its

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[60] Vonnegut, Kurt, *Timequake* (London: Vintage Books, 1998), p. 63.

[61] Vonnegut, Kurt, 'Playboy Interview', in *Wampeters, Foma and Granfalloons (Opinions)* (London: Jonathan Cape, Ltd., 1974), pp. 265-313, p. 266.

[62] Vonnegut, *Rosewater*, p. 14.

ghettoization, something which Judith Merril and Roger Luckhurst both suggest is self-inflicted to a certain extent.[63] Science fiction's separation from mainstream fiction and other modal fiction elicits both anxiety and pride from within the mode: some texts revel in the disdain; others mourn science fiction's low status. As Luckhurst argues, 'Science fiction … is anxiously self-aware of its inadequacy before the sole judge of the legitimate'.[64] In this way, science fiction's description of its own ghettoization, whether positive or negative, is indicative of the changing place of science fiction in society from that of a lesser literature to a begrudgingly accepted one.

For example, Vonnegut's description of Rosewater's donation of science fiction books to the hospitalised Billy Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse-Five* suggests that it is some kind of lesser fiction:

> It was Rosewater who introduced Billy to science fiction and in particular to the writings of Kilgore Trout. Rosewater had a tremendous collection of science-fiction paperbacks under his bed. He brought them to the hospital in a steamer trunk. Those beloved, frumpish books gave off a smell that permeated the ward – like flannel pajamas that hadn't been changed for a month, or like Irish Stew.[65]

The language used here to describe the books is particularly noteworthy. The novels literally stink, and are frumpy, connoting images of a slightly pudgy and badly dressed middle-aged woman who has not bathed in several days. When at home, Rosewater keeps them under his bed, suggesting clichés about young boys shamefully hiding pornography under their mattresses. The language, however, also manages to suggest alongside these defamatory remarks the way that science fiction aficionados might view the books as well: they are like flannel pyjamas (cosy, if unchanged) and Irish Stew (hearty and heart-warming). Even the description 'frumpish' can be positive: it might describe a beloved aunt or grandmother; similarly, all sorts of important things are kept under beds, not merely pornographic magazines. This views the science fiction ghetto in a mixed

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[63] Merril, Judith, 'What Do You Mean: Science Fiction?', in *SF: The Other Side of Realism: Essays on Modern Fantasy and Science Fiction*, edited by Thomas D. Clareson (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1971), pp. 53-95, p. 79; Luckhurst, Roger, *'The Angle Between Two Walls': The Fiction of J.G. Ballard* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), pp. 13-15.
[64] Luckhurst, *Ballard*, p. 13.
[65] Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, p. 72-3.

light: though much of this might be considered negative, there is a certain understanding in the word choice that suggests reasons readers may enjoy and even love science fiction. *Slaughterhouse-Five* therefore marks a turning point in the way science fiction is viewed: the ghetto is no longer only a source of disdain and embarrassment: it can also be a matter of preference or even pride. This seems to imply mixture of attitudes towards the genre at the time of publication.

The passages above provide specific examples of metafiction within science fiction and exemplify three major thematic concerns. As a device, metafiction within science fiction appears to function in much the same way as it does in mainstream and amodal fiction: it uses either a break in the overall narrative, as is the case in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, or a character's voice to argue a specific fictional point. In this, metafictional science fiction, at least at this level of structural sophistication, runs parallel to that found in other kinds of fiction. The various thematic concerns advanced in these passages makes them significant, however. Rather than attending to Hutcheon's 'mimesis of process', these passages probe not the method of their creation but almost existential themes such as science fiction's definition (which one might consider similar to identity), science fiction's place in the larger world, and science fiction's ghettoization. These texts engage with these debates and advance further arguments, thus rendering them self-reflexive and internally critical.

These passages, however, also move away from the more common understanding of metafiction as an internalised literary device and towards a kind of metafiction that not only voices critical debates but engages with them as well through the act of discussion. With the exception of Aldiss's 'Enigma 2', every one of the above metafictional passages takes the form of a conversation between two characters (though the other half of the conversation is often implicit in Vonnegut). This posits these passages as dialogue, implying that they may not only be dialogues, for example, between Rosewater and Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse-Five* or Betty and Paul in *The Man in the High Castle*, but dialogues between two parts of a debate. In this way, these passages may be understood as representing a debate, thus exhibiting a mimesis of discussion rather than process.

What is particularly interesting about metafictional science fiction, however, is that at its most sophisticated, it has an ability to move away from this more mimetic form of metafiction to something altogether more performative.

Science fiction, due to its ontological dominant and its structural similarity with the scientific 'thought experiment',[66] also has the capacity to create fictional worlds and plots based around fictional debates and hypotheses. Because the self-consciousness foregrounded in science fiction may be understood as being particularly attuned, according to Mas'ud Zavarzedah, to the 'narrative theme',[67] these fictional hypotheses fuse with the text's overall narrative. As a result, these texts move away from mimesis and towards metonymy. In order to do this, the science fiction text foregrounds its narrative world through a variety of different methods. This level of sophistication is possible due to metafiction and science fiction's relationship with possible world theory (also known as modal philosophy) and text-world theory.

Worlds Within Worlds: Possible Worlds and Text World Theory

Possible world theory and text world theory are deceptively simple terms: they both deal with created worlds or 'world-making',[68] the former as a possible alternative to the 'actual' (or known) world,[69] and the latter with the worlds created out of any textual discourse.[70] These two theories are closely linked, particularly insofar as they relate to fictional texts. Each theory, however, has a different part to play in the burgeoning relationship between science fiction and metafiction, particularly where the concept of ontological layering within texts is concerned.

The term 'possible world' has its philosophical roots in the work of seventeenth century mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz. As Leibniz uses the term, possible worlds formed a basic postulate of logic, suggesting that every conceivable possibility is acted out in another 'possible' world. Each world in Leibniz's philosophy is made up of 'monads', which are metaphorical atoms of being.[71] These monads determine the world to

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[66] Broderick, Damien, *Reading By Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 7.

[67] Zavarzadeh, Mas'ud, *The Mythopoeic Reality: The Postwar American Nonfiction Novel* (Urbana: University Illinois Press, 1976), p. 40.

[68] Goodman, Nelson, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Hassocks: The Harvester Press Limited, 1978), p. 6.

[69] Bradley, Raymond and Normal Schwartz, *Possible Worlds: An Introduction to Logic and Its Philosophy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), pp. 6-7.

[70] Gavins, *Text World Theory*, p. 2.

[71] Deleuze, Gilles, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, translated by Tom Conley (London: Continuum, 2006), pp. 67-8.

an observer, but the world does in fact determine the quality of the specific monads. That is, to paraphrase Gilles Deleuze's description of Leibniz's monadology, there is a world in which Adam has sinned, and we know it is that world because we know Adam has sinned. The world-building process, however, did not create a world where Adam sinned, but a world where Adam *would* sin as an emergent property of all of the world's constituent monads.[72] This is an important distinction to make where Leibniz's possible worlds are concerned: a possible world is not merely a single hypothetical change in how a world is, but all of the effects this change has. Each of these worlds, he says, are essentially contradictory or 'incompossible' with one another, but are equally real and could be realised.[73] The slippery reality values of these incompossible worlds created a basis for scientific inquiry for Leibniz because they allowed philosophers and scientists alike to consider hypothetical concepts that were incompossible with the actual world. This incompossible world is commonly called a 'counterfactual' in modern modal philosophy: literally, a hypothetical world that runs counter to the real world.[74] These worlds are logically possible rather than physically possible[75] and this allows for physical impossibilities (incompossible with the actual world, but compossible with the hypothetical world) so long as the world does not contradict its own internal logic.

In simple terms, these incompossible worlds form experimental spaces for thought experiments. It is useful to note that the usage of counterfactuals in the sciences often begins with phrases such as 'suppose there was a world where' or 'if it was possible that'. The literary construction of the incompossible world is almost identical to that of fiction, where an 'as if' or 'what if' construction underlies the vast majority of narratives.[76] Importantly, the hypothetical construction of the counterfactual world is almost syntactically identical to that of the science fiction text. The world of a science fiction text may therefore be understood as a hypothetical, incompossible world.

Despite this apparent similarity, the relationship between possible worlds and general fictional worlds is a somewhat thorny one, and draws arrows from both sides of the argument. Gregory Currie argues that, while the two should not

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[72] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[73] *Ibid.*

[74] Lewis, David, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1986), pp. 20-1.

[75] Bradley and Schwartz, pp. 6-7.

[76] Iser, *Imaginary*, p. 13.

be conflated, 'a world of the story will be a possible world in the sense of modal semantics',[77] suggesting a direct and almost literal relationship between the world of a story and the worlds posited by possible worlds theory. In his book *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds* (1998), Lubomír Doležel makes a similar argument, but adds the caveat that 'fictional worlds of literature … are a special kind of possible world'[78] with features that are unrelated to possible worlds theory. Crucially, Doležel also argues that fictional world are human constructs, thus removing the probability of their existence from the literary use of the term.[79] Ruth Ronen, meanwhile, suggests that literary critics go too far when they equate possible worlds with fictional worlds:

> literary theorists… detach the notion of possibility from any abstract idea of relative probability of occurrence as originally formulated in possible worlds semantics. Literary worlds are possible not in the sense that they can be viewed as possible alternatives to the actual state of affairs, but in the sense that they *actualize a world* which is analogous with, derivative of, or contradictory to the world we live in'.[80]

This is an interesting objection to the common usage of possible worlds in literary criticism, particularly as it only appears to apply to specific modes of fiction. In the case of science fiction, however, Ronen's objection is moot. As Samuel R. Delany has argued, 'what makes a given story s-f *is* its speculative content'.[81] Science fiction, because of its deep structure as a hypothetical mode of fictionalising, implicitly incorporates the elements of probability and incompossibility present in Leibniz's original construction of the concept in a way that amodal fiction does not.

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[77] Currie, Gregory, *The Nature of Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 62.

[78] Doležel, Lubomír, *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1998), p. 16.

[79] *Ibid*., p. 23. This has a secondary effect, as Leibniz's incompossible worlds were contained in the 'omniscient divine mind' (p. 14). This de-deification of the term further separates the use of possible worlds in mathematics and philosophy from its use in literary criticism.

[80] Ronen, Ruth, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 50-1.

[81] Delany, Samuel R., 'About Five Thousand Seven Hundred and Fifty Words', in *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction* (Elizabethtown, NY: Dragon Press, 1977), pp. 33-49, p. 33.

The case of the C.S. Lewis novel *Perelandra* (1943) teases out some of the subtleties of this link between possible worlds, incompossibility, and science fiction. In this novel, the main character Edward Ransom travels to Venus and has many adventures on the planet's surface. Someone reading this novel in the year it was published may well believe that it is possible to go to Venus and manage to do any of the things that Ransom does; however, if someone reads the same novel in 2011, after learning that Venus is covered in clouds of sulphuric acid, they would know that Ransom is likely to die from the harsh conditions of the planet long before he meets Queen Tinidril. The Venus of the novel is incompossible with the Venus of the known universe in 2011, whereas in 1943, it was believably compossible. The content of the novel itself has not changed; the reader's frame of reference has changed. If science fiction is described using a definition that relies on the possible/impossible binary (such as in the case of Samuel R. Delany[82]), then this science fiction novel becomes fantasy when read in 2011. If science fiction is seen as an incompossible counterfactual world, however, *Perelandra* remains science fiction regardless of the period in which it is read. A text's science fictionality therefore seems linked not to its context but the way in which it presents a fictional world.

The full significance of science fiction's status as a fictional application of possible world theory becomes apparent when the connection between text world theory, metafiction, and science fiction is drawn out. Text worlds, unlike possible worlds, are not contingent on their compossibility or incompossibility with the actual world: they are 'mental constructs' used for understanding complex utterances as a narrative;[83] or, to put it a different way, a text creates worlds through its language known as 'text worlds'. Text world theory amplifies the relationship between science fiction, metafiction, and possible worlds due to its attention to the layering of text worlds within a single text. The suggestion that texts are often made up of many text worlds paves the way for an understanding of texts that implies texts of any mode are more than a mirror to the world – they create worlds within worlds.

Narratives are made up of world-building elements that describe a text world, but this text world may also create further worlds within itself for various

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[82] Delany has famously suggested that science fiction what might happen but has not yet happened (whereas realism is what can happen and fantasy is what cannot happen) ('Words' p. 44).
[83] Werth, p. 7.

reasons, resulting in a layered effect. These layers, analogous to the 'strata' of literature described by Roman Ingarden,[84] as well as the extradiagetic, intradiagetic, or metadiagetic narrative levels described by Gérard Genette,[85] are embedded within the overriding 'discourse world' of the text world.[86] This discourse world might be normally thought of as the 'main narrative' of a text: it is the 'highest level' of the text and the level that might be thought of as encapsulating a storytelling atmosphere.[87] Inside this discourse world are the many sub-worlds which the reader 'toggles' between.[88] These sub-worlds include flashbacks, dual narratives (such as two stories that run parallel to each other), and so forth. While these kinds of narratives do not seem to constitute sub-worlds from a horizontal, narratological point of view as they are part of a sequential ordering of the overall narrative, when a text is understood vertically, these moments require different forms of engagement on the part of the reader and therefore constitute separate sub-worlds.[89] Metafiction can be found under the larger heading of 'deictic sub-worlds', as this variety of sub-world moves the attention of the reader away from the discourse world to something separate to that being described.[90] The sub-world, therefore, is not made up only of momentary adjustments to voice and temporality, but also the reader's experience of these changes.

Metafiction, because of its turbulent affect on readerly attention, can therefore be seen as a kind of deictic sub-world within the overall narrative of the text. Science fiction, on the other hand, benefits from text world theory in a slightly different manner. While ostensibly a science fiction text is a typical text in that it has a discourse world and any number of internal sub-worlds, because of its intrinsic link to the hypothetical and the concept of the incompossible world, a science fiction text constitutes a specific type of 'sub-world' of the actual world, much as any text does.[91] As Genette argues in the case of metalepsis (his equivalent to metafiction):

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[84] Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art*, p. 30.

[85] Genette, Gérard, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, translated by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 228-34.

[86] Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics*, p. 140.

[87] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

[88] *Ibid.*, p. 142.

[89] *Ibid.*, p. 135-6.

[90] *Ibid.*, p. 140.

[91] According to Peter Stockwell, science fiction would be an 'epistemic sub-world' (*Cognitive Poetics*, p. 141) due to its predictive qualities.

> The most troubling thing about metalepsis indeed lies in this unacceptable and insistent hypothesis, that the extradiagetic is perhaps always diagetic, and that the narrator and his narratees – you and I – perhaps belong to some narrative.[92]

This understanding of the science fiction text as a sub-world of the actual world foregrounds its fictionality while preserving its requisite incompossibility, and therefore there is a clear link between how science fiction relates to the world of the reader and how metafiction does the same. What is particularly interesting in the texts analysed here is their use not just of the text world or the possible world, but the way in which this fuses with the text's presentation of this world. This thesis labels this melding of presentation and fictional world the 'narrative world'.[93]

As this thesis is particularly concerned with the interaction of narrative worlds as a method of creating a metafictional narrative, a system of diagrams has been created in order to facilitate discussion. The symbols and overall shape of these diagrams have been adapted from those found in Paul Werth's book on text worlds, *Text Worlds: representing conceptual space in discourse* (1999). As the example diagram below shows, each narrative world (or layer) is given a number. Since the majority of the texts analysed in this thesis deal directly with worlds that are set within other worlds, these numbers increase as the layers become ever more internalised. In the texts where these worlds are not all internalised (such as in the case of *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*, analysed in chapter 2), the numbering follows the sequential presentation of these narrative worlds. So, as a simple example, a text which contains an internal novel would be presented in the following fashion (Figure 1.1):

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[92] Genette, *Narrative*, p. 236.
[93] This term is also an intentional pun, given this thesis' interest in science fiction texts that actualise literary theory as fictional worlds.
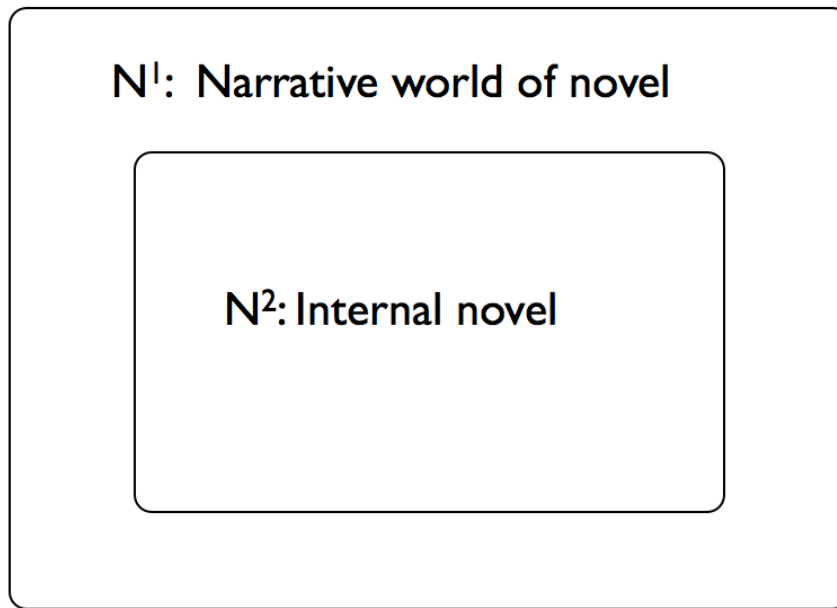
Figure 1.1: Diagram of narrative worlds involved in the presentation of an internal novel.

The overall narrative world of the novel is given the designation N^1, since it is the ontological point of origin for the narrative. That is, it is the most external reality explicitly included within the text. The internal novel, designated by N^2, is therefore a step inwards and therefore upwards numerically, and it is totally encapsulated by N^1. This diagram shows the general way in which all of the narrative worlds within this thesis are illustrated. This numbering system is made more complicated by the addition of the narrative world N' (N-prime), which denotes not only a world of origin, but a world of origin ostensibly outside the text (such as the world of the reader or the author). It is important to note that in each analysis, this numbering of narrative worlds begins over again: an internal novel may be denoted by N^2 in one analysis and N^4 in another. The numbering is relative only to the specific analysis to which it is attached.

This understanding of both metafiction and science fiction as sub-worlds of a larger text world allows them to be seen as different versions of the same metaleptic literary device. Both science fiction and metafiction create sub-worlds for the purpose of investigating the line between the known world and the portrayed text world, and both use this as a method of introducing a kind of literary turbulence into a text that reminds readers of the textuality of what they are reading. Further, while science fiction works as a possible sub-world, as has already been described, metafiction can also form a possible world, such as in

texts where authors walk amongst their characters. Prodding at this 'semi-permeable membrane'[94] between the fictional and the real creates an 'ontological instability'[95] in these kinds of fictions. The distinction between the real and the fictional shatters, leaving the suggestion that fiction is in any way a 'mirror' of the actual world, or even a 'window' into another,[96] quite literally in pieces.

Fictional Inner-Space: metafictional science fiction

Science fiction's New Wave, with its emphasis on newness of style and content, created the perfect literary climate for these shards to be picked up and examined in an experimental way. Though its underlying narratological structure makes science fiction a natural mode for metafictional experimentation it is rarely identified as doing so. Instead, science fiction has largely found its champions among those attempting to define it as 'a contemporary form of Eliot's objective correlative'.[97] This reasoning roots itself in an understanding of the chronology of science fiction, particularly in the mode's historical context. While it is possible to trace science fiction to texts such as Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) and beyond, its germination is commonly located in the European Gothic period. Specifically, science fiction's origin has been identified as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818),[98] a theory that Brian Aldiss originated.

Aldiss argues that *Frankenstein* may be understood as the first science fiction text because it was sufficiently different from everything that came before. Shelley's novel denoted a new, innovative genre of writing in the way it 'dramatize[d] the difference between the old age and the new, between an age when things went by rote and one where everything was suddenly called into question'.[99] The fact that science fiction's naissance and development parallels the industrial revolution charges the mode with technological advances, both real and imaginary. As Scott Bukatman argues, however, 'it is not the technology per se that characterizes the operations of science fiction, but the interface of

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[94] McHale, p. 35.
[95] Baker, *Postmodernity*, p. 6.
[96] Currie, Mark, *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1998), p. 35.
[97] McNelly, p. 194. Cf. Jameson, 'Progress'; Suvin, 'Sociology', among others.
[98] Bould and Vint, p. 2.
[99] Aldiss, Brian and David Wingrove, *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction* (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1986), p. 40.

technology with the human subject'.[100] Science fiction's emphasis on the impact of technological advancement on human beings has, in the past, elicited critics to describe it as a literature that portrays the future in order to better understand a quickly changing present: it is, according to Samuel R. Delany, in 'dialogue with the present'.[101]

As such, much science fiction involves the creation of hypothetical technologies, which Darko Suvin terms a 'novum'.[102] The novum, he argues, is an unfamiliar or new aspect introduced into a text in order to cause 'cognitive estrangement'[103] in the reader. In this way, science fiction is understood as such because the reader is aware that something about the text is different from the familiar, and that 'something' is the novum. Suvin also necessitates that nova be both realistically scientific in nature[104] and determine the entirety of what he refers to as the text's 'narrative logic'; that is, the novum must be central to the narrative in order for the text to truly be science fiction.[105] This understanding of science fiction, however, is problematic. It is unnecessarily prescriptive and isolating: there appears to be a solid black line between science fiction and other related modes of writing (such as the fairy tale, the fantasy, and the myth), and nova can be seen as a predetermined set of genre conventions or tropes. This is unfortunate, as many ostensibly science fiction texts do not fit into Suvin's rigid categorization, thus creating not only an impermeable box for science fiction, but refusing the possibility of cross-genre fertilisation. For example, if a text has space ships and faster-than-light travel (two generally accepted science fiction tropes) but is ostensibly about interpersonal relationships in a way that is not totally reliant on setting, such as in the case of Anne McCaffrey's *Crystal Singer* (1982), is this text still science fiction? A strict application of Suvin's definition would suggest it is not, because while the main character in McCaffrey's novel, Killashandra, cuts crystals for use in space ships, the mundane aspects of the text – her relationships with her various lovers – engages the reader's intellect rather

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[100] Bukatman, Scott, *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 8.
[101] Delany, Samuel R., '*Dichtung und* Science Fiction', in *Starboard Wine: More Notes on the Language of Science Fiction* (Pleasantville: Dragon Press, 1984), pp. 165-96, p. 176.
[102] Suvin, Darko, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 63, 66.
[103] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[104] *Ibid.*, p. 66.
[105] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

than the estranging elements. Science fiction texts that have been argued as having no discernable novum, such as in the case of J.G. Ballard's *Crash* (1973), are even more difficult to reconcile with Suvin's poetics.[106]

Though Suvin's poetics, which popularly constitute the background to much contemporary science fiction criticism, are problematic, the concept that science fiction texts contain an element or elements that differentiate the world of the text from the world of the reader is particularly useful to this thesis. During the New Wave period, however, these elements were no longer limited to the technological and scientific: the 'newness' in science fiction during the New Wave could be found in all levels of the text, from new treatments of old stories to the usage of experimental stylistics. This movement brought with it an unprecedented amount of self-awareness into the mode, signalling what Matthew Candelaria calls a 'ripeness' of genre.[107] While science fiction had, to this point, 'achieved considerable maturity as a genre […] it was still seen by outsiders in terms of pulp formulas and movie monsters',[108] and the New Wave reacted specifically against this stereotype. Just as metafiction examines 'the process of its own making',[109] much science fiction from this period became blatantly self-conscious in an attempt to revive stale conventions and plots. Rather than setting up a periscope to the future in order to learn about the present, as much science fiction had for decades, New Wave science fiction began to stare at itself in the mirror and begin to understand and analyse what it saw there, creating its own

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[106] Jorgensen, Darren, 'Postmodernism', in *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Mark Bould, Andrew M. Butler, Adam Roberts, and Sherryl Vint (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 279-87, p. 284. Further, much of Suvin's theorizing seems to be little more than a backhanded compliment, as he suggests that 95 percent of science fiction is 'perishable stuff' while in the same sentence arguing that the remaining percentage of science fiction is of the utmost importance (Suvin, *Metamorphoses,* p. vii). He also argues that science fiction engages a reader's cognition in a unique way, but that it is still vastly inferior to 'superior contemporary writing' (*Ibid.,* p. 30). For a far more complete examination of Suvin's mixed attitude towards science fiction than would be appropriate to attempt here, Cf. Luckhurst, pp. 16-17.

[107] Candelaria, Matthew, 'Before We Begin: Some Notes on Early SF Criticism', in *Speculations on Speculation: Theories of Science Fiction*, edited by James Gunn and Matthew Candelaria (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005), pp. xiii-xix, p. xiv.

[108] Atterbery, Brian, 'The magazine era: 1926-1960', in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 32-47, p. 45.

[109] Christensen, Inger, *The Meaning of Metafiction: A Critical Study of Selected Novels by Sterne, Nabokov, Barth and Beckett* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1981), p. 11.

'strange loop'. While some New Wave science fiction began to explore 'inner space', such as in the psychological investigations in Philip K. Dick's novels, other New Wave texts found another sort of inner space just as rich: the inner space of the science fiction text itself, presented as a construct to be dismantled in a metafictional manner. The 'novum' of metafictional science fiction is therefore not the setting or even any of the gadgetry, but the *way* in which the setting is presented.

This thesis will mirror this theoretical impulse insofar as it forms a basis for understanding science fiction as a kind of literary experimentalism. The circuitous relationship between the commentary in the science fiction texts analysed in this thesis and the 'theoretical' information presented in this chapter emphasises the ouroboros-like relationship between criticism and the creative act exposed by this thesis. Metafiction in science fiction does not exist only in rarefied circumstances: it is part of the underlying structure of every science fiction novel. As Kingsley Amis famously argues in his groundbreaking work in science fiction, *New Maps of Hell* (1961), 'what attracts people to science fiction is not in the first place literary quality in the accustomed sense of that term. But […] they may well come to find such quality there, perhaps in an unaccustomed form, if they ever take the trouble to look for it'.[110] Because there is no set 'theory' of metafiction,[111] science fiction's implicit metafictional qualities may indeed be this 'unaccustomed form'.

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[110] Amis, Kingsley, *New Maps of Hell: A Survey of Science Fiction* (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1961), p. 9.
[111] Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative*, p. 155.

Chapter 2:

Lens 1: Narrative Worlds in Science Fiction

'Nothing we look at is ever seen without some shift and flicker – that constant flaking of vision which we take as imperfections of the eye or simply the instability of attention itself; and we ignore this illusory screen for the solid reality behind it. But the solid reality is the illusion; the shift and flicker is all there is.' – Samuel R. Delany, 'Shadows'[1]

This and the following chapter have been designed to examine the postulates put forth in the first chapter. I argue that if we accept this postulated series of parallels between science fiction, metafiction, possible worlds, and text-world theory and apply it rigorously to a narratological model of science fiction, science fiction may be understood as not merely narratives about the future nor even thoughtful examination of the present, but highly sophisticated literary experiments that investigate fictional ontology. This is not a direct structuralist approach to science fiction, though it shares aims and conclusions with some structuralist notions of science fiction.[2] Instead, this chapter examines the underlying ontological deep structure of two science fiction texts and how this deep structure affects the involvement of the reader or the author with each text. In this way, the science fiction texts analysed in this chapter and the next are fictional lenses that facilitate a reader's understanding of how fictional worlds work in relation to the real world or exhibit a change in the power an author has over a text, which are effects that arise out of the self-awareness apparent in these texts.

It is worth noting, however, that metafiction deriving from the nested story technique that both of these texts employ does not necessitate that all texts with nested narratives are metafictional. The device aligns itself with metafiction when it creates a salient layered structure alongside a thematic concern with concepts of reality or fictionality. Metafiction in these kinds of narratives therefore derives from a fusion of narrative structure and narrative theme. In science fiction,

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[1] Delany, Samuel R., 'Shadows', in *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction* (Elizabethtown, NY: Dragon Press, 1977), pp. 51-134, p. 51-2.

[2] That is, an identification of an underlying structure that makes science fiction readily identifiable and quantifiable, particularly paying homage of the work of Darko Suvin, Tzvetan Todorov, Christine Brooke-Rose, and Eric S. Rabkin.

metafiction and the sort of layered structure implicit in a nested narrative often combine as a unified literary device, and this occurs when a narrative invokes possible worlds through a textual deictic shift, creating a multi-layered narrative.

As the first chapter explains, science fictional worlds and possible worlds share a common underlying hypothetical structure. Both the science fiction world and possible worlds are presented as incompossible with the actual world and are therefore used as experimental spheres, implying that these counterfactual worlds are distinct from the actual world. This particular invocation of science fiction worlds partially solves the problem Ruth Ronen identifies in equating fictional worlds with possible worlds,[3] and Alvin Platinga suggests this relationship from the perspective of possible worlds theory in the following way: 'we can take a book to be, not a set of propositions, but a proposition true just in one world'.[4] While this describes fiction in general to a certain extent, it almost serves as an accidental definition of a science fiction text from an ontological point of view. The world presented in the science fiction text may therefore be understood as a proposition (equivalent to a generous understanding of Suvin's novum, or one of Leibniz's monads) that exists in only one world. In effect, these propositions are part of the world-building process.

In the case of narrative worlds, however, this world-building process becomes more complicated than compiling a list of propositions: in reading a text, a reader decodes the building blocks of the narrative world through the act of reading of the text and therefore participates in the creation of the fictional world.[5] The implication that a reader (re)creates a text suggests a tiered relationship between the actual world of a reader, his or her reconstruction of a text, and the reconstituted narrative world. The result of this is a terraced, layered effect where one world appears to sit 'inside' another. Therefore, the narrative world the reader (re)creates is akin to the incompossible counterfactual world of the philosopher, and has a similar ontological status. This device can be used several times over, creating multiple narrative levels, such as in the case of the well-

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[3] Ronen, Ruth, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 50-1.

[4] Platinga, Alvin, 'Actualism and Possible Worlds', in *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings*, 2nd edition, edited by Michael J. Loux (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 168-87, p. 173.

[5] Doležel, Lubomír, *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 21; Iser, Wolfgang, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 65.

known story-within-a-story-within-a-story technique often used in Gothic fiction,[6] which Robert Alter refers to as a 'Chinese Box' form.[7] This understanding of narrative is what Roland Barthes has identified as 'vertical rather than horizontal. As he says in 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives' (1977):

> To understand a narrative is not merely to follow the unfolding of the story, it is also to recognize its construction in 'storeys', to project the horizontal concretations of the narrative 'thread' onto an implicitly vertical axis; to read (to listen to) narrative is not merely a move from one word to the next, it is also a move from one level to the next.[8]

This vertical understanding of a narrative allows narrative layers to be understood as moveable parts of a text, just as moveable in some respects as characters, words, and sentences.

In a vertical reading of a multi-layered text, therefore, a reader moves through 'different spheres of reality', to use Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's phrase. Berger and Luckmann describe this movement between levels as a 'kind of shock […] caused by the shift in attentiveness that the transition entails'.[9] Though Berger and Luckmann refer in their book to the multiple 'spheres of reality' present in the actual world (such as the dream world and the waking world), this conceptualization also applies to narrative levels and the movement through them during the experience of reality. The movement between narrative levels is therefore similar, for example, to movement between the apparent reality of the dream state and the apparent reality of the waking world. Within a single text, the movement between fictional worlds creates a similar transitory moment with a similar effect on the reader: that of shock due to the shift in ontological stability. To use the terminology of cognitive poetics, movement between fictional worlds requires a reader to redefine a text's deictic

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[6] Sage, Victor, 'Irish Gothic: C.R. Maturin and J.S. LeFanu', in *A Companion to the Gothic*, edited by David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 2000), pp. 81-93, p. 86.

[7] Alter, Robert, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 187.

[8] Barthes, Roland, 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives', in *Image, Music, Text*, translated by Stephen Heath (Hammersmith: Fontana Press, 1977), pp. 79-124, p. 87.

[9] Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 38.

centre,[10] thus reminding the readers of a text's fictionality. This, as was argued in the first chapter, is similar to the effect metafiction has on readers. These transitions are moments of literary turbulence: just as turbulence in an aircraft may cause passengers to feel uneasy with the fact they are flying several thousand feet above the ground, literary turbulence reminds readers that the text world they had been immersed in is completely fictional. In this way, metafiction that derives from the movement from one level of narrative to another reformulates the relationship between author, text, and reader in a specifically ontological fashion.

Importantly, this facet of science fiction pivots on the mode's relationship with concepts of mimesis and fictional representation. Whilst science fiction often exhibits what might be termed a transparent narrative,[11] its lack of apparent mimesis complicates this transparency. Though it presents a narrative world, science fiction does not necessarily (re)present any facet of the actual world except in an extrapolative way. As Albert Wendland has argued, science fiction 'does not imitate reality, it imitates realism',[12] and in this way, it is possible to read science fiction as a 'simulacrum of simulation', Baudrillard's third order of simulacra.[13] To put it another way, in this understanding, science fiction is a floating signifier with no signified and does not represent any real-world objects. This simulation of realism further links science fiction to concepts of metafiction, as was argued in chapter 1. Science fiction that foregrounds this simulation in some manner or another, whether in instances of direct metafictional breaks or as an entire text of performed metafiction, can therefore be considered metafictional science fiction. Though metafictional science fiction may be understood as

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[10] Stockwell, Peter, *Cognitive Poetics: An introduction* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 46.

[11] Zavarzedah, Mas'ud, *The Mythopoeic Reality: The Postwar American Nonfiction Novel* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), p. 32. Of course, many if not all of the examples examined in this thesis do *not* have what would normally be termed transparent narratives, but this is the exception rather than the rule.

[12] Wendland, Albert, *Science, Myth, and the Fictional Creation of Alien Worlds* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), p. 16 (sic).

[13] Baudrillard, Jean, 'Simulacra and Science Fiction', in *Simulacra and Simulation*, translated by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010), pp.121-127, p.121. Baudrillard categorizes science fiction as the 'second order' of the simulacra, where it is 'founded on energy', and only suggests a theoretical link between science fiction and the third order because 'the good old imaginary of science fiction is dead' (p. 121). This seems, however, too reductive in light of the experimentalism of the New Wave.

mimetic with reference to its narrative simulation of realism, its metafictionality moves from the mimetic to the poietic.

Nested narratives can be used at varying degrees of complexity, and this chapter moves from the simple to the complex in an attempt to uncover the concerns this technique voices in science fiction. The stories-within-stories ostensibly written by Kilgore Trout in Kurt Vonnegut's novels provide an excellent example of a simple application of this narrative device. A portion of Trout's *Pan Galactic Three-Day Pass* nests neatly within some of the final scenes of *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater* (1965), creating a microcosm of this device. The analysis of this short passage will stand as a model for this kind of narratological analysis throughout the rest of the thesis. I will then turn my attention to the final section of Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions* (1973), when internal author Philboyd Studge enters his text and confronts his creation, Kilgore Trout. Though each of these texts is a science fiction text in its own right, both novels use their science fiction backdrop as a methodology for examining fictional issues.

Pan Galactic Three-Day Pass

As previously noted, the nested narrative device has its origins, at least as far as the affect on the reader is concerned, partly in the European Gothic novel. When used in a Gothic narrative, the nested narrative serves to complicate, among other things, the 'truth value' of a text: it lends a certain believability to the text due to the witness structure it invokes,[14] but significantly this believability has caveats given the often supernatural nature of events in such texts.[15] The resulting effect on the reader is Todorov's Fantastic, an 'evanescent'[16] moment of 'hesitation'[17] on the part of the reader and/or character about whether or not to see the events presented in the narrative as real. In science fiction, this Fantastic

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[14] Sage, Victor, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (Houndmills: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1988), p. xix.

[15] Believability here does not mean that the readers necessarily assume the narrative to be true; instead, believability suggests an accurate portrayal of real-world events. As with all fiction, the 'real' part of the text is located in the probability of it happening, not the actual event itself.

[16] Brooke-Rose, Christine, *Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, especially of the fantastic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 63.

[17] Todorov, Tzvetan, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, translated by Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 25.

affect is somewhat negated through the use of a nested narrative as it foregrounds the fictionality of a text and the indecisiveness disappears, allowing the text to become either possible or impossible (the uncanny or 'marvelous', to use Todorov's vocabulary, or compossible or incompossible according to Leibniz and Deleuze).[18] While the nested narrative may occasionally function in science fiction in the same way it does in the Fantastic, it also functions to remind readers of the fictionality of the story they are reading. This section deals specifically with this narratological function of the story-within-a-story.

While *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater* has many metafictional moments, some of which have been discussed in chapter 1, it also contains one of the most involved summaries of a Kilgore Trout story in all of Vonnegut's works. On his bus journey to Indianapolis, Eliot Rosewater reads Trout's novel *Pan Galactic Three-Day Pass*. Readers of *Rosewater* are treated to three layers of narrative during Rosewater's trip. First, there is a direct quotation from Trout's novel. Secondly, the narrator (ostensibly Vonnegut) summarizes the majority of the action in Trout's novel. Last is a layer that narrates the events around Rosewater as he reads. The narrative moves from one layer to another with fairly obvious changes, some typographical, such as a change in typeface and page layout, and others that are an almost undetectable shift of narrative voice.

The outer layer of the narrative, made up of the general events of the text to this point, illustrates events such as Rosewater settling down to read the novel on the bus, the journey of the bus itself, and anything that happens to or around Rosewater as he is reading. The first shift between this layer and the second, the summary of the Trout novel, is a smooth one:

> There was more fussing outside the bus, but Eliot didn't think it had anything to do with him. He was immediately enchanted by the book, so much so that he didn't even notice when the bus pulled away. It was an exciting story, all about a man…[19]

In this selection, the reader follows Rosewater's attention from the events outside the bus to the narrative of the novel he is reading. His attention swiftly comes to stand in for the reader's attention, and the reader's attention therefore moves fluidly from the overall narrative to the internal novel in a single sentence ('It was

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[18] Todorov firmly places science fiction into his category of the 'marvelous' (*Fantastic*, p. 56-7).

[19] Vonnegut, Kurt, *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater; or, Pearls before Swine* (London: Vintage, 1992), p. 152.

an exciting story, all about a man…'). Interestingly, this moment reflects upon the distracting ability not only of fiction in general, but science fiction specifically through the use of the word 'enchanted' and Rosewater's lack of attention to the movement of the bus once engrossed in his reading.

The text remains at this secondary narrative level for some time and summarizes the majority of the novel as Rosewater reads. Instead of concerning itself with the events of the story, however, the summary comments about the characters and the philosophy driving the novel. For example, the main character, Sergeant Raymond Boyle, is described in the following way: 'Boyle wasn't a technician. He was an English teacher'.[20] This is unusual enough within a science fiction context to raise the eyebrows of anyone familiar with the mode's conventions, and the summary here, like *Rosewater* as a whole,[21] plays on the frustration of readerly expectations.

Rather than moving forward with the events of the story, the summary legitimizes this choice of character for the majority of the time the narrative remains at this level. Because of the disruption to the narrative caused by this argument, the commentary about Boyle can be read as a kind of literary turbulence and therefore metafictional. According to the summary, Boyle was chosen because

> Earth was the only place in the whole known universe where language was used. It was a unique Earthling invention. […] The reason creatures wanted to use language instead of mental telepathy was that they found out they could get so much more done with language.[22]

The focus on the power of speech and verbal language, like the choice of an English-teaching hero, seems somewhat unusual in a science fiction context, particularly in 1963 when the New Wave was only beginning. Whilst a reader does not need to know of the shift in science fiction towards literary concerns at the time of the novel's publication, this shift, along with the shifting narrative levels, makes this emphasis all the more intriguing. In this case, the text foregrounds not any of the typographical aspects of the written word, but the use of language in general. Significantly, it subverts a much more common science

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[20] *Ibid.*
[21] Chapter 1 addressed *Rosewater*'s apparent lack of science fictionality and stated it can be understood as a piece of economic science fiction.
[22] Vonnegut, *Rosewater*, p. 152.

fiction trope, that of telepathy somehow being more powerful than normal human speech,[23] a move that makes verbal human language a super-foregrounded figure in this passage.

In this case, it is possible and useful to read this selection as a short piece on the power of language in relation to science and technology. As was the case with *Rosewater* as a whole, the summary of Trout's novel appears to be challenging the (then current) mega-text of science fiction through this subversion. Placing language – the building blocks of narratives – upon a pedestal as an invention with more importance and usefulness than any technology bestows upon language a power that technology is incapable of having. As the summary says, language can 'get so much more done'.[24] What this means is not immediately clear, though the context suggests a generally positive view: language replaces interest in information and makes it possible 'to start thinking in terms of *projects*'.[25] This suggests that language engenders not only a cooperative atmosphere, but also an atmosphere that facilitates the kind of long-term work necessary for a project. Verbal language appears to slow down thought processes to the point where it is possible to concentrate on a single topic at a time. Though telepathy is not normally considered a technological feat, it is certainly possible to read it as a tool,[26] particularly as it often serves the same estranging narrative purpose as a piece of technology in a science fiction text. When read metafictionally, therefore, this presentation of language as a method of communication that is more functional than 'higher' forms of communication (e.g. telepathy) suggests that human speech and therefore communicative creations such as books and narratives are better at influencing the world than technology.[27]

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[23] This theme emerges in varied texts, such as the telepathic abilities of some in Anne McCaffrey's Talent Universe stories and novels where the various telepathic characters are considered in some ways superhuman. Likewise, this ability is presented in the *X-Men* franchise across both film and comic books in both positive and negative lights.

[24] Vonnegut, *Rosewater*, p. 152.

[25] *Ibid*.

[26] Cf. Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2011), p. 84-85.

[27] Other Vonnegut texts elaborate upon this theme, such as in the case of Trout's Nobel Prize for services to mental health and his influence upon Dwayne Hoover in *Breakfast of Champions* (1973) (p. 15), and in his non-fictional writings, where he refers to the purpose of the artist as similar to that of a 'coal-mine canary'

At this point, the text shifts from this commentary fully back into summary mode, and then goes on to provide a portion of *Pan Galactic Three-Day Pass* itself. This quoted passage within the overall narrative of *Rosewater* physically disrupts the flow of the narrative for the reader in a physical way: the text is blocked and indented. Significantly, this selection underlines a personal moment of universal proportions and specifically focuses on the importance of language:

> 'Is it – is it – Mom?' said Boyle, fighting back the tears. 'Is it Pop?
> Is it Nancy?' Nancy was the girl next door. 'Is it Gramps?'
> 'Son-' said the C.O., 'brace yourself. I hate to tell you this: It isn't
> *who* that has died. It's *what* has died.'
> 'What's died?'
> 'What's died, my boy, is the Milky Way.'[28]

While the emphasis in this passage on the difference between the death of a loved one and the death of a galaxy would be here regardless of the text, the fact that the C.O. emphasises the difference between 'who' and 'what' and the typography of the quoted passage (physically inset within the previous narrative layer) further highlights the fictionality of the death of the galaxy. Eliot is (ostensibly) in the Milky Way while reading, and thus the death of the Milky Way must be fictional for him to read the novel. Because this extract is found within a novel being read by a character, himself in a novel (*Rosewater*), which is in turn being read by a reader in the actual world, the fictionality of the character is highlighted as well.[29] This narratological construct mirrors the act of reading, thus reminding the reader of their own position as reader, as well as emphasising the importance of single words within a text.

The shift back to the main narrative level is somewhat more complex than the shift away from it. Because this is a complicated shift, it is worth quoting in entirety.

> 'What's died, my boy, is the Milky Way.'

(Vonnegut, Kurt, 'Playboy Interview', in *Wampeters, Foma & Granfalloons (Opinions)* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974), pp. 265-313, p. 266).

[28] Vonnegut, *Rosewater*, p. 153.

[29] A second shift of this sort happens once Rosewater has arrived at Indianapolis, where he remembers a book about the Dresden firestorms. The text contains a quoted passage from this book (p. 154). Interestingly, given Vonnegut's personal history with Dresden and his repeated narrative attempts to face the atrocities he witnessed there, this passage and its proximity to the passage from Trout's novel might therefore be seen as an attempt to 'fictionalize' the events in Dresden as a coping device.

Eliot looked up from his reading. Rosewater County was gone. He did not miss it.

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When the bus stopped in Nashville, Indiana, the seat of Brown county, Eliot glanced up again, studied the fire apparatus on view there. He thought of buying Nashville some really nice equipment, but decided against it. He didn't think the people would take good care of it. Nashville was an arts and crafts center, so it wasn't surprising that Eliot also saw a glassblower making Christmas-tree ornaments in June.

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Eliot didn't look up again until the bus reached the outskirts of Indianapolis.[30]

As before, the reader's attention follows Rosewater's, but instead of shifting from the layer of the quoted Trout novel to the summary once more, it shifts directly back to the main narrative, as if distracted. In a moment of literary word painting, the narrative level moves back to the main level as Rosewater looks up from his book and realises where he is. This happens several times, and in this part of the journey the reader's viewpoint is limited to observing Rosewater when he looks away from his book: first in Nashville, and then when he arrives in Indianapolis, with the periods without readerly access punctuated with section breaks. While this section of *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater* is useful in a generically metafictional fashion, as it illustrates a basic method of disrupting a reader's attention and foregrounding the fictionality of a text, it also serves as a fairly straightforward example of how possible worlds, text worlds, and metafiction work together.

If we label each narrative level in this selection, the relationship between text worlds and narrative levels becomes easier to illustrate. If we call the overall narrative of the text N^1, the Trout novel's summary N^2, and the excerpt from the Trout novel N^3, then we can illustrate a reader's movement between the layers of text more clearly. It is important to first note that a narrative or text world is not necessarily the same as a narrative layer or level in this thesis: while N^2 and N^3 may appear to nest inside each other because of the order they are introduced in relation to N^1, they in fact refer to the same *text* world, but by the way of different

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[30] *Ibid.*, p. 153. The three asterisks stand in for section breaks in the original text.

narrative layers. The main difference between N^2 and N^3, therefore, might be described as a difference of *frame* rather than world. Frames in general 'organise involvement',[31] and this is precisely what happens in this passage. When the narrative is in N^2, the reader is 'reading' the Trout novel (over Rosewater's shoulder, so to speak): the reader steps inside N^1 and therefore gains direct access to N^3. This is different from a case where N^3 (for this particular analysis' purpose, a level that denotes an internal novel) is a real novel that a reader can access outside of N^1; *Pan Galactic Three-Day Pass* can only be accessed via Vonnegut's novel. The interaction between worlds here is direct and one-way, both for the reader and for Rosewater. The reader may move into Rosewater's world, but Rosewater seems unable (or perhaps uninterested in) moving into the reader's world.[32]

This passage, therefore, begins in N^1, shifts into N^2 as the summary takes over, and then moves into N^3 during the quoted passage. It then moves from N^3 directly back to N^1, and remains there until Rosewater arrives in Indianapolis. The spatial relationship between these three is illustrated in the following figure (Figure 2.1):

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[31] Goffman, Erving, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1974), p. 345.

[32] This makes the permeability of the narrative layers distinctly different from those in a first person narrative such as Kage Baker's *In The Garden of Iden* (1997), where the main character speaks directly to the reader. The permeability of *Rosewater*'s layers is one-way, whereas in first person narratives it may be two-way.
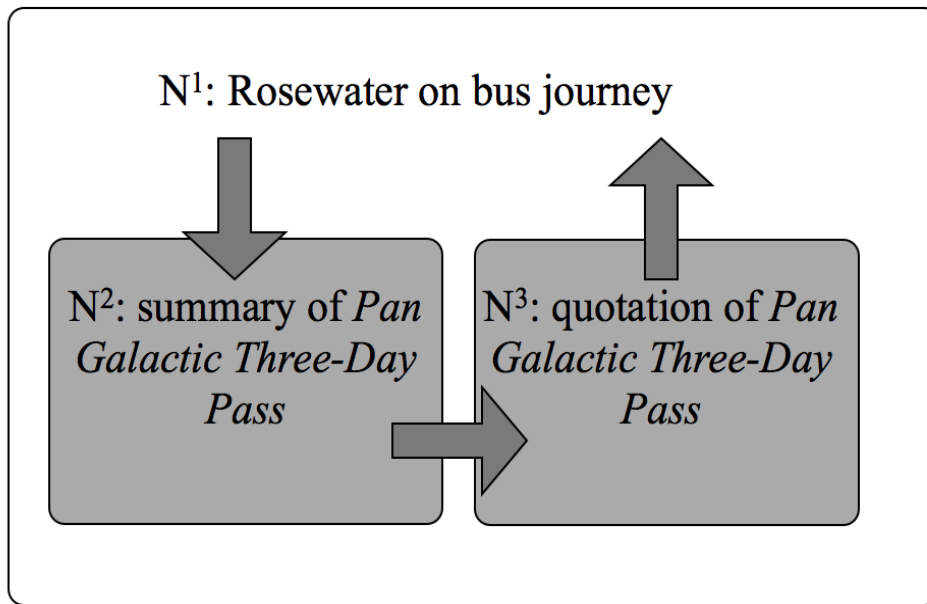
Figure 2.1: Diagram of the narrative worlds in Rosewater's bus journey; the arrows denote the attention of the reader.

As this figure shows, both N^2 and N^3 are nested within N^1, but are not nested inside each other, as was mentioned earlier. While both of these narrative levels refer (or represent) the same text world, they are not, in fact, the same narrative world, and as such are shown as separate in this diagram.

I have conspicuously left a layer out of this diagram: N' (N-prime), which, in this case, is the narrative layer of the person reading *Rosewater*. All forays into fiction may be understood as beginning with N', and it is thus an important layer to consider when looking at the interaction of possible worlds and metafiction. This complicates the diagram above in several ways, all of which stem from explicating the exact relationship between N^1 and N'. Simply put, whether or not a novel is inside the known world must be made explicit. While this may seem to be the case, a novel is also more than words on a page placed between two covers: it resides within the actual world of the reader. This complicates matters, however, when the reality values of the presented fictional world and the actual world are considered, particularly with reference to fictional characters and objects.

One way of discussing the reality values of fictional objects comes from Alexius Meinong. R.M. Sainsbury describes this at length in his book *Fiction and Fictionalism* (2010). The Meinongian view suggests that a narrative world and all of its constituents do not exist, but are nonetheless real:

> fictional characters (and other purely fictional things) are real,
> actual, perhaps in some sense concrete, but nonexistent. Their
> nonexistence explains why we don't bump into them, and why they
> don't contribute to global warming. Their reality means we can
> refer to them, and say things about them that are genuinely true.
> […] The nonexistent things belong to our reality, not just to the
> world of fiction.[33]

Sainsbury implies that the narrative world is inside the actual world, insofar as something 'real, actual, … concrete, but nonexistent' can be inside anything. The concept of nonexistents in this particular philosophy breaks down somewhat in the face of science fiction: while the worlds and characters of amodal fiction might be labelled nonexistent by Meinongians because we (as readers) do not notice their effects on our world and we cannot see them in reality, this seems rooted in an underlying assumption that these narrative worlds are essentially reflections of the actual world.[34] They are part of the actual world but exist, quite literally, only as fictions. Science fiction, however, does not appear to reflect the actual world (nor does it pretend to do so), except in an extrapolative fashion,[35] and this complicates matters. As was argued earlier, it is possible to say that science fiction does not reflect anything real, and at most only refracts the present through various lenses and prisms to create 'new' worlds. These new worlds are hypothetical, counterfactual worlds, 'what if' constructions with plot lines and characters. This suggests, therefore, that while amodal fiction appears to have close links to the actual world both phenomenologically and ontologically, science fiction, while arguably part of the actual world in the same way as amodal fiction, refers to *non-actual* nonexistents and therefore brings something not of the actual world into existence in the actual world. Science fiction's ontological existence is therefore problematised because of its hypothetical construction. This liminal space is itself the essence of a possible world: an incompossible world accessible only through the presence of language. Albert Wendland has said that science fiction only

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[33] Sainsbury, R.M., *Fiction and Fictionalism* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 44-5.

[34] This is also why many argue against the equation of possible worlds with fictional worlds, as was noted in the introduction.

[35] Cf. Delany, Samuel R. '*Dichtung und* Science Fiction' in *Starboard Wine: More Notes on the Language of Science Fiction* (Pleasantville: Dragon Press, 1984), pp. 165-96, p. 176.

pretends to the fiction,[36] and it is as this pretence that science fiction can be understood as a possible world.

The Meinongian understanding of narrative existence impacts upon this reading of narrative levels in *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater* in several ways. As characters in fiction are seen as nonexistent entities, their mere existence suggests the incompossibility of their inhabited world with the world of the reader. This creates a clear break between the two worlds, and therefore suggests a clear boundary between the narrative world within the text and the world outside it. Because *Pan Galactic Three-Day Pass* is presented not only as a work of fiction, but a work of *science fiction*, however, it is possible to understand its narrative world as also distinct from Rosewater's world. Each embedded text world (N^1 and N^3; N^2 is purely a narrative world) is nonexistent in context and therefore incompossible with the other two. Therefore, if *Rosewater*'s status as a science fiction text is accepted, then it can be seen as a thought experiment just as in the case of all science fiction. This affects the relationship between the overall narrative world of the text (N^1) and the narrative world of the reader (N'), making the narrative worlds bounded by the text (the border between N^1 and N') counterfactual worlds. A reader can be seen as intuitively understanding the fictionality of the text because its narrative structure posits it as a 'what if' question. This allows for an illustration of a counterfactual narrative world used as a metafictional device. In the case of this passage from *Rosewater*, this metafictional device is doubled (as N^1 and N^3 are both blatantly text worlds inside a larger world), which in turn brings direct attention to the overall novel's fictionality. Readers are aware not only that Rosewater himself is a reader looking in on a possible world (one created by language, made explicit in the excerpt from and summary of *Pan Galactic Three-Day Pass*), but that the reader of the Vonnegut text itself mirrors this process. In this specific circumstance, therefore, the narrative nature of the science fiction text can be used in order to create an entire narrative that works as a metafictional device.

The Death of Trout: *Breakfast of Champions*

While *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater* exemplifies this movement between narrative layers as exhibited in a 'nested' narrative form, narrative layering also takes other forms. The internal author is another common device used to create

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[36] Wendland, p. 16.

narrative layering, and does so in a distinctly different manner than that of the internal text. This device is fairly common in metafiction throughout history, and is seen in texts ranging from Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (1380s-1400) to John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969). In the typical presentation, this device interrupts a text with commentary from the author, generally about the action or the creation of the text, and thus causes narrative disruption. This creates a similar terraced effect to that of internal texts: the interruption narrates the gap between the world of the author and the world of the overall narrative. The internalised author, therefore, creates another narrative world (denoted by N^2 in the following analysis), much in the same way that using an inset quotation from another text does. In these instances, the shift between narrative levels is more subtle than in the case of a quoted internal text: the narrative uses a diegetic shift only involving a changeover in narrative voice rather than a physical, typographical shift.[37]

While postmodern fiction has its fair share of internal authors, science fiction in general is not much given to internalising its authors for literary purposes. In fact, the majority of science fiction writers who do so are analysed in the present thesis. One author who does so, however, stands out significantly: Kurt Vonnegut, and his creation Kilgore Trout. Over the course of six novels and thirty years, Vonnegut developed the character of science fiction author Kilgore Trout, at once an alter ego for Vonnegut and a metonym for science fiction authors as a whole. In this thesis, I would like to move away from biographical readings of Trout and look instead of his direct interaction with Vonnegut-as-narrator (as fictional alter-ego Philboyd Studge) at the end of *Breakfast of Champions* (1973). As Michelle Persell has pointed out, 'there are few more mundane observations to offer [about] Kurt Vonnegut than the fact that he writes about writing',[38] and as such this analysis focuses more on what Vonnegut and Trout's interactions say about fiction rather than the writing process. In doing so, this analysis will create a second model of how science fiction narratives allows for metafiction on a macro, megametaphorical level.

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[37] Both of these deigetic shifts fall under the larger category of 'textual shifts' that Peter Stockwell identifies, as do most manifestations of metaleptic devices (*Cognitive Poetics*, p. 54-5).

[38] Persell, Michelle, 'It's All Play-Acting: Authorship and Identity in the Novels of Kurt Vonnegut', in *Kurt Vonnegut: Images and Representations*, edited by Marc Leeds and Peter J. Reed (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), pp. 39-50, p. 39.

For the purposes of this analysis, N^1 will be understood as the narrative world that Kilgore Trout, Dwayne Hoover, and the other main characters inhabit. The narrative layer created when Vonnegut-the-narrator (here referred to as Philboyd Studge, as the first chapter of the book implies[39]) enters the text will be N^3, and N^2 in this case is the narrative layer cohabited by both Trout and Studge. N' is the 'void' that Studge normally inhabits as invisible author,[40] the area 'behind' N^1, N^2 and N^3. This is a narrative level implied but not directly invoked in *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*.[41] Rather than conflating N^2 and N^3, I have separated them into experiential spheres, the former being where Studge only breaks into the main narrative (N^1) through passing comments, and the latter the text world created where Studge and Trout interact directly (N^2), as there is a clear differentiation in the text between moments when Studge comments on the text and when he actively engages with the text.

While the majority of this analysis concerns itself with the action in the epilogue of *Breakfast of Champions*, it is worth examining some of the themes and issues built up during the majority of the book as they play integral roles in the final section. The first of these issues are the images of the mirror and the lens in the novel. Mirrors and lenses in glasses are both described later as being called 'leaks',[42] a term derived from Kilgore Trout's novels. Rather than simply being an unusual name for reflective and refractive surfaces, the use of 'leak' seems specifically linked to crossing borderlines. For example, when the term is first introduced in the book, Trout jokes to a small child approaching a mirror, 'Don't get too near that leak. You wouldn't want to wind up in some other universe, would you?'.[43] Likewise, the lenses in Studge's glasses, which he wears while he is present in the pivotal cocktail lounge sequence, are described as 'two holes into another universe'.[44] It seems that mirrors and lenses in this novel do not merely refract light but in fact entire universes and serve as doorways (or, literally, windows) into these other universes.

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[39] Vonnegut, Kurt, *Breakfast of Champions; or, Goodbye Blue Monday* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 4, 6.
[40] *Ibid*., p. 294.
[41] While the analysis of *Rosewater* considered the relationship of the narrative to the reader, in *Breakfast of Champions* this concerned is replaced with an examination of the relationship between author and narrative, and therefore the 'void' becomes N'.
[42] Vonnegut, *Breakfast*, p. 19, p. 90.
[43] *Ibid*., p. 19.
[44] *Ibid*., p. 193.

The second major issue that comes into play in the epilogue is the overt fictionality of the novel itself. These explicit metafictional passages, which take place in N^3, are full of comments such as 'Trout was a famous made-up person in my books',[45] thus directly foregrounding the fictionality of the book's characters.[46] Later on, Studge describes his influence on various characters a similarly overt manner:

> I had made him [Dwayne Hoover] up, of course – and his pilot, too. I put Colonel Looseleaf Harper, the man who had dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki, Japan, at the controls.
>
> I made Rosewater an alcoholic in another book. I now had him reasonably well sobered up, with the help of Alcoholics Anonymous. I had him use his new-found sobriety to explore, among other things, the supposed spiritual and physical benefits of sexual orgies with strangers in New York City. He was only confused so far.
>
> I could have killed him, and his pilot too, but I let them live on.[47]

These kinds of passages foreground Studge's role in the narrative, illustrating him as an omnipotent and omnipresent creator and manipulator in what Donald E. Morse considers a parody of the postmodern novel.[48] The intrusion of the creator's voice in N^3 removes any semblance of 'reality' that the text may have had before, showing the characters as constructs, and enforces its existence as 'story'.

This foregrounded fictionality is a part of a larger foregrounded aspect of the text, namely its status as a science fiction narrative. Just as *Rosewater* is not overtly science fictional, *Breakfast of Champions* does not appear science fictional from a convention-based standpoint, nor does it contain any significant alterations from the known world that might encourage cognitive estrangement.[49] What it does contain, however, are several verbal estranging devices modelled on similar verbal devices found in texts that would be more obviously described as science fiction. The narrative of *Breakfast of Champions* is dotted with phrases like 'in

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[45] *Ibid.*, p. 151.

[46] This is one of many moments when Studge's voice becomes Vonnegut's, blurring the distinction between the two.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 269.

[48] Morse, Donald E., *The Novels of Kurt Vonnegut: Imagining Being an American* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2003), p. 100.

[49] This is, of course, aside from the short summaries of Trout novels found in N^3.

Dwayne's part of the planet',[50] references to humans as 'Earthlings',[51] and Earth is described as 'planet Earth'[52] or just 'the planet'.[53] Further, much of the world-building background in the first portion of the novel is described as if it is somewhat alien to the author. For example, the Studge's description of how flags show respect to each other is both child-like and journalistic: 'Flag-dipping was a form of friendly and respectful salute, which consisted of bringing the flag on a stick closer to the ground, then raising it up again'.[54] This description of a highly ritualised action shows it as somewhat absurd and alien to the narrator. Because the narrative takes this distanced stance to its own content, this can be read as an estranged narrative in a very technical sense. The reason the science fiction status of *Breakfast of Champions* is significant derives from its foregrounded fictionality: the text world is presented as a posited, hypothetical world (one quite possibly compossible with the actual world), both through these linguistic estranging devices and the blatant textuality exposed in N^3. As such, anything the text suggests about fictionality in general can also be applied to science fiction.

These three key issues – fictionality, the idea of 'leaks' being a way between universes, and the novel's reliance on verbal estranging devices to cast it in a science fiction mode – form the background necessary for understanding exactly what happens during the final few chapters and epilogue of the novel. The sequence, which Studge refers to as a 'spiritual climax',[55] begins with Studge placing himself in the cocktail lounge of the Holiday Inn just as Kilgore Trout enters, thus creating N^2, a narrative world where Trout and Studge can coexist and interact. N^2 is differentiated physically through the same sort of section markers that have been used throughout the novel: it can therefore only be understood as a separate layer if it is seen as an experimental sphere where two parts of a text interact that would not normally do so.[56] In this sequence, Philboyd Studge moves from the 'void' to N^2, eventually confronts Kilgore Trout and then frees

[50] Vonnegut, *Breakfast*, p. 50.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 7, 12.

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 218.

[56] The vast majority of Vonnegut's novels are punctuated by section breaks; while most simply use a break in the text, two use actual images: a fire company's emblem in *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater* and arrows in *Breakfast of Champions*. This sectioning of the text allows for a smooth incorporation of the authorial voice as part of the overall narrative in all of the novels, and makes them appear like a series of vignettes rather than full-length novels.

him. While this may seem fairly standard postmodernist fare with regards to internal authors,[57] the way in which it is done and, specifically, its use of narrative worlds is worth examining.

At the beginning of this sequence, although Studge is physically in the cocktail lounge, no character seems particularly aware of his presence. Trout begins 'feeling spooky', as though he has a sort of sixth sense that tells him something is amiss.[58] To him, though, Studge is only visible as a pair of mirrored glasses (leaks).[59] This description of Studge's presence in N^2 is interesting as it suggests, given what has been implied earlier in the novel about leaks, that it is through these glasses he enters – and, as author, also creates – this narrative layer. The image of reflective glasses also emphasises not only the mimetic or representative aspects implicit in the act of fiction writing, but also the watchfulness of the author from behind the lenses. In turn, this imagery can be understood as a metonym for a particular kind of authorship: the literally reflective and watchful writer.

Trout soon becomes aware of Studge's presence. Studge admits that of all the characters he created, Trout was the only one with 'enough imagination to suspect he might be the creation of another human being',[60] and thought that he might be a 'character in a book by somebody who wants to write about somebody who suffers all the time'.[61] Trout's self-awareness, bestowed upon him by Studge, is the first implication that Studge's authorial power over his characters may not be absolute. This faltering of the authoritarian form of authorship links this sequence to Roland Barthes' suggestion in his essay 'The Death of the Author' (1968) that authorial power is being broken down. At this point, the narrative dips back into what reads as though it is a mixture of N^1 and N^3, flipping back and forth from straightforward narration and the commentary of N^3, as Studge puts Trout and Dwayne Hoover through their final, fateful interaction. However, this is in fact still N^2, as the narrative still occasionally mentions that

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[57] An author relinquishing or losing control over their characters is not uncommon in postmodern fiction; it might be argued that this happens, for example, in John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

[58] Vonnegut, *Breakfast*., p. 236.

[59] *Ibid*.

[60] *Ibid*., p. 240.

[61] *Ibid*., p. 241. This comment forms an interesting parallel between Kilgore Trout and Kid, the main character in Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren*, which will be analysed in Chapter 6.

Studge remains in the cocktail lounge, watchful throughout the action.[62] As

Hoover and Trout move away from the cocktail lounge, Studge follows, keeping

>a respectful distance between myself and all the violence – even
>though I had created Dwayne and his violence and the city, and the
>sky above and the Earth below. Even so, I came out of the riot
>with a broken watch crystal and what turned out later to be a
>broken toe. Somebody jumped backwards to get out of Dwayne's
>way. He broke my watch crystal, even though I created him, and
>he broke my toe.[63]

This passage again suggests that Studge's authority has continued to crumble: his own characters have begun to overpower him and physically injure him. This passage also shows how physical Studge's presence has become: he is no longer the watcher behind his 'leaks'. Later on, Kazak, a Doberman pinscher that was a major character in a previous draft of the novel, attacks him in hopes of fatally injuring him.[64] In the commentary, Studge only remarks, 'I should have known that a character as ferocious as Kazak was not easily cut out of a novel'.[65] These injuries – some, like those from Kazak, ostensibly vengeful in nature – are evidence of the creation of N^2 as a separate narrative level where characters and the author can interact in a way that has consequences for both of them. This suggests, for all the Studge's bombast and apparent omniscience, he suffers from an increasing lack of power and relevance.

Throughout this, significantly, Studge does not interact directly with Trout, even though the repercussions of his influence and his presence are clearly felt, both through his manipulation of the plot and in Trout's agitation while in the cocktail lounge. What happens in Studge's face-to-face confrontation with Trout can be read as an illustration of the changing relationship between authors and texts. Significantly, Studge waits for Trout in order to 'intercept him',[66] and Studge sends Trout 'telepathic messages' in order to direct Trout towards Studge:[67] Trout now appears to have some agency and a choice in whether or not he meets his creator. Despite these messages and reassurances of 'good news',[68]

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[62] *Ibid*., pp. 245-53.
[63] *Ibid*., p. 274.
[64] *Ibid*., pp. 285-6.
[65] *Ibid*., p. 286.
[66] *Ibid*., p. 284.
[67] *Ibid*., p. 288.
[68] *Ibid*.

Trout runs away from Studge after seeing him leap over a car, and the two only meet because Studge calls out directly to Trout from the car from which he chases him.[69] When Studge tells Trout that he is his creator, that he is a novelist, Trout is understandably shocked, and then responds in a quite unusual way when Studge asks if he has any questions for him.

> 'If I were in your spot, I would certainly have loads of questions,' I said.
>
> 'Do you have a gun?' he said.
>
> I laughed […]. 'I don't need a gun to control you, Mr. Trout. All I have to do is write down something about you, and that's it.'
>
> 'Are you *crazy*?' he said.
>
> 'No,' I said. And I shattered his power to doubt me. I transported him to the Taj Mahal and then to Venice and then to Dar es Salaam and then to the surface of the Sun, where the flames could not consume him – and then back to Midland City again.[70]

Despite Trout's apparently murderous intentions towards his creator, unlike like Kazak, he is stopped through Studge's show of prowess. Trout's hatred of Studge is further squashed when Studge admits to Trout that he loves him and wants to do penance for all of the suffering he has put Trout through: 'I have broken your mind to pieces. I want to make it whole. I want you to feel a wholeness and inner harmony such as I have never allowed you to feel before',[71] and he wants to 'free' him and the other characters he has created. Studge then disappears into the metatextual void where he normally resides, and hears Trout call after him: '*Make me young, make me young, make me young!*'.[72] The way that Studge frees Trout is not entirely obvious as the novel ends there; the next appearance of a Trout in Vonnegut's oeuvre is as the *nom de plume* for veterinarian Robert Fender in *Jailbird* (1981), who writes science fiction in addition to being a practicing veterinarian,[73] and then as Trout's son Leon in *Galapàgos* (1985). In both of these cases it appears Vonnegut has kept alter-ego Studge's promise to make Trout's mind whole: he is a successful writer in *Jailbird*, and has worldwide fame in *Galapàgos*. Further, Trout's request that Studge/Vonnegut make him young

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[69] *Ibid*., p. 290.

[70] *Ibid*., pp. 291-2.

[71] *Ibid*., p. 292-3.

[72] *Ibid*., p. 295.

[73] Vonnegut, Kurt, *Jailbird* (London: Panther Books, 1984), p. 67.

seems to be also granted as Leon Trout can be read as a younger version of Kilgore. It might be inferred, therefore, that Trout has died at the end of *Breakfast of Champions* and is reborn in subsequent novels, thus 'freeing' him. Neither of these manifestations of Trout, however, resembles the kind of freedom that Studge originally suggests. Instead of truly freeing Trout, it appears that Studge/Vonnegut now approaches Trout with a different mindset. Instead of being the captive of a manipulative 'Author-God',[74] Trout has become the beloved child of a benevolent *scripteur*. What seems to have actually happened here is an apparent change in the kind of power an author has over a text and their characters. Instead of resembling an Author-God in an almost Old Testament, Job-like fashion, Studge/Vonnegut has revived the ability of his creations to exhibit free will.

Studge's disappearance into the void at the end of the novel leaves it in N^3, which has been the dominant narrative world throughout. What is interesting in the case of *Breakfast of Champions*, is that this dominant narrative layer is not the one all the other layers are nested within. According to the novel, the outermost layer is N': the void where Studge/Vonnegut stays as an author. The other narrative layers (N^1, N^2, and N^3) are nested inside this world as alternate experimental spheres. Unlike the nested worlds in *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*, however, these narrative layers denote different text worlds, and significantly, two of these text worlds can be understood as having permeable boundaries (represented by the dotted lines). The relationship between these layers is represented pictorially in Figure 2.2.

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[74] Barthes, Roland, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music, Text*, translated by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp. 142-8, p. 146.
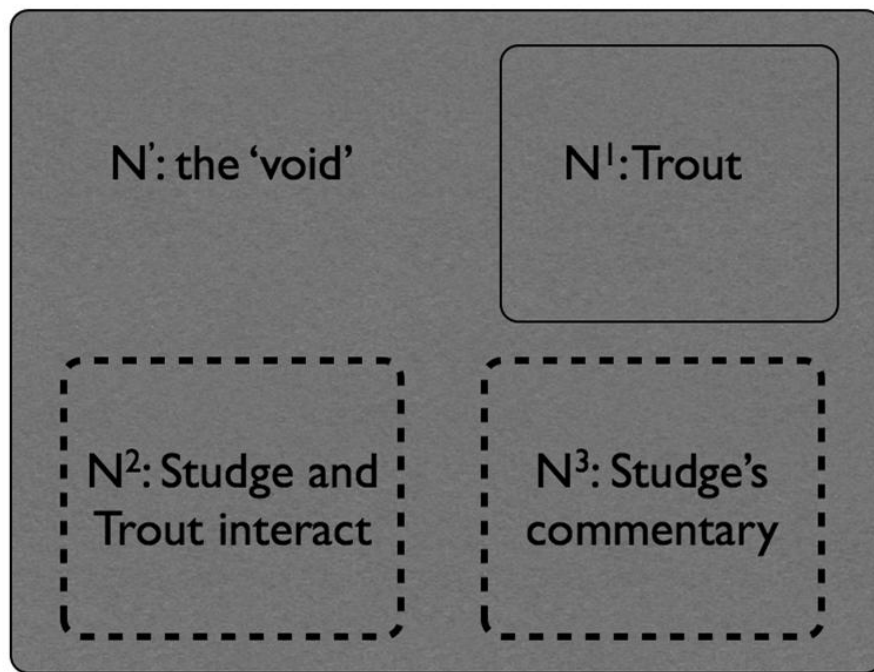
Figure 2.2: Narrative Worlds in *Breakfast of Champions.* The dotted borders surrounding N^2 and N^3 imply a certain amount of permeability between narrative worlds.

As with many Vonnegut novels the majority of the novel's action takes place not in N^1, but instead in the void of N' and the commentary layer that is N^3. The refrains of 'so it goes' in *Slaughterhouse-Five* and 'and so on' or 'etc.' in *Breakfast of Champions*, as well as the multitude of illustrations in *Breakfast of Champions* give a specific timbre to the narrative voice, specifically, that of a story-teller. These instances, along with the many asides found in Vonnegut novels about older drafts of the novel at hand or the author's manipulation of events (such as in some of the portions quoted above), are direct author-to-reader communications, and serve to constantly remind the reader that they are being told a story by someone else who constantly intervenes. In doing this, Vonnegut makes the 'window' or 'lens' (or, as Trout might have it, 'leak') that surrounds the text visible at all times, and the reader is therefore constantly forced to refocus his or her mental 'eye' from window to storyworld and back again.

There are two significant aspects to this kind of narrative layering with regards to metafiction and science fiction. First, this layering comes about as a result of the internal author's estrangement from the text world of N^1: he must be separate in order to make the commentary contained in N^3. N^3 may therefore be read as a purely metaleptic layer. In this fashion, because of this layer's insistence

on creating N^1 as an estranged narrative world, it is possible to understand this world as science fictional in nature, even though it is bereft of any significant conventions. *Breakfast of Champions* is therefore science fiction due to its modal voice, both through the language identified above and the use of N^1 as an experimental world. This allows for the second aspect of this layering to become apparent: what the novel does is utilise the nature of science fiction's narrative structure to create a novel that legitimises – and to a certain extent normalises – its narrative experimentation through the science fiction mode. In effect, this is performative metafiction. To put it another way, *Breakfast of Champions* uses the science fiction mode as a method of literary experimentation, and this mode means that it is possible to incorporate the literary experimentalism seamlessly into a narrative. The literary experimentalism becomes 'real', in a way: it is represented through the action of the narrative, and this representation is, importantly, non-allegorical. This fusion of form and function creates an unusual breed of science fiction, at once experimental from a literary aspect and quite traditionally science fictional in others, and it utilizes science fiction tropes as methods for performing literary experimentation. This combination of the theoretical and the science fictional becomes extremely important in the following chapters, as the texts analysed there capitalise on the ability of science fiction to make the theoretical concrete and 'real'.

In the case of *Breakfast of Champions*, the science fiction narrative makes two related theoretical narrative worlds concrete: N^2, the layer where Trout and Studge interact directly; and N', the layer where Studge normally resides. In the case of N^2, as may have already been discerned, the experiment that is played out relates to authorship theory in the 1960s and 1970s, influenced by a reaction against understanding a text's 'meaning' through the author. As noted earlier, Studge's entrance into the narrative layer of N^1 creates the layer N^2 with significant repercussions for him: his characters can injure him, resist him, and while he still has power over them and in fact superhuman power within the novel, evidenced in his leap over the car in a single bound in order to reach Trout, this power seems somewhat inconsequential. His attempts at controlling his characters are met with derision (Kazak's violence and Trout's request of a gun) and fear (Trout feels uneasy when Studge is physically close, and runs away from Studge when he attempts to follow him). Studge's overbearing presence as an author who purposely manipulates his characters' lives is clearly detrimental and

disained. This intense dislike of Studge might be attributed to the death of the concept of God-like authorial power that Barthes outlines:

> We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) […]. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing. […] In precisely this way literature […], by refusing to assign a 'secret', an ultimate meaning, to the text (and to the world as text), liberates what might be called an anti-theological activity.[75]

In this case, an author's influence over the text's meaning links directly with an author's influence over a text during its creation. N^2, therefore, is a narrative layer where concepts from essays like Barthes are made theatrical. Importantly, however, this narrative layer seems completely natural within the context of the novel, and this is due to the way in which the novel sets itself up as an experimental space through its invocation of science fiction language, as was noted above. In this way, *Breakfast of Champions* may be seen as an actualisation of literary theory, and the creative text takes on many aspects of the critical text. *Breakfast of Champions* is thus rendered not only metafictional, but 'theoretical' according to Mark Currie's terms.[76]

The actualisation of N', the non-world of the narrative voice, however, works towards a slightly different end. As Uri Margolin notes, authors in all modes of fiction often shy away from exposing themselves too directly.[77] During the postmodern literary movement, however, many authors chose to explode their texts in such a way that the authorial voice came to the forefront, explaining, commentating, and otherwise interrupting the overall narrative of a text. Though in *Breakfast of Champions*, and other novels, most significantly *Timequake*, Vonnegut does all of these things, he also makes an interesting move by naming the narrative voice, thus creating distance between Vonnegut-the-author and Studge-the-narrator. This distance complicates matters, as it makes the narrator completely fictitious and therefore problematises his status as internal author to a certain extent. This is remedied through the repeated foiling of Trout, Studge, and

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[75] Barthes, 'Author', p. 146-7.

[76] Currie, Mark, *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1998), p. 52.

[77] Margolin, Uri, 'Cognitive Science, the Thinking Mind, and Literary Narrative', in *Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Sciences*, edited by David Herman (Stanford: CSLI Publications, 2003), pp. 271-294, p. 277.

Vonnegut throughout the text. Trout is described as sending telepathic messages to the Creator of the Universe,[78] much as Studge sends him messages later on in the Epilogue.[79] Trout is also described as 'having my father's wasted face',[80] and as having 'my father's voice'.[81] While it appears that this may refer to the fictional Studge's father, a detail in the last section of the novel complicates this presumption: 'His voice was my father's voce. I *heard* my father – and I *saw* my mother in the void. My mother stayed far, far away, because she had left me a legacy of suicide'.[82] The author's mother is also alluded to in the following N^2 passage:

> 'This is a very bad book you're writing, I said to myself behind my *leaks*.
> 'I know,' I said.
> 'You're afraid you'll kill yourself the way your mother did,' I said.
> 'I know,' I said.[83]

The authorial voice's suicidal mother is significant because Vonnegut's own mother had committed suicide.[84] The authorial voice of Studge in N^2 seems to slip into a voice that may well be Vonnegut's. This fluidity of identity creates a slippage between Studge and Vonnegut, and implies a similar one between Studge and Trout as well. Trout's status as a science fiction writer and therefore Vonnegut's alter ego, as many have argued, also provides a slippage between the identities of Trout and Vonnegut. What is significant here is that all of these identities somehow become one in the void of N', and therefore N' can be considered a metaleptic world behind the world of the text from where these various identities spring.

The world that this narrative layer refers to is considered largely understood in the realm of literary theory, and certainly rarely, if ever, referred to as a separate world. The internal narrator in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, for instance, does break through the overall narrative of the novel, but does not seem to come *from* somewhere – the narrator simply intrudes. In *Breakfast of Champions*, however, the narrator provides running commentary in N^2 and refers

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[78] Vonnegut, *Breakfast*, p. 67.
[79] *Ibid*., p. 288.
[80] *Ibid*., p. 293.
[81] *Ibid*., pp. 294-5.
[82] *Ibid*., p. 294.
[83] *Ibid*., p. 193.
[84] Schatt, Stanley, *Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), p. 15.

to a separate text-world that is his world. As was the case with Studge's interactions with his characters, this intrusion does not seem out of place, and this is again facilitated by the science fictional mode invoked in the language used throughout the novel. These sections of the novel seem to answer the question of 'what if we could see what happened behind and before a novel?' While this is partially answered in N^3, such as in the background information about Kazak, it is also answered through this use of the void as a metatextual space.

The science fictionality of *Breakfast of Champions* serves the text's thematic interest in examining the relationship between an author and his or her text through the use of possible literary worlds. It creates a world where an author and character can interact directly and also a world accessible only by the author himself, and hypothesizes what might happen if these fictional theories about the death of authorial influence were played out in the actual world.

Conclusion: Possible Worlds as Narratological Constructs in Science Fiction

The selections analysed from these two Kurt Vonnegut texts demonstrate two major ways in which possible worlds theory may fuse with science fiction's underlying narratological construct. This was the major intention of this chapter, and as such, this fusion and its implications must be examined more closely since it forms much of the methodological basis for the analyses in the remaining chapters. This synthesis in science fiction must be understood as being made of two parts, the narrative level, and the metafictional theme.

The first major part of this amalgamation is that it is possible to understand science fiction narratives on a structural level as having multiple narrative levels through which it moves. These narrative levels can be seen as possible narrative worlds and serve as framing devices, though some may refer to identical text worlds as was the case of N^2 and N^3 in *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*. It is necessary not to conflate the terms text world (or narrative world), possible world, and narrative level, as narrative levels may in fact refer to the same text, narrative, or possible world. Narrative levels can be understood as lenses through which these worlds are seen and comprehended by the reader. Because of this, the narrative levels in the texts analysed in this chapter work as deictic framing devices that point out new worlds as well as new ways of understanding old worlds.

The other major part of this fusion of possible worlds and science fiction is the metafictional theme. Both of the texts in analysed in this chapter investigate fictionality in different ways: *Rosewater* explores the nature of the reality of the fictional world and the usefulness of language through the inclusion of an internal novel, and *Breakfast of Champions* explores the changing status of the author through allowing a fictional author to involve himself with his creations in multiple different ways. Though each novel as a whole is ostensibly 'about' something else (in the case of *Rosewater* the philanthropy of Eliot Rosewater, and in the case of *Breakfast of Champions* the events that led to Hoover's bad reaction to Trout's novel), these selections move away from the overall plotting and into narrower fictional concerns – if only for a moment. It is in these moments of metafiction that the hypothetical structure of science fiction can be used to its fullest extent, and as was shown above, these novels, in their individual ways, capitalize upon science fiction's relationship with possible worlds in these metafictional sections.

The use of narrative levels in these texts illustrates a way in which not only can metafiction utilise science fiction, but a way in which science fiction can use metafictionality. Science fiction's employment of metafiction is seen most clearly in the analysis of *Breakfast of Champions*, where the 'science' of the science fiction in this text derives from literary sources: the examination of varying levels of authorial engagement in a text simultaneously explores metafictional areas relating to authorship in the 1960s and 1970s and creates several science fictional (estranged) worlds in which these experiments may take place. The science fiction of this text therefore takes as its cue not science in its accustomed form, such as faster than light travel and aliens, but the 'science' of literary criticism. This type of science fiction forms a microscope-like lens through which theoretical literary issues can be observed as they play out in an experimental world (the narrative worlds and layers of the text), and the text becomes performative metafiction.

Significantly, the literary experiment in *Breakfast of Champions* is fairly conservative from the standpoint of narrative worlds. For the most part borderlines between text and author are preserved, and even when the borderline becomes semi-permeable, when the Epilogue is in N^2 and Studge can enter his text, he manages to do so with only a broken toe and fractured watch to show for it: he still holds power over his creations, whether or not they like him. Though

his influence over them has slipped, in the end he still manipulates them as a benevolent Author-God. At the close of the novel, the borderlines between text and author, and significantly those between narrative worlds, are restored to normal. The next chapter will explore what happens when these borderlines are erased altogether, with regards to the distance between reader, author, and text in Brian Aldiss's *Frankenstein Unbound*.

Chapter 3
Lens 2: The Unbound Text and Breaking Down Narrative Boundaries

'What we need is not great works but playful ones.' – Ronald Sukenick[1]

The passages analysed in the previous chapter illustrate the use of narrative layering as a metafictional device in *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater* and *Breakfast of Champions*. These narratives nest multiple possible text worlds (labelled 'narrative worlds') within the overall text world of the narrative, giving rise to a terraced effect where one world exists inside another. This effect, in turn, highlights and foregrounds the placement of narratives within a larger world and creates a particular kind of textual deixis that allows a text that is an independent science fiction narrative but which is also inherently metafictional. The narrative layering in these texts reflects that of the text in the actual world, thus creating a lens through which concepts of realities and their relationships with each other can be explored and understood. The narrative structure of the science fiction text and metafictional thematics were shown to work together as a synthesis, suggesting that as a mode science fiction is particularly well equipped to handle this sort of literary experimentation because of its hypothetical underpinning.

It should be noted, however, that the kind of ontological layering shown in these Vonnegut texts pivots on a particular understanding of the relationship between the reader, the text, and the author in literature, an understanding where the reader, author, and text do not directly interact even though they may appear to do so.[2] Despite the somewhat permeable boundary between the world of Studge and the world of Trout in *Breakfast of Champions*, Studge and Trout are still fictional characters, and therefore they may interact because they are both 'textual' beings. The actual author remains behind the scenes and outside the text (the metatextual 'void' Vonnegut refers to), the characters remain alone on the page, and the reader is nowhere to be seen outside of occasional direct address on the part of the narrator. The boundaries between author, text, and character remain intact. In contrast, this chapter explores what happens when these

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[1] Qtd. in Waugh, Patricia, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 34.

[2] For example, Philboyd Studge, the slippage of identity between him, Trout, and Vonnegut not withstanding, is explicitly *not* Vonnegut and the two should not be conflated.

normally solid boundaries are broken down, resulting in an 'unbound' text. An unbound text presents a world where the rules of textuality do not apply: characters interact freely with readers, and readers with authors, and the text may change as a result.[3]

The content of this chapter is most easily understood as a theoretical counterpoint to the previous chapter. Whereas the texts analysed in the previous chapter highlighted the boundaries between textual layers in order to create metafiction, here the structured and hierarchical layering of the text within the actual world and the authorial power over the text is erased, thus providing author, reader, and text with direct access to one another. The text analysed in this chapter, Brian Aldiss's *Frankenstein Unbound* (1973), illustrates this explosion of extra-textual boundaries by invoking the science fiction conventions of time travel and the alternate universe in order to give a text that would otherwise be totally abstract and theoretical a concrete grounding.

Broken Lenses: The Flattened Text and Science Fiction

The texts analysed in the previous chapter were characterized by a layered structure that allowed nested narratives to be understood as relative to one another, whether as different frames for the same text world or as different worlds entirely. In contrast, an erasure of this aspect characterises *Frankenstein Unbound*. This erasure removes the hierarchy between extra-narrative layers and creates a text that appears not only unbounded but totally without layers. What this does to a narrative, however, must be explored in more depth before moving on to the metafictional implications that this lack of extra-narrative layering might have in a text.

First, the concept of the extra-narrative level needs to be fully explained. The extra-narrative level refers to the layering implicit in all textual relationships: the vertical layering of author, reader, and text as textual components ('text' here refers to what David Herman would term the 'storyworld'[4]), one ostensibly inside another. In this way, the text forms the innermost of these layers, the author the next one out, fully encompassing the text layer, and the reader's layer surrounds both of these, as shown in Figure 3.1. The layer of the reader can therefore be

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[3] It is worth noting, however, that these texts only *represent* unbounded texts; they are themselves still bounded in the normal fashion.

[4] Herman, David, *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), p. 14.

understood as N', given it is the layer from which the experience of these textual components originates, making the authorial layer N^1, and the text N^2.
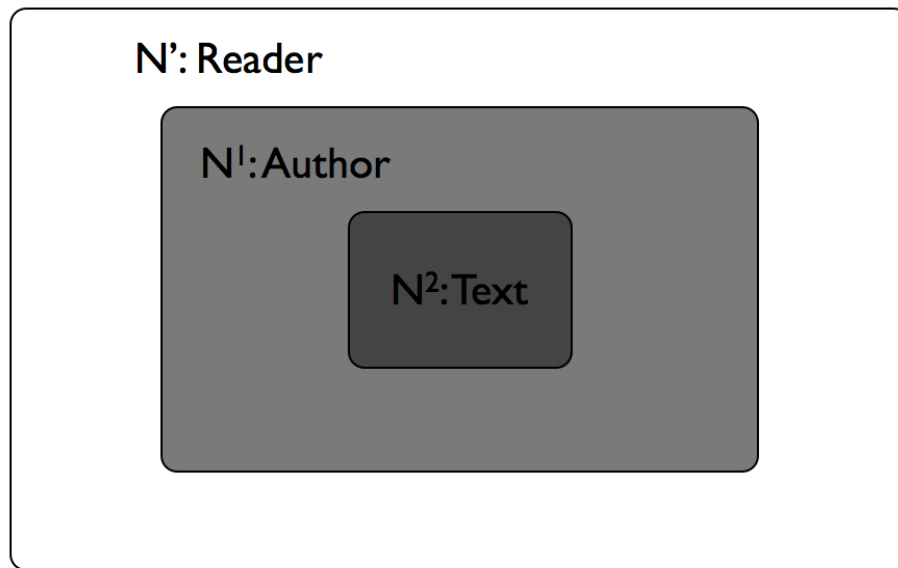

Figure 3.1: Extra-Narrative Layers.

In this model of the ontological relationship between extra-narrative layers, the author can be understood as part of a transitional layer, a sort of periscope that allows the reader to look into the world of the text. Whether as a manipulative creator of meaning or as Barthes' comparatively *laissez-faire* scriptor,[5] the author enables the link between text and reader. Likewise, the text may only influence the reader through the medium of the authorial layer. The authorial layer can therefore also be understood as working as a lens in this way, focusing the reader's attention on one part of the text world by refracting the text in a certain way. This active, transitional nature of the authorial layer grants it an implicit power: it directs the attention of the reader, not only to specific portions of the text world, but for how long, in what order, and at what distance.[6] The absolute and possibly even manipulative influence of the author's layer means that a reader must continually be an observer[7] and the text the observed. Extra-narrative layers

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[5] Barthes, Roland, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music, Text*, translated by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp. 142-8, p. 147.

[6] Indeed, it is this sort of authorial power against which Barthes argues.

[7] Mark Currie has noted that a reader's main agency with respect to a text is found in his or her ability to visit the text in any temporal method they desire, whether to read slowly, quickly, random portions out of order, or to read half a book, forget about it, and finish several years later (Currie, Mark, *About Time: Narrative, Fiction, and the Philosophy of Time* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 21). This agency, however, is still limited by the confines of what the

are not directly analogous to the narrative layers explored in the previous chapter, but they operate in a similar fashion insofar as they create a layered effect in a text where one world sits 'inside' the reality of another. It is this effect that the internal layering of narratives in texts such as *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater* mirrors, thus creating metafictional commentary through textual deixis. The major difference between internal narrative layers and extra-narrative layers is that the latter, while implicit in the text itself, are part of the phenomenology of the text and come into being when a text is read (they otherwise exist as potential).

As was shown in the analysis of *Breakfast of Champions* in the previous chapter, the power play implicit in extra-narrative layering can be broken down somewhat or even destroyed. The destruction of extra-narrative boundaries results in what I have labelled, after *Frankenstein Unbound*, the unbound text. This unbound text is no longer terraced with vertical frames that allow specific readerly involvement, but flattened and completely horizontal in nature. Importantly, breaking these frames puts the power implicit in the transitional, authorial layer into flux. Just as the reader, author, and text are free to intermingle in the unbound text, so the reader or the text itself may take up the author's creative power in turn. The unbound text is therefore implicitly metafictional in that it methodically examines the relationship between these extra-narrative layers through their removal. In this way, an unbound text, with its conspicuously absent layers, can be seen as drawing attention to extra-narrative layering, and this unbound state is yet another type of textual deixis. The bounded text becomes critical through the process of its unbinding, just as metafiction breaks down the boundary between the literary text and the critical text,[8] and as such, breaks the lenses implicit in all literature. It is worth emphasising here, however, that unless a text requires direct intervention on the part of the reader, it merely represents an unbound text. That is, while the text of *Frankenstein Unbound* is decidedly not unbound (as its reader-text-author relationship remains in tact), its presentation of the original *Frankenstein* is one of an unbound text.

There is something unique, however, about how the unbound text can be presented in the science fiction mode. If it is taken as given that a science fiction

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author has chosen to represent of the text world: at no point can the reader actually influence what they read. The text remains the same.
[8] Currie, Mark, 'Introduction', in *Metafiction*, edited by Mark Currie (London: Longman, 1995), pp. 1-18, p. 5.

text represents a hypothetical world, as Albert Wendland argues[9], an understanding of science fiction made possible by the links between modal philosophy and the underlying narrative structure of the mode, then science fiction can be seen as particularly well-suited for supporting this sort of possible narrative world. Within science fiction, the unbound text may be simply understood as just another hypothetical science fiction world. In this possible science fiction world, however, the 'proposition'[10] the text makes is not about the future or a parallel world, but a hypothetical literary world where authors, readers, and the text may interact and influence each other. Because genre can be understood as a mode of thinking,[11] science fiction that illustrates a world built upon literary theory can therefore be understood as an examination of literary theory itself. Theory, in this kind of science fiction, becomes praxis without the need for allegory or metaphor. It is not that using science fiction makes theory 'realistic' or 'believable', but that the mode allows the texts to use the existing mega-text of science fiction to illustrate these highly theoretical constructs. The science fiction mode therefore serves as an experimental space where these thought experiments can be fully realised and easily communicated. In effect, this is another example of science fiction becoming 'theoretical'.[12]

Wolfgang Iser observes that 'the reality represented in the text is not meant to represent reality; it points to something that it is not, although it functions to make that something conceivable',[13] and it in this very function that science fiction intersects with literary theory and Baudrillard's concept of the simulacra.[14] Science fiction simulates worlds through narrative, creating something ('nonexistent' but real, according to R.M. Sainsbury[15]) out of nothing.

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[9] Wendland, Albert, *Science, Myth, and the Fictional Creation of Alien Worlds* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), p. 27.

[10] Platinga, Alvin, 'Actualism and Possible Worlds', in *Metaphysics: Contemporary Readings* (2nd edition), edited by Michael J. Loux (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 168-87, p. 173.

[11] Duff, David, 'Introduction', in *Modern Genre Theory*, edited by David Duff (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2000), pp. 1-24, p. 10.

[12] Currie, Mark, *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1998), p. 52.

[13] Iser, Wolfgang, *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 13.

[14] Baudrillard, Jean, 'Simulacra and Science Fiction', in *Simulacra and Simulation*, translated by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010), pp. 121-7.

[15] Sainsbury, R.M., *Fiction and Fictionalism* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 44-6.

Though it imitates a world, this world has no original. Through the use of the existing science fiction mega-text, science fiction illustrates these possible text worlds in terms of science fiction conventions, such as time travel and alternate realities, thus making these theories 'conceivable'. Time travel, used in science fiction to present either an alternate viewpoint of the past or a glimpse into the future, estranges the reader from the text chronologically, usually through the use of specific dates. Specific objects and events are possible in the presented text world because it is a different time, such as in the case of H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*. Likewise, the trope of alternate realities (or parallel universes) also allows for events and actions that are otherwise impossible in the actual world of the reader. Alternate realities create new worlds only tangentially related to that of the reader and therefore facilitate changes in the *status quo* that would otherwise require significant technological achievement, historical changes, or certain violations of the laws of physics, evidenced in texts such as Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*. The creation of a world where text, author, and reader exist on a level playing field fits comfortably into this category of alternate reality, and therefore can be seen as within the realm of possibility in a science fiction context. The critical content of these kinds of science fiction texts may therefore be subsumed by the science fiction itself, and this chapter is interested in unravelling these intertwined strands of narrative.[16]

Science fiction that takes its hypothetical impetus from literary theory therefore directly engages with this literary theory and becomes metafictional. They are metafictional insofar as they investigate not only fiction itself, but also the criticism of fiction. Interestingly, in the case of *Frankenstein Unbound* this is achieved without the use of allegory, which, according to Todorov, would break down the Fantastic element implicit in the mode.[17] Instead, texts like *Frankenstein Unbound* exhibit a fusion of metafiction and science fiction, at once theoretical and creative, invoking both literary 'science' (or narratology) and 'real' science. This text proposes a truly innovative hypothetical world where the creative, the critical, and the science fictional mesh in their totality, creating a truly 'theoretical' text at the narrative level.

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[16] The creation of new worlds in science fiction is a problematic one with regards to *Frankenstein Unbound*, but this will be examined more closely in the later section on adaptation.

[17] Todorov, Tzvetan, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, translated by Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 33.

Frankenstein Unbound: The Postmodern Prometheus

Mary Shelley's[18] *Frankenstein* (1818) is often cited as the first piece of true science fiction, a theory advanced originally by Brian Aldiss in his book *Billion Year Spree* (1973, later expanded with additions from David Wingrove and re-titled *Trillion Year Spree*).[19] As such, *Frankenstein* occupies a particularly honoured place within science fiction history, and Brian Aldiss's adaptation and rewriting of the novel as *Frankenstein Unbound* (1973) therefore carries with it significant metafictional implications that would not be there in the adaptation or rewriting of any other science fiction text.[20] These implications, important in their own right, are further emphasized by Aldiss's novel's unbound, flattened narrative state. In illustrating an unbound version of the *Frankenstein* text, Aldiss represents not only the death of the author, but also the death of the novel and the rebirth of the concept of the reader as the locus of control in a text's creation. The reader's acquisition of narrative control and the consequential explosive 'unbounding' of the original text mirrors the minimal narrative layering within the text, suggesting that some of the control the author might have over a text is due to its 'bounding' – its solid boundaries. The erasure of narrative boundaries performed in *Frankenstein Unbound* therefore has particular implications about the use of the science fiction narrative as an experimental sphere for literary theory, due, in part, to the importance of its source text, but also the way in which the source text is dismantled and reassembled as an adaptation. The text marries form to theme in a fashion similar to that seen in *Breakfast of Champions*, but this intertwining persists throughout the majority of the novel.

Before embarking on this thematic analysis, however, it is worth first glancing at the similarities that *Frankenstein Unbound* bears to the original *Frankenstein*, particularly insofar as narrative layering goes. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is notable for its nesting of narrative worlds, and the effect of this nesting is much the same as that analysed in *Rosewater* in the previous chapter. It contains several nested stories, beginning with a narrative world constituting arctic explorer Walton's letters to his sister Margaret, in which nests

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[18] Hereafter referred to as Shelley. Percy Bysshe Shelley is explicitly referred to as such.

[19] Citations in this thesis refer to this later expanded edition.

[20] Indeed, Aldiss adapted *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (H.G. Wells, 1896) as *Moreau's Other Island* (1980), and *Dracula* (Bram Stoker, 1898) as *Dracula Unbound* (1990), another novel featuring Joe Bodenland.

Frankenstein's narrative about his past exploits with his monster, and the monster's monologue about his journeys nests within this world. A further narrative world is created through the preface to the novel, thus giving the novel a total of five narrative worlds, each nested one in another.[21] This level of nestedness serves as a device for distancing the reader further and further from the more impossible levels of the narrative (e.g., the creation of the monster), which means that as the monster breaks into the reality inhabited by Walton and Frankenstein at the climax of the novel, it is as though the monster becomes more real and therefore terrifying.

Frankenstein Unbound's use of this nestedness is twofold. First, Aldiss removes the majority of the layering present in Frankenstein through the use of embedded stories and letters, though he does pay particular homage to it with Bodenland's letters to his wife Mina in the first part of the novel, and continues to do so implicitly through the use of the voice recorder. The implication here is that the text is in some way a found manuscript, though whether found by Mina or someone else is unclear. Secondly, Aldiss mimics the textual shape this nestedness, not to terrace realities one inside each other, but to create a novel that is, in its structure, not unlike that of the original Frankenstein. For example, not only do Bodenland's letters to Mina serve a similar narrative purpose as Walton's letters to Margaret in that they distance the reader from the action, but the monster's arrival at Walton and Frankenstein's camp in the original novel occurs at roughly the same stage in the text as Bodenland's confrontation with the monster and its mate in Frankenstein Unbound. Therefore, though Aldiss removes much of the underlying nestedness in Frankenstein, vestiges of this layering can still be seen in Frankenstein Unbound in its narrative structure. While the layering in Frankenstein creates distance between the reader and the presented narrative worlds (and then allows the narrative world to come crashing

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[21] Frankenstein also contains three text worlds: the world of the Preface, the world inhabited by Walton and Frankenstein (and the monster) when they meet, and then the retrospective one narrated by Frankenstein. These two last text worlds are, of course, actually one in the same, but are presented textually as incompossible worlds until the end when the text world where the monster is 'real' becomes the same as the text world Walton inhabits, thus problematising the fictionality of the monster. The narrative world invoked by Frankenstein's story (inclusive of the monster's monologue) therefore sits inside the narrative world where Walton and Frankenstein meet, but the boundary between these two is shown to be semi-permeable. Thus, while the monster's intrusion appears to be a frame-breaking moment, it is only so from the perspective of narrative worlds, not text worlds, since all of these narrative worlds represent the same text world.

into the higher level world), the vestigial layering in *Frankenstein Unbound* allows it to make full use of the science fiction mode, particularly insofar as world-building is concerned.

Frankenstein Unbound's erasure of textual boundaries creates an experimental space where, as was the case with *Breakfast of Champions*, literary hypotheses are played out as performance. In the instance of *Frankenstein Unbound*, this hypothesis revolves around two major centres: first, the often-used metaphors relating to being 'lost' in a book or a book 'coming to life', and second, the relationship of the novel to its original source. The text's presentation of a world where Shelley has unwittingly written about real events thus creates a text without boundaries. The very title of the text itself brings with it a multiplicity of implications, and this analysis seeks to tease out some of these possible readings.

Frankenstein Unbound: The Possible World

The most immediately apparent reading of *Frankenstein Unbound*'s title relates to a freeing of the original text. Instead of literally being bookended by its covers, it spills into the real world, and no longer limited by its textual boundaries, the text becomes changeable and the lines between character, reader, and author blur. Most significant is the blurred status of Joseph Bodenland. Bodenland's narrative begins in 2020 Texas and after he 'timeslips' to 1816 Switzerland, he finds himself not only among Shelley and her poet companions, but also the characters from the original *Frankenstein*. Bodenland's relationship with both Shelley and the characters he had hitherto believed totally fictional suggests his character's purpose within the narrative is one of internal reader. His relationship with the text, due to its unbound status, is unusual and worth examining in detail.

In particular, the way in which Bodenland grapples with the sudden realisation that Victor Frankenstein is a real person demonstrates the effect the unbound text has had on his relationship to both the fictional world. Upon meeting Frankenstein in a Swiss inn and then later the Shelleys and Lord Byron, Bodenland muses,

> I had accepted the equal reality of Mary Shelley and her creation, Victor Frankenstein, just as I had accepted the equal reality of Victor and his monster. In my position, there was no difficulty in so doing; for they accepted my reality and I was as much a mythical creature in their world and they would have been in

mine.[22]

In this passage, Bodenland places himself on an equal footing with both Shelley and Frankenstein and the creature, and the exact language he uses to do so is striking. Bodenland does not describe only Frankenstein and his monster as 'mythical', but also gives that attribute to himself as well as Shelley. He constructs this relationship in an unusual manner, arguing not only that fictional characters are mythical in comparison to him, but that he is also as mythical in relation to authors as well as fictional characters. As Bodenland remarks earlier, 'I felt myself in the presence of myth, and, by association, *accepted myself as mythical!*'.[23] He describes himself as 'a character in a fantastic film'.[24] The opposition these passages imply existed between Bodenland's original reality value (actual, or non-mythical) and the reality values of both Shelley and the *Frankenstein* characters (mythical) before Bodenland's timeslip to this version of 1816 Switzerland therefore seems odd: surely Bodenland's reality is compossible with that of the Shelleys and Byron since Shelley's novel exists in Bodenland's world. These passages suggest otherwise. Bodenland therefore seems to describe an understanding of the relative reality values of author and text that was modelled in the introduction to this chapter, a situation where the author (while ostensibly sharing a reality value with those outside the text) is considered a textual component. In effect, the change Bodenland wrestles with here describes the permeability of textual boundaries that defines the fictional world of *Frankenstein Unbound*, where characters and authors exist in the same space.

Bodenland's intrusion into this world, therefore may be understood as that of a reader. He is not merely a time-traveller or traveller to a parallel universe, as the text might otherwise seem to argue, but actually a reader of the original *Frankenstein*. Shelley identifies Bodenland's relationship to the text when he mentions he has already read her (as yet in 1816) unfinished novel: 'You know, Joe, you are my first reader!'[25] This solves Bodenland's perplexing description of himself as being a 'mythical creature' in Shelly and Frankenstein's worlds: a reader is in some ways mythical to the text and author, insofar as they do not normally exist in the same world as a text (and are therefore of a different reality) and are often largely theoretical in relation to an author. If Bodenland's

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[22] Aldiss, Brian, *Frankenstein Unbound* (London: House of Stratus, 2000), p. 80.
[23] *Ibid*., p. 31.
[24] *Ibid*., p. 51.
[25] *Ibid*., p. 94.

interactions with Shelley and the events and characters from the original *Frankenstein* are to be understood as those of a reader with an author and a text, then Bodenland's readerliness serves as a lens through which the events of *Frankenstein Unbound* may be seen.

Bodenland, however, has an unusual level of influence over the text of *Frankenstein*. Because of his self-proclaimed equal status with the characters of the original novel, Bodenland experiences the novel in high-definition and real-time as a character himself. In a way, Bodenland's experiences may be understood as the actualisation of the common metaphor of becoming 'lost' in a novel. Bodenland's sexual relationship with Mary Shelley, however, grants him further influence over the events of the novel, and he becomes not merely an interested observer (or reader) but an active reader with the ability to influence the text to a destructive degree.

Given Bodenland's immediate obsession with Shelley upon first seeing her, it is not entirely unexpected that they eventually consummate their relationship. He is filled with admiration for both Shelley as author and as a woman, and he tells her: 'I worship and respect your character. And your body. And your works. Everything that is Mary Shelley. You are woman and legend – all things!'.[26] The consummation of Shelley and Bodenland's relationship works on two levels: while it is clearly a fleshly meeting of two infatuated characters, the sexual act plays a pivotal role in the narrative and plays upon the slippage between the concept of the reproductive act and the artistic act. As such, it is not the sexual act itself that is important, but the shift in Bodenland's relationship to the original *Frankenstein* that is worth examining.

Before Bodenland's relationship with Shelley becomes sexual, Bodenland is an interested observer, but does not interfere in the action of *Frankenstein* as it plays out around him. This is evidenced in Bodenland's exchange with Frankenstein himself at an inn when he first arrives in this version of 1816 Switzerland:

> Ordinarily, I would have chosen an empty table. In my new mood, I went over to the solitary man and said easily, pulling out a chair, 'May I sit at your table?'
> For a moment I thought my accent had not been understood. Then he said, 'I can't stop you sitting there', and lowered his head to his

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[26] *Ibid*.

paper again.[27]

The man in this passage is revealed to be Frankenstein shortly afterwards, but at this point both Bodenland and the reader of *Frankenstein Unbound* only assume this man is an inhabitant of this new world, and a slightly gruff one at that. What is significant about this passage, though, is that regardless of the identity of the man, this conversation reads as though Bodenland is asking for permission to become a part of the text, to partake in their reality (to sit at their table) and to live amongst them. By asking Frankenstein's permission to sit at the same table to exist on the same level, or even sup with him, Bodenland levels the playing field between text and reader to one of equal power and shared existence.

After consummating his relationship with Mary Shelley, however, Bodenland becomes bolder and takes up an active position towards the text. He seeks out Frankenstein not only in order to stop him from creating a mate for the creature, but also to convince him to help him murder the creature,[28] and eventually kills both Frankenstein and the creature in turn. Though these acts are ostensibly spurred by Bodenland's desire to rid the world of the creature's influence and the science that created him, they are only made possible through his sexual union with Shelley. According to Bodenland,

> Every act I took which would have been impossible in my own age served to disperse the sheet-anchors that held my personality. Embracing Mary Shelley, enjoying her love and perfumes, had produced the greatest solvent effect so far.[29]

This slippage of vocabulary from pro-creation to creation has a highly disruptive effect on the text, and Shelley herself has initiated this change as the 'solvent'. The reader, no longer kept outside the borders of the text by the transformative author, is now capable of changing the text in whatever way he sees fit. The boundaries keeping the reader from intervening in the text have been dissolved.

This slippage of vocabulary also implies a secondary set of slippery words: that of author and creator. While Mary Shelley is obviously the author of the original text of *Frankenstein*, she may also be understood as its creator: God-like, powerful, and able to determine the interaction between reader and text. Within Aldiss's novel, however, Shelley and the original *Frankenstein* have foils in

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[27] *Ibid*., p. 26.
[28] *Ibid*., p. 96.
[29] *Ibid*., pp. 96-7.

Victor Frankenstein and his creature.[30] This foiling, as analogy, has two major consequences. First, the relationship between Frankenstein and the creature can be seen as amplifying that illustrated between Shelley and her novel. Secondly, and more subtly, Bodenland's interaction with Frankenstein and the monster can therefore be seen as augmenting the interactions he has with Shelley and the other portions of the text itself. In particular, when interacting with the creature itself, Bodenland's writerly violence implies a murder of the original *Frankenstein* text.

Frankenstein Unbound's presentation of an unbound text, therefore, allows Bodenland to slip into a world where the extra-narrative worlds of author, text, and reader may interact and influence one another. This world is therefore quite literally a text world: a world made up of a text.[31] This world is not merely fictional (or mythical) in the sense of being unreal from Bodenland's original point of view in 2020 Texas, but also fictional in the sense that it is an actualised text. As was the case with *Breakfast of Champions*, this actualisation is neither allegorical or metaphorical: it is a performance of the interaction of extra-narrative worlds. Bodenland's presence as an internal reader underlines the novel's unbound state, and therefore he is an intrinsic part of creating a complete, literal text-world within *Frankenstein Unbound*. In this manner, the subtitle of Shelley's original novel becomes highly significant: *Frankenstein: or The Modern Prometheus* slyly becomes *Frankenstein Unbound: The Postmodern Prometheus*. As an internal reader that becomes an influential figure, Bodenland may be understood as a highly postmodern presence in the novel. Instead of stealing fire from the gods, however, Bodenland has been gifted with the ability to affect a text.

Frankenstein Unbound: The Writerly Text

While the ramifications of *Frankenstein Unbound*'s unbound state are many, one of the most significant as far as this analysis is concerned is its affect on the relationship between the reader and the text. The 'unbound' text becomes, instead of a 'readerly' text, what Barthes calls a 'writerly' text. The writerliness of a text slightly rearranges the relationship between text, reader, and author from

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[30] This is similar to the way Shelley and Frankenstein are foils of each other in a biographical reading of *Frankenstein* that understands it as an attempt on Shelley's part to make amends for her lost child.

[31] Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren* is another example of such a text world, and is examined in chapter 6.

that of the readerly text in a few very important ways. The readerly text, according to Barthes, 'can be read, but not written';[32] the reader is largely passive in their approach to the text. The text is therefore something that happens to them, an 'event', much as Stanley Fish argues in his essay 'Literature in the Reader'.[33] The writerly text, however, something that Barthes names and Fish refers to implicitly but does not relate back to Barthes, is a text where a reader is instrumental in creating the text and its meaning during the act of reading. Fish, for example, emphasizes the 'participation […] of the reader',[34] and as such locates any meaning that a text may have in the reader's response to it rather than in the text as an objective item. Barthes argues that a writerly text asks that a reader to 'no longer [be] a consumer, but a producer of the text' (4), thus emphasising the reader's active involvement in creating the text.[35] The co-constructive element of writerly texts links closely with what Wolfgang Iser has said about reading: 'the […] signs of literature constitute an organization of signifiers which do not serve to designate a signified object, but instead designate *instructions* for the *production* of the signified'.[36] That is, readers must re-create a text, and as such, when reading, 'we [the readers] are caught up in the very thing we are producing'.[37] In this way the writerly text is a text that requires an active engagement on the reader's part.

Frankenstein Unbound's science fictionality can be understood as part of its writerliness because the writerly text, as Barthes defines it, shares many common features with the science fiction text. According to Scott Bukatman, 'science fiction is inherently "writerly" in the Barthesian sense of positing an active reader who must wittingly construct the text in the process of reading it'.[38] Samuel R. Delany, in his essay 'Some Presumptuous Approaches to Science Fiction', argues that science fiction's requirement of the active reader derives from the very words used in writing science fiction: 'the conventions of poetry or

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[32] Barthes, Roland, *S/Z*, translated by Richard Miller (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1990), p. 4.
[33] Fish, Stanley, 'Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics', in *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 21-67, p. 25, p. 48.
[34] *Ibid.*, 25.
[35] Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 4.
[36] Iser, Wolfgang, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 65.
[37] *Ibid.*, p. 127.
[38] Bukatman, Scott, *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 12.

drama or mundane fiction – or science fiction – are in themselves separate languages'.[39] Science fiction's conventions – or mega-text – can therefore be understood as a specific set of signifiers which science fiction writers employ in very mode-specific ways. The use of these mode-specific signifiers results in a relationship between the science fiction author and the science fiction reader that resembles that of encoder and decoder, what Gwyneth Jones refers to as 'an active process of translation'.[40] That is, in order to make sense of the text, the reader must be able to understand what various conventions denote (such as a robot or a spaceship), particularly if they are expressed through neologism. In this way, science fiction bears an uncanny resemblance to the writerly text, at least at the level of readerly involvement. It is therefore possible to begin from a standpoint where *Frankenstein Unbound* looks very much like a writerly text. The writerliness of the text, however, becomes more apparent and in turn more significant when its status as an adaptation is examined.

Frankenstein Unbound capitalises on the concept of the writerly text, however, even outside of its science fictionality. If writerliness within a text is signalled through a necessity on the writer's part to become writer-like and participate in the creation of a text, as text that 'is *ourselves writing*',[41] then Bodenland's conscious attempts to change events whilst in pursuit of Frankenstein and his creature evidence his writerly engagement with the text. Furthermore, Bodenland is in some respects also an internal writer within the text: he keeps a log of his adventures in 1816 on his tape-memory from 2020, and also writes a letter to Shelley while incarcerated in Geneva.[42] Though Bodenland is only shown writing in the case of this letter, the occasional textual references to recording on his tape-memory cease after he is jailed. The narrative, however, continues on in the first person. While it might be assumed that Bodenland has recorded the remainder of the narrative on his tape-memory, the request for, and use of, writing materials suggests a very active involvement with the act of writing that is very different from the kind of recorded travelogue that would be found on the tape-memory. This request seems to mark a split between

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[39] Delany, Samuel R. 'Some Presumptuous Approaches to Science Fiction', in *Starboard Wine: More Notes on the Language of Science Fiction* (Pleasantville: Dragon Press, 1984), pp. 46-55, p. 53.
[40] Jones, Gwyneth, *Deconstructing the Starships: Science, Fiction, and Reality* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), p. 6.
[41] Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 5.
[42] Aldiss, *Frankenstein Unbound*, p. 101.

Bodenland as reader and Bodenland as writer, perhaps even more so than Shelley and Bodenland's consummation of their relationship. In this way, Bodenland's sexual relationship with Shelley grants him power over the text, but he must consciously – and literally – take up the pen to become a writer in his own right in order to affect the text of the original *Frankenstein*.

Frankenstein Unbound: Possible Texts

Bodenland's status as a writerly reader aids in making sense of the ontological relationship of the text of *Frankenstein Unbound* to the original *Frankenstein* is concerned. While *Frankenstein Unbound* ostensibly looks like an adaptation of the original text, insofar as it 'transcodes'[43] the plot and theme of the original novel into a somewhat different but still recognisably *Frankenstein*-shaped narrative,[44] the relationship between the two is a much subtler one. If understood as an unbound text, then *Frankenstein Unbound* presents a narrative of a reader reading and interacting with the text in order to derive meaning from it. In doing so, Bodenland creates another text entirely, a new text apparently incompossible with the original, and these two versions of *Frankenstein* are therefore incompossible copies of one another.

Roland Barthes' conception of the writerly text derives from an inherent 'plurality'[45] evident in all texts. Texts contain a multitude of possible meanings and readings and the intervention of the reader aids in the creation of specific readings. Barthes writes in *S/Z* that 'the meaning of a text lies not in this or that interpretation but in the diagrammatic totality of its readings, in their plural system. […] the meaning of the text can be nothing but the plurality of its systems, its infinite (circular) "transcribability"'.[46] What is particularly interesting about this understanding of the reader's involvement in the text is how he or she not only effectively gleans something different from the text in each reading,[47] but actually creates a different text through doing so. The more writerly or plural a

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[43] Hutcheon, Linda, *A Theory of Adaptation* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 16.
[44] Though the ending is obviously different, *Frankenstein Unbound* manages to appropriate the original's Promethean theme. This is partially because the timeslips that bring Bodenland to Switzerland derive from scientific advancements gone wrong, but also because Bodenland's writerly violence towards the original *Frankenstein* stems from the authorial power he gained from Shelley (literary fire from the author-God, as it were).
[45] Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 120.
[46] *Ibid*.
[47] *Ibid*., pp. 15-6.

text – the more open it is to a reader's intervention – the more possible readings may be created.[48] In the writerly text, the 'text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds',[49] and this denotes an infinite number of possible readings. This infinite possibility of readings, however, also slyly implies an infinite number of versions of a text – both from the standpoint of derived meanings and from that of the text the reader experiences (both individual readers and each individual experience of reading undertaken by a single reader).[50] Each reading experience creates a new set of meanings – a new text – derived from the multiplicity of systems inherent in texts.

The text of *Frankenstein Unbound* may be understood, therefore, as one of many possible versions of *Frankenstein* that readers create when reading. Bodenland's readerly intervention in the events of *Frankenstein* may therefore be read not as an adaptation of the original text (though in many ways it is that), but the creation of one of many possible writerly versions of *Frankenstein*. In effect, the act of reading creates one of many incompossible copies of the text. In reading (or, given his familiarity with 'deplorable'[51] adaptations, rereading) the original novel, then, multiple versions of the text are available to Bodenland; the novel is in a 'state of multiple alternate possibilities', according to Christine Kenyon Jones.[52] His ability to intervene in the events derives from his status as a writerly reader, and thus, when granted control over the text through his sexual relationship with Mary Shelley, the text becomes unbound and in Barthes' terms, plural. In one sense, the unbound text in the face of the writerly reader suggests precisely what this chapter has already stated: a text bereft of the boundaries between author, text, and reader. In another sense, however, the unbound text also implies a text in possession of a sense of freedom; in a literal, material sense, the image conjured is one of a text burst forth from its seams, with orphan leaves fluttering in the wind. The absence of the controlling presence of an author-God from whom all meaning derives[53] leaves the text wild and unlimited, pregnant with possible meanings. In this way, it is possible to understand Frankenstein's

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[48] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[49] *Ibid.*
[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11, p. 16.
[51] Aldiss, *Frankenstein Unbound*, p. 40.
[52] Jones, Christine Kenyon, 'SF and Romantic Biofictions: Aldiss, Gibson, Sterling, Powers'. *Science Fiction Studies*. Vol. 24, No. 1 (1997), pp. 47-56, p. 52.
[53] Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 174.

creature's words at the end of *Frankenstein Unbound* as the words of the newly unbound text: 'Once I am unbound, I am unbounded!'.[54] What is particularly interesting, however, is that despite proclaimed limitless freedom on the part of the text, the reader quite literally always has the final word. Bodenland murders the creature, thus effectively collapsing the previously pluralised text, which was open to multiple possible interpretations, to a singular meaning denoted by a single reader. The reader always binds the writerly text in the end.

As a piece of science fiction, then, *Frankenstein Unbound* is a performance of the writerly text. Like *Breakfast of Champions*, it uses its science fictionality to create a narrative world where textual components may interact directly. *Frankenstein Unbound* therefore becomes an incompossible copy of the original *Frankenstein*. Just as the presented narrative world of the text is the actualisation of an incompossible world, the text itself is the actualisation of one of the many possible versions of the text. The science fiction conventions of the alternate reality and time travel therefore create a backdrop against which a drama about literary theory may be performed. As a result, the text also engages with Barthesian theory about writerly texts and the importance of the reader in creating not only the meaning in a text, but also recreating the text in a fictional manner, therefore blurring the line between the critical text and the creative one as well as the boundaries between author, text, and reader. Whereas the texts analysed in the previous chapter emphasized these boundaries in order to examine them, *Frankenstein Unbound* presents a text where these boundaries are conspicuously absent, thus presenting a theoretical counterpoint to both *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater* and *Breakfast of Champions*. In this way, it is therefore possible to understand that the 'science' portion of *Frankenstein Unbound*'s science fictionality is not only the familiar science fiction conventions of time travel and alternate universes, but literary science – that is, narratology. Placing narratology at the hypothetical centre of a piece of science fiction signals an attempt to expand the borderlines of science fiction's remit; it literally unbinds science fiction from its mega-text. This extension of science fiction's limits climaxes in Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren* (examined in chapter 6). The next two chapters investigate subtle uses of the metaleptic narrative world in science fiction in the works of Joanna Russ and Douglas Adams through the use of time and parody.

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[54] Aldiss, *Frankenstein Unbound*, p. 188.

Chapter 4

Prism 1: Science Fiction, Temporal Narrative Framing, and Metafiction

"The salient relation between story and character is representational: the story tells us about, or describes, the character. This seems uncontroversial. But in the project of determining whether fictional characters belong to extra-fictional reality, we are back to the beginning." – R.M. Sainsbury, *Fiction and Fictionalism*[1]

"One of the weaknesses of academic criticism is that, though it has been preoccupied with the issue of self-consciousness, it has never dealt with the issue of self-consciousness in relation to time…." – Mark Currie, *About Time*[2]

The previous chapters examine, both through direct examples and a counter-example, ways in which science fiction and metafiction complement each other insofar as narrative layering is concerned. Both chapters argued that science fiction, as a mode, allows for a kind of literary experimentalism where the science fiction elements of the text serve as framing devices that aid in the exploration of literary theory in a fictional context. The science explored in these sorts of science fiction is therefore understood as literary science in addition to any more traditional sciences invoked in the text. This fictional context differs from similar experimental fiction from the 1960s and 1970s because of the compossibility of literary theory and narrative world that a science fiction mode brings to a text. That is, while a text such as John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is a piece of experimental fiction that uses a fictional context to explore theoretical themes, the world of these 'experiments' is decidedly different from that of the overall narrative. This incompossibility of narrative worlds foregrounds the relationship between extra-textual layers and textual layers, thus creating metafiction. The last two chapters have argued, however, that metafiction may also derive from presenting worlds that are incompossible with the reader's world. In these cases, the science fictional world presents such normally incompossible textual components – that of the author and the characters of the text, for example – as compossible within a single world, and it is capable of this due to its inherent

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[1] Sainsbury, R.M., *Fiction and Fictionalism* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 35.
[2] Currie, Mark, *About Time: Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 45.

hypothetical impetus. The metafictionality of these texts therefore derives from highlighting – or erasing – a text's layered structure.

Instead of looking at experiential spaces – that is, who is involved and what can they do – as a method for understanding and delineating between narrative worlds, this chapter looks at how the portrayal of time can be used as a framing device within the metafictional science fiction text, specifically in texts that are 'out of time' in some fashion. According to Mark Currie, 'all novels should be viewed as tales about time'.[3] Gerald Prince defines a narrative as 'representation of real or fictive events and situations in a time sequence',[4] and therefore a narrative may be seen as an illustration of the passage of time as much as it is of the events that happen in this time. This chapter argues for a slight reversal of Currie's claim: that tales about time can be viewed as tales about narrative. More specifically, the analysis here argues that narratives that are chronologically 'out of time' foreground narrative time. Time in these novels becomes a deictic device that emphasizes the impossibility and incompossibility of the narrative, thus performing textual deixis. The entirety of this chapter moves towards arguing this reversal, which will result in an exploration of the use of temporality as a metafictive device within science fiction narratives.

This chapter makes use of two texts by Joanna Russ, the 1984 short story collection *Extra(Ordinary) People* and the novella *We Who Are About To…* (1976), and these texts have been chosen for two specific reasons. First, both texts concern themselves very specifically with histories and, specifically, science fiction as a future history. Secondly, both texts exhibit Russ's prominent feminist leanings and incorporate this philosophy in their discussion of histories and science fiction. Though this latter attribute comes across more strongly and with more complexity in *We Who Are About To…*, the explicit feminism shown in *Extra(Ordinary) People* runs parallel to its arguments about history and each informs the other.[5] In each case, however, the way in which these histories are

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[3] Currie, *About Time,* p. 4.

[4] Prince, Gerald, *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1982), p. 1.

[5] While *The Female Man* (1975) also ostensibly deals with these themes, and ties them directly to the idea of multiple alternative realities, these issues have been exhaustively analysed by critics such as Jeanne Cortiel (Cf. Cortiel, Jeanne, *Demand My Writing: Joanna Russ/ Feminism/ Science Fiction* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999)), anything said here would be only a restatement of these existing analyses, and as such it has been eschewed in favour of the Russ texts analysed here.

framed, one through that of a desperate woman stranded on an inhospitable world, and the other through a robotic history lesson, centres on questions of authority and implies issues about authoritative future histories. Both of these central issues are dispersed through the prism of a temporal framing, which breaks them down into various constituent parts. In these texts, narrative layers derive from these temporal frames and careful attendance to this layering process informs a reading of these two major thematic strands. The metafiction evident in these texts derives from this process and its interaction with these themes.

History, Time, and Science Fiction

The relationship between metafiction and this temporal framing process can be seen more clearly when examined against the backdrop of history and time as it was approached in literary studies during the same period. Postmodernist philosophy challenged the authority of accepted history, giving rise to alternate readings of history such as Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilisation* (1961), which traced the history of civilisation through the treatment of the mentally ill. Jean-François Lyotard refers to this as a move away from the grand narrative (that of accepted histories) towards the *petit récit* (literally 'little stories' or 'little narratives'), that of the personal story.[6] The way in which this concept has been appropriated by literature is nicely summarised by Linda Hutcheon. She calls this facet of postmodernist literature the historiograph, a text that 'problematises the entire notion of historical knowledge'.[7] Mark Currie notes that Hutcheon's understanding of postmodern history is one 'dominated by certain unresolved contradictions between history and fiction, arising from a generalised distrust of official facts, and a blurring of the boundary between events and facts as represented'.[8] Each historiograph therefore claims to be a *petit récit* rather than a grand narrative and, when combined with metafiction to create 'historiographic

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[6] Lyotard, Jean-François, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 60.

[7] Hutcheon, Linda, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 89.

[8] Currie, *About Time*, p. 25. Currie notes that Hutcheon's summary is inadequate (26), but it serves as a baseline for a postmodern understanding of history in this thesis.

metafiction',[9] in effect asks readers to question the validity of the history they read.

Time and narrative time in particular came under similar investigation during the same period.[10] Though time had become highly elastic during the height of modernism (such as was the case in Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse* (1927)), the postmodern use of time's elasticity moved beyond simple dilation and contraction. According to Ursula K. Heise, the difference between the modernist and postmodernist approaches to time can be summarised in the following fashion: 'although both modernism and postmodernism foreground breaks or schisms in time, high modernism questions mainly the relevance and accessibility of the past, whereas postmodernism challenges the notion of time as such'.[11] Time as portrayed in postmodern fiction, therefore, is not merely fluid but completely arbitrary. She goes on to argue that modernism follows a 'soft clock' mentality and that it

> generate[s] a temporality that transcends the individual without obliterating it; [it] foreground[s] the uniqueness of each psychological time world, but in the process also open[s] up a time beyond individual perception by allowing the readers to experience subjective temporalities other than their own and to perceive events as they appear in these different frameworks.[12]

In contrast, Heise argues that in postmodern texts,

> the differing accounts or flashbacks are not linked to the voice or mind of any narrator or character configured with a view toward psychological realism, and they tell event sequences in contradictory and mutually exclusive versions that do not allow the reader to infer a coherent story and reality.[13]

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[9] Hutcheon, *Postmodernism*, p. 5.

[10] For a useful survey of time in literature, please see Ricoeur, Paul, *Time and Narrative*, vols. 1 and 2, translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984, 1985); Ricoeur, Paul, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, translated by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988); Currie, Mark, *About Time*, and Heise, Ursula K. *Chronoschisms: Time, Narrative, and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[11] Heise, Ursula K., *Chronoschisms: Time, Narrative, and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 37-8.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 51.

[13] *Ibid.,* p. 53.

In effect, the main difference between modernist time and postmodernist time is that modernist time retains a consistent and 'realistic' chronology, while postmodernist time is not merely fragmentary but chaotic. This difference in the perception of time, particularly in how it is presented to a reader, becomes essential in this chapter. The texts analysed here present time as fragmentary, highly individuated, and impressionistic, and thereby fall under the category of postmodern portrayals of time.

The historiograph and this postmodern conceptualisation of time both have particular significance with regards to the future as portrayed in science fiction narratives. Heise also makes particular note of science fiction texts in her study of time in postmodernist narratives, and argues that in these texts

> narrative … takes on the temporal structure of a future that can no longer be envisioned without great difficulty, so that the time experience of the future is displaced into the reading experience. […] science fiction novels […] propose a version of the future: but in this case, a version of the future that is highly aware of the difficulties of articulating any such version.[14]

The science fiction text therefore has an inherently complicated temporal position with reference to both their portrayed future and the reader's present. Futures portrayed in science fiction texts therefore exist not only as possible worlds or possible futures; their very syntax sets them up as disjointed from the reader's world since, according to Mark Currie, the narrated events in a fiction can be thought of as part of the past.[15] The complex use of the past and present tense for narratives about the future makes them, at least from a narratological point of view, future histories. Science fiction narratives about the future also carry with them an internal consciousness about their internal paradox: the possible future told as actualised past.[16] In this way, a text about the future can be understood as implicitly metafictional, particularly if the text makes a point of foregrounding its status as a history (future or otherwise).[17]

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[14] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

[15] Currie, M., *About Time*, p. 5.

[16] Some of these texts, such as *We Who Are About To…* and in fact *Frankenstein Unbound*, may also be considered found manuscripts given their apparent transcription, further problematising their temporality.

[17] Sawyer, Andy, 'Future History', in *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Mark Bould, Andrew M. Butler, Adam Roberts, and Sheryl Vint (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 489-93, p. 492.

Extra(Ordinary) People **(1984)**

Extra(Ordinary) People is a loosely linked collection of short stories Russ originally published between 1982 and 1983. Though some of these stories do not immediately appear to be science fictional, much as was the case with both *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater* and *Breakfast of Champions*, they may be understood as science fictional through the use of various framing devices employed both in the stories and in the collection as a whole.[18] The presentation of all of these stories as science fictional therefore has knock-on effects with regards to how it approaches concepts of history, with regards to both its portrayal of future histories and the collection's overall metafictional commentary about time in narrative.

These framing devices are made up of two basic categories: the neologism and the epigraph. While the use of neologism comes almost entirely from the final story in the collection, 'Everyday Depressions', the epigraph is used both on the level of the individual story and as a method of binding the stories to one another in the collection as a whole. The metafictionality of *Extra(Ordinary) People* derives almost solely through the impact of these epigraphs at both the micro and macro level of the collection.

'Everyday Depressions', a series of letters by a writer talking about a book they may write in the future, gains its gravity from an epigraph by science fiction author Carol Emschwiller: 'It's *all* science fiction'.[19] Russ's story, ostensibly a fairly straightforward metafiction about a writer planning a book, takes on a different tone when this epigraph is considered. If 'it' is really all science fiction, it follows that this story is science fiction as well, or at least contains some aspect of science fiction. The most obvious science fiction convention in the story, what Peter Stockwell labels the neologism,[20] operates at the end of the story. The fictional author uses words such as 'wombun', 'wumyn', 'wymeen', and 'teachur',[21] all of which are homonyms or nearly homonyms for familiar English

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[18] The major exception to this rule is the story 'Souls', where the interaction between the visitors and Abbess Rudegunde is clearly that between aliens proclaiming ownership over the humans in the abbey.

[19] Russ, Joanna, 'Everyday Depressions', in *Extra(Ordinary) People* (London: The Women's Press, 1984), pp. 147-60, p. 147.

[20] Stockwell, Peter, *The Poetics of Science Fiction* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), p. 119.

[21] Russ, 'Everyday', p. 160.

words. The estranging effect these words have on the reader therefore exists only at the level of spelling. While these neologisms are not enough to thrust the narrative into a science fictional space, as they come at the end of the story, they can cast the 'past' of the text in a science fictional light. In this way, these words become framing devices that imply the science fiction mode, much as the narrative voice in *Breakfast of Champions* implies a cultural distance between the narrator and the narrated. In the case of 'Everyday Depressions', however, these estranging elements come quite late in the chronology of the text for them to imply science fictionality except in hindsight, and this estrangement dissipates somewhat when these words are understood in the context of other neologisms (such as 'frosh',[22] a common slang term for someone in the first year of either high school or university in the United States). The words may be neologisms, but their newness does not necessitate science fictionality, only distance between the reader and the text.

If the Emschwiller epigraph is to be believed, however, then the entirety of the story is science fiction, despite the story being bereft of common science fiction conventions like aliens, technologies, and space flight. If the thesis put forward by Albert Wendland is taken seriously and science fiction is understood as a kind of literary thought experiment,[23] then identifying the subject of this experiment will inevitably identify the science fiction content of the text. In the case of this text, much as was the case with both *Frankenstein Unbound* and *Breakfast of Champions*, the experiment here is a literary one, where the fictional author works through possibilities for a new story. The text charts the thought experiments played out in the mind of the writer in letter-form before beginning to write a novel – one which never moves out of the theoretical landscape created as it is a 'silly book'.[24] The proposition this text makes with reference to the framing epigraph, is that science fiction is more than conventions (what Wendland would call 'conventional mode' science fiction),[25] and that the science extrapolated in a piece of science fiction can in fact be literary science – narratology. In effect, epigraph and neologisms in 'Everyday Depressions' serve as world-denoting monads (in the Leibnizian sense), thus estranging the world of the text.

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[22] *Ibid*.

[23] Wendland, Albert, *Science, Myth, and the Fictional Creation of Alien Worlds* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), p. 24.

[24] Russ, 'Everyday', p. 160.

[25] Wendland, p. 4.

What is extraordinary about this particular story is that this entire reading depends upon the reader understanding the implication of the Emschwiller epigraph. The quotation itself therefore acts as an extra-diegetic framing device, much in the same way as the typographical changes in *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater* signal changes in narrative world, and this leads the reader to consider questions about the text they might not otherwise. Without this epigraph, the story reads as a fairly straightforward piece of experimental fiction. The inflection it provides for the story suggests its importance as a framing device is to serve as a lens through which the text may be understood, much as was the case with framing devices in both texts analysed in Chapter 2.

This technique of using the epigraph as a framing device is employed throughout the remainder of *Extra(Ordinary) People*. Instead of acting purely as a lens through which to understand the main body of the stories within the collection, these epigraphs serve as links between the stories. The epigraphs form their own story that encompasses that of the various collected texts and places them into a secondary, outer narrative. Though *Extra(Ordinary) People* is ostensibly a collection of short stories – and in fact it is marketed as such – each story is bookended by a short conversation between a school child and his tutor. These conversations frame the stories as a history lesson, sketched out simply at the beginning of the collection:

> 'Today,' said the tutor, 'we study history.'
>
> The schoolkid listened.[26]

At this juncture, the history lesson frame is fairly bland: it is impossible to see it as science fictional or otherwise. Indeed, most of the first story, 'Souls', appears to be historical fiction about unusual happenings at a medieval abbey. By the end of 'Souls', however, readers become aware that the world of Abbess Rudegunde is not compossible with their own: there is no record of aliens visiting an abbey. Even the student is surprised at this revelation, and his tutor reacts in a manner that will eventually become a familiar refrain by the end of the collection.[27]

> 'So that's how the world was saved,' said the schoolkid. 'By those aliens with their telepathic powers.'

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[26] Russ, Joanna, *Extra(Ordinary) People* (London: The Woman's Press: 1984), p. i.

[27] The conversation after 'Souls' is replicated in variation after 'The Mystery of the Young Gentleman' (p. 93), and the opening sentences by the tutor and the schoolkid are identical to that in the earlier conversation.

> 'Do you believe that?' said the tutor. 'Then you'd believe anything! No, it wasn't like that at all.'[28]

This becomes a pattern throughout the collection: the student constantly asks if the previous story was 'how the world was saved', and the tutor consistently denies not only that the story was about how the world was saved, but that events resembled the story at all. When this attitude is contrasted with the opening conversation in the collection, the word 'history' there becomes problematic for two reasons. First, the history that the tutor purports to be teaching seems incompossible with any history known to the reader. This immediately and forcibly estranges the events of the entire collection for the reader, thus shunting them to the realm of the Fantastic. More importantly, however, the tutor's comment in the above quoted conversation that 'it wasn't like that at all' calls into question the kind of history being taught. This comment creates a dissonance in the collection's logic: why even mention the story with the Abbess if it was not how the world was saved, much less accurate history? The tutor's implication that the story of 'Souls' was somehow false, and that the schoolkid is gullible for believing it, underlines history's mutable qualities. The schoolkid becomes understandably distrusting of his tutor. The tutor is later revealed to be a computer in the conversation between 'The Mystery of the Young Gentleman' and 'Bodies'.[29] By the final conversation, the student remarks that he no longer believes the tutor at all,[30] beseeching him to 'tell the truth' in the final exchange.[31] The overall suggestion of these passages is that while each may be truth insofar as each happened, the actual situation was far more complicated and each story only tells a portion of the truth. History, therefore, is shown to be multifaceted, and narrative serves as a prism for breaking reality down into manageable portions that are neither entirely true nor complete. They are, however, compossible with one another.

In the final conversation, the teacher also emphasises not only the multiplicity of history, but also its existence as a construct.

> 'All right,' said the schoolkid. 'This is the last time and you'd better tell the truth.
>
> '*Is that the way the world was saved?*'

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[28] Russ, *People*, p. 61.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 93.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 145.
[31] *Ibid.*, 161.

The tutor said, 'What makes you think the world's ever been saved?'[32]

Because the schoolkid believes the tutor has ostensibly been presenting these narratives as ways in which the world was 'saved' due to the characterisation of the 'lesson' as one about history, the suggestion that the world may never have been saved comes as a shock. The student would clearly like to believe the world has been saved, and thus has created his or her own constructed history where something, at some point, has allowed this to happen. History's intersection with fiction, and its status as a constructed narrative becomes more significant thematically in *We Who Are About To…*, but here this slippage serves to underline the unreliability of history and tellers of history. This text, and this conversation in particular, dismantles history's authority into multiple possible narratives.

The multiplicity of history is further problematised by the science fiction content of some stories, particularly those that clearly take place in the future like 'Bodies' and 'What Did You Do During the Revolution, Grandma?'. In these instances, the tutor's original assertion that the content of these stories is history not only complicates issues for the schoolkid, but also creates a temporal problem for the reader. If the events described in these stories are history despite happening in the reader's yet-to-be-realised future, then this creates a temporal paradox, the very 'difficulty' that Heise identifies in science fiction.[33] This temporal frame therefore foregrounds the "possibleness" of these futuristic narratives for the reader from a science fiction standpoint. The chronological framing created by the conversations between the schoolkid and tutor therefore means the world illustrated by the text is incompossible with that of the reader's world. In effect, the incompossible histories the collection illustrates uses history as a method of estranging readers; that is, as a novum.

Russ's use of the science fiction mode in *Extra(Ordinary) People* is, however, more sophisticated than just this temporal and ontological estrangement. The framing provided by the history lesson creates an experiential space. If we put Goffman's concept of framing as constructing a space in which audience involvement is organised in a specific manner[34] alongside Wendland's suggestion

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[32] *Ibid*.

[33] Heise, p. 67.

[34] Goffman, Erving, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 345.

that science fiction is largely hypothetical,[35] then what results is an understanding of science fiction as a kind of framing device. Science fiction therefore creates an experiential space, as do all framing devices, but due to its inherent hypothetical impetus, science fiction also creates an *experimental* space. This experimental space, proceeding directly from the fusion of science fiction's experimental nature and its use as a framing device, is another way of understanding science fiction's link with possible worlds theory. This secondary model is particularly useful at this juncture because it emphasises that science fiction's experimental qualities need not be traditionally scientific. In *Extra(Ordinary) People*, for example, while each story has its own experimental elements – from the science fiction world created in 'Souls' to the more traditional literary experiment in 'Everyday Depressions' – the history lesson that weaves between these stories creates a further experimental space. Over the course of the collection, the history lesson frame works as a marker – a novum[36] – that signals a counterfactual world where history itself is being examined. As a novum, the history lesson also blatantly highlights the fictionality of its content, thus problematising history in general. Not only does the collection's incompossibility with the reader's world imply an experimental space where history itself becomes malleable and untrustworthy, it also becomes a space to 'study history'[37] on a conceptual level.

The history lesson therefore necessarily becomes a temporal frame. As a frame, the lesson places the collection in the past, even if the world portrayed might appear futuristic to the reader. Much as in the case with nested narratives where the inner portions of the narrative are flashbacks, this creates a constant movement backwards and forwards in time for the reader, and indeed the individual stories serve a similar purpose to the flashback. Structurally, these stories also work in much the same way as nested narratives do, and each story is its own narrative world. The 'present' in the collection is the time of the history lesson (N^1, to use the same model as used in Chapter 1 for *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*), with the 'past' being each of the stories (N^2, N^3, N^4, etc., each nested

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[35] Wendland, p. 3.

[36] Suvin's terminology is being invoked for the purposes of linguistic unity; however, the history lesson here works more like Thomas Pavel's 'salient structure' (Pavel, Thomas, *Fictional Worlds* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 57) and Leibniz's monad as a method of identifying a possible world (Deleuze, Giles, *The Fold*, translated by Tom Conley (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 68).

[37] Russ, *People*, p. i.

within N^1 but not within each other). The text's foregrounding of these stories as both past and history complicates this chronology. The history lesson therefore performs both temporal and textual deixis at once, moving the reader backwards and forwards through time and to and from various narrative worlds.

Much as was the case with *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*, *Extra(Ordinary) People* uses its narrative structure and its narrative worlds as a method of highlighting its own fictionality. In this way, the temporal frame of the history lesson has a prismatic effect on the text. No longer is it simply a lens through which a reader may understand events; the mutability of histories shown in this collection suggests time in narrative is a prism that disperses reality into multiple, equally legitimate, narratives.

We Who Are About To… (1976)

Whereas *Extra(Ordinary) People* couches its interest in historicity and science fiction in the guise of a history lesson, Russ's novella *We Who Are About To…* engages with a slightly different portion of the discourse surrounding history and science fiction. Rather than continually offering alternate versions of a past, Russ's female protagonist continually reminds the reader of her concern over being remembered once she has died, which is complicated by the text constantly making references to a future readership. In this text, Russ's feminism becomes especially useful in understanding the possible world portrayed, particularly in the agency the narrator derives from the act of narration, though this is by no means necessarily a feminist analysis. When understood as a whole, then, the text may be seen as laced with arguments about science fiction and its own internal value system.

The platform that allows all of these discourses to grow is the apparent time period of the text. As was mentioned earlier, *We Who Are About To…* is another future history, reliant on science fiction's ability to narrate the future. This is, in part, aided by the text's identification of its own present. Ostensibly, it takes place in the future of the reader's world, evidenced by references to places on Earth and Earth's cultures, such as the Sahara Desert and the Pacific Ocean,[38] Greek,[39] the British Empire,[40] Bach's 'Toccata and Fugue in D minor',[41] New

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[38] Russ, Joanna, *We Who Are About To…* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), p. 1.
[39] *Ibid*., p. 3.
[40] *Ibid*., p. 4.

Jersey and Ellis Island,[42] among others. In addition, the narrator refers to her surroundings by saying they are 'very much like New Jersey a hundred and thirty-five years ago, when my ancestors came to Ellis Island: about nineteen-aught-five that was'.[43] This specific information places the time of the narrative around the year 2040 – certainly in the future relative to the reader when the novella was published in 1976. These references occur mostly within the first few pages of the text, and these real-world places and events, when juxtaposed with the space travel that brought the narrator and her comrades to the planet in the first place, suggest a future time period relative to that of the reader, as they would in any science fiction text.[44] These references create a stable history for the events that the novella accounts, but they also turn the events in the novella into a history as well by linking them with a known (actual) historical narrative.

This move is problematised by the text's emphasis on the creation and eventual retrieval of the main character's vocoder, where she has recorded the entirety of the text. For example, she states early on

> This will never be found.
>
> Who am I writing for then?[45]

This attitude comes to a climax when she later says in despair, 'Nobody will find this anyway or they'll all have flippers so who cares'.[46] This cultural disconnection the narrator assumes she will have with her readership has further implications when *We Who Are About To*'s feminism is considered, as does her referral to speaking into her vocoder as 'writing'. Both of these statements, however, imply any readers must somehow be in the future relative to the narrator. The way the narrator talks about her eventual readership implies that any readership must necessarily be in the future relative to her. This, however, is not the case: the events in this narrative do not and cannot happen in the actual world: they are the events of a counterfactual.[47] The events described in this text, then, are not so much that of a future history but a found future. Therefore, while the events of the confessional narrative (which this text is) eventually 'catch up'

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[41] *Ibid.*

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 6

[43] *Ibid.*

[44] This is, of course, up until the year 2040. At this point, the novella will cease to be a future history in the most literal sense and become an alternate history.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

[47] In the case of a reader in a post-2040 world, the tense shifts and this sentence becomes 'did not and could not have happened'.

with the narrator in time and space, as Mark Currie suggests,[48] when cast in the science fiction mode, this form actually increases both the temporal and spatial distance between the narrator and the reader as it becomes more apparent that the worlds of the two are incompossible with one another.

The incompossibility of the possible (future) history in *We Who Are About To…* and the present of the actual reader imply a similar incompossibility between the implied reader and the actual reader as well. This distinction is an important one as it pushes the text further into the realm of impossibility. If the narrator is to be believed, the person reading the story is someone in a future far beyond her present, perhaps with 'flippers',[49] or perhaps even God, 'who already knows'[50] about the events described on the vocoder. If the book had been framed with an epigraph that suggested these events had taken place sometime in the far past relative to the actual reader, or even found in the far future and transported to the actual reader's present, then it might be possible to argue that the book does not present readers with a temporal paradox.[51] The references to the actual world and the outright difficulty in having a text claim to take place in 2040 even though it is being read long before, however, foregrounds the text's chronological claims as incompossible with the actual world. This foregrounds the textuality of the narrative, and as a result, also implicitly foregrounds its fictionality. The full implications of this temporal and textual foregrounding become clearer when the themes of feminism and the history/fantasy opposition within the text are examined in more detail.

Though this analysis should not be considered in any way a feminist one, a quick recounting of the feminist issues at play in *We Who Are About To…* is necessary at this point. The narrative follows the events of a crash-landed space-ship, recorded diligently by the narrator and main character, who may possibly be named Elaine.[52] Once landed, the party dole out responsibilities and decide that one of the first imperatives is to reproduce.[53] The narrator, however, takes

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[48] Currie, M., *About Time*, p. 61.
[49] Russ, *We Who*, p. 78.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 79.
[51] A similar problem arises in Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren*, which is explored in chapter 6.
[52] Russ, *We Who*, p. 73; Delany, Samuel R., 'Introduction', in *We Who Are About To…* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2006), pp. v-xv, p. x; Mendlesohn, Farah, 'A Visionary Feminist.' *Science Fiction Studies*. Vol. 32, No. 1. 2005. pp. 535-7, p. 536.
[53] Russ, *We Who*, p. 37-9.

exception to this for two reasons: first, she feels the others 'were going to force [her] to have babies',[54] and second, she is convinced that she and her company will die on the planet.[55] Instead of banding together with those she landed with and attempting to build a civilisation, the narrator decides to practice 'the art of dying'.[56] She becomes convinced that she would rather die with dignity than reproduce, and questions the quality of survival she and her fellow passengers and any of their offspring would have on this planet. In effect, the narrator takes a differing temporal perspective to her fellow survivors: she considers the long-term implications of their survival, whilst they focus on more immediate concerns. As she says to the others,

> All right, so you think you have the chance of a snowball in hell.
> Maybe you do. But I think that some kinds of survival are damned
> idiotic. Do you want your children to live in the Old Stone Age?
> Do you want them to forget how to read? Do you want to lose
> your teeth? Do you want your great-grandchildren to die at thirty?
> That's obscene.[57]

The narrator sees her fellow passengers' reluctance to understand what survival on the planet means in logistical terms makes her believe she would rather die. As she argues in an aside in her narrative:

> You must understand that the patriarchy is coming back, has
> returned (in fact) in two days. By no design. You must understand
> that I have no music, no books, no friends, no love. No civilization
> without industrialization! I'm very much afraid of death. But I
> must. I must. I must.
>
> Deliver me from the body of this. This body. This damned life.[58]

She retreats from the original campsite and when the others attempt to follow her, she kills them. Left alone in her cave, she begins hallucinating about her victims as she slowly starves, and then finally commits suicide. These events are all linked directly to the narrator's refusal to bow to a system that requires women to reproduce, and as such the narrator's perhaps radical opinion on such matters serves as a lens through which to understand her motivations.

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[54] *Ibid.*, p. 104.
[55] *Ibid.*, p. 12-3.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[58] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

What is interesting about the narrator's decision to die is that it runs parallel to an impulse to record her life on the planet. Though the narrator says she always keeps her vocoder with her,[59] the text appears to have been composed entirely with death in mind, and this suggests it was begun after she decided to die. While there is a clear link between the narrator's refusal to reproduce and her desire to record her life, as she appears to be exchanging one form of immortality for another, a slightly more subtle link is made between the story the narrative tells about what actually happened after landing on the planet and the apparently carefree attitude her fellow passengers take to 'running around cheerily into the Upper Paleolithic'.[60] Samuel R. Delany notes this link in his introduction to the 2005 edition of *We Who Are About To…*:

> … what Kurt Vonnegut had already characterized as "the impossibly generous universe" of science fiction: When, in the real world, 95 percent of all commercial airline crashed are one hundred percent fatal and we live in a solar system in which presumably only one planet can support any life at all, from the thirties through the fifties science fiction was nevertheless full of spaceship crashes (!) in which everyone gets up and walks away from the wreckage unscathed- and usually out onto a planet with breathable atmosphere, amenable weather, and a high-tech civilization in wait near-by to provide interesting twists in subsequent adventures.
>
> This is the fundamental convention Russ's novel takes to task.[61]

Importantly, the convention that Delany notes is a dominant science fiction convention, thus setting up an opposition between the dominant optimistic narrative of space travel and the more pessimistic one Russ presents. Russ does not merely subvert this science fiction convention, however; she offers an alternate, challenging vision of the same event.

To this end, Jeanne Cortiel has noted that 'the paradoxical act of narration itself becomes a fundamental factor of empowerment. The dying woman […] becomes the sole producer of meaning in this "colony"'.[62] The narrator's agency

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[59] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[60] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
[61] Delany, 'Introduction', p. viii.
[62] Cortiel, Jeanne, 'Determinate Politics of Indeterminacy: Reading Joanna Russ's Recent Work in Light of Her Early Short Fiction', in *Future Females, the Next*

in the narrative is due, partially, to her ability to disrupt the more conventional narrative, but also through metaleptic asides that allow her to point the narrative in the direction she has chosen.[63] The text contains several asides, marked from the rest of the text with brackets.[64] These parenthetical digressions also foreground the narrator's act of recording her story as an act. As metaleptic digressions, these instances illustrate the narrator's control over the text and are her direct additions to the events. For example, in narrating the first few hours after the crash, she says, 'goodbye computer that could have sent back an instantaneous distress call along the coordinates we came through (provided it had them, which I doubt) […]'.[65] The narrator's lack of trust in anyone's ability to have prepared for the crash comes through clearly, and this highlights not only her pessimism about her survival, but also forms the basis of a critical lens through which the rest of the events are to be viewed. Other parenthetical asides are less broadly thematic and instead perform textual deixis. The narrator mentions that

> (I'm not, of course, recording this at the time it happened. I stole half-an-hour from the long, long dawn. Two and a half hours of twilight, then three more of real dark, and again two and a half hours of dusk-turned-backward: slow, creeping, endless, unadvancing grey.)[66]

This selection emphasises the temporal gap between the events being narrated and the actual recording of them – and in fact the time it took to record them. In both cases, the use of these brackets moves the narrative backward and forwards in time, from the time when the narrator is speaking into the vocoder, amending and commenting on events, to the time of the events themselves. This textual deixis emphasises the narrator's agency: her ability to affect events around her, both in a literal way through refusing to bear children and in a more figurative way through the narration of these events. As a result, she rewrites science fiction conventions,

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Generation: New Voices and Velocities in Feminist Science Fiction Criticism, edited by Maureen S. Barr (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), pp. 219-236, p. 220.

[63] This understanding of metalepsis is derived from Gérard Genette, who suggests that '*Metalepsis* … forms a system with *prolepsis*, *analepsis*, *syllepsis*, and *paralepsis*, with this specific sense: "taking hold of (telling) by changing level"' (Genette, Gérard, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, translated by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 235).

[64] Not every bracketed phrase is an aside; however, this device is used primarily for the narrator's interjections and additions.

[65] Russ, *We Who*, p. 2.

[66] *Ibid*., p. 9.

and this implicitly makes *We Who Are About To…* a performance of a Barthesian writerly text (if the science fiction mega-text is understood as a text in its own right).[67] This writerly agency allows the narrator to subvert conventional science fiction norms, and thus her refusal to reproduce is an intrinsic part of her subversion of this convention.

The narrative's subversion takes the form of a text overly concerned not only with the stark reality of crash landing on an alien planet, but one interested in foregrounding the relationship between history and fantasy. These two concerns, though they do not immediately seem to coincide, work together with the narrator's radical feminism to inform a metafictional reading of the text. In order to explore this aspect of the text, what it says about the relationship between history and fantasy must be examined first. The narrator begins this part of her discourse by arguing that 'history is all fantasy'.[68] This is a fairly radical assessment of history, though it seems to stem from postmodern philosophies about history that suggest accepted history is just one of many versions of events. To suggest history is fantasy means that history is itself a construct in the same way fantasy is: a narrative created to serve a purpose. Furthermore, the use of the word 'fantasy' also carries with it the implication of fictionality: history is, according to the narrator, a fiction. Equally, it seems, the use of the word 'fantasy' implies the construction of history is a highly personal act, as this is one woman's account of the crash and its aftermath. As Farah Mendlesohn has argued, the novel's 'narrative is precisely about world-as-personalized-construction'.[69] The narrator delves somewhat deeper into the relationship between history and fantasy in the following passage:

> If history were not fantasy, then one could ask to be remembered but history is fake and memories die when you do and only God (don't believe it) remembers. History always rewritten. Nobody will find this anyway or they'll have flippers so who cares.[70]

At this point, the narrator argues that being part of history allows one to be remembered, but this is impossible since 'history is fake' and 'always rewritten'. Linking the idea of history as a construct with a need to be remembered allows the

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[67] Barthes, Roland, *S/Z*, translated by Richard Miller (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1990), pp. 4-5.
[68] *Ibid.*, p. 75.
[69] Mendlesohn, Farah, 'Feminist', p. 536.
[70] Russ, *We Who*, p. 78.

narrator to emphasise her own relationship to history later on, when she says that she is 'outside history'.[71] In doing this, she sets up an opposition between history and fantasy when she remarks that she 'might as well be unreal if [she] can't get into [history]'.[72] The particular wording she uses to construct this opposition suggests a second opposing pair that she seems to conflate with the first. By suggesting that being 'outside history' is to be 'unreal', she therefore implies that being real would be inside history.[73] Two opposing pairs can therefore be derived from these passages: that of history/fantasy and real/unreal, where history and the real are roughly identical and fantasy and the unreal are similarly equated.

The narrator appears to contradict herself here, however: either history and fantasy are the same, as she argues originally, or history and fantasy are opposites, as she implies later on. What stands out about this contradiction, however, is that while the narrator argues originally for an equation of history with fantasy, she also clearly states as well that to be part of history (as a construct) is to be accepted as 'real'. This is the key to understanding this apparent contradiction: history is fantasy because history is a construct, not because history is unreal, per se. Similarly, when she uses the world unreal later on, she does not appear to mean impossible but, instead, somehow outside of the accepted historical construct.

If the narrator's argument that history is a construct and to be outside of it is to be 'unreal' is combined with what Delany says about Russ's subversion of the crashed space-ship convention and the concept of science fiction as a future history, then two important conclusions can be drawn. First, history (the accepted historical construct) can be seen as somewhat synonymous with science fiction convention. To be part of the future history that is science fiction, then, means to follow a convention fairly strictly. Secondly, in this case, subverting a convention also means being sidelined in much the same way being outside of the accepted historical narrative would. Russ's novella speaks of its own subversive content as a highly radical move, and implies that the convention of the crash landed space-ship narrative that has a happy ending only exists as a dominant because anything else has been considered unreal. What the narrator says about history being

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[71] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 86.

[73] She also makes the argument that others (specifically Cassie) believe being inside history means being 'important' (p. 85).

fantasy no longer contradicts what she later argues about the unreal: the convention is a fantasy, and the unreal has been marginalised.

By refusing to acquiesce to her male shipmates' demands to procreate, the narrator forces the narrative outside of accepted science fiction convention. The narrator's refrain that she is writing for no one, talking to herself, and that her vocoder and the narrative on it will never be found therefore take on a new light: her story will never be known if it is not heard or read by someone else, and therefore her entire existence is essentially a fiction. Her final cry, one for connection with someone in the universe, takes on an odd form:

> Feed me, feed me, feed me! […]
>
> Read me, read me, read me![74]

The implications of this parallel sentence structure are clear: just as feeding sustains a body, reading sustains a story. In order to be remembered and therefore continue to exist in some fashion as history, the narrator's story must be read, and this foregrounds the importance of the reader in the writing process. Without a reader, the narrator remains only fantasy, an alternate future history completely outside of time. This aspect is emphasised in the text by allowing the narrator to remain largely nameless: we see a single reference to herself by name, though it is ambiguous as to whether or not she refers to herself.[75] She is a nameless woman slowly dying on a planet that no one will ever visit.

The irony of this is that by virtue of being read, the narrator and her story gain significance. The very fact that readers know she kills her shipmates and then dies alone means that she exists: the existence of the book itself necessitates her existence (as a non-existent, of course). As Jeanne Cortiel has noted, 'authoring becomes the sole connection of the dying narrator to life and human history',[76] but this is a fleeting reassurance of her historical importance, as without a reader, she remains in the realm of fantasy.[77] I would argue, however, that her refrain that she is writing for no one and that no one will ever hear her recording is a deeply ironic one. The narrator gives herself agency through the act of narration, and ensures that she has the chance of becoming a part of history.

Because of this, *We Who Are About To…* can be understood as using time as a narrative framing device in a manner that, when read with the text's self-

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[74] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[76] Cortiel, Jeanne, *Demand My Writing*, p. 39.

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 204.

consciousness in mind, moves the text itself into an unusual fictional space where it is at once possible and impossible. While the self-consciousness of what might be called the inner text speaks about the dichotomy of history and fantasy, and how science fiction conventions have become the accepted dominant in future histories, the outer text involves the impossibility of the text itself. This aspect of the text derives from the inherent 'difficulties' in writing about a future time and place that Ursula K. Heise identifies.[78] The narrator's assertion that her narrative will never be found and read clearly contradicts the book's existence, and as was argued earlier, this foregrounds the text's fictionality. This fictionality ties in closely with the paternalistic science fiction conventions subverted by the text, thus creating a set of accepted future histories and a set of future histories that are never voiced and therefore, in a way, will never happen. These contradictions, however, have further effects on the text on a macro level. If the text itself is somehow outside of the accepted future history that makes up the mega-text of science fiction, and if the text is outside of time as well because of its internal temporal contradictions, then it slips into a strange liminal space between possible and impossible. No longer is the question whether the text is compossible with the present day, but whether the text itself can, according to its own rules, even exist. In much the same way as *Extra(Ordinary) People*, then, it foregrounds its own speculative content and science fictional status by forcing itself into a liminal ontological category.

 We Who Are About To… places its interest in history in lines drawn parallel with feminism and an interest in the mega-text of science fiction. Each of these concepts informs the other, whether by explaining apparent contradictions or through expansion. As a novel about time, however, it makes an argument about the impossibility not only of writing about the future, as Ursula K. Heise might argue, but of talking about a future that does not fit the pre-determined conceptions of the future. Russ's novella becomes a book about time that, for all intents and purposes, understands itself as unreal. It therefore shows science fiction not as a lens that embraces all possible futures, but a prism that breaks down all possible future realities into their constituent parts and selects only preferable futures, such as ones where everyone survives a crash-landing on a planet and successfully colonises it, rather than one where everyone slowly starves to death.

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[78] Heise, p. 67.

(Im)Possible Texts: Time and Self-Consciousness in Science Fiction

As the epigraph to this chapter argues, 'one of the weaknesses of academic criticism is that, though it has been preoccupied with the issue of self-consciousness, it has never dealt with the issue of self-consciousness in relation to time'.[79] While this chapter's overall argument has been an attempt to argue for a two-way relationship between fiction and time insofar as a text about one is also about the other, it is also interested in looking at the relationship between self-consciousness and time in science fiction. Both of the texts analyzed here force their proposed histories, future and past, alongside what might be considered authoritative versions of history in order to displace the authority of the dominant discourse (the dominant historical discourse or the dominant conventional discourse). In the case of *Extra(Ordinary) People*, the tutor exposes history as a construct, and therefore places the 'history' of science fiction itself in the cross-hairs of postmodern philosophies about history. *We Who Are About To…* makes a similar move, but directly criticizes science fiction conventions for having become exclusive and, the text argues, male.[80] Its narrator takes the narrative of the crashed space-ship into her own hands and liberates it, granting herself agency as a character through her ability to write her own history of the future. In both cases, these texts expose the concept of an official history as a construct, and replace this construct with a multifaceted understanding of the past and future that becomes highly unreliable and personalized.

In order to do this, both texts utilize time as a framing device. While *Extra(Ordinary) People* does this through a fairly straightforward use of epigraphs to create an inner and an outer storyline which suggest multiple possible histories, *We Who Are About To…* uses time as a frame in a completely different fashion. While there is a certain amount of layering implicit in the narrator's asides, as was argued earlier, a more subtle layering can be discerned through its engagement with, and criticism of, science fiction conventions. While the narrative itself takes place largely within one experimental space (that of the narrator's recording), and within that it creates several other narrative worlds, such as the narrator's past and the process of recording events, this experimental space sets itself against another implied experimental space: that of the

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[79] Currie, M., *About Time*, p. 45.
[80] This is probably closely linked to an underrepresentation of women writing in science fiction.

conventional crashed space-ship narrative. Because the dominant science fiction convention is implicitly embedded within the narrative, it is possible to understand the text as double-voiced,[81] creating a secondary discourse (that of the 'accepted' science fiction convention) that runs parallel to that of the events the narrator records. The text therefore can be separated into a critical text (the overt narrative) and the source text (the convention being criticized). Readers understand the increasing distance between the conventional science fiction narrative and the events of *We Who Are About To…* because the conventional events are implicit in Russ's text.

Interestingly, the voice of the science fiction convention, though implicit, is otherwise silent. This illustrates an interesting reversal of the very issue of 'official' history that Russ's novella subverts: the narrator's voice quite literally speaks over that of the assumed science fiction mega-text, rewrites it, and silences it in the end. In this way, the narrator's agency as an author of her own destiny (in both senses) can be seen as the catalyst that allows her to break free of a dominant science fiction convention. This implicit layering of discourses is further enhanced by the overt impossibility of the text: it is out of time, a text that the author presumed no one would ever find, being read long before its own composition. If the text had in any way shown itself as a possible future (even one of many possible ones), then this begins to break down the carefully constructed argument the narrator makes about how she (and her story) are totally 'on the periphery'[82] as fantasy rather than official history. The text's impossibility according to its own temporality underlines its peripheral status, and thus its temporality foregrounds its science fictionality.

In this way, *Extra(Ordinary) People* and *We Who Are About To…* both illustrate a particular use of time in science fiction narratives that pervades much science fiction and speculative fiction written by women, and the texts analyzed in this chapter constitute part of a larger cycle of self-conscious science fiction texts written by women that use time as a metafictional device to talk about issues of

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[81] Rose, Margaret A., *Parody/Meta-Fiction: An analysis of Parody as a Critical Mirror to the writing and reception of fiction* (London: Croom Helm, Ltd., 1979), p. 107. Though Rose uses this terminology with reference to the relationship between parody and metafiction (a link which will be discussed further in Chapter 5), a text that directly engages with a convention (in whatever way it does so) creates a similarly implicit double-voiced discourse.

[82] Russ, *We Who*, p. 82.

possible futures in science fiction.[83] These texts use time to foreground the impossibility of science fiction narratives. Russ implicitly juxtaposes these narratives against more conventional science fiction and creates a double-voiced discourse within each text that creates implicit narrative layering. The next chapter explores the idea of the double-voiced discourse as a kind of metafiction in more detail, particularly as it is seen in Douglas Adams's science fiction parodies.

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[83] Cf. Piercy, Marge, *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976); Baker, Kage, *The Company* Series (1997-2010); Tepper, Sheri S. *The Margarets* (2007); Atwood, Margaret, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985); and Niffenegger, Audrey, *The Time-Traveller's Wife* (2003), among others. A lengthy discussion of these texts and others like them is an area for further expansion.

Chapter 5

Prism 2: Parody as Metafiction in Science Fiction

'This is the story of that terrible, stupid catastrophe and some of its consequences.
'It is also the story of a book…' – Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*[1]

'The true test of Comedy is that it shall awaken thoughtful laughter.' – George Meredith, 'An Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit'[2]

The last chapter argued that when science fiction narratives foreground their temporal position relative to the reader, they create a 'double-voiced' text. These texts are metafictional insofar as they emphasize the gap between the reader and the text, and thus use temporal deixis as well as textual deixis in order to create an experimental space to examine fictional issues. Narrative layering in these texts is therefore implicit, and when juxtaposed with the overt layering of narrative worlds in the texts analysed in chapters 2 and 3, this form of layering is comparatively subtle. This layering is implied, and it is remarkably similar to the layering found in parody texts. This chapter will expand upon this subtle layering of narrative worlds as it is found in science fiction parodies. As such, this chapter bases its argument around a somewhat different critical assumption than the other chapters in this thesis. Whilst the previous chapters examined sophisticated uses of narrative worlds in order to present them as metaleptic devices, this chapter examines parody as a metaleptic device that creates an implied narrative world separate from that of the overall performed narrative. The parodic science fiction text, at least in the case of Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* novels, therefore largely subsumes the commentary world.

Science fiction's popularity as a subject of parody derives largely from its highly recognizable conventions and tropes that are easily manipulated for humorous effect. In addition, science fiction's commonly serious presentation of its what may otherwise be considered contrived conventions allows space for

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[1] Adams, Douglas, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, in *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide* (New York: Portland House, 1997), p. 5.
[2] Meredith, George, 'An Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit', 1897 (1877), Project Gutenberg (2005), http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1219, p. 24.

significant parody. As Vonnegut critic Donald L. Lawler notes in his examination of the sub-genre of space opera, 'Because [space opera] itself is hyperbolic in its treatment of subject, it is an ideal vehicle for burlesque, especially when the values to be parodied are the very ones that space opera has promoted consistently'.[3] Because space opera's treatment of science fiction's genre conventions and the mode's 'hyperbolic' attitude are often a source of parody in science fiction, parodic science fiction may be understood as invoking what George Meredith terms 'thoughtful laughter'.[4] That is, parodic science fiction engages a reader's mind both at the level of reactive humour and at the level of cognitive processing. Meredith's emphasis on the word 'thoughtful' here closely allies itself with Darko Suvin's definition of science fiction as 'cognitive estrangement':[5] as with science fiction in general, parodic science fiction requires a certain level of mental engagement on the part of the reader.[6] This chapter argues that what is particularly interesting here is that the affect on and the involvement of the reader is similar in both science fiction and in parody. In particular, the chapter argues that the space opera sub-genre of science fiction also serves as a lens through which parodic science fiction texts may be understood as metafictional.

Douglas Adams's 'trilogy' of five novels, *The Hitchhiker's Guides to the Galaxy* (1979), provides multiple examples of mode-specific parodic moments within science fiction. This chapter links the subjects of parody in science fiction with critical assessments of the mode, particularly the sub-genre of space opera, and thus to foreground the metafictional facets of these parodies for examination and analysis. In this way, parodic science fiction will be shown to act as a prism, as it not only parodies science fiction but also actively subverts criticism of the mode. This distinction is an important one, as relocating the source of parody strengthens the argument for the intersection of metafiction and science fiction, and thus forms the basis for uncovering a sustained fictional engagement with critical issues in science fiction studies as a second implicit narrative world within

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[3] Lawler, Donald L., '*The Sirens of Titan*: Vonnegut's Metaphysical Shaggy-Dog Story', in *Vonnegut in America: an introduction to the life and work of Kurt Vonnegut*, edited by Jerome Klinkowitz and Donald L. Lawler (New York: Delacorte Press, 1977), pp. 61-86, p. 72.

[4] Meredith, p. 24.

[5] Suvin, Darko, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 15.

[6] As was noted in chapter 3, science fiction holds many features in common with the Barthesian 'writerly' text.

the text. While most parody functions as commentary on the source text, the metafictional parody identified and analysed in this chapter can be understood as a meta-commentary that engages with existing criticism as much as it does the existing science fiction canon. This moves the science fiction parody into the realm of 'theoretical fiction' described by Mark Currie.[7] The analyses in this chapter, therefore, will consider parody in science fiction as stimulated by issues already identified by critical studies rather than newly recognized problems.

Metafiction, Parody, and Margaret A. Rose

Though the above has alluded to a significant and specific overlap of metafiction and parody, I would now like to expand on this argument since it is essential for this chapter. Parody as a literary form is often grouped together with similar forms, such as the burlesque, the satire, and other comedic forms.[8] In particular, it is paired with burlesque as they have similar comedic elements,[9] and M.H. Abrams considers the parody a form of 'high-burlesque'.[10] According to Abrams, 'parody imitates the serious manner and characteristic features of a particular literary work, or the distinctive style of a particular author, or the typical stylistic and other features of a serious literary genre, and deflates the original by applying the imitation to a lowly or comically inappropriate subject'.[11] Parody, for the purposes of this chapter, will therefore be understood as a special kind of intertextuality[12] where various textual attributes (whether of a specific text or group of texts) are imitated and 'exaggerate[d] to ludicrous effect'.[13] Robert Phiddean, in his exploration of Swiftian Parody, calls this act 'refunctioning'.[14]

This intertextuality creates what Simon Dentith labels a 'double-voiced discourse': a parody implicitly brings with it a source text, and the two remain in dialogue throughout the text.[15] According to Joseph A. Dane, this is a kind of

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[7] Currie, Mark, *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1998), p. 51.

[8] Abrams, M.H. with Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (eighth edition) (Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), p. 27.

[9] Dentith, Simon, *Parody* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 190.

[10] Abrams, p. 27. Abrams distinguishes between high and low burlesque by the apparent aesthetic 'dignity' of the new text in comparison to the old.

[11] *Ibid*.

[12] Dentith, pp. 4-5.

[13] *Ibid*., p. 32.

[14] Phiddean, Robert, *Swift's Parody* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 13.

[15] Dentith, p. 8.

Bakhtinian 'polyglossia'.[16] This has two major implications for the parodic text. First, it would appear that a parody can only be understood as parody by a reader who knows the source text,[17] though it is possible (if rare) for a text to be an 'accidental' parody.[18] This is particularly interesting, as this implies that a text containing parodic elements is not wholly dependant on a reader's understanding of the source material in order to actually be a parody text. The parodic elements of a text may therefore be understood as a secondary narrative world that exists parallel to the overall narrative, thus creating a 'double-voiced discourse'. In this model of the parody narrative, the parody material is therefore encoded in an overall narrative that exists independently of the source material.[19] The independence of the overall narrative explains why the uninitiated reader may still comprehend a parody text (though not necessarily as a parody) even though the reader may have no knowledge of the parody's source material. In effect, the reader only hears one of the 'voices', and thus does not understand the text as a parody. Secondly, this double-voiced format implies a relationship with a source text, further implying an inherent critical basis to parody. This is the basis of its link with metafiction.

Margaret A. Rose pushes this link between metafiction and parody further, and argues that parody can ultimately be viewed as a species of self-reflexive literary criticism: 'As a form of meta-fiction, parody has often been used as a basis for general literary theory, and to study such parody is to study the analysis of fiction made from within the fiction itself'.[20] As evidence, she cites the usage of texts such as *Don Quixote* and *Tristram Shandy* and the Russian Formalists' application of them as the parodic base of much literary criticism (at least in the Formalist tradition). In doing so, she sets up a distinct overlap between the creative (the source text and the parody as a stand-alone text) and the critical (the commentary that makes up the parody): what she refers to as the 'dual-text' quality of parody.[21] Though similar to Dentith's 'double-voiced discourse', Rose

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[16] Dane, Joseph A., *Parody: Critical Concepts Versus Literary Practices, Aristophanes to Sterne* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), p. 8.

[17] Rose, Margaret A., *Parody/ Meta-Fiction: An analysis of Parody as a Critical Mirror to the writing and reception of fiction* (London: Croom Helm, Ltd., 1979), p. 62.

[18] Rose, Margaret A., *Parody: Ancient Modern, and Postmodern* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 41.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

[20] Rose, *Parody/ Meta-Fiction*, p. 13.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 51.

argues that the dual-text mode allows parody to be 'self-reflexive, and to have […] the function of superseding imitation'.[22] Rose therefore moves parody away from its imitative function and instead leans heavily on its critical properties. In this way, she argues that parody and metafiction hold a critical impetus in common.

Parody is often understood is terms of its critical basis; Dentith, for example, defines parody as 'any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice'.[23] This is an interesting and useful definition to examine at this point. The phrase 'polemical allusive imitation' suggests that parody is, at its core, about a critical reaction to another text. Indeed, it is this polemical or critical underpinning that separates parody from Fredric Jameson's postmodern pastiche, which is characterised by its lack of 'ulterior motives'.[24] Fredric Jameson argues that in a postmodern society, parody has given way to pastiche as a major method of intertextuality, due in part to the 'unavailability of the older national language'.[25] Though pastiche is similar to parody insofar as it is imitative, Jameson argues that pastiche is wholly lacking in parody's polemical underpinning. As such, it is a 'blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs'.[26] Parody's ability to critique its source texts goes beyond voicing of these polemics, however, and Dane argues that parody is a 'meta-literary genre and thus a form of literary criticism'.[27] If what Dane and Rose say is true, then parody may be understood as possessing metaleptic functions similar to metafiction. Larry McCaffrey argues that metafictional texts are those 'fictions which examine fictional systems',[28] and that they specifically examine 'the way in which reality is transformed by and filtered through narrative assumptions and conventions'.[29] These 'fictional systems' may therefore be understood as any set of conventions surrounding fiction, whether part of the creative process, the text itself, or even the body of critical work

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[22] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

[23] Dentith, p. 9.

[24] Jameson, Fredric, *Postmodernism, or: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 17.

[25] *Ibid*.

[26] *Ibid*.

[27] Dane, p. 5.

[28] McCaffrey, Larry, *The Metafictional Muse; The Works of Robert Coover, Donald Barthelme, and William H. Gass* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982), p. 5.

[29] *Ibid*.

surrounding a collection of texts. All of these are subjects of metafictional commentary, and therefore may be considered targets for parody as well. This is a particularly useful understanding of the parody source text where science fiction is concerned, as while science fiction parodies may occasionally refer to a specific text, more often they refer to the more general mega-text of science fiction conventions, settings, and iconography as a generalised source text.[30]

Dentith also notes that while not necessarily metafictional,[31] parody's exaggeration of the source text's qualities appears to have an 'evident critical function'.[32] Therefore, while parody may have a 'critical function' of one sort or another, this criticism is not necessarily *self*-critical in every case. Robert Phiddean has argued for this distinction in his analysis of Swiftian parody:

> … all parody refunctions pre-existing text(s) and/or discourse(s) … […] It [Parody] is dialogical and suggestive as well as negatively deconstructive, for it (at least potentially) can achieve controlled and metafictional commentary as well as purely arbitrary problematization.[33]

Phiddean argues for two functions of parody: the first where it 'refunctions' or problematises its source text or discourse,[34] and secondly where it makes a metafictional commentary on top of this refunctioning. Parody, when sufficiently focussed on the source text or discourse, attains a level of self-reflexivity. This self-reflexivity is the implicit secondary voice that both Rose and Dentith refer to in their analyses of parody.[35] Though this voice runs parallel to that of the overall text, it may only be discerned when understood in the context of a source text or

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[30] Though conventions and tropes are themselves not systems, the overall science fiction mega-text may be understood as a system of mutually agreed upon conventions, tropes, and themes.

[31] Dentith, p. 16.

[32] *Ibid*., p. 32.

[33] Phiddean, p. 13-4.

[34] Phiddean's inclusion of discourse as a source of parody is interesting, as many studies of parody centre on single texts as sources for parody (this is, of course, because Swiftian parody derives not from individual texts but discourses). As in the case of McCaffrey's definition of metafiction, which was noted above, the use of the word 'discourse' aids in releasing restrictions on source texts for parody, and eliminates the need for a one-to-one correspondence between parody and source text.

[35] This dual role of the commentary voice in parody does not contradict either Rose or Dentith's assertions that there are two voices at play in parody. The role of the commentary in parody is a matter of the level of engagement and should be understood as a sliding scale.

discourse. In this way, the critical functions of parody are largely dependant on the reader's engagement with the text, as a reader who is unfamiliar with the source of the parody will not necessarily understand the parody as critical.

Parody's dual nature carries with it an implication beyond these two voices, however. Rose argues that parody's dual structure in fact invokes a text made of multiple text worlds. According to her, 'parody must… be understood as consisting of two fictional worlds – the one "performed" and the other, the parody itself, a new world which offers a critical context for the re-coding and re-reception of the former'.[36] In this way, the parody world constantly acts as a backward glance, always reconstructing the world of the source text or discourse through the lens of its own criticism. The particular relationship Rose depicts between the world of the parody and the 'performed' text, however, is completely non-hierarchical and considers the 'structural role played by the parodied text as a second text-world (and not just as a sub-text) in the parody'.[37] This is an important difference between Rose's conception of parody and the double-voiced discourse that Dentith identifies: while Dentith argues for duality in the parody text, he implies that the implicit commentary function of parody is secondary (the 'sub-text' Rose suggests in her parenthesis). Rose, meanwhile, argues the two levels of discourse are equal and work as two 'worlds' within the text. She limits her understanding of text worlds in parody to the reader's reception of the parody, and posits that the world of the parody text (which she labels TW_1; TW_2 is the source text or discourse) is completely dependant on the reader's recognition of it as such.[38] Therefore, Rose appears more interested in the quality of parody's implicit dual-textuality and the reader's participation in the creation of TW_1 than in the text world created by this participation. This chapter, however, is more interested in the latter, and as an extension, the interaction between these two text worlds. Though this argument can be understood as one facet of Rose's conception of the parody as a dual text, it may be understood more fully when seen through the lens of possible worlds theory.

The idea of the dual text at work in parody, especially when extended to the level of two textual worlds as it is in Rose's work, benefits from understanding the textual levels at work in parody as fictional worlds. The two levels of the parodic text can be differentiated by calling the overall narrative of the parody text

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[36] Rose, *Parody/Meta-Fiction*, p. 107.
[37] *Ibid.*
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 26-8.

N^1 and the commentary implicit in the text N^2.[39] N^1 is the 'base' narrative world, containing the plot, the characters, and the events of the parody text, while N^2 is the metafictional commentary world. Unlike the examples of narrative worlds labelled with this system in chapters 2 and 3, these narrative worlds do not sit nested within each other in any fashion. They are, instead, fully parallel. The only difference between these worlds, as far as their ontological statuses are concerned, is the explicitness of N^1 and the implicitness of N^2. N^1 is an independent text world, and is therefore the only level available to readers unfamiliar with the text or system being parodied, as Rose has noted.[40] N^2, therefore, is the world of the commentary the parody makes and, importantly, the reader's recognition of it as such. The relationship between these narrative worlds, then, is quite different from the jagged textual deixis common in many metafictional texts where authorial voices intrude into a narrative world (such as was the case in *Breakfast of Champions*). The presence of two narrative worlds in the parody text does not evoke feelings of the 'literary turbulence' characteristic of more common metafictionality. Parody is a much 'smoother' ride for the reader, to extend the metaphor, even though readers witness two narrative worlds at once. The ideal reader of parody, therefore, understands and reads both worlds at once as a cohesive whole.

If parody is made of two narrative worlds, N^1 and N^2, then the space between the two creates a metaleptic effect. Gérard Genette defines a metaleptic device as 'the act that consists precisely of introducing into one situation, by means of a discourse, the knowledge of another situation'.[41] In the case of a parody text, the introduced discourse is the commentary itself, a critical discourse that acts as a colouring lens over the main text, regardless of the reader's comprehension of its status as commentary.[42] N^2 may therefore be understood as a metaleptic narrative world in much the same way as authorial intrusion in metafictions like Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions*.

Parody's implicit invocation of narrative worlds exhibits in a particularly interesting way in science fiction parody. I would like to return briefly to a passage from Rose, where she argues that parody is 'self-reflexive, and [has] the

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[39] Rose's TW_2 and TW_1, respectively.
[40] Rose, *Parody/ Meta-Fiction*, p. 27.
[41] Genette, Gérard, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, translated by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 234.
[42] N^2 exists *in potentia* even if the reader is unaware of its existence.

function of superseding imitation'.[43] While this has been understood previously in this thesis as arguing for parody's critical function, the idea that one of parody's functions is to go beyond imitation has not been examined in detail. On the surface, this statement is quite simple: parody's narrative functions go beyond that of mimetic representation. This slight difference in how parody's mimeticism exhibits, however, is something parody shares with science fiction. If science fiction has no direct relationship with reality, then it is therefore not mimetic in a very strict sense even though it shares certain operative characteristics like a transparent narrative with what would normally be considered mimetic fiction.[44] In other words, science fiction largely exists as a simulacrum, as Albert Wendland implies when he argues that science fiction 'imitates realism'.[45] This additional similarity links parody with science fiction as they are both inherently imitative modes of writing. Science fiction texts that work as literary hypotheses (whether overtly or covertly) blatantly highlight their status as fictions, and this implicit metafictionality crosses paths with parody's non-mimetic function. Both parody's commentary world (N^2) and the lack of mimeticism in science fiction create a textual distance between a reader's world and the main textual world (N^1) where metafiction can take place. Parodic science fiction, therefore, may be understood as metafictional through its hypothetical basis as well as its implicit foregrounding of its fictionality through its use of parody.

Parody in New Wave Science Fiction

Before embarking on an examination of Adams's novels, the stylistic experimentalism that largely characterises New Wave science fiction must also be explored in relation to these texts. These parodies and their metafictional commentary links closely to the overall critical atmosphere surrounding science fiction during this movement.

The New Wave, as was argued in the introduction of this thesis, singled out specific areas for improvement in science fiction, and *New Worlds* editor Michael Moorcock called for fresh plot treatments and ideas, emphasising the

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[43] Rose, *Parody/ Meta-Fiction*, p. 66.
[44] Zavarzadeh, Mas'ud, *The Mythopoeic Reality: The Postwar American Nonfiction Novel* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), p. 32.
[45] Wendland, Albert, *Science, Myth, and the Fictional Creation of Alien Worlds* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), p. 16.

importance of stylistics.[46] The New Wave may therefore be seen as not only a stylistic revolution, but also a backlash against what Damien Broderick identifies as a perceived 'genre exhaustion'.[47] Broderick describes this science fiction as having 'become complacent, recycling with minor modification a small number of tropes and ideas',[48] and in its place, the New Wave imposed 'radical stylistics'[49] and started to deconstruct one of the major underlying themes of previous science fiction: 'the ideological myth of supreme scientific competence and galactic manifest destiny'.[50] This 'impatience with the limitations'[51] of science fiction created a context for both Vonnegut and Adams's parodies, and these works reflect an understanding not only of what was considered problematic in science fiction, but also common critical attitudes of the time. For example, as will be argued in more detail below, much of the technology in Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* novels seems a direct spoof of strangely named blaster rifles and computers in space opera. In each case, these conventional plot devices are imitated, parodied, and subverted for comic effect. Much of the parody in the texts analysed here therefore may be understood as parody that has been filtered through the prism of New Wave sensibilities. These texts may be understood as parodying not specific texts, as some definitions of parody might require, but significant portions of the science fiction mega-text that criticism – and the New Wave movement – had singled out for improvement and development, and in this way, they may be considered as pieces of metafiction. In effect, it is not the conventions themselves that become targets for parody but their presentation in the overall generic system to which they belong. As this criticism often derives largely from the sub-genre of space opera, which is often characterised by its

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[46] Moorcock, Michael, 'What's the Argument?' *New Worlds SF*. Vol. 48, No 144 (1964), p. 2-3.

[47] Broderick, Damien, 'New Wave and backwash: 1960-1980', in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 48-63, p. 49.

[48] *Ibid*., p. 50.

[49] *Ibid*. Interestingly, James Blish argued that it was not the actual 'stylistic competence' that hampered science fiction, but a lack of ingenuity in handling 'theme and drama' (*Ibid*.).

[50] *Ibid*., p. 52.

[51] Greenland, Colin, 'The "Field" and the "Wave": The History of *New Worlds*', in *Speculations on Speculation: Theories of Science Fiction*, edited by James Gunn and Matthew Candelaria (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005), pp. 247-65, p. 248.

tendency to utilise 'stock characters and situations',[52] each issue examined in this chapter will be understood with reference to this typically 'hyperbolic'[53] sub-genre.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (1979), *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe* (1980), and *Life, the Universe and Everything* (1982)

Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* 'trilogy' is a virtual cornucopia of science fiction parody, as well science fiction and social satire and straightforward comedy.[54] These novels exhibit a self-conscious knowledge of their generic history and the mega-text of science fiction, and use this awareness to comment on critical issues by portraying them as absurd. This chapter will only examine the first three novels in this series, as the source of humour in the series shifts from that of science fiction conventions typified in space opera to specific social satire of British life in *So Long, and Thanks for All The Fish* (1985) and *Mostly Harmless* (1986). While both sources of humour – that of science fiction and modern British life – run through the entirety of the series, the first three novels are the most explicitly parodic with regards to science fiction, and specifically with regards to the space opera, as Gary Westfahl has noted.[55] While the last two novels do exhibit some science fiction parody, it is largely repetitive of that found in the first three and does not add significantly to any arguments put forth in earlier texts. The majority of the parody in Adams's novels centres around three main subject of parody: setting, characters, and science fiction iconography. I will briefly explore each of these subjects in turn, first as they are seen in non-parodic science fiction, and then as they are in Adams's novels. A comparison of the specific commentary offered by these parodies and criticism of space opera follows this examination.

The science fiction setting or world is a steadfast convention in science fiction, and it arguably makes up the mode's most defining feature. As was argued in the introduction, nova (individual differences between the reader's

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[52] Prucher, Jeff (ed), *Brave New Words: The Oxford Dictionary of Science Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 205.

[53] Lawler, p. 72.

[54] It is worth noting that *Hitchhiker's Guide* originated in a different medium (first as a radio play and later in novelised form), and this origin somewhat mitigates the novels' claim as parodic science fiction *literature*.

[55] Westfahl, Gary, 'Space Opera', in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 197-208, p. 203-4.

world and the world of a science fiction text) determine the world of a science fiction text much in the same way that Leibniz and Deleuze argue that monads determine a possible world.[56] The science fiction world is therefore made up of the nova portrayed in the text, whether in the form of unknown technologies, alien visitations, or alternate histories. The possibilities illustrated by these worlds, while virtually limitless, tend to manifest in one of several categories. For example, as Samuel R. Delany has noted, one of these categories of narratives is that of the crash-landed space ship on an alien world.[57] Likewise, as in the case of James Blish's *Cities in Flight* quartet (1953, 1955, 1959, 1962), science fiction worlds often exhibit as futuristic and dependent on technology. Even more recent and ostensibly New Wave novels, such as Christopher Priest's *Inverted World* (1974), depend on a physical difference between the fictional world and the actual world that creates an unusual situation for its inhabitants that they must (and normally do) overcome in order to live normal lives. For the purposes of this thesis, the science fiction 'world' denotes both the larger possible world alluded to in the text and the various literal worlds visited by the characters. In the texts analysed here, parody of the science fiction world often takes the form of removing the 'sense of wonder'[58] from these other worlds and replacing it with a sense of banality.

Characters in science fiction, similar to 'everyman' characters from medieval literature,[59] constitute a significant source of science fiction parody across media. Academics and popular critics alike often deride science fiction using stock characters; even those critics who defend science fiction's characterisation do so by relegating characters to the realm of 'pieces of equipment',[60] a move that creates more problems than it solves. The use of stock characters, however problematic, creates specific categories of character, not unlike the character types Vladímir Propp identifies in his *Morphology of the*

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[56] Deleuze, Giles, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, translated by Tom Conley (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 68.

[57] Delany, Samuel R., 'Introduction', in *We Who Are About To…* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2006), p. viii.

[58] Prucher, p. 179-80.

[59] Stockwell, Peter, *The Poetics of Science Fiction* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), p. 98; Russ, Joanna 'Towards an Aesthetic of Science Fiction' in *To Write Like a Woman: Essays in Feminism and Science Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 3-14, p. 5.

[60] Jones, Gwyneth, *Deconstructing the Starships: Science, Fiction and Reality* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), p. 5.

Folktale (1928) that create a 'canonical tale pattern'.[61] These categories include, for example, the ultra-brave captain, the futuristic damsel in distress, the cool-but-passionate woman who runs everything, the alien who finds Earth unevolved yet progressive (usually for reasons of 'human spirit', 'love', or some similarly problematic aspect), the brilliant and attractive scientist (both male and female). Each of these character types performs specific narrative duties within a science fiction text. In order to quickly illustrate the pervasiveness of these character types, each one will be identified in Anne McCaffrey's *The Dragonriders of Pern* series (1968-present). Just to remain within the original trilogy for simplicity, the ultra-brave captain character can be found in Weyrleader F'lar, the cool woman with hidden depths in his weyrmate Lessa, the damsel in distress in Brekke, the alien intelligence in the computer intelligence AIVAS, and a version of the scientist in Jaxom.[62] Though these characters exhibit more complex characterisation than might be otherwise suggested by this quick categorization, many of them take their inspiration from these basic character types. Adams's novels subvert many of these types quite extensively and they are the source of a considerable amount of parody.

The final category of items from which much of the parody in Adams derives is the iconography of science fiction. By this, I mean those parts of the mega-text that are considered singular elements or conventions: alien life, technologies, and so on. Roughly directly equivalent to Suvin's narrow definition of the novum, these icons often signal the science fictionality of a text, denoting the science fiction world in the manner that Carl D. Malmgren suggests.[63] Iconographic parody, which means the foregrounding of 'tired' or 'traditional' tropes, removes the sense of wonder surrounding these icons, like the parody of science fiction worlds, and replaces it with an overwhelming sense of dissatisfaction and banality on the part of the characters.

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[61] Propp, Vladímir, *Morphology of the Folktale*, translated by Laurence Scott (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), p. 88.
[62] It might be argued that most of McCaffrey's female characters, specifically Lessa, Moreta, Menolly, Miriam, and Nerilka, all address specific gender issues at the time of publication. For the purposes of this thesis, however, these characters subvert one stereotype (namely that of the helpless woman) while becoming and perhaps even creating another.
[63] Malmgren, Carl D., *Worlds Apart: Narratology of Science Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 9. See the introduction for a discussion of Malmgren's work.

The Science Fiction World

Gwyneth Jones argues that the creation of a new world in a science fiction text 'unites every kind of sf',[64] and indeed, many instances of parody in Adams's novels relate directly to the science fiction world. These worlds, whether alien, futuristic, or alternate versions of Earth history, each possess at least one novum that differentiates it from the actual world of the reader, thus creating a narrated distance between the reader and the fictional world. Brian Aldiss has noted an 'intimate' link between the science fictional world and the history of its creation and the fantasy travelogue, particularly insofar as the places one travels to in these kinds of stories must be 'exotic'[65] in order to be of interest to the reader. Indeed, the detail with which many science fiction writers create these worlds leads some to argue that 'sf … insists that world be treated as character'.[66] Whether futuristic, alternate, or alien, a single feature unites these worlds: they are interesting or 'exotic' enough to write about in the first place. In essence, they evoke a sense of wonder in the reader because of their otherness.

In Adams's novels, however, this sense of curiosity and awe that is found in so many science fiction novels is rendered banal. Many stories of other worlds often portray them as interesting, unusual in some way, or even terrifying, though all of the worlds in these novels might normally inspire a sense of wonder in the reader, these worlds are framed through the characters interactions with them as dull and everyday. For example, Magrathea, a planet that houses the factor of a company that creates custom designed planets, is completely dead and desolate on the surface. Though otherworldly and remarkable to Arthur Dent since it the first alien world he has set foot upon, the world is considered a 'desolate hole' by Ford Prefect, Zaphod Beeblebrox, and Trillian.[67] In addition, the reason for the planet's uninhabited surface completely disappoints Arthur's expectations:

> 'Did the surface become too polluted or overpopulated?'
>
> 'No, I don't think so,' said Zaphod. 'I think they just didn't like it

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[64] Jones, Gwyneth, 'The icons of science fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 163-73, p. 163.

[65] Aldiss, Brian and David Wingrove, *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction* (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1986), p. 155.

[66] Mendlesohn, Farah, 'Introduction: reading science fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 1-12, p. 8.

[67] Adams, Douglas, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, in *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide* (New York: Portland House, 1997), pp. 1-143, p. 94.

very much.'[68]

This moment of anticlimax relies on the assumption that a race would only desert the surface of their planet because of some environmental disaster. Because this section is set up much in the same way that a more environmentally-minded piece of science fiction might be, such as Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965), this foregrounds its complete failure to deliver any sort of green moral. This uninspiring landscape, which in a novel like *Dune* would be foregrounded and thematised, is portrayed as insignificant and totally empty of wonder. Though this might appear closer to Jameson's formulation of pastiche than parody because Magrathea pointedly is not being used as a didactic figure, this passage parodies those texts where a world like Magrathea would constitute a moralizing moment. In this way, Arthur's disappointed expectations align with those of the reader.

Similarly, many of the other planets the main characters visit throughout their travels, while unique and, at least to the reader, as different from reality as possible, are treated with the utmost normality within the novels and by these planets' inhabitants. To alien characters like Zaphod and Ford, a planet that grows mattresses, or Frogstar B, the planet whose sole purpose is to house the Total Perspective Vortex and then become the base for Milliway's, the Restaurant at the End of the Universe, is perfectly normal and treated as such. Even Sqornshellous Zeta, the mattress-growing planet, is legitimised as something to be expected in an infinite universe, where, statistically speaking, everything is likely to exist naturally somewhere.[69] This is, in effect, Todorov's marvellous (where the 'supernatural is explained in a logical manner') taken to a level of logical absurdity.[70] By treating these new worlds as simply part of the universe these stories happen in (sometimes quite literally), these novels remove the wonder commonly attached to the way most science fiction texts foreground their world. Though these worlds are not removed from the foreground altogether, the banality with which the 'native' characters (Zaphod in particular) treat them portrays them as normal rather than wondrous. Carl R. Kropf describes this tendency in Adams's novels in the following manner: 'the main characters wander, apparently at random, from one setting to another and, while remaining themselves

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[68] *Ibid.*, p. 95.

[69] Adams, Douglas, *Life, the Universe and Everything*, in *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide* (New York: Portland House, 1997), pp. 311-469, p. 350.

[70] Todorov, Tzvetan, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, translated by Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp. 56-7.

untouched by their experiences, they expose their own absurdities and those of the societies they encounter'.[71] Therefore, while Arthur Dent may react quite strongly to these new worlds at first, the overriding impression the readers are given is one of comparative boredom. What is important here, however, is that even Arthur becomes inured to these new worlds over time (though whether this occurs through satiation or an acceptance of the surprising and unexpected as everyday is unclear). It is not necessarily that the freshness of these worlds has gone stale, but that they no longer have the power to impress him. It is possible, therefore, to read Arthur's boredom as arguing that the basic building block of the science fiction mode has become exhausted – even for the characters themselves. This links Arthur's reaction to these new worlds as a performance of the very same genre exhaustion to which the New Wave reacted.[72]

Science Fiction Characters

Character parody can be found throughout the entirety of Adams's opus in nearly every character, but the most significant and extensive parody comes from the befuddled Earthling Arthur Dent, President of the Universe Zaphod Beeblebrox, Prostenic Vogon Jeltz, and, to a point, Trillian a.k.a. Tricia McMillan. Other characters parody the much of the remainder of the stable of 'stock characters'[73] from science fiction, including Marvin the Android, the Magrathean coastline designer Slartibartfast, Wowbagger the Infinitely Prolonged, and the captain of the 'B' ark that crash-lands on Earth Mark I. Each of these characters operates as a parody of a corresponding science fiction character stereotype, which will be elaborated upon below. In addition to this fairly straightforward parody, the particular focalization of these novels through Arthur, rather than any of the other characters (Trillian and Zaphod in particular) will be shown to parody the typical science fiction narrative structure. Though Adams has remarked that some of his characters are based on his real life friends and acquaintances,[74] this does not limit their ability to parody conventional character types.

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[71] Kropf, Carl R., 'Douglas Adams' "Hitchhiker" Novels as Mock Science Fiction' *Science Fiction Studies* Vol. 15, No. 44 (1988), pp. 61-70, p. 61.
[72] Cf. Bould, Mark and Sherryl Vint, *The Routledge Concise History of Science Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 106-10; Broderick, 'New Wave', p. 49.
[73] Jones, 'Icons', p. 171.
[74] Adams, Douglas, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy: The Original Radio Scripts*, edited by Geoffrey Perkins (London: Pan Books, 1985), p. 50.

As a main character, Arthur Dent operates in the narrative of Adams's novels as a touchstone for readers. For the vast majority of the novels, he greets every alien and event with wonder and shock, reacting much as the reader might. In essence, he forms a bridge between the reader and recounted events. Thrown into a world without Earth, amongst fascinating alien worlds and creatures, Arthur seems ill equipped to handle his fate. Unlike the 'strong, tough, all-action heroes' that tend to make up the majority of protagonists in science fiction texts[75] and space operas in particular, Arthur wanders throughout most of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe* in a fruitless attempt to find a cup of tea, managing to tie up all of *The Heart of Gold*'s resources in his search.[76] Even when his life is threatened by pan-dimensional beings that protrude into Arthur's dimension as mice, he attempts to run away rather than confront them or fight as might be expected from a lead character.[77] Arthur does not portray the typical space opera hero ability to 'save the universe with daring and courage', as Paul di Filippo describes it.[78] This, perhaps, is understandable, but it goes completely against the typical attributes of a science fiction protagonist as a gun-slinging, ultra-courageous man or the scientist hero that Thomas D. Clareson identifies as a common protagonist.[79] As an anti-hero,[80] Arthur's spinelessness casts an unusual shadow over his status as a touchstone character for readers. Rather than bolstering confidence in the 'triumph of the human spirit'[81] Arthur's ineptitude casts doubt in the reader's mind over what mankind might actually be capable of accomplishing. Instead of portraying a 'vindication' of the typically idealistic view of humanity's chances in space found in many space operas and older science fiction,[82] therefore, the character of Arthur

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[75] Aldiss and Wingrove, p. 288.

[76] Adams, *Hitchhiker*, p. 83; Adams, *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe* in *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide* (New York: Portland House, 1997), pp. 145-309, p. 156.

[77] Adams, *Hitchhiker*, pp. 133-4.

[78] Di Filippo, Paul, 'Science Fiction and Fantasy' *The Washington Post*, 15 January 2006 [Online] http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/12/AR2006011201715.html, accessed 13 July 2011.

[79] Clareson, Thomas D., 'The Other Side of Realism', in *SF: The Other Side of Realism*, edited by Thomas D. Clareson (Bowling Green: University Popular Press, 1971), pp. 1-28, p. 17.

[80] Abrams, p. 12.

[81] Kropf, p. 62.

[82] Atterbery, Brian, 'The magazine era: 1926-1960', in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 32-47, p. 36.

suggests a much more sobering and realistic view of mankind's ability to cope with the Other.

Arthur's Englishness also adds a peculiar slant to his character insofar as the stereotypical science fiction hero is concerned. Carl R. Kropf notes Arthur's national traits as one of the more important reversals of readerly expectations that Adams makes within his novels:

> SF frequently celebrates the triumph of the human spirit, as personified by a hero of epic proportions, over seemingly impossible odds. However, Adams's unlikely hero, Arthur Dent, is a bungling British Everyman whose heroic quest is confined to the search for a drinkable cup of tea.[83]

Despite this quotation's emphasis, Arthur's status as a stereotypical Englishman rather than the typical (and often American) science fiction hero is underplayed somewhat in Kropf's article as a whole and is worth exploring in more detail. Because Arthur is not only a reversal of the stereotypical space opera hero but pointedly also subverts the tendency for such heroes to be American, the *Hitchhiker's Guide* novels also specifies the target of this parody: American space opera. While it would be inaccurate to argue that Adams only parodies American science fiction in these novels, the fact that many brash, heroic protagonists were invariably American[84] suggests that Arthur's Englishness has been designed to serve as a diametric opposite to the stereotype. Arthur Dent therefore disappoints a reader's expectations of a science fiction hero through the reversal of key character traits.

Zaphod Beeblebrox similarly subverts readerly expectations through a reversal. While Zaphod serves as a parody of world leaders in general (evidenced clearly in the detailed description of the president of the universe's duties and actual powers),[85] he also parodies alien leaders within science fiction. Normally this sort of character 'offer[s] salvation' to man,[86] a quality seen quite clearly in the character of Valentine Michael Smith in Robert A Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961), or are portrayed as 'wily diplomatic opponents'.[87] Aliens

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[83] *Ibid*.

[84] Booker, M. Keith and Anne-Marie Thomas, *The Science Fiction Handbook* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 29.

[85] Adams, *Hitchhiker*, p. 28.

[86] Badmington, Neil, *Alien Chic: Posthumanism and the Other Within* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 73.

[87] Jones, 'Icons', p. 168.

are also often depicted as highly intelligent beings, usually superior to humans to some degree.[88] The commentary in Adams's novel is therefore fairly simple: Zaphod challenges these perfect, poised, and superior aliens by being crass, insane, and flamboyant, thus frustrating readerly expectations. The humour in Zaphod's character, therefore, comes from his portrayal as a charismatic imbecile rather than a cold intelligence: unlike the superior alien, he is all too human. As his own 'private brain care specialist',[89] Gag Halfrunt, says of him, 'Zaphod's just this guy, you know?'[90] Even here, referring to Zaphod as 'just this guy' serves as an anticlimactic observation, not unlike the one that occurs on Magrathea. Readers expect an alien leader to be cool, collected, and above all, sane, and Zaphod is the polar opposite.

Prostentic Vogon Jeltz and others of his race, on the other hand, while on the surface a parody of the middle-management machine at work in many nations, are also clear commentaries on the stereotypical alien antagonist in science fiction. Much science fiction portrays antagonists from other worlds as 'monsters',[91] alien enemies to be feared and guarded against. The Vogons, as the following passage indicates, are not typical science fiction antagonists, however:

> They are one of the most unpleasant races in the Galaxy – not actually evil, but bad-tempered, bureaucratic, officious and callous. They wouldn't even lift a finger to save their own grandmothers from the Ravenous Bugblatter Beast of Traal without orders signed in triplicate, sent in, sent back, queried, lost, found, subjected to public inquiry, lost again, and finally buried in soft peat for three months and recycled as firelighters.[92]

The internal Guide portrays these beings as unpleasant and banal but not, as the passage suggests, evil. They are simply bureaucrats. As a commentary on science fiction villains, the Vogons do two things. First, they subvert the audience's expectation that the villains in a science fiction text must be incomprehensibly evil – or even evil at all. They are the closest thing to a villain the first novel has, but even then this is largely due to how they operate in the

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[88] Wolfe, Gary K., *The Known and the Unknown: the iconography of science fiction* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1979), p. 205.
[89] Adams, *Restaurant*, p. 152.
[90] *Ibid.*, p. 153.
[91] Badmington, p. 2.
[92] Adams, *Hitchhiker*, p. 38.

narrative's structure rather than any intrinsic characteristic.[93] The worst possible punishment a Vogon can bestow is, in fact, a poetry reading.[94] Illustrating the Vogons as simply 'unpleasant' rather than malevolent, the text removes the emphasis on the interaction between protagonists and antagonists that drives most science fiction plot and foregrounds random character interactions. The portrayal of the Vogons as banal villains resonates with a trend Neil Badmington has noted in science fiction films of the 1950s in his book *Alien Chic: Posthumanism and the Other Within* (2004):

> With this crisis comes the waning of a hatred of the alien. Suspicion no longer has a trusted target. Martians no longer need to be restricted, feared, and destroyed, for the other is far closer to home than the films of the 1950s suggested.[95]

This statement gains clarity when juxtaposed with a similar argument earlier in Badmington's book: 'Mars is no longer to be feared, for human creations are now far more terrifying'.[96] Badmington argues that during the middle of the twentieth century, the locus of fear in these sorts of texts moves from outside the human sphere to within humanity itself, thus shrinking the distance between humans and the alien other.[97] Two aspects of the Vogons may be understood as part of this shift. First, the Vogons fit quite well into the category of the less terrifying alien. While ostensibly dangerous (given their demolition of Earth), they are hopelessly bureaucratic, and it is therefore difficult to see them as evil, only following orders. Furthermore, the 'evil' in the Vogons is a very human evil: the bureaucracy that typifies their species. Though alien, the only remotely evil thing about the Vogons is something they share with humanity.

Among the main characters, Trillian, or Tricia McMillan, is an unusual case insofar as she resembles her non-parodic counterparts. According to M. Keith Booker and Anne-Marie Thomas, the typical female character in science fiction is 'often peripheral', and commonly portrayed as the alien Other.[98] If the

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[93] The pandimensional beings that create the Earth and Earth Mark II also act as villains in the first novel; however, like the Vogons, they are similarly non-threatening.

[94] Adams, *Hitchhiker*, pp. 45-8. Ford Prefect and Arthur Dent, having criticised Jeltz's poetry inappropriately, are also threatened with death – but as presented in the text, death is apparently preferable to Vogon poetry.

[95] Badmington, p. 33.

[96] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

[97] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[98] Booker and Thomas, p. 86.

heroes of science fiction are 'blandly indistinguishable' Everymen,[99] then the women of much space opera are even more indistinguishable. As Veronica Hollinger notes, these characters are women 'with virtually no individuality or agency'.[100] These characters are seen, but rarely heard. Trillian, as Zaphod's girlfriend (and sidekick), therefore fits into the stereotypical science fiction role for a female character. She gets swept away on an intergalactic romance with Zaphod, and is of minimal importance in the first three novels aside from owning two white mice that end up being the interdimensional beings that commissioned Earth. It is arguable, therefore, that Adams is largely not interested in women's place in science fiction within these novels. Indeed, Adams's other two female characters are similarly bland and indistinct. In *So Long and Thanks for All the Fish*, Fenchurch exists as little more than Arthur's slightly artsy girlfriend who happens to have learned how to fly.[101] Trillian and Arthur's daughter, Random, allows for some satire in *Mostly Harmless*, but is otherwise unspectacular for her gender. As a character, then, Trillian herself does not parody her forebears, nor do any of the other female characters.

What Trillian's presence manages to do, however, is suggest a structural parody through her character's narrative position. Though Trillian is on the edge of the narrative,[102] as a woman in a 'man's' story, she would still be there during all of the action in a fairly standard supporting role to the hero. Because she is Zaphod's girlfriend and not Arthur's, however, this complicates matters. The overall arc of the narrative of the first three novels concentrates on the journey of Arthur Dent, thereby relegating both Trillian (the female lead) and Zaphod to the role of secondary characters. Zaphod, though hyperbolic, seems more properly understood as a hero character than a sidekick, and he and Trillian appear to be stereotypes of male and female leads. Arthur Dent and his friend Ford Prefect, similarly, look more like a comedy duo than they do main characters. Because readers see the narrative through the frame of Arthur (and Ford to a certain extent), rather than through the dramatic hero and heroine, this reverses the stereotypical narrative emphasis in science fiction. In effect, the *Hitchhiker's*

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[99] Atterbery, p. 36.

[100] Hollinger, Veronica, 'Feminist theory and science fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 125-36, p. 126.

[101] Adams, Douglas, *So Long and Thanks for All the Fish*, in *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide* (New York: Portland House, 1986), pp. 471-611, p. 561.

[102] For the most part, though her character is central in *Mostly Harmless*.

Guide novels propose the question of what would happen if the hero was psychotic and self-absorbed, and the heroics were left to the inept comic relief.

This reversal of science fiction stereotypes continues in more minor characters and subplots as well. The captain of the 'B' Ark that crash lands into prehistoric Earth Mark I, for example, might be expected, like a science fiction hero, be brave, dashingly handsome, and actively and rigorously impressive both intellectually and physically. This captain, however, is introduced whilst in the midst of a bath on the bridge of his ship.[103] Though this could be explained away as a cultural difference in some novels, the captain's lax attitude is foregrounded and exemplified in the following passage:

> This was the view through the Galactic centre from which they were travelling, and indeed had been travelling for years, at a speed that he couldn't quite remember at the moment, but he knew it was terribly fast. It was something approaching the speed of something or other, or was it three times the speed of something else? Jolly impressive anyway.[104]

The captain's lackadaisical regard for his ship's functions is emphasised for his general indifference to his first mate, known only as Number Two. The following description, also from the captain's point of view, further suggests a reversal of the stereotypical space ship captain.

> Not like that ghastly Number Two, strutting about all over the place, polishing his buttons, issuing reports every hour: 'Ship's still moving, Captain.' 'Still on course, Captain.' 'Oxygen levels still being maintained, Captain.' 'Give it a rest,' was the Captain's vote.[105]

When juxtaposed with the over-eager Number Two, the captain of the 'B' Ark seems careless and infantile (particularly when it is revealed he has been in the bath for three years),[106] and not at all like what readers would expect from a captain.[107] This parody is particularly interesting because it preserves the humour of the situation without necessitating any direct knowledge of the source material.

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[103] Adams, *Restaurant*, p. 264.
[104] *Ibid.*
[105] *Ibid.*, p. 264-5.
[106] *Ibid.*, p. 268.
[107] Of course, the 'B' Ark was filled with the most (supposedly) 'useless' members of Golgafrincham society, so perhaps these sorts of leadership styles are to be expected (*Ibid.*, p. 273).

The very brief appearance of Wowbagger the Infinitely Prolonged, who shows up in the very beginning and end of *Life, the Universe, and Everything*, is a similarly self-sufficient parody. Though immortal beings are looked to as source of wisdom or at least historical retrospect in the Fantastic modes, as is the case with the immortal cyborgs in Kage Baker's *The Company* series and even the wizard characters in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Wowbagger, perhaps unsurprisingly, does not fit this pattern. He is a character that has asked himself the question 'who wants to live forever?' and answered 'not me'. Rather than being endlessly wise, patient, and serene, Wowbagger is bored and cranky, and has made it his infinite life's work to insult everyone who has ever lived.[108] This parody is clear enough to those familiar with immortal beings in both science fiction and fantasy mega-texts, but Adams provides those unfamiliar with the character type a reference point: 'Most of those who are born immortal instinctively know how to cope with it, but Wowbagger was not one of them. Indeed, he had come to hate them, the load of serene bastards'.[109] The word 'serene' in the second sentence works extremely hard as it carries the entirety of past immortal characters on its linguistic shoulders. Like most of the characters mentioned thus far, Wowbagger reverses what audiences expect of immortal beings. Wowbagger's description goes further, however, and forces the reader to understand him as unusual. As a parody, therefore, Wowbagger's description functions as a framing device that allows even the uninitiated to understand him as a parodic figure. This description illustrates a moment where the commentary world (N^2) peeks through into the overall world of the parody, a rarity in Adams's novels.

The character parody within the *Hitchhiker's Guide* is not limited to that of human characters. What makes Marvin the Robot interesting both within the discourse of the text and the science fiction mega-text in general is his personality – what in the novels is called a GPP, or Genuine People Personality.[110] Robots and androids are often given a personality of types through their programming and the anthropomorphising reaction of the characters around them, but as a general rule, robots do what they are programmed to do. Any 'breaking' of the rules of their programming, as in the classic case of Asimov's robots, generally comes about from imperfect logic in the programming, not any inherent evil in the

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[108] Adams, *Life*, p. 318.
[109] *Ibid.*, p. 317.
[110] Adams, *Hitchhiker*, p. 64.

robot's personality, as they have none. In the New Wave robots and androids begin to have autonomous personalities and consciousnesses of their own that appear to come about in the same way that human personality and consciousness are believed to come about, normally through the 'breaking' of the android's programming. This happens, for example, in the cases of Spike (*The Stone Gods* (2007, Jeanette Winterson)), Yod (*He, She, and It* (1991, Marge Piercy)), and Spofforth (*Mockingbird* (1980, Walter Tevis)). That is, the personalities and consciousnesses of these androids and robots are emergent properties of their programming.

Marvin appears therefore to be a halfway point between these two extremes: his consciousness and personality are part of his programming. Daniel Dinello notes that humanoid aliens (whether alien physically or intellectually) are particularly worthy of ridicule: 'we mockingly laugh at the mechanical encrusted on the living and the living encrusted on the mechanical'.[111] Much of the parody surrounding Marvin, however, derives from his artificial personality: he is chronically depressed.[112] This is parodic because this personality belies any of Marvin's usefulness for the rest of the characters. Rather than being the incredibly fast jack-of-all-trades that most robots and androids are, he sits at the edges of the action complaining. The rest of the characters generally ignore him, and when they do notice him, they ask him to do menial tasks. He typically responds to these requests in the following fashion: 'Here I am, brain the size of a planet and they ask me to take you down to the bridge. Call that *job satisfaction*? 'Cos I don't'.[113] The humour in this derives from the reader's knowledge that in most science fiction, androids are valuable members of the crew, while Marvin is marginalised in these novels. The science fictional critique surrounding Marvin therefore takes the question of 'what if the robots broke their programming?' one step further, and in fact reaches back to Isaac Asimov and his three laws of robotics to ask the question 'what if their programming is followed perfectly?' Marvin acts precisely how his creators programmed him to, but, through his programming, becomes a completely useless piece of machinery. Marvin functions perfectly, but like a computer that crashes, he can only do what he is

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[111] Dinello, Daniel, *Technophobia!: Science Fiction Vision of Posthuman Technology* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), p. 74.
[112] Marvin is famously said to be based upon a friend of Adams' (Adams, *Radio*, p. 50).
[113] Adams, *Hitchhiker*, p. 65.

programmed to do. Rather than the 'berserk robot gone amok' often found in much science fiction, such as that of Asimov;[114] Marvin's imperfections harm no one but himself. As a parody, Marvin therefore robs the convention of the robot of its threatening nature and replaces it with something banal, benign, and deeply flawed.

Science Fiction Iconography

The final major area of parody that Adams's novels cover is that of the general iconography of science fiction. These are the nova that signal the story is taking place in a universe outside of their own.[115] These icons, tropes, or conventions are an important part of science fiction, as Farah Mendlesohn has noted: 'Science fiction has come to rely on the evolution of a vocabulary, of a structure and a set of shared ideas which are deeply embedded in the genre's psyche'.[116] This historical vocabulary makes up what has been called the 'mega-text' of science fiction:[117] every coined word or phrase, every fictional technological development that has occurred and subsequently been used in science fiction. Science fiction iconography divides into three general categories for the purposes of this thesis: technology, aliens, and space ships.[118] Adams utilises all three categories in his novels, with varying degrees of parody.

The futuristic technology that science fiction generally uses comes in multiple guises, from the complex computer to the standard issue space rifle, and Adams's novels exaggerate both in their parody of space opera. These novels make particular note of the unusual way these items are named, particularly when done through neologism. As Peter Stockwell has noted, 'neologism is the feature that most often appears in parodies of [science fiction], reflecting and ridiculing the perception of the miraculous technology that has powers in proportion to the complexity and obscurity of its name'.[119] Though Adams uses neologism in multiple ways in his novels (Stockwell analyses the use of neologism alongside

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[114] Wolfe, p. 153.
[115] In Leibniz's language, these nova are monads, and thus are distinct from the science fiction setting.
[116] Mendlesohn, 'Introduction', p. 6.
[117] Broderick, Damien, *Reading By Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 59.
[118] The space ship may arguably be considered both a part of technology and part of the science fiction world (as it can serve as setting), and for this reason it has its own category here.
[119] Stockwell, *Science Fiction*, p. 115.

scientific vocabulary in Adams's description of the Infinite Improbability Drive, for example),[120] the steady trickle of unusual gadget names provides a constant source of parody throughout the novels. For example, Ford Prefect's homing beacon is called a 'Sub-Etha Sens-O-Matic',[121] Zaphod's bomb a 'Paralyso-Matic',[122] police carry 'Kill-O-Zap' guns,[123] the *Heart of Gold* has a 'Nutri-Matic Drinks Synthesizer' instead of a kitchen,[124] and the Vogon ship contains a 'Sub-Cyclic Normality Assert-i-Tron' as well as a '30-Megahurt Definit-Kil Photrazon Cannon'.[125] Computers, similarly, have names such as 'Googleplex Star Thinker in the Seventh Galaxy of Light and Ingenuity',[126] 'the Great Hyperbolic Omni-Cognate Neutron Wrangler of Ciceronicus Twelve',[127] and the 'Multicorticoid Perspicutron Titan Muller'.[128] Names such as the Infinite Improbability Drive that powers the *Heart of Gold*[129] and the infamous Pan-Galactic Gargle Blaster cocktail[130] seem relatively tame in comparison. These neologisms and others like them throughout Adams's novels 'satirise … features of science fiction partly because [they are] so close to actual science fiction style', according to Stockwell.[131] As was the case with the description of Wowbagger, however, these neologisms do not require any specific knowledge in order for a reader to find them parodic. As hyperbole, they imply a history of outrageous neologisms, and therefore this is another moment when N^2 may be seen as leaking through into the main parody narrative.[132]

The narrative use of these unusually named devices also becomes a source of parody, and Adams's use of the computer is one example of this. Though the ultimate computer is often the android, as elaborated upon above, a ship's computer is often the non-mobile version of this, and human and alien characters often interact with it as though it were more than a mere computer. The ship's

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[120] *Ibid.*
[121] Adams, *Hitchhiker*, p. 20.
[122] *Ibid.*, p. 32.
[123] *Ibid.*, p. 136.
[124] Adams, *Restaurant*, p. 154.
[125] *Ibid.*, p. 159.
[126] Adams, *Hitchhiker*, p. 112.
[127] *Ibid.*
[128] *Ibid.*, p. 113.
[129] Adams, *Hitchhiker*, p. 60.
[130] *Ibid.*, p. 17.
[131] Stockwell, *Science Fiction*, p. 117.
[132] The hyperbolic neologism is also seen in character names (Wowbagger, Zaphod, Majikthese, etc.) and planet names (Sqornshellous Zeta, for example).

computer on the *Heart of Gold* in *Hitchhiker's Guide* is named Eddie, and while
he very much fits into this tradition of a knowledge bank, he also has an unusual
personality as well. He is cheerful and helpful to a fault – and to the annoyance of
Zaphod in particular:

> "Hi there!" [the computer] said brightly and simultaneously
> spewed out a tiny ribbon of ticker tape just for the record. The
> ticker tape said, *Hi there!*
> "Oh God," said Zaphod. He hadn't worked with this computer for
> long but had already learned to loathe it.[133]

It is important to note that Eddie appears to be sentient, given his reaction to
Zaphod's anger at his unwanted helpfulness. This is likely due to a similar level
of programming that gives the doors on the *Heart of Gold* their easily pleased-
personalities and Marvin his eternally melancholy one, though this is never made
explicit in the text. This mirrors the crew's reaction to Marvin, and in this passage
Zaphod seems less than impressed with Eddie's programming. This is an
interesting rejection of technology that seems to be in line with the anxieties often
voiced about technology in science fiction, such as in the case of HAL in *2001: A
Space Odyssey*. Zaphod's issue with technology here, however, is not due to any
inherent evil. Eddie is simply irritating, and Eddie the computer is not longer
threatening but banal: a version of HAL without the maniacal tendencies.

Another computer features quite prominently in Adams's novels,
particularly in *Hitchhiker's Guide*: Deep Thought, the computer built to uncover
the ultimate question of life, the universe, and everything.[134] Though there is
much humour surrounding Deep Thought and its meaning in the lives of its
inventors, particularly with regards to the relative places of science and
philosophy, it also serves to comment on the place of the computer in society.
The use of the super-intelligent computer in science fiction '[gave] a religious
spin to anxiety about techno-totalitarianism, a recurring theme in science fiction
[that] centres on the fear that super-computers will become god-like in their vast
powers but Satanic in their anti-human evil'.[135] Deep Thought clearly stems from
this tradition, as it has, in a manner of speaking, created Earth.

Deep Thought also serves to further parody one specific aspect of science
fiction technology. That is, like Marvin and Eddie, Deep Thought can only do

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[133] Adams, *Hitchhiker*, p. 69.
[134] *Ibid.*, pp. 111-115.
[135] Dinello, p. 101.

what its user tells it to do. Lunkwill and Fook, the beings that finally ask the computer for the answer to the ultimate question about life, the universe and everything, never bothered to ask what the question itself was.[136] Like all answers, the answer is meaningless without the context of the question, and their descendents, Loonquawl and Pouchg, are understandably irritated with this. This is, however, a failure of programming, not the machine itself, and once again raises the theme that a machine is only as good as its inventor. It does not merely subvert the reader's expectation of what a computer should be, as Kropf argues,[137] but actually comments on the emphasis and trust bestowed upon computers within science fiction itself. That the failure produces yet another failure –the Earth, which has been created to answer the question, was destroyed five minutes before its programme had finished – only emphasises this imperfection.

Adams also uses space ships, if in a limited way, as a form of parody within his novels. Though one of the oldest parts of the science fiction mega-text, the space ship became particularly significant and noticeable in science fiction during the space race of the 1950s, when it 'became SF's trademark'.[138] The ship *Heart of Gold*, used mostly in the first novel, is a ship that runs purely on logic. While it might be argued that all space ships in science fiction find their propulsion from scientific speculation, particularly in the famous case of *Star Trek*'s warp drive, all of these propulsion systems stem from what is currently known about science. The *Heart of Gold* is unusual: its propulsions system derives its power from pure logic: it is run by a device called an 'infinite improbability drive'.[139] The infinite improbability drive operates on the logic that every possibility has an improbability factor attached to it and, much in the same way that one dials a specific phone number, 'dialling' a specific improbability factor will get you to one specific place from another almost instantaneously.[140] The way in which this differs from traditional space-ship propulsion is subtle. The suggestion of the Infinite Improbability Drive is that the laws of physics can be circumvented if one applies a little logic. This mutability of the rules of science is particularly postmodern, and exists in stark contrast to science fiction that relies solely on 'realities' of science, such as the science that drives the

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[136] Adams, *Hitchhiker*, p. 121.
[137] Kropf, p. 65.
[138] Aldiss and Wingrove, p. 28.
[139] Adams, *Hitchhiker*, p. 60.
[140] *Ibid.*

spindizzies in James Blish's *Cities in Flight* novels. Whereas the typical space ship runs on logic and science, this ship runs on the perceived arbitrariness and the randomness of the universe: a kind of aleatoric power source.

The jet-black stunt ship that Zaphod steals at Milliway's is a smooth paragon of technology and design and a further parody of the stereotypical space ship. It is completely disposable, and its entire purpose is to be crashed into a sun at the end of a Disaster Area concert.[141] On one hand, this appears at first glance to be a simple demonstration of the tendency towards disposability in the late twentieth century world. That is, in the future, even *space ships* will be a form of disposable entertainment. By quite literally crashing this ship into the sun, the novel suggests both the disposability that comes along with products in the postmodern era and a kind of realist vision of a future –and a science fiction that reflects that idea. The elaborate set pieces that were the space ships of Heinlein and Clarke are no longer applicable; a space ship whose sole purpose is to be crashed into the sun is far more interesting – and probably far more likely.

The parody in Douglas Adam's novels, variously stemming from characters, worlds, and the iconography typical of science fiction, creates the secondary text world that Rose identifies in parody through a specifically postmodern engagement with the traditions and conventions of science fiction. Each transformation identified above involves making an icon, character type, or alien world banal or even more hyperbolic. Carl R. Kropf notes this aspects of Adams's novels and says that they 'depict nature as disordered and morally chaotic. Adams's novels become reflexive, commenting on the bankruptcy of the genre's paradigms'.[142] While Kropf roots this reflexivity in a subversion of the closure usually given to readers in science fiction,[143] I would argue that instead, Adams's novels are indicative of an exhaustion in science fiction that is not unlike that which Barth identifies in postmodern literature.[144] The reflexivity or metafiction evident in Adams's novels, however, is found not in overt metafictional narrative worlds, but instead in this secondary, implicit narrative world of parody, and is the 'thoughtful laughter' that it invokes.

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[141] Adams, *Restaurant*, p. 250.
[142] Kropf, p. 62.
[143] *Ibid.*, p. 63-4.
[144] Barth, John, 'The Literature of Exhaustion', in *Metafiction*, edited by Mark Currie (London: Longman, 1995), pp. 161-71, p. 162.

Several issues remain, however. Because of its very nature, the parody narrative world cannot be identified except in fleeting glimpses, such as in the case of Wowbagger's introduction. In this moment, for example, the implicit parodic commentary leaks into the performed narrative world, juxtaposing a description of how such immortals are conventionally presented with Wowbagger's complete reversal of this portrayal. These juxtapositions are forms of textual deixis[145] and grant the uninitiated reader with background information (albeit limited and directed) so that Wowbagger may be understood as a parody. This presentation of N^2 is rare, however, and its presence is largely implied.

The reliance on the cognitive engagement on the part of the reader makes the parody text implicitly writerly, insofar as the construction of the parody narrative world is dependant on the reader's knowledge of how these various conventions commonly present. The reader therefore 'writes' this parody world through the act of reading, much as Barthes argues the reader determines meaning in a text.[146] In effect, the humorous content of Adams's novels cannot be reduced to simple punch lines, but instead constitute a sustained, critical engagement with science fiction conventions on the part of both the author and the reader.

This prolonged reversal of readerly expectations implies a specific agenda behind the parody. Indeed, according to Jameson, what separates parody from similar forms such as pastiche is in fact its critical impetus. While each specific convention or trope parodied in the *Hitchhiker's Guide* novels ostensibly stems from specific reactions to science fiction tropes on Adams's part,[147] they also implicitly derive from the same genre exhaustion identified not only in Kropf's essay, but also by the instigators of the New Wave movement. Adams's novels

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[145] Though Peter Stockwell suggests that the circumference of textual deixis is limited to what Gérard Genette might describe as metaleptic devices (Stockwell, Peter, *Cognitive Poetics* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 46), it seems that the text's statement that Wowbagger is unusual among immortal beings implicitly draws readers away from the narrative presented and sketches other possible narratives (such as those where immortals *do* 'instinctively know how to cope' with immortality). In this way, this passage subtly foregrounds Wowbagger's character as fictional and therefore performs implicit textual deixis.

[146] Barthes, Roland, *S/Z*, translated by Richard Miller (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 4-5.

[147] While the polemics behind a parody are intrinsically important, this chapter is more interested in how the parody itself relates to the act of reading and therefore how it creates a secondary narrative world that overlies the performed narrative. As such, the agenda behind this critical engagement is somewhat tangential. The edited collection of original radio scripts for *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* makes note of many of the inspirations for the series.

push these exhausted conventions to their logical limits in order to parody them. In doing so, Adams infuses these tired conventions with a fresh, humorous perspective, and thus his novels exhibit New Wave sensibilities even though most would not consider them part of the overall movement. Unlike the other texts analysed in this thesis, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* novels do not extend the remit of science fiction stylistically or with regards to content; instead, these novels extend the internal logic that governs the use of the science fiction mega-text to its absolute limit. The final chapter in this thesis examines Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren*, a novel that not only attempts to extend the limits of science fiction but also those of language itself.

Chapter 6

'Prism, mirror, lens': Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren*

'In any coherent time loop, there are certain objects that are created during and exist within the time loop. One common example of such an item is the hypothetical Book from Nowhere: A man brings a copy of a book with him back in time, giving it to himself, and instructing himself to reproduce the book as faithfully as he can. The book is then published, and after its publication, the man then buys the book, gets in a time machine, and starts the cycle all over again. The book is a perfectly stable physical object that actually exists, despite the fact that it seems to come from nowhere.' – Charles Yu[1]

'Science fiction is a literature of edges.' – Jean Mark Gawron[2]

The past four chapters examined different methods of understanding narrative worlds in science fiction as metafictional devices. In each case, overt and covert uses of multiple narrative worlds allowed the science fiction text to embark on an act of mode-specific metafictional commentary. For these texts, the science under extrapolation is literary science – narratology – and they use multiple science fictional narrative worlds in order to dramatize literary experiments. These texts are not only thought experiments like those commonly found in science fiction, but literary experiments as well, and they capitalise upon the structural similarities science fiction shares with both possible worlds theory and metafiction. The text analysed in the present chapter, Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren* (1974), combines all of the various methods of incorporating narrative worlds and metafiction in science fiction explored in previous chapters, utilising such devices as internal texts, the erosion of the borderline between author and character, and foregrounded textual features. This creates a multi-layered narrative made almost entirely of textual deixis that blurs the overall narrative of the text through this act of foregrounding. In doing so, the multiple narrative worlds at work in the novel fold in on themselves, creating a text that is hyper-aware of its status as a text. As a result, *Dhalgren* may be read not merely as a

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[1] Yu, Charles, *How To Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe* (London: Corvus, 2010), p. 113.

[2] Gawron, Jean Mark, 'Introduction' in *Dhalgren* by Samuel Delany (Boston: Gregg Press, 1977), pp. v-xlii, p. xxiii.

metafictional science fiction novel where its foregrounded textuality disrupts readerly attention in order to remind readers of the novel's fictionality, but also a recursive textual structure: a science fiction novel about a science fiction novel about a science fiction novel.

Dhalgren's textuality is particularly interesting, however, because the methods it uses to engage with fictionality. Rather than echoing critical trends, *Dhalgren* may be understood as performing literary theory. In this way, it might be more appropriate to understand *Dhalgren* not as metafiction but to borrow from Mark Currie and label it 'theoretical fiction'.[3] This label is slippery and therefore problematic when used in a science fiction context, since science fiction already has a theoretical or hypothetical basis, as was argued in the introduction and the first chapter. While this chapter will not label *Dhalgren* 'theoretical' for these reasons, Currie's repositioning of metafiction as distinctly theoretical becomes important in an examination of *Dhalgren*'s metafictionality because it emphasizes a text's critical abilities. In effect, Currie seems to argue that theoretical fiction moves beyond self-reflexivity and is actually capable of literary criticism. As Currie has argued, 'the critical text is the literary text and vice versa',[4] and it is this circuitous relationship that demarcates theoretical fiction.

Like many of Delany's texts,[5] *Dhalgren* emphasizes its textuality to a point where the text is 'all foreground',[6] and invokes many of the metaleptic devices considered earlier in this thesis. In this, *Dhalgren* is markedly different from the other texts analysed here. It is not that poiesis stands in for mimesis, as was the case in *Frankenstein Unbound* or even the portions of *Breakfast of Champions* when Philboyd Studge entered the narrative, nor that there is a parallel commentary world implicit in the text as was the case in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* novels. Although all of these devices are evident in *Dhalgren*, the text takes as its centre the liminal area between author and character, the finished

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[3] Currie, Mark, *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1998), p. 51.

[4] Currie, Mark, 'Introduction', in *Metafiction*, edited by Mark Currie (London: Longman, 1995), pp. 1-18, p. 5.

[5] Cf. *The Einstein Intersection* (1967) and *Triton* (1976). *The Einstein Intersection* emphasizes the editorial process through its inclusion of selections from the writer's notebook, while an appendix that concerns itself with aspects of science fictionality follows *Triton*'s main text. *The Ballad of Beta-2* (1965) does this to a lesser extent through its investigation of the source of a space-ballad. It is nearly critical cliché to say that Delany writes metafictions.

[6] Delany, Samuel R., quoted in Broderick, Damien, *Reading By Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 139.

text with the text-in-process, and postmodern fiction and science fiction. In effect, *Dhalgren* moves past the semi-mimetic functions of these other texts and becomes pure poiesis.

Dhalgren's narrative experimentalism, anchored in a 'super-foregrounded'[7], poietic narrative, has prompted some to describe it as Delany's 'masterpiece'[8] and a 'watershed work' in science fiction.[9] Damien Broderick calls it 'ambitious',[10] and Albert Wendland argues that its experimental stylistics 'confounds stylistic expectations'.[11] Carl Freedman, meanwhile, describes this style as both modernist and postmodernist, and suggests that Delany uses the 'techniques of Joycean modernism'.[12] It is perhaps because of this heightened stylistics that William Gibson argues *Dhalgren* is 'not there to be finally understood. [...] its "riddle" was never meant to be "solved"'.[13] While these comments may be slightly hyperbolic, the novel's cipher-like quality combine with its sheer size make it incredibly difficult to break down in a familiar critical fashion.[14] Because of the novel's palimpsestic, spiral-shaped, and highly stylised nature, this thesis approaches *Dhalgren* somewhat differently than it has other texts. The analytic structure used here takes its cue from the following passage, where Kid attempts to come to terms with his newly published book of poems, many of which he does not remember writing.

Such a strange, marvellous, and marvellously inadequate object!

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[7] A term borrowed from Peter Stockwell, who uses it in reference to the textual dominant (Stockwell, Peter, *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 14).

[8] Broderick, *Starlight*, p. 139.

[9] Barbour, Douglas, *Worlds out of Words: The Science Fiction Novels of Samuel R. Delany* (Frome: Bran's Head Books, Ltd., 1979), p. 89.

[10] Broderick, Damien, 'New Wave and backwash: 1960-1980', in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 48-63, p. 59.

[11] Wendland, Albert, *Science, Myth, and the Fictional Creation of Alien Worlds* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), p. 51.

[12] Freedman, Carl, 'Samuel Delany: A Biographical and Critical Overview', in *A Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by David Seed (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 398-407, p. 402-3.

[13] Gibson, William, 'The Recombinant City: A Foreword', in *Dhalgren*, Samuel R. Delany (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), pp. xi-xiii, p. xi.

[14] Many analyses of *Dhalgren* largely limit themselves to listing (such as in the case of Teresa L. Ebert's essay 'Postmodern Innovative Fiction and Science Fiction: An Encounter with Samuel R. Delany's Technotopia'). Other analyses, such as the chapter about *Dhalgren* in Douglas Barbour's book on Delany, mention that 'in a novel of this size and complexity one must limit analysis' (p. 119).

He was still unable to read it, though. He still tried. And tried
again, and tried till his throat was constricted, his forearms wet,
and his heart hammered down where he'd always thought his liver
was. Neither dislike nor discomfort with the work explained that.
Rather the book itself was lodged in some equation where it did not
belong, setting off hyperradicals and differentials through all the
chambers of his consciousness.[15]

Differentials, in mathematics, are tangential lines, while hyperradicals are
methods of solving equations that are impossible to solve using normal calculus[16].
Metaphorically, then, this speaks to thematic tangents and the inexpressible and
ineffable, particularly as it relates to a reader's inability to put into words
something they comprehend. This chapter's analytical angle pivots on the idea
that a book may be so complex that it requires the reader to develop new methods
(the aforementioned hyperradicals) of analysis to articulate their understanding of
it. This chapter takes these ideas as its cue, and in particular charts these thematic
differentials as well as the text's attempts to articulate what was previously
inexpressible through these tangents. In doing so, this chapter runs each
differential to its end, and then begins again on a different tangent, using the
analysis of the previous differentials to aid in the discussion of those that come
afterwards. *Dhalgren*'s complex narrative, as the title to this chapter suggests,
acts not only as a mirror or a lens between reader and text, but also has multiple
peculiar prismatic effects that invoke a considerable amount of metafictionality.
Because of this, *Dhalgren* represents an unusual text world, one that has at its core
not only issues of authorship and fictionality but the state of science fiction as
well. This chapter moves from an exploration of the qualities of *Dhalgren*'s
setting, the ruined city of Bellona; to the complex relationship between Kid,
Newboy, Lanya, Tak Loufer, and Delany-the-internal-author; Kid's recursive
notebook; the image of the prism; and finally an analysis of the novel's awareness
of its own stylistics and its own difficulty. While *Dhalgren* perhaps purposely

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[15] Delany, Samuel R., *Dhalgren* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), p. 531. All
subsequent references to *Dhalgren* come from this edition.
[16] Newman, James Roy, *The World of Mathematics, volume 3* (Mineola, NY:
Dover Publications, Inc., 2000), p. 2005. Hyperradicals (also called ultraradicals)
are the only means of solving quintic equations, which were considered
unsolvable until the introduction of the hyperradical. Thanks to Matt Nowak and
Tim McGookey for explaining this concept in layman's terms.

defies interpretation, as Gwyneth Jones has suggested,[17] and it might perhaps be impossible (or unwise) to completely unearth this ineffable source, *Dhalgren* stands as a testament to the possibilities of the science fiction narrative as a form of fiction, particularly insofar as one capable of voicing concepts and ideas that are otherwise impossible to discuss. Through the use of metafiction, it explores not only 'inner space' in a way similar to that of much New Wave science fiction, but as was the case with other texts analysed in this thesis, it also examines the inner space of fiction itself. In addition, *Dhalgren* utilises science fiction's hypothetical impetus and the mode's relationship with possible worlds in order to attempt an articulation of the otherwise inexpressible.

Differential 1: Bellona, the Solipsistic Text-World

Because much of what concerns this thesis is the narrative quality of the world represented in a science fiction text, it is logical to begin with an examination of the fictional world of *Dhalgren*. This examination forms a solid basis for an investigation into the relationship between the novel's characters and, in particular, the novel's inherent palimpsestic nature as evidenced by Kid's notebook, as the analyses of characters and object demand a coherent understanding of the city of Bellona. Bellona and its peculiar qualities will be returned to in another differential exploring science fiction stylistics.

Bellona is a ruined, post-apocalyptic city, with many of its inhabitants members of gangs. Gary K. Wolfe has argued that Bellona 'portrays in complex detail the disintegration of a megalopolis',[18] while William Gibson has described it as a 'recombinant city… [a] metamorphic Middle American streetscape, transfigured by some unspecified thing or process, where nothing remains quite as it was'.[19] Gibson's choice of the word 'recombinant' seems particularly apposite, as the city seems not merely chaotic but cobbled together from parts of other cities. An 'autumnal city',[20] it is decrepit, wasted, and anarchic, summarily dismissed by the rest of the world, and is described as 'a city of inner discordances and retinal distortions'.[21] Words such as blurred, obscured, and

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[17] Jones, Gwyneth, 'Introduction', in *Dhalgren* by Samuel R. Delany (London: Gollancz, 2010), n.pag [ebook].
[18] Wolfe, Gary K., *The Known and the Unknown: the iconography of science fiction* (Kent: The Kent University Press, 1979), p. 93.
[19] Gibson, p. xii.
[20] Delany, *Dhalgren*, p. 1.
[21] *Ibid*., p. 14.

clouded and their variations dominate the lexicon used to describe Bellona's atmosphere.[22] Old smashed streetlights line the streets,[23] the church clock tower has no hands,[24] and the destruction in the city bears witness to some past trauma.[25] The very name Bellona invokes the Roman goddess of war,[26] and brings with it concepts of conflict. Images of disintegration, destruction, and distortion all suggest a vast, proud city now left with only shadows of what it once was, now disconnected with the rest of the world and only accessible through the bridge the main character, Kid,[27] uses to enter the city.[28] Other characters more familiar with Bellona describe it in terms that suggest it is an unusual city. Tak Loufer, one of the first people Kid meets on entering Bellona, says to Kid that '[it] is a strange place, maybe stranger than any you've ever been'.[29] Loufer qualifies this statement, adding, 'it still has rules. You just have to find them out'.[30] Bellona may be unusual, but it has its own consistent logic. Lanya, one of Kid's lovers, echoes this statement when she tells Kid that 'finding your way around Bellona is a little funny at first'.[31] Bellona as a whole is therefore desolate and rotting and so isolated it may appear indecipherable to newcomers.

The flow of time in Bellona is a subject of particular interest early in the novel. Upon arrival, Kid notices the dates on several copies of the local newspaper, the *Bellona Times*. The dates read in the following order: Saturday, April 1, 1919; Wednesday, December 25, 1933; Thursday, December 25, 1940; Monday, December 25, 1879.[32] According to Loufer, one of the characters who has been in Bellona for quite some time, the editor of the newspaper arbitrarily

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[22] *Ibid.*, p. 54, p. 75, p. 96.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 77-8.

[26] Coleman, J.A., *The Dictionary of Mythology* (London: Acrturus, 2008), p. 140. Interestingly, Bellona is referred to in Delany's *Triton* as a city on Mars that underwent some devastating transformation (Delany, Samuel R., *Triton* (London: Grafton, 1976), p. 132, p. 183).

[27] Kid is variously referred to as the kid, Kid, and Kidd. He changes the spelling of his name to Kid partway through the novel (p. 314), and the majority of the time the text refers to him in this manner. This chapter refers to him as Kid as this is the dominant spelling used. Quotations from the text referring to him by other versions of his name remain in their original form. J.G. Ballard uses a similar prismatic naming strategy in *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1969).

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

assigns dates and 'it's a real event when he brings out two papers with consecutive dates […] But sometimes he slips up and Tuesday actually follows Wednesday – or do I have that backward?'[33] Like the missing hands on the clock tower in the centre of Bellona, the newspaper editor's insistence on the arbitrariness of time suggests time is unusually fluid in Bellona, even though the characters appear to experience time linearly. Though time itself seems to continue on linearly for the characters, their perception of it is fragmentary.[34] The uncertainty expressed by Loufer when he admits to not knowing the normal flow of weekday names further emphasizes the disconnection between time in Bellona and time in the outside world. The newspaper's unique approach to calendar time is one thing, liable to be down to personal idiosyncrasy, but the confusion Loufer expresses suggests that this temporal confusion exists at a deeper level in Bellona. Lanya identifies the difference between the nature of time in Bellona and the nature of time as Kid understood it in the following manner:

> I live in one city […] Maybe you live in another. In mine, time … leaks; sloshes backwards and forwards, turns up and show's what's on its … underside. Things shift. Yeah, maybe you could explain. In your city. In your city, you're sane and I'm crazy. But in mine, *you're* the one who's nuts! Because you keep telling me things are happening that don't fit in with what I *see*! Maybe that's the only city I live in.[35]

Lanya appears aware of the difference between the flow of time in Bellona and that in the rest of the world, describing Bellona as having fragmentary time. This does not seem unusual in a city where the clocks have no hands. Bellona's destabilised temporality seems directly related to postmodern concepts of narrative time such as those discussed in detail in chapter 4. As Heise argues about postmodernist narratives,

> Postmodernist novels […] take a very different approach to time. … the differing accounts or flashbacks are not linked to the voice or mind of any narrator or character configured with a view toward psychological realism, and they tell event sequences in contradictory and mutually exclusive versions that do not allow the

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[33] *Ibid*., pp. 45-6.
[34] The final section of the novel is an exception to this, as it displays multiple fragmented timelines.
[35] *Ibid*., p. 414.

reader to infer a coherent story and reality.[36]

Lanya's comment that things 'shift' in Bellona seems indicative of this incoherence. The novel's circuitous structure as well as its multiple points of entry and recursive passages mirror the shifting temporality that seems to define much of what happens in Bellona.

Lanya's description of time in Bellona, however, opens up a further understanding of Bellona's characteristics. Time in Bellona bears a remarkable resemblance to that of narrative time, and in particular, the time of a narrative as viewed by a reader. In order to examine this similarity, we can compare the passage from *Dhalgren* quoted earlier to a similar one from Mark Currie's book *About Time* describing the difference between experienced time and narrative time.

> In the written text, the future lies in wait in a specific way, in that it is possible to flout the linearity of writing and take an excursion into the future. I can abandon the *moving now* of fiction, the place of the bookmark, and skip ahead at will. I do not require the wormhole of authorially controlled prolepsis for such an excursion, in the sense that I can leaf through a novel and seize on any moment of the fictional future.[37]

Narrative time therefore becomes an object that can be entered at any point the reader desires, which destabilises its temporality. The reader therefore becomes something of a time traveller through this ability to move through narrative time at will, without the express permission of the author. Narrative time therefore becomes part of a 'block universe', which Currie notes has 'an *untensed* view of time'.[38] This conceptualisation allows the critic or reader to take up a position outside a narrative and view the entire temporality of a text as neither past, present, nor future, but distinctly separate from an outsider's experience of time. What is particularly useful here is that to the reader, time appears fragmentary as they can move through the narrative out of order. This fluidity mirrors that of time in Bellona, a 'timeless city, [a] spaceless preserve where any slippage can

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[36] Heise, Ursula K., *Chronoschisms: Time, Narrative, and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 53.

[37] Currie, Mark, *About Time: Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 143.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

occur'[39] – and *Dhalgren* as a whole. While this might be expected in a novel that uses both modernist and postmodern stylistic effects, Lanya's recognition of this prompts a re-evaluation of Bellona's status. Lanya's text-based conceptualisation of time in Bellona implies it is more than a city, blocked off from the rest of the world because of some disaster. Instead, what this suggests is that the city of Bellona is a metonym for a text.

Though Bellona's flow of time opens up the possibility that the city is a text-world in a metaphorical sense, other portions of the text argue this from a more recognisably metafictional standpoint. Early on in the novel, Kid acquires a notebook, already half-filled with scribbling. Though Kid is not consciously aware of it, the lines already present in the notebook are those of the novel *Dhalgren*.

> In Palmer-perfect script, an interrupted sentence took up on the top line:
>
>> *to wound the autumnal city.*
>>
>> *So howled out for the world to give him a name.*
>
> That made goose bumps on his flanks…[40]

The italicised portion directly quotes the opening of *Dhalgren*, and the notebook contains several quotations from *Dhalgren*, some identical and some slightly altered. While ostensibly a form of textual deixis which foregrounds the text's status as fiction, this inclusion of the novel within itself also creates a recursive structure where the text repeats itself, fugue-like, again and again, as quotation and variation, in a very similar process to that of the Deleuzian fold.[41] This overt foregrounding relentlessly pushes the fictionality of *Dhalgren*'s narrative world to the fore through its repetition. In this way, it is possible to understand the city of Bellona not only as a fictional city, but a city that is a metonym for a fictional city. Kid's growing awareness that his life in Bellona (past, present, future) is already recorded in a notebook suggests that he is fictional. In fact, Kid mentions at one point that 'words are going on all the time' in his head, as though his thoughts were a kind of narrative ostinato.[42] This understanding colours the comment made by the woman Kid has sex with before he goes to Bellona: 'be glad you're

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[39] Delany, *Dhalgren*, p. 382.
[40] *Ibid*., p. 32.
[41] Deleuze, Gilles, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, translated by Tom Colney (London: Continuum, 2006), pp. 3-14.
[42] Delany, *Dhalgren*, p. 296.

not just a character scrawled in the margins of somebody else's lost notebook'.[43]
This comment is oddly prescient in retrospect of Kid's acquisition of the
notebook. Even though the writing present in the notebook when he finds it
appears to be his own, as he mentions much later on,[44] the suggestion that Kid is a
character even in his own notebook is an important one. This foregrounds Kid's
dual nature as both being inside the text and outside of it, and suggests the
possibility that Kid has placed himself inside the narrative as an author. The
slippage between character and author will be explored more fully in a later
differential.

Other characters also foreground Bellona's status as text world, and in
doing so also note various key characteristics. Tak Loufer, for example, makes
the argument that Bellona is science fiction.

> 'Actually,' Tak was saying, 'I suspect the whole thing is science
> fiction.'
> 'Huh? You mean a time-warp, or a parallel universe?'
> 'No, just… well, science fiction. Only real. It follows all the
> conventions.'
> 'Spaceships, ray-guns, going faster than light? I used to read the
> stuff, but I haven't seen anything like that around here.'
> 'Bet you don't read the new, good stuff. Let's see: the Three
> Conventions of science fiction – ' Tak wiped his forehead with his
> leather sleeve. (Kid thought, inanely: He's polishing his brain.)
> 'First, a single man can change the course of a whole world: Look
> at Calkins, look at George – look at you! Second: The only
> measure of intelligence or genius is its linear and practical
> application: In a landscape like this, what other kind do we even
> allow to visit? Three: The Universe is an essentially hospitable
> place, full of earth-type planets where you can crashland your
> spaceship and survive long enough to have an adventure…'[45]

It is important to note that Tak does not structure the relationship between Bellona
and science fiction using a simile but a metaphor, and this passage serves as
prolepsis against any attempt to understand Bellona as a purely dystopian setting,
which is what might otherwise be construed by the above conversation. If

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[43] *Ibid*., p. 5.
[44] *Ibid*., p. 238.
[45] *Ibid*., p. 372.

Bellona is an actualised science fiction text, then the question is what is science fictional about it. Tak's summation of the 'Three Conventions' of science fiction, though fairly unconventional, speaks to narrative and plot treatments characteristic of 'new, good' science fiction, rather than those items belonging to the more familiar mega-text of science fiction that Kid names. Given the difficulty inherent in defining science fiction, Tak's definition and examples are unhelpful and are compounded by the problem of conflating a world with a mode of writing. William Sims Bainbridge has noted one possible way of interpreting Tak's argument. If this statement is read as metafictional and Bellona actually means *Dhalgren*, then,

> whether or not Bellona fulfils these qualifications, *Dhalgren* does not fulfil traditional definitions of science fiction unless one counts literary criticism as science! If that is permissible, then the novel can be said to extrapolate what might be the next discoveries in that field and thus qualifies as traditional SF.[46]

This is a particularly useful way of looking at *Dhalgren*, which will be returned to more fully later on. For this differential, I would like to reverse Bainbridge's statements in order to explore if what he says about *Dhalgren* as a science fiction text might also apply to Bellona given the city's apparent textual status. Aside from the sense of destruction that invokes the post-apocalyptic, the city is largely bereft of anything that appears to be part of the mega-text of science fiction. Even when the shadowy clouds that have hitherto made it impossible to see the stars vanish and not one but two moons appear in the sky overhead, this is a matter of only momentary distraction.[47] Similarly, while the sun's sudden appearance causes short-term panic, it is quickly forgotten.[48] Loufer's assertion that the city is science fiction, then, must be less figurative and more literal; indeed, his argument says as much. He speaks of George, Calkins, and Kid as if they were characters in his speech, identifies narrative arcs already apparent in their own narratives, and finds an explanation for the relatively easy lifestyle found in Bellona's wasteland. If Bellona is a text-world, and that text world has specific characters in common with a science fiction text, then Bellona must therefore be a science fiction text.

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[46] Bainbridge, William Sims, *Dimensions of Science Fiction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 94.

[47] Delany, *Dhalgren*, pp. 94-6.

[48] *Ibid.*, pp. 432-3.

If Bellona is a text (or a text world that represents a text), this explains and underlines two of its more unusual features. Bellona is covered in a kind of grey fog, making it not only impossible to see anything outside of the city from within, but also meaning the outside world cannot make any transmissions into Bellona. Ostensibly part of Bellona's isolation, this may also be read as part of its textual status. If texts are block universes, nothing would be able to get in or out.[49] As Gawron notes, 'Bellona remains in the most delicate of fictive suspensions, a bubble, already fragile because it is a fiction'.[50] This fog therefore represents a kind of textual limit. *Dhalgren*'s narrative shape emphasizes this: though it appears Kid has only just arrived in Bellona at the beginning of the novel, the narrative is looped and Kid arrives in Bellona shortly after having left, completely powerless to escape this self-limiting world. This circular nature underlines the relationship between Bellona, *Dhalgren*, and the notebook Kid finds, which is the subject of the next differential.

Differential 2: The Notebook

Kid's notebook is a rich source of metafictionality in *Dhalgren*, and much of this derives from it appearing to be the text of *Dhalgren*. In a fashion, the presence of the notebook allows *Dhalgren* to be understood as a book about a book about a book, lapsing into an eternally recursive and self-referential spiral. The notebook has a peculiar ontological status within *Dhalgren*, both with reference to the novel and to Bellona. As was noted earlier, the novelisation of events presented in a narrative is a fairly common metaleptic device. *Dhalgren* presents this internal novel with more complexity, however, and this complexity derives from two factors. First, the quoted text that duplicates *Dhalgren* (though occasionally with slight variation) has no clear author. Kid both confirms and denies having written what was in the notebook when he found it.[51] Secondly, its relationship to the novel the reader reads is apparent almost from the start, whereas usually the creation of the text is only mentioned at the end of such a text, and thus while the more common version of this device creates a retrospectively framed narrative, as it appears in *Dhalgren*, it frames it in a completely different

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[49] Indeed, this is what David Lewis notes in his discussion of the impossibility of trans-world travel between possible worlds. (Lewis, David, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 80-1).
[50] Gawron, p. xv.
[51] Delany, *Dhalgren*, p. 238, p. 350.

manner. The presence of the notebook throughout the entirety of *Dhalgren* creates an inherently palimpsestic structure that reaches a climax in the final chapter. Like a hall of mirrors, the notebook is a metaphorical reflective surface that refracts and reflects the grey light in Bellona.

Significantly, the notebook's presence problematises the ontological status of *Dhalgren*, Bellona, and the notebook itself. Though the relationship between a fictional world and the actual world is inherently complicated from an ontological point of view, the presence of an internal novel purporting to portray a fictional world identical to the one portrayed in the novel exacerbates this somewhat. In this case, it is not a matter of layering, even though it appears that the world of Kid's notebook sits nested within the world of Bellona much in the same way that Kilgore Trout's novel nests within *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*. In order for the situation in *Dhalgren* to mimic *Rosewater*'s, the world Kid's notebook portrays must be incompossible with that of Kid and Bellona. Because the notebook directly echoes the text of *Dhalgren*, however, the notebook cannot be understood as having a fictional status relative to that of Bellona. Neither are the world of the notebook and Bellona parallel worlds; instead, they overlap. If Bellona itself is a text, then this overlap further emphasizes the palimpsestic nature of *Dhalgren*, perhaps even more so than Kid's additional poems in the notebook.[52]

In Meinongian terms, then, the notebook presents a problem as far as truth-values are concerned. The book of *Dhalgren* is an existent, actualised object: readers can see it and touch it because it has real physicality in their world. According to R.M. Sainsbury, the characters and objects within *Dhalgren*, however, are actual nonexistents. Though they are fictional, characters and objects 'really have the properties that are ascribed to them',[53] and therefore they are 'actual things, not merely possible ones'.[54] The notebook therefore has a dual ontological status: it is an actual nonexistent because it resides within a fictional text, but also an actual existent because it *is* that fictional text. The friction this paradox creates in the text allows the typically metafictional concerns such as the writing process to become super-foregrounded figures, both through the passages quoted from Kid's notebook and portions of the main narrative as well. This is

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[52] These are incorporated in *Dhalgren*'s final chapter, Anathemata: A Plague Journal.

[53] Sainsbury, R.M., *Fiction and Fictionalism* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 52-3.

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

precisely what Gawron argues when he says 'Delany, by reinserting text into text, by all his crossing loops, here makes self-conscious the fiction-making process'.[55] This self-reflexivity takes two forms, as quotations of the text in *Dhalgren* and as commentary passages, both in the notebook and in *Dhalgren* as a whole, which fit comfortably into a more familiar definition of metafiction.

One significant example of the quotation and variation process that happens in Kid's notebook can be seen in the following two passages. The first passage occurs in the main text of *Dhalgren* before Kid enters Bellona, and the other is one of the original passages in the notebook.

> It is not that I have no past. Rather, it continually fragments on the terrible and vivid ephemera of now. In the long country, cut with rain, somehow there is nowhere to begin.[56]
>
> […]
>
> It is not that I have no future. Rather it continually fragments on the insubstantial and indistinct ephemera of now. It the summer country, stitched with lightning, somehow there is no way to conclude.[57]

The differences between these passages highlight a theme that echoes throughout many of the more directly metaleptic passages both within and without the notebook: the editing process.[58] The difference in vocabulary and temporality (moving from 'past' in the first passage to 'future' in the second) suggest an incongruity between the two passages resembling two slightly contradictory versions of a story, as though the world depicted in *Dhalgren* and the world of Kid's notebook are somewhat out of phase with each other. It is as though these texts belong to different times and realities, even though they occupy the same reality. If these passages are understood with respect to many of Kid's actions that foreground his editorial process,[59] however, the notebook passage may be evidence of an earlier draft of *Dhalgren*, and indeed this is Bainbridge's assertion.[60] This solves the apparent paradox of the internalised novel to some extent: a draft of a text has a different reality status to the finished text. This does

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[55] Gawron, p. xl.

[56] Delany, *Dhalgren*, p. 10.

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

[58] Delany returns to this theme often in his novels, as evidenced by *The Einstein Intersection* and *Triton*.

[59] Cf. Delany, *Dhalgren*, p. 176, p. 242.

[60] Bainbridge, pp. 94-5.

not, however, negate nor diminish the metafictional foregrounding effect achieved through the juxtaposition of draft and final text, particularly as other sections of *Dhalgren* are directly reproduced in Kid's notebook,[61] nor does it mean these text worlds are necessarily incompossible with one another.   In addition, the juxtaposition of a first person section which speaks about actions of actors, says 'I am about to write' and then moves on to a section describing some fairly quick action[62] further emphasizes the relationship between the written word and what happens in *Dhalgren*. In effect, what this illustrates is the breakdown of the relationship between signifier and signified that Deleuze notes[63] as words become actualised as things.

This emphasis on the editorial process also amplifies the textuality of Bellona. Lanya's assertion that 'things shift',[64] for example, carries with it not only an observation about the fluidity of time in the city, but also evidences constant tinkering behind the scenes. Loufer makes a similar assertion earlier on: 'It's not the season that changes. It's us. The whole city shifts, turns, rearranges itself. All the time. And rearranges us…'.[65] While Loufer argues this is only a joke,[66] the suggestion that Bellona is chaotic and unreliable, changed by some unseen hand, remains. Mildred's observation 'you think you've met everybody in the city there is to meet. Then, suddenly, somebody who's been here all along, watching you from the bushes, sticks his nose out-'[67] becomes a description of newly introduced characters in a text and how they might appear to established characters. The awareness these characters possess of Bellona's mutable landscape seems quite significant: they are not merely aware of themselves and their world, but aware of an outside force that affects their world. In this way, according to Gawron, 'the fictive structuring forces may, from time to time, be perceived as such by the characters'.[68] This shifting happens both at the level of character and the linguistic level, as the two passages above highlight. The self-consciousness *Dhalgren*'s metafictional passages illustrate intensifies

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[61] Cf. Delany, *Dhalgren*, p. 261, which is identical to *Dhalgren*'s final lines.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 440.
[63] Lecercle, Jean-Jacques, *Deleuze and Language* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 19-27.
[64] Delany, *Dhalgren*, p. 414.
[65] *Ibid.*, p. 36.
[66] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[67] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[68] Gawron, p. xii.

exponentially through these kinds of passages where characters seem eerily aware of their own textuality.

The writing and editing process is also particularly foregrounded in the final chapter of *Dhalgren*, which purports to be a draft of *Brass Orchids*, Kid's book of poetry.[69] Though completely bereft of verse, it does contain several crossed-out words, and multiple inset paragraphs, many of which comment on the main action in the chapter. Itself fragmentary and missing several pages and portions of text and with multiple sections that begin mid-sentence, this final chapter emphasizes the palimpsestic characteristics of the editing process wherein multiple texts are created one on top of another through the act of deletion. For example, the following passage illustrates the various possibilities for the text that are never played out:

> Dragon Lady let go all her breath in some way still not a scream. Nightmare danced back across the kitchen twisting his orchid (jerking a little); ~~as though/ I think~~ I think he was trying to understand what he'd done. Dragon Lady threw herself ~~at him~~, cutting for his face and kicking. (~~I kept thinking~~ Thinking: There's an art to these weapons I don't begin to understand.)[70]

This passage carries with it Derridian 'traces' of previous drafts,[71] and it is possible to see the editing process in action here. In addition, this passage in particular serves as an example of narrative incompossibility; that is, the incompatibility of narratives with one another. In the world *Dhalgren* proposes, the figurative becomes the actual, and words become things. Much as single units of being (monads) imply specific worlds in Leibniz's philosophy,[72] it is therefore possible to understand words as monads on a linguistic scale. Therefore, the difference caused by the exchange of each one of these erasures therefore connotes a different narrative that could have come into existence but did not – a reversal of the sudden appearance of new characters that Loufer notes. These erased worlds are incompossible alternate versions of the text. As a result, these passages mirror this editorial theme on a microscopic scale.

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[69] Delany, *Dhalgren*, p. 651.

[70] *Ibid*.

[71] Derrida, Jacques, 'Ellipses', in *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 294-300, p. 295.

[72] Deleuze, *Fold*, p. 68.

The final chapter also contains many passages of direct commentary, two of which in particular illuminate Kid's relationship to the notebook and his place in Bellona. We are aware of the authorial voice in one of these inset passages, and it directly argues for Kid's authorship given its place next to a conversation between Kid and Newboy where the 'I' is Kid: 'The advantage of transcribing your own conversation: It's the only chance you have to be articulate'.[73] This admission of authority continues in other similar comments, including those alerting the reader to how events and conversations have been changed,[74] as well as later thoughts upon re-reading portions of the text.[75] This comes to a climax with the following inset:

> Also wonder if writing about myself in the third person is really the way to go about losing or making a name. My life here more and more resembles a book whose opening chapters, whose title even, suggest mysteries to be solved only at closing. But as one reads along, one becomes more and more suspicious that the author has lost the thread of his argument, that the questions will never be resolved, or more upsetting, that the position of the characters will have so changed by the book's end that the answers to the initial questions will have become trivial.[76]

This passage makes two very important moves. First, it solidifies Kid as the authorial voice. This helps to clarify some of the pronoun slippage apparent in earlier portions of *Dhalgren*, where the narrative moves from third person to first (normally in a post-orgasmic haze): the slippage is Kid moving from character status to author status (a move that will be more fully explored in the next differential). Secondly, and more relevant to the relationship between the notebook and *Dhalgren*, this passage also speaks about Kid's textual existence. The text does not make it clear, however, whether Kid is simply recording events that have happened, or fictionalising those he sees around him, and therefore it is difficult to surmise whether Kid is the source of the events in Bellona, or simply a scribe.

Significantly, Delany's use of these insets is a further nesting of narrative worlds: Kid's notebook (in published form, as *Brass Orchids*) exists within and

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[73] Delany, *Dhalgren*, p. 741.
[74] *Ibid*., p. 747.
[75] *Ibid*., p. 779.
[76] *Ibid*., pp. 755-6.

without these insets, and this further destabilises the ontology of the narrative. The internalised notebook therefore sets up a self-contained structure, where a text contains itself, and that contained text also contains itself (and, presumably, on to infinity, as *Brass Orchids* must contain some reference to itself if it is the text of *Dhalgren*). This infinite recursion is highlighted when Lanya reads one of Kid's unfinished poems, and he considers writing a poem about Lanya named '*Lines on her reading lines on her*'.[77] *Dhalgren* embeds this effect throughout its text through its inclusion of Kid's notebook. The overall effect here therefore becomes one of a hall with an infinite number of mirrors where it is impossible to see where the reality ends and the illusion begins.

Kid's notebook therefore serves a structural purpose and multiple thematic purposes within the novel. Thematically, the notebook is closely linked to ideas of the text world and underlines the proposition that Bellona is itself an animated text world by containing all that is Bellona within its covers. Furthermore, it emphasizes issues of textuality, particularly creation and the editing process, thus foregrounding all commentary relating to these issues in the novel. Structurally, however, the notebook invokes images of infinitely recursive structures, thus creating a narrative feedback loop. In doing so, the notebook creates a world within itself; this world is not a sub-world incompossible with the main narrative world of the text, as was the case in similar uses of multiple narrative worlds analysed in this thesis, but a complete replica of the narrative world within itself. This destabilises the world of the text, thus giving rise to the same kind of 'literary turbulence' that metafiction invokes.

Differential 3: Prisms

The final differential this chapter seeks to explore is the image of the prism, particularly as it pertains to the novel's infinitely recursive structure. Various permutations of the phrase 'prism, mirror, lens' abound in *Dhalgren*, but the concept of the prism itself is of supreme importance. Scientifically, prisms are objects that disperse light – they break it up into its constituent components – and the experiment is the familiar one where a student uses a prism to create a rainbow, thus dispersing visible white light into its seven component colours. Unlike a mirror, which reflects, and a lens, which is there to be seen *through* (though it may have some effect on how something is seen), a prism enacts a

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[77] *Ibid*., p. 119.

process that splits up whatever has gone through it. *Dhalgren*'s major physical manifestation of the prism is the popular Orchid weapon, made of brass chains and bits of glass. The shimmering effect of an orchid is described in terms of light science:

> Prisms.
>
> Some of them, anyway.
>
> Others were round.
>
> He ran the chain across his hand. Some of the round ones were transparent. Where they crossed the spaces between his fingers, the light distorted. He lifted the chain to gaze through one of the lenses. But it was opaque. Tilting it, he saw pass, dim and inches distant in the circle, his own eye, quivering in the quivering glass.[78]

The language of optics dominates here and words like transparency, prisms, opacity, lenses, reflection, and distortion all become a rich source of vocabulary that visually echoes throughout the novel. Reflective, refractive, and distorting surfaces and objects abound in *Dhalgren*. In addition to the reflective orchids that most of the men in the city wear, for example, Bellona is described as being double-lit,[79] the moons that appear are originally explained away as 'reflections',[80] and holograms line the streets at night.[81] Kid even mentions that he originally considered titling the book of poetry that becomes *Brass Orchids* both 'Prism, Mirror, Lens' and 'Diffraction'.[82] Light and its ability to create illusion through the use of reflective surfaces also relates to the novel's self-reflexivity. Kid's notebook can be said to mirror Bellona – regardless of its ontological status – and metafiction itself has been described as a 'mirror' to fiction.[83] The image of the mirror and related optical vocabulary therefore brings with it an inherent metafictionality.

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[78] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 95.

[81] *Ibid.*, pp. 22-3.

[82] *Ibid.*, p. 522.

[83] Rose, Margaret, *Parody/ Meta-Fiction: An analysis of parody as a critical mirror to the writing and reception of fiction* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), p. 59. The present thesis makes similar metaphorical comparisons, referring to a text as a lens or mirror on occasion.

While fiction is often spoken of in terms of mirrors or lenses or some variation on that theme,[84] the prism is less commonly referred to in these kinds of discussions. For a text to be a prism would mean it has a similar effect – it breaks something in the text into constituent parts. *Dhalgren* appears to do this in two related ways. First, as has already been argued somewhat, it foregrounds the creative and editorial acts, and in doing so, it allows multiple versions of the same text to exist in the same space. In effect, this creates a prismatic text where it is possible to see the final text and the variations that led to it at once. Secondly, and more significantly, *Dhalgren*'s main prismatic effect lies in the relationship between the characters, particularly Loufer, Newboy, and, of course, Kid. Instead of being individual characters, I would like to argue that each of these characters are variations of each other. Specifically, these characters are collections of various attributes of an overriding authorial personality, 'dispersions' of a single personality which exist as separate characters because of the text's prismatic effects.

Key to understanding how the prismatic dispersal of the authorial character works is the relationship between Kid and his erstwhile publisher and editor, Ernest Newboy. In midst of one of Kid and Newboy's fairly one-sided discussions about Kid's notebook, poetry, and the publishing industry, Kid says, offhandedly, 'You're talking to yourself'. After a moment, Newboy replies, 'Most certainly'.[85] While on the surface this appears to be Kid's way of letting Newboy know he's not interested in what's being said, or even simply as a way of reminding him that he has been speaking for quite some time, it is important to note that Newboy pauses before replying to Kid. This pause has the effect of allowing Kid's comment to hang in the air for examination, allowing its various possibilities to be explored. Newboy's affirmation both confirms the statement and answers it as well. While it may be possible to interpret this exchange as Kid recognising Newboy as a kind of foil for himself, given both men are writers, because of the self-reflexive elements in the text and its preoccupation with reflective surfaces it is also possible to see this conversation as suggesting these two are in fact versions of the same character.[86] This relationship is also implied

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[84] Cf. Mark Currie's description of fiction as a 'window' (*Postmodern Narrative Theory*, p. 35), for example.

[85] Delany, *Dhalgren*, p. 355.

[86] It is also possible that Newboy and the other characters are part of Kid's hallucinations (p. 39).

in the way Kid reacts to Newboy simply 'knowing' about a missing comma in his notebook, remarking on his 'joy […] at some sensed communion'.[87] Further suggestions about Newboy and Kid's relationship are also found in the following passage from Kid's notebook

> *Consider: if an author, passing a mirror, were to see one day not himself but some character of his invention, though he might be surprised, might even question his sanity, he would still have something by which to relate. But suppose, passing on the inside, the character should glance at his mirror and see, not himself, but the author, a complete stranger, staring in at him, to whom he has no relation at all, what is this poor creature left…?*[88]

This image of author and character seeing each other via a reflective surface (a mirror) suggests an unusual situation: not only would an author be aware of his or her characters, but characters would be aware of that which they were previously unaware: their creator. In addition, they see themselves in each other, quite literally as reflections.[89] This is a distinctly different sort of internal author from that seen in texts like *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, where the authorial voice interrupts the main action of the text, or in Vonnegut novels such as *Breakfast of Champions* and *Timequake* (1997) where the authorial voice remains active and talkative throughout the text. Instead of existing as a distracting device, the internal authors in *Dhalgren* are part of the action, and the novel is about them.

Interestingly, while Kid and Newboy appear to be variations on an internal author, particularly given their professions and their discussions, they are not the only characters that act as internal authors. Loufer, for example, acts as a reader of Bellona, evidenced through his assertion that Bellona is science fiction. This argument, however, is more than Loufer's reading: his preoccupation with science fiction colours all that comes after it in the text. Because of this comment, readers are prompted to look for the science fictionality of *Dhalgren*. In this way, then, Loufer implicitly rewrites the entire novel. Loufer's ability to rewrite the novel in a particular way thus makes him a science fiction author – or at least the science

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[87] Delany, *Dhalgren*, p. 356.
[88] *Ibid.*, p. 360.
[89] If Newboy and Kid are versions of each other, the existential trauma is not a necessary after-effect of 'seeing' each other.

fiction-writing part of an overall authorial figure.[90] In addition, Loufer's presence helps to add an implicit sense of science fictionality into what is an otherwise apparently mainstream novel. Much as Gwyneth Jones notes in her introduction to the 2010 edition of *Dhalgren*, the novel is 'infused with genre sensibility' despite being bereft of more obvious science fiction tropes from the science fiction mega-text.[91] This begs the question: if Loufer is the science fiction-writing portion of the author, then what are Kid and Newboy? Given Newboy's status as publisher and published author and his long soliloquies about both being an author and the publishing field, it seems Newboy is the critical part of an author, the experienced author. Kid is newly a poet[92] and constantly depicted in the midst of writing, and is therefore the creative part. In this way, *Dhalgren* does not have a single internal author, but at least three – or three representations of the writing *process*.[93] Like the novel's attempt to manoeuvre into the liminal area between poiesis and mimesis, this diffraction of the authorial voice similarly explores the relationship between author and character and the possibility the two are not mutually incompatible.

The practical effect of this tripartite author is twofold. First, with portions of an overall author distilled into three characters, this allows for an unusual situation where an author may discuss a text with himself without appearing mad. For example, though Newboy ostensibly talks to himself when he soliloquizes about writing, he still has Kid as a sounding board. Secondly, however, three authors means the text is written three times (if only partially): once by Kid, the creator, once by Newboy the publisher, and then Tak rewrites it through the lens of science fiction as well.

To a certain extent, then, part of *Dhalgren*'s difficulty stems from these prismatic qualities. As Newboy says to Kid, 'The thing you have been baring, not to mention staring through all this time, has become an immense prism'.[94] The slippage between characters, point of view, and even some of the palimpsestic qualities of the final section of the novel are all due to the text's prismatic effect on its elements.

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[90] Loufer, of course, also makes a major contribution to the text by naming Kid in the first place (p. 18).

[91] Jones, 'Introduction', n.pag (ebook).

[92] Delany, *Dhalgren*, p. 159.

[93] It is possible to see every character in *Dhalgren* as an internal author to some extent; however, Loufer, Kid, and Newboy are the most blatantly authorial.

[94] *Ibid*., p. 260.

Differential 4: 'This circle in all…': Stylistics

In view of *Dhalgren*'s concern with reflexive and infinitely recursive structures, it is now necessary to turn to its stylistics,[95] as these run parallel to its thematic metafictionality. The various stylistics *Dhalgren* uses amplify all of the major themes already examined in this chapter and are thematised within the text, thus anchoring the recursive nature of the novel on a linguistic and structural level. This foregrounding act means the stylistics become a further metafictional element in the text as well as becoming intrinsically linked to other metafictional themes explored within the text. As was mentioned above, many analyses of *Dhalgren* note its heightened stylistics, and *Dhalgren*'s experimentalism has drawn both criticism and praise. This ranges from Theodore Sturgeon's assertion that it was, as Carl Freedman summarizes it, 'the very best book that science fiction had ever produced' to Harlan Ellison's contention that it is dull and pointless.[96] Gwyneth Jones, meanwhile, describes the stylistics as 'enjoyable' if 'wilfully opaque' in her introduction to the most recent reprint of the novel.[97] Out of this stylistic complexity, however, comes a self-conscious preoccupation with stylistics. Though this may be unsurprising in a text so looped and metafictional to begin with, *Dhalgren* foregrounds literary style and its own heightened stylistics in particular.   In doing so, the novel thematises its stylistics, and this move places literary experimentalism in the spotlight. *Dhalgren* uses literary techniques and devices that fall under both modernist and postmodernist categories, and while some of these have been noted in the differentials above, it is worth examining these devices and other similar ones within the novel before looking at how they influence the thematic content of the novel in various ways.

Dhalgren most obviously employs metafiction as a device, and in this novel it exhibits most blatantly in the form of internal authors, internal novels, and direct metafictional commentary about the creative act, editing, and publishing. Though metafiction spans the history of literature,[98] as a specific foregrounding device it links *Dhalgren*'s stylistics to postmodernist trends in particular.

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[95] Style here means 'distinctive linguistic expression' (Verdonk, Peter, *Stylistics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 3).

[96] Freedman, 'Delany', p. 402.

[97] Jones, 'Introduction', n.pag (ebook).

[98] Alter, Robert, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 3; Hutcheon, Linda, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (New York: Methuen, 1984), p. xvii.

Newboy's commentary about poetry,[99] for example, exhibits a thoroughly postmodern concern with self-reflexivity similar to that seen in mainstream metafiction of the twentieth century. Likewise, Kid's status as an internal author as well as the inclusion of his book of poetry, *Brass Orchids*, creates a layered effect within the novel and thus aids in highlighting ontological boundaries between the author and text. As has been argued throughout this thesis, each of these metafictional devices foreground the textuality of the novel and therefore serve to remind the reader about the fictionality of what they read. In addition to these metafictional devices, *Dhalgren* also employs a considerable amount of fragmentation, and this is best seen in its palimpestic nature. For example, when Kid's notebook is read, this creates a secondary text within the novel, though only a partial one, much as was the case with *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*. *Dhalgren*'s final chapter, ostensibly the content of *Brass Orchids*,[100] is palimpsestic on multiple levels: it not only includes physical text insets, but multiple deleted portions, as well as commentary from what appears to be an editorial third party in italics and brackets.[101] The novel's palimpsestic structure seems to link to both modernist ideas of the fragmentary polyphonic text, as well as a particularly postmodern version of intertextuality. These metafictional devices and textual fragmentation serve to emphasize two major themes in the novel. First, they foreground the novel's textuality through the inclusion of texts, relentlessly reminding readers of the novel's fictionality, just as all metafiction does. In turn, however, this foregrounded textuality serves to create multiple narrative layers within the novel: that of the novel itself (N^1), Kid's notebook (N^2), and the insets within his notebook (N^3).[102] Secondly, *Dhalgren*'s use of metafiction also directly links it to New Wave concerns with 'inner space',[103] much as was seen earlier in this thesis in texts such as *Breakfast of Champions* and *Frankenstein Unbound*. As was the case with these other texts, the inner space *Dhalgren* explores is not psychological in nature but textual, and this explicitly expands science fiction's thematic remit from hypothetical science to the possibilities of the self-reflexive piece of art.

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[99] Delany, *Dhalgren*, pp. 353-55.

[100] *Ibid.*, p. 651.

[101] *Ibid.*, p. 651, p. 656, p. 658, pp. 662-3,

[102] The numbering of narrative worlds here follows closely to that used in chapter 2 in the analysis of *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*.

[103] Prucher, Jeff (ed.), *Brave New Words: The Oxford Dictionary of Science Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 98-9.

In addition to metafictional devices and small-scale fragmentation, *Dhalgren* is also fragmented on a large-scale, structural level. Though the overall shape of the novel is roughly that of a spiral, it lacks several portions of text, and this is notable particularly in the final Anathemata section. Douglas Barbour has commented that this unusual shape is itself noteworthy, 'although *Dhalgren* continually curves in upon itself it is far more complicated in structure than a circle'.[104] Indeed, this shape might be more usefully described either as a fold in the Deleuzian fashion,[105] or possibly as the 'strange loop' that Douglas Hofstadter describes.[106] Both of these metaphorical illustrations, as well as the Moebius Strip shape Barbour suggests as a possible visual aid,[107] describe a recursive process: Deleuze describes Leibniz's fold as something that resembles a geometrical fractal, where even the smallest piece of matter expresses its whole,[108] while Hofstadter argues that the strange loop allows self-consciousness to arise through the incorporation of one's self into one's thought process.[109] This textual shape, however described, is part of a stylistic device that gives *Dhalgren* multiple entry points, multiple ways of understanding its labyrinths and, in effect, gives it a recursive shape on not only a thematic level but a macroscopic, structural level as well. *Dhalgren* also uses much more small-scale literary devices like repetition and variation to achieve a similar end, thus creating small-scale and large-scale folding that mimic one another like fractals. The phrase 'prism, mirror, lens' and its variants are repeated several times throughout the novel. Therefore, all of these

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[104] Barbour, p. 108.

[105] Deleuze, Gilles, *Le pli: Leibniz et le Baroque* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1988), pp. 5-19. For the reasoning behind the use of the French original in this case, see footnote 108 below.

[106] Hofstadter, Douglas, *I Am A Strange Loop* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), pp. 101-2.

[107] Barbour, p. 108.

[108] Deleuze, *Fold*, p. 6 '… a flexible or an elastic body still has cohering parts that form a fold, such that they are not separated into parts of parts but are rather divided to infinity in smaller and smaller folds that always retain a certain cohesion.' Colney's translation, due to its reliance on word-for-word translation, does not voice the underlying similarity with fractals, and therefore I have retranslated and somewhat transliterated the original French: '… un corps flexible ou élastique a encore des parties cohérentes qui forment un pli, si bien qu'elles ne se séparent pas en parties de parties, mais plutôt se divisent à l'infiniti en plis de plus en plus petits qui gardent toujours un certain cohesion.' ('a flexible or elastic body is constituted of coherent parts that form a fold, and these folds do not separate into different and disparate parts, but themselves divide into infinite folds, smaller and smaller while remaining cohesive (and descriptive of the whole)' (Deleuze, *Le pli*, p. 9).

[109] Hofstadter, *Loop*, p. 102.

devices emphasize recursion, whether structurally, linguistically, or thematically, creating a text that folds in upon itself in multiple ways.

The stylistics serve a further purpose, obfuscating the overall text itself and rendering it the 'riddle' that Gibson identifies in his introduction to the 1996 edition of the novel.[110] The novel's thematics mirror this stylistic complexity, particularly in the way that *Dhalgren* juxtaposes the image of the reflective surface, most significantly the prism, with that of the shadow and the clouded atmosphere. The relationship between light and dark and the reflective surface and the fogged atmosphere permeate the novel. Newboy, in one of his soliloquies about writing and publishing, links the writing process and the phrase of 'prism, mirror, lens' in the following way:

> It starts out mirrored on both sides: initially reassuring, but ultimately distracting. It rather gets in the way. But as you go on, the silvering starts to wear. Now you can see more, and more, directly through. Really - […] it's a lens. […] But, frankly, during the moments of illumination, it is practically impossible for you to read them, much less decide whether they still contain sense. The thing you have been baring, not to mention staring through all the time, has become an immense prism.[111]

As was noted above in Differential 3, the idea of reflection is linked to ideas of fiction both metaphorically and linguistically. Newboy here gives something of an evolution of narrative stylistics, from understanding the text as a simple mirror to a lens and finally as a prism. This is a journey from direct mimesis to something akin to impressionism. As a prism breaks white light into its constituent colours, a narrative 'prism' breaks fiction (or even diffracts it) into its constituent parts, and Newboy seems to argue that this movement from the reflective to the refractive and diffractive renders the text nearly incomprehensible. Newboy's illustration of the relationship between the phrase 'prism, mirror, lens' and the comprehension of narrative also reflects the recursive structures evident in *Dhalgren*. Newboy's comment, therefore, may be understood as speaking about textual issues: namely, the self-reflexive qualities of *Dhalgren* and how, through their reflecting and diffracting qualities, they cloud the text and make it difficult to understand.

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[110] Gibson, p. xi.
[111] Delany, *Dhalgren*, p. 259-60.

This difficulty, which stems from the stylistics the novel employs, closely aligns with the novel's attempt to articulate the inexpressible. In order to investigate this, it is necessary to return to a passage examined earlier in this chapter, describing Kid's reaction to his own book of poetry.

> Such a strange, marvellous, and marvellously inadequate object! He was still unable to read it, though. He still tried. And tried again, and tried till his throat was constricted, his forearms wet, and his heart hammered down where he'd always thought his liver was. Neither dislike nor discomfort with the work explained that. Rather the book itself was lodged in some equation where it did not belong, setting off hyperradicals and differentials through all the chambers of his consciousness.[112]

Newboy echoes this frustration in being unable to make sense of a difficult text when he speaks of a similarly complicated text: '…the prose was too dense for me to get more than ten of the sixteen pages. I have always prided myself on my ability to read anything […]. But I put *that* article by!'[113] These two passages are linked through a concern with difficulties in reading due, it appears, to their complicated stylistics. Newboy's article is 'dense' and therefore complex, while *Brass Orchids*' 'strange' and 'marvellous' qualities make it nearly impossible to understand. It appears, however, that Kid does comprehend some of it on an unconscious level because of his physical reactions, as well as the remark that the book causes 'hyperradicals and differentials' to move through his consciousness. His book therefore causes a purely unconscious reaction, one that occurs despite Kid's professed inability to understand his own text on a conscious level. Particularly interesting in Kid's description of his reading experience is his mention of 'hyperradicals'. Whilst these equations were examined briefly earlier on in this chapter, I would like to return to them now in order to examine their relationship to *Dhalgren*'s heightened stylistics.

A hyperradical, as was mentioned earlier in this thesis, is a formula that finds solutions for a specific set of complex algebraic equations, known as quintics, which mathematics had otherwise been unable to solve. James Roy Newman describes the hyperradical as something 'for which hitherto there [had]

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[112] *Ibid*., p. 531.
[113] *Ibid*., p. 161.

been neither words, nor symbols'.[114] In effect, the hyperradical articulates something that, until its development, had been impossible to express mathematically. Conceptually, then, the use of the hyperradical in the above passage seems intrinsically linked to that of stylistics in *Dhalgren*, particularly in the way it metaphorically articulates the previously ineffable. The theme of the ineffability continues throughout the novel. Kid notes that Lanya's harmonica, for example, makes unusual harmonies:

> You can't make that discord on a harmonica.
>
> Not on any harmonica he'd ever had.[115]

The harmonica's peculiar abilities are mentioned several times in the novel.[116] The impossibility of the discord this harmonica makes explicit that the harmonica itself may be unusual, perhaps even specially designed to make such dissonances.[117] An open-ended passage from Kid's notebook speaks of a similar need for language to do what Lanya's harmonica does: '*It is our despair at the textural inadequacies of language that drives us to heighten the structural ones toward*'.[118] According to this passage, language requires the use of structure (whether on the level of stylistics or narrative) to intensify language's power. Kid voices a similar argument, though ironically, when he says that 'I don't think they … *make* poets as great as I want to be!'[119] Again, the limitations of language seem an implicit barrier to Kid becoming a 'great' poet. Each of these passages speak to language's failings, and therefore implicitly call for an artistic version of a hyperradical that would somehow express these otherwise unutterable things.

 Dhalgren's call for the development of an artistic hyperradical links directly into its experimental stylistics for two reasons. First, language's perceived shortcomings may be understood as an impetus for developing new stylistics, as indeed Kid's notebook argues. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, this also implicitly justifies the novel's use of the science fiction mode, and this justification links back into this chapter's understanding of Bellona as a science fiction text. The following passage argues for this, and depends upon an understanding of Bellona as a science fiction text: 'The common problem, I

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[114] Newman, p. 2005.

[115] Delany, *Dhalgren*, p. 68.

[116] *Ibid.*, p. 369, p. 523.

[117] Harmonicas are generally designed to play only a specific set of notes and chords.

[118] Delany, *Dhalgren*, p. 79.

[119] *Ibid.*, p. 169.

suppose, is to have more to say than vocabulary and syntax can bear. That is why I am hunting in these desiccated streets'.[120] Linguistic and syntactic limitations have driven the author to attempt to use science fiction as a mode of communication. Though depicted as a chaotic, apocalyptic city with 'desiccated streets', Bellona appears to be a place worth being 'hunted' in. The text never resolves the question of whether or not the author manages to articulate the inexpressible, whether they have found their literary hyperradical; instead, it merely states that the text's complexity derives from an authorial attempt to express something otherwise ineffable.

In addition to *Dhalgren*'s emphasis on the ability of stylistics to articulate the inexpressible, however, the text also voices some anxieties about its experimental stylistics, particularly as regards their science fiction context. Many of the text's references to stylistics refer, on a surface level, to the city of Bellona. Because of Bellona's text-world status, these observations describe Bellona both as a city and as a text, and therefore may be read as having metafictional concerns. For example, Kid makes the following observation to Newboy shortly after arriving in Bellona:

> This is not a very useful city. Very little here approaches any eidolon of the beautiful.
>
> This is what a *good* neighborhood in Bellona looks like?[121]

Three words stand out in this passage: useful, beautiful, and good. As description of a city, the term 'useful' seems odd, but in terms of a text, this word is fairly clear. A useful text would be one that contains meaning, has a social function, or fulfils a specific role. This usefulness links directly to its beauty – in textual terms, its stylistics. This apparent beauty and Bellona's ruin seem at odds with one another, however. Newboy gives voice to this juxtaposition when he gives his opinion of Bellona: 'I confess, the whole place seems a pointless and ugly mistake, with no relation to what I know as civilization, better obliterated than abandoned'.[122] If Bellona is understood as a text, then this passage suggests that whatever manner of text it is, it appears uncivilised, even worthless. Describing Bellona-the-text-world as uncivilised and 'pointless and ugly' argues two things implicitly: firstly, that Bellona is somehow different from other similar texts, and secondly, that such a difference should be avoided. If Bellona is a science fiction

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[120] *Ibid.*, p. 75.
[121] *Ibid.*, p. 75.
[122] Delany, *Dhalgren*, p. 354.

text, as Loufer has argued, then it is possible to understand this passage as criticising Bellona's science fictionality because it is neither 'useful' nor 'beautiful', even though it is a 'good' part of science fiction because of its heightened stylistics.

Given *Dhalgren*'s experimental nature, these selections speak to an anxiety about the text's validity as a piece of science fiction. This apprehension, however, is linked to more than just anxieties about experimentalism: it appears concerned with the legitimacy of science fiction itself. For example, though the following passage is, on one level, about the isolation of Bellona, it also speaks about the ghettoization of science fiction:

> Very few suspect the existence of this city. It is as if not only the media but the laws of perspective themselves have redesigned knowledge and perception to pass it by. Rumor says there is practically no power here.[123]

The highly experimental science fiction text, Bellona, seems impossible – no one 'suspects the existence of this city'. Like the counter-cultural dystopia that Bellona imitates, both the literary academy and publishers have cut science fiction off from the rest of literature and placed it into an isolated space. Following the advent of the New Wave movement, in an attempt to make science fiction more 'literary', some science fiction writers (including Delany) began incorporating heightened stylistics in their texts in order to make them more significant and acceptable to the literary elite. 'This city' – Bellona, the stylised science fiction text – therefore seems impossible, even mythical, because 'there is no power' in science fiction, nothing that experimental stylistics might help to perfect or sustain. When this is understood in retrospect to both Newboy and Kid's disparaging remarks about Bellona, then it seems these rumours are right. Bellona – and science fiction by implication – seems unsalvageable and doomed to obscurity, even if it becomes 'beautiful'.

Ultimately, then, this passage subtly engages with the most 'divisive' debate in science fiction: that of its definition.[124] Bellona's 'uncivilised' status therefore apparently removes it from civilisation (that is, the mode as a whole). This speaks very much of the liminal status of *Dhalgren* as it is neither wholly

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[123] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[124] Gunn, James, 'Toward a Definition of Science Fiction', in *Speculations on Speculation: Theories of Science Fiction*, edited by James Gunn and Matthew Candelaria (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005), pp. 5-12, p. 5.

science fictional according to some definitions (as Tak and Kid argue above), nor is it wholly literary; it is both. As Jacques Derrida argues in his essay 'The Law of Genre', 'participation [in genre] never amounts to belonging'.[125] Bellona's separation from the outside world illustrates this lack of direct association, and in effect, this passage speaks of the isolation inherent in attempting to expand the boundaries of a genre. Through innovation, then, *Dhalgren* detaches itself from the rest of science fiction.

Despite the apparent anxieties the text voices, *Dhalgren*'s stylistics serve two major purposes. First, their presence extends the novel's self-reflexivity through an act of foregrounding that occurs both on thematic and linguistic levels. Secondly, they also illuminate their own purpose within the text insofar as they are meant to aid in an attempt to articulate the ineffable. They form the final major thematic differential within the novel.

Possibilities of Science Fiction

Thus far, this chapter has largely concerned itself with *Dhalgren*'s metafictional content, particularly as it relates to examining science fiction's own 'inner space'. As a recursive text, *Dhalgren* inhabits itself, and examines itself using the metaphor of a city. The topography of the city allows the science fiction text to come alive and for the author to walk not only amongst his characters but the actual textual elements themselves. As a piece of metafiction, then, it is fairly evident that *Dhalgren* utilises multiple metaleptic techniques to create a text world where it is possible for all of these things to happen. *Dhalgren*'s use of science fiction's relationship with possible worlds is somewhat more complex than the creation of a metafictive text world, however, and this is what this conclusion will explore in more detail.

Even without the understanding that Bellona is a science fiction text, the fluid, ruined landscape that Kid, Loufer, and Lanya inhabit is a world unto itself, disconnected and totally isolated from the rest of the universe. It appears to contain at least three major narrative worlds: the overall narrative of *Dhalgren* (N^1), the narrative world of Kid's notebook both in quotation in the first six sections of the novel (N^2), and the insets in Anathemata: A Plague Journal (N^3). The occasional slippages into first person narration in N^1 may constitute a fourth

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[125] Derrida, Jacques, 'The Law of Genre', translated by Avital Ronell, in *Modern Genre Theory*, edited by David Duff (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), pp. 219-31, p. 230.

narrative world (N^4), though the differentiation between this and N^1 is not entirely apparent. It is worth returning to the visual method of understanding the relationship between these worlds momentarily. Much as was the case in similar texts like *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*, these worlds sit one within another (shown in Figure 6.1).
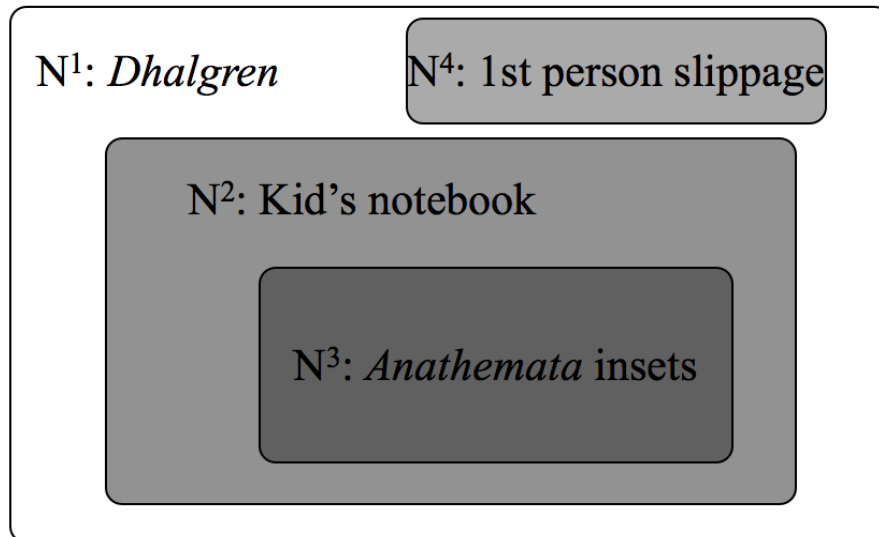

Figure 6.1: Narrative Worlds in *Dhalgren* (ontological relativity).

It is immediately apparent, however, that as far as narrative voice is concerned, these worlds leak into each other. The slippage into first person in N^4 seems aligned with many of the first person insets in N^3, and because Kid's notebook (N^2) reflects the text of *Dhalgren* (N^1), both in direct quote and variation, it seems these are also part of the same narrative world. Furthermore, though this particular organization of narrative worlds within the novel derives from relative distance from and involvement on the part of the reader (again, an assumed N'), it does not uncover anything unusual about the portrayed world of the text, and it does not note the significance of Bellona's status as a science fiction text, Kid's existence both inside and outside the text, or *Dhalgren*'s inherent reflexiveness. Though this diagram illustrates the relative organization of the various narrative worlds within *Dhalgren*, problematically, it does not account for any of the novel's thematically salient features.

The following two diagrams show the ontological relationship between various narrative worlds within *Dhalgren*, emphasising the recursive structure that underlies the novel. *Dhalgren*'s narrative worlds are split into two diagrams here for space reasons. The first (Figure 6.2) contains what might be considered the

outer text: the actual world (which is understood, metafictionally, as the 'outside world') (N'), Kid the author (N^1), and the actual-world text of *Dhalgren* (N^2). This diagram bears a close resemblance to Figure 6.1, as well as the organisation of world, author, and text evident in most texts (as was noted in Chapter 3).
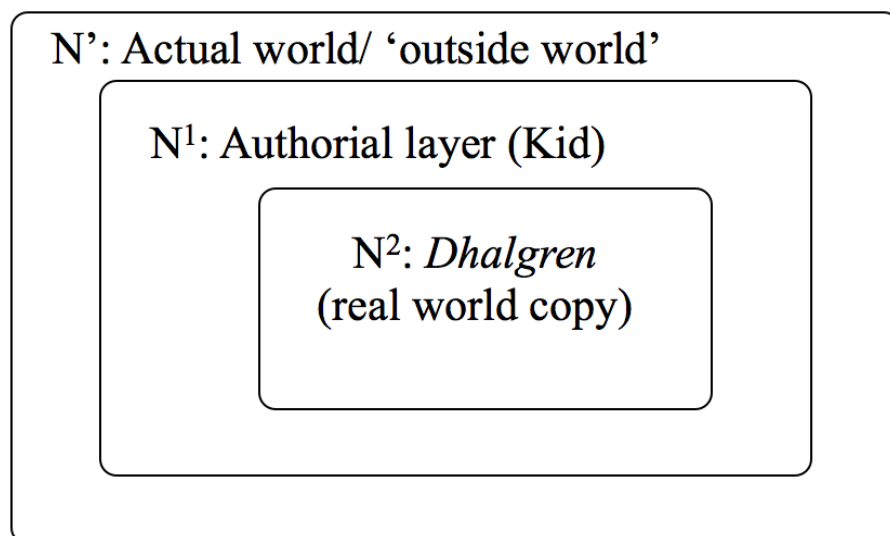

Figure 6.2: *Dhalgren*'s outer text.

The second figure here illustrates the recursive nature of *Dhalgren*'s inner text. This diagram begins with the same N^2 as was used in Figure 6.2, and within it is contained the city of Bellona (N^4), Kid's journal (N^5), and Kid himself (N^3), as well as the strange loop within Kid's journal that repeats N^2 through N^5. Kid as a character has been given his own narrative world for two reasons. First and foremost, his character moves through these different experiential spaces, at one moment speaking from without his journal, and at other moments speaking within. Secondly, as a character Kid is an internal author, and therefore becomes a sort of super-figure that crosses multiple narrative levels with ease.[126] As such he receives his own narrative world, namely as his experience of the text differs greatly from the other characters in his ability to engage with it, and this is the reason N^3 sits across multiple worlds rather than wholly enveloping other worlds.

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[126] Note that the Kid in N^3 is not the same authorial figure present in N^1. This is partially because Kid the author is only a part of the author's presence in *Dhalgren* (as noted in Differential 3), as well as due to the way in which Kid interacts with his surroundings.
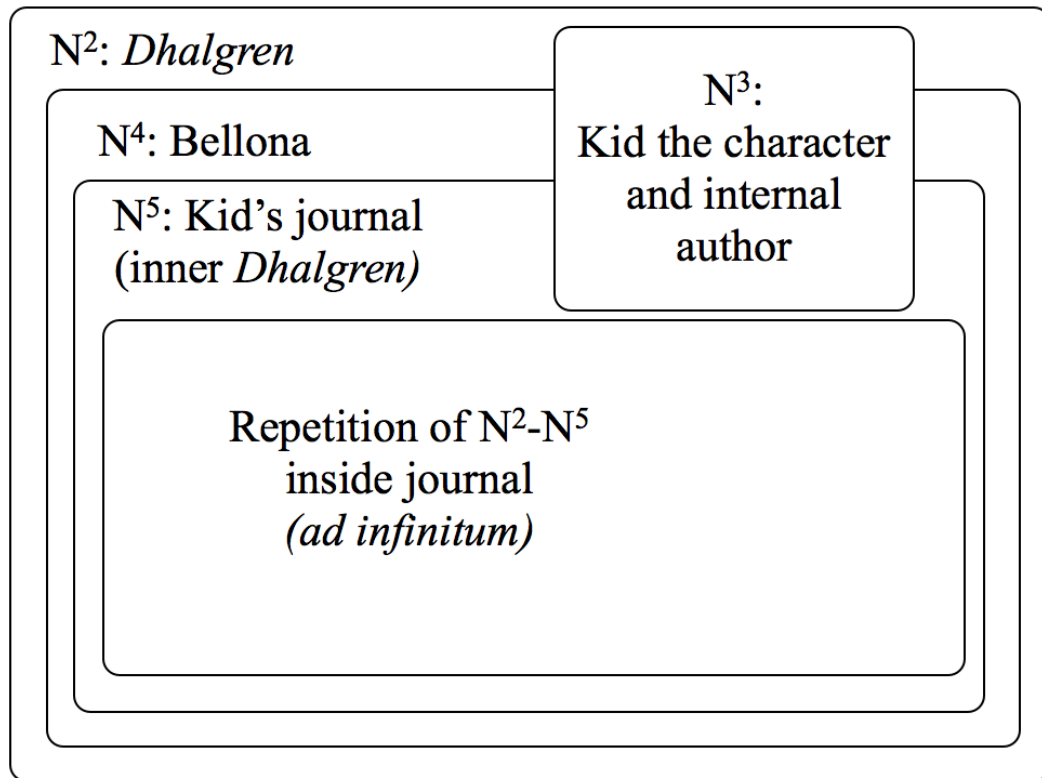
Figure 6.3: *Dhalgren*'s inner text, including recursion.

This figure in particular emphasizes the recursive nature of the text, and the concept of the text within a text remains structurally important in this diagram, and it illustrates that the repeated structure is not a single world (as might be understood by the phrase 'a novel within a novel'), but a whole set of narrative worlds and their particular relationships with one another.

Importantly, this recursion comes about as a result of the metafictional content and self-reflexive stylistics within the novel, and this denotes various features of the possible worlds that *Dhalgren* invokes. First and foremost, part of the hypothetical basis that supports these worlds is the concept that a world may be 'inside' another, and this goes beyond the layering evident in many of the texts previously analysed in this thesis, not theoretically but by the sheer number of times it repeats (explicitly and implicitly) within the novel. For example, while *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater* uses a comparable layered effect with an internal novel and *Frankenstein Unbound* works through the erasure of the same effect, there is only one set of these layers in each case. *Dhalgren* contains multiple instances of this layering effect, and each sits one within another, presumably continuing on to infinity. In this way, *Dhalgren* seems to support the supposition

that a fictional text is a possible world within the actual world.[127] Due to this, it is possible to understand a further facet of *Dhalgren*'s hypothetical impetus: the worlds it illustrates are not only fictional, but fictional texts. This derives from Differential 1, where the city of Bellona was shown to be a literal text-world; that is, a text that has been given a city's topography in order for the author to interact with it. In view of the novel's engagement with possible world theory, however, Bellona links its existence as a text-world to its existence as a fictional world. In this novel, then, as was the case in *Frankenstein Unbound*, the label 'fictional world' becomes literal. The final major attribute that the addition of a modal understanding of *Dhalgren*'s possible worlds adds is therefore the 'what if' question it appears to answer. *Dhalgren* proposes a world where an author writes the very book he is in, and therefore narrates his own composition. In this way, the novel may be understood to contain a copy of itself in all its iterations, and its metafictionality and its use of possible worlds may be seen as intrinsically linked.

As a piece of science fiction, then, *Dhalgren* continues the narrative innovation exhibited by *Frankenstein Unbound*, *Breakfast of Champions*, and even *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* through its use of literary science – that is, narratology – as the theoretical basis for its narrative experiments. Its experimentalism may be observed at both microscopic and macroscopic levels: the stylistics employed create a prism that displays the inner workings of a text, while its foregrounding of metaleptic themes creates an unusually recursive set of narrative worlds. In this way, *Dhalgren* probes the limits of not only science fiction through its use of narratology as the basis of its internal hypothesis, but also pushes the limits of fiction, asking questions about what it is possible for a text to portray, and imagining the various ways in which it might portray these things. In order to investigate its own hypothesis, it has had to develop its own literary hyperradical, both stylistically and thematically, and in this way, *Dhalgren* illustrates what Mark Currie labels 'theoretical fiction' in a very literal sense. This novel is the very edge of science fiction's remit: speculative both in fictional standards and science fictionality. As Jean-Jacques Lecercle says of Deleuze's understanding of linguistics, 'language is no longer representative, that is, separated from the things and states of things on which it is articulated: it tends

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[127] This assertion is a contentious one within some readings of modal philosophy, as was noted in the introduction.

towards its own limits'.[128] Similarly, the way in which the novel pushes these limits, both linguistic and science fictional, results in an eventual breakdown of the relationship between signified and signifier, allowing words to become actualised as things. In this way, both *Dhalgren*'s use of language reaches a point where it breaks down under its own weight and becomes not only recursive but also infinitely complex in its recursiveness. *Dhalgren*'s science fictionality is more implicit than explicit, as Gwyneth Jones has noted, and this isolates the novel, which is reflected in Bellona's separation from the rest of the world. As a thought-experiment, it questions the mode's definition and its purpose as a literature (to reflect, like the mysterious moon that appears in Bellona), and *Dhalgren* is at once a mirror, a prism, and a lens, reflecting, diffracting, and refracting its own fictionality throughout the text, folding into itself, presumably to infinity.

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[128] Lecercle, p. 25.

Some Concluding Propositions

'In science fiction, "science" – i.e., sentences displaying verbal emblems of scientific discourses – is used to literalize the meanings of other sentences for use in the construction of the fictional foreground. Such sentences as "His world exploded," or "She turned on her left side," as they subsume the proper technological discourse […], leave the banality of the emotionally muzzy metaphor, abandon the triviality of insomniac tossings, and, through the labyrinth of technical possibility, become possible images of the impossible.' – Samuel R. Delany, *Triton* (1976)[1]

'Out my window I can see the edges of stories as we pass by. Some of them, the space operas, are grand circuses of light. Others are smaller systems, lonesome clusters, dim and muted and private little stories.' Charles Yu, *How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe* [2]

As a whole, metafictional science fiction might easily be understood as an academic curiosity: at first glance it is neither overwhelmingly pervasive in its overt or covert forms, nor is it particularly noteworthy for its critical attitudes. As such, it is only remarkable in that such stylistic and narrative experimentalism exists at all in a mode of writing generally disregarded or even derided for its stylistics[3]. This reductive understanding of metafictional science fiction, however, disguises an intriguing interplay between the formation and presentation of the science fictional world and a text's metafictionality. While the texts explored in this thesis all fit into the specific historical time period of the New Wave in science fiction, they also hold in common something more important and, this thesis would argue, more universal to science fiction as a whole than a period, specific movement, or subgenre of science fiction. The specific stylistic pyrotechnics that Samuel R. Delany employs in *Dhalgren* to create its endlessly recursive narrative are not specific to Delany or science fiction in the 1970s in America; they arise from the same underlying structure that creates to the unusual

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[1] Delany, Samuel R., *Triton* (London: Grafton, 1995), p. 337.
[2] Yu, Charles, *How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe* (London: Corvus, 2010), p. 134.
[3] Stockwell, Peter, *The Poetics of Science Fiction* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), pp. 50-1.

fictional world in *Frankenstein Unbound*, and grants Philboyd Studge with the power to slip out of his void to exasperate Kilgore Trout in *Breakfast of Champions*, and are effectively the same devices that allow Isaac Asimov to create his robots or enable Robert A. Heinlein to bring Valentine Michael Smith back to Earth in *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961). Science fiction's structural similarity to the scientific hypothesis allows it to portray not only possible worlds through the use of a scientifically-based novum as Darko Suvin might argue,[4] but theoretical worlds that may spring from any kind of hypothesis as well.

In the case of metafictional science fiction, this theorising about worlds extends to include literary theorising, and therefore science fiction becomes self-reflexive. It would perhaps be a step too far to suggest that all science fiction, through its creation of strange and other fictional worlds, is *actively* metafictional; however, all science fiction texts portray incompossible fictional worlds and therefore create a rift between the portrayed world and the actual world of the reader. In turn, this produces a kind of friction in the reader – the 'literary turbulence' identified in the first chapter. This friction or turbulence is itself at the centre of metafictionality, which may be understood as a form of textual deixis.[5] Therefore, all science fiction by its very nature generates a significant space between the fictional world and the actual world. Science fiction is, theoretically, a highly fertile form of writing for metafictional experimentation because of this space, but not all science fiction exploits this gap for metafictional purposes. It would be possible to suggest, however, that much if not all science fiction is structurally similar to metafiction from an ontological point of view. The sort of metafictional science fiction examined in this thesis simply exploits this underlying congruence.

Metafictional Science Fiction

Metafictional science fiction is most simply understood as a self-reflexive type of science fiction. More than simply illustrating poiesis as much metafiction does, at its most sophisticated level, metafictional science fiction texts consciously explore how the fictional world works within the narrative of the science fiction

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[4] Suvin, Darko, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 63.
[5] Stockwell, Peter, *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction* (London, Routledge, 2009), p.46. Cf. chapter 1 for further explanation of between metafiction as textual deixis.

text. Because one of science fiction's most recognisable features is its setting and therefore by extension the way it posits its fictional world in relation to the actual world, the metafictional science fiction text that concerns itself with the fictional world is anything but a self-limiting, period-specific curiosity. Because metafictional science fiction explores not only how hypothetical worlds might be portrayed, but also what sorts of worlds are within science fiction's remit, this links into issues of definition, one of the most debated areas of science fiction criticism. Metafictional science fiction, even when investigated at the level of narrative experimentalism as it is in this thesis, therefore feeds directly into more common concerns over the definition of science fiction despite an apparent lack of overt thematic engagement with the topic.

Regardless of its links to more common areas of critical attention, metafictional science fiction has not garnered much attention for its metafictionality. Whilst Andrew M. Butler identifies various specific science fiction texts as playing 'metafictive games'[6], and Fredric Jameson implicitly argues that science fiction texts have a kind of received, implicit self-reflexivity,[7] the viewpoint that, as Veronica Hollinger puts it, 'science fiction is not much given to […] self-reflexivity; […] it is rarely openly "metafictional"',[8] is far more common. Though science fiction's metafictionality has not been entirely unnoticed, as the introduction notes, when it is noted, its analysis is largely limited to matters of identification. This thesis, however, makes the claim that not only is much science fiction metafictional in some fashion, it is an inherent modal trait which derives from the mode's hypothetical impetus and underlying narrative structure, as was noted above. In addition, metafictionality in science fiction may be exhibited in multiple ways: the momentary break in the narrative similar to that found in metafictional postmodern fiction, the inclusion of an internal text or author, the implication of a narrative's ontological impossibility due to incompossible timelines within a text, as well as through the use of parody. All of these metaleptic techniques foreground the fictionality of a text in one way or

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[6] Butler, Andrew M., 'Postmodernism and science fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 137-48, p. 146.
[7] Jameson, Fredric, 'Progress Versus Utopia; or, Can We Imagine the Future?' *Science Fiction Studies*. Vol. 9, No. 27 (1982), pp. 147-58, p. 150-1.
[8] Hollinger, Veronica, 'Science Fiction and Postmodernism, in *A Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by David Seed (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 232-47, p. 234.

another (whether explicitly or implicitly), resulting in a multi-worlded, self-reflexive text.

As a narrative mode, science fiction proposes a specific set of possibilities through the introduction of something into the portrayed science fictional that is totally incompossible with the actual world (or the world of the reader), which Darko Suvin calls a 'novum'.[9] This introduction of a novum brings some level of what this thesis terms 'literary turbulence' into the text, whether in a significant fashion (as in the examples of *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*, *We Who Are About To…*, and *Extra (Ordinary) People*), or in less obvious but still important ways (such as in the case of Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* trilogy and its implicit commentary world). Though science fiction's very nature highlights the incompossibility of the presented fictional world with the actual world, some science fiction texts foreground this difference to such a significant level that it not only highlights the text's incompossibility but its fictionality as well.

Science fiction may foreground the incompossibility and therefore the fictionality of its proposed world through the use of multiple narrative strategies. Kurt Vonnegut's *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*, for example, foregrounds its fictionality through the inclusion of an internal science fiction novel written by Kilgore Trout named *Galactic Three-Day Pass*. As the first half of chapter 2 argued, this inclusion creates multiple narrative levels within the larger *Rosewater* novel, and each shift between the Vonnegut novel to the Trout novel and back again creates a moment of friction which highlights the act of reading. The world of *Galactic Three-Day Pass* is illustrated as being incompossible with Eliot Rosewater's world as portrayed in *Rosewater*, and this juxtaposition recreates the very same ontological layering present when a reader in the actual world reads *Rosewater*.

Metafictional science fiction, in less complex applications of this fusion, results in a text with at least one overt narrative world (that of the text's main narrative) and one or more implied narrative worlds. In the case of *Breakfast of Champions*, this implied narrative world is the 'void' where Philboyd Studge sits and watches the action of his novel behind his 'leaks'. In both of the analysed Joanna Russ texts, the emphasis on the incompossibility between the text's chronology and the reader's chronology foregrounds the impossibility of the

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[9] Suvin, p. 63.

narrative as presented in the text. The very impossibility of the events narrated in these texts – most obviously that of *We Who Are About To…* - implies a metatextual narrative world where these events took place and the narrative was written. Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* implies a secondary narrative world made up entirely of parodic commentary. Each of these texts implies the existence of a secondary narrative world but do not illustrate it in the way that texts such as *Dhalgren*, *Breakfast of Champions*, and *Frankenstein Unbound* do.

At its most sophisticated, this combination of metafiction and science fiction becomes what this thesis terms 'performed metafiction'; that is, when the proposed science fiction world is based upon a narratological hypothesis, and the narrative portrays this hypothesis as interaction between characters within a very specific world without recourse to allegory. This performative metafiction relies upon the science fiction mode in order to remain non-metaphorical and non-allegorical.

This thesis largely avoids the identification of specific thematic threads that run throughout the texts analysed here as it is far more interested in narrative strategies used in the construction of science fictional worlds and their effect on the reader as forms of textual deixis. This is partially because, as a whole, these issues are not unique to these texts, particularly in the way they perform criticism of the science fiction mode, nor do these texts reflect an overall thematic trend. It is not that they are unimportant, but simply that they are considered secondary to the methods these texts use to create their self-reflexivity. The analysed selection from *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*, for example, alludes to science fiction's comforting and diversionary qualities. *Breakfast of Champions*' implicit science fictionality underlines the mode's narrative possibilities, much in the same way that *Frankenstein Unbound* and *Dhalgren* do (though of course the third does this much more blatantly than the other two). *Frankenstein Unbound* also argues for science fiction's underlying social importance as an early warning system. On the more directly critical side of things, meanwhile, the two Joanna Russ texts analysed in this thesis both engage directly with science fiction's nature as a future history and what that means, and Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* novels engage with direct critique of the mode through the use of parody. *Dhalgren*, likewise, seems concerned with expanding and drawing out as many of the genre's possibilities – both stylistic and narrative – as feasible. As

this thesis argues, these texts all reflect much of the critical commentary on science fiction, and while each text makes its own specific additions to the body of work on science fiction, in general they do not challenge these critical attitudes. Like the texts explored in the first chapter, the issues surrounding science fiction's social purpose as well as its definition and ghettoization continue as major themes in metafictional science fiction texts, but these texts largely only reiterate them.

Similarly, the metafiction in these texts does not say anything particularly new about fiction in general. The various themes suggested by the internalised authors in *Breakfast of Champions*, *Frankenstein Unbound*, and *Dhalgren* echo similar concerns seen in much postmodern fiction from the 1960s and 1970s. Even Adams's novels seem to limit themselves to poking fun at science fiction conventions. In this way, the texts analysed here are not particularly noteworthy for what they say with their metafictionality, whether when addressing science fiction or fiction in general. This is not a problem in itself, as the thesis's intention is not to explore specific thematic concerns, per se, but instead to investigate the various ways in which metafictional science fiction fuses its form with its content to create metafiction.

What *is* remarkable and therefore distinctive about these texts is the structural way in which they create this metafictionality and how they embed their metafiction in their science fictionality. Metafictional science fiction's use of the narrative world to perform textual deixis allows each of these texts to not merely become 'dual-voiced' texts,[10] in Margaret A. Rose's terminology, but to push Darko Suvin's concept of the novum to its absolute extreme. In these sorts of texts, the novum is no longer limited to the realm of the purely scientific, as Suvin's original use of the term requires, but the novum's remit expands to include the science of literature: narratology. More than simple setting or narrative voice, the narrative world of metafictional science fiction makes the text an experimental space where science fiction may be self-critical in a unique fashion. This experimental space creates fertile ground for authors and readers to interact as in the case of *Frankenstein Unbound* and *Breakfast of Champions*, for the reading experience to be illustrated as the reader's movement through multiple worlds as in *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*, and portrays an actualised text-made-flesh as in *Dhalgren*. Texts such as these use the science fiction mode to present

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[10] Rose, Margaret A., *Parody/ Meta-Fiction: An analysis of Parody as a Critical Mirror to the writing and reception of fiction* (London: Croom Helm, Ltd., 1979), p. 51.

worlds where textual concerns may be actualised, and thus literary theory becomes performative.

Unlike much amodal metafiction, such as that found in texts like John Fowles' *The Magus* (1966), metafictional science fiction does not require that the metafictional aspects of the text creep in as through from a world different to that of the overall text. The overt 'otherness' of the science fiction world allows the science fiction text to combine its metafictionality with its science fictionality. For example, while a more straightforward science fiction text such as Arthur C. Clarke's *Rendezvous with Rama* (1973) may present a world where aliens have sent a starship to earth, thus implying a possible world where aliens that have interstellar travel exist, a piece of metafictional science fiction such as *Frankenstein Unbound* proposes a world without the boundaries between text, reader, and author and uses the tropes of time travel and alternative realities to 'bring' the reader to this world (both literally and figuratively). What is interesting about metafictional science fiction, however, is that these conventions allow the metafictional content of the novel to look as though it is a piece of straightforward science fiction. *Frankenstein Unbound* therefore works as a piece of science fiction due to two parallel nova: first the overtly science fictional tropes of time travel and alternate world, and secondly the fictional world without textual boundaries these tropes allow Bodenland to visit. All of these nova serve as estranging devices in a broad understanding of Suvin's term, but understanding Aldiss's novel as a piece of poiesis considerably expands the limits of the novum and science fiction in general. The resulting text is one that proposes a world which takes as its inspiration literary theory rather than scientific theory, and is simultaneously science fictional and metafictional.

Limits I: Expanding 'Inner Space'

J.G. Ballard famously argued that 'The biggest developments of the immediate future will take place, not on the Moon or Mars, but on Earth, and it is *inner* space, not outer, that needs to be explored.'[11] Whilst this may originally have been interpreted as a call for science fiction writers to explore the inner workings of humanity, Ballard's charge takes on a new meaning with respect to metafictional science fiction. Whereas inner space has traditionally meant science

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[11] Ballard, J.G., 'Which Way to Inner Space?', in *A User's Guide to the Millennium* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996), pp. 195-8, p. 197.

fictional examination of the unexplored portions of the human mind as opposed to unexplored regions of the universe, metafictional science fiction, with its emphasis on narratology as a science, may be understood as exploring fiction's own 'inner space'. In the cases of *Dhalgren*, *Breakfast of Champions*, and *Frankenstein Unbound*, this exploration of inner space becomes actualised. What would normally be the realm of the figurative or the purely critical – the interactions between text, author, and reader – become actualised and performative within the text. Metafictional science fiction creates a possible text world that actualises these otherwise figurative or purely theoretical concepts.

In metafiction, the relationship between the critical text and the creative text may be understood as one that becomes increasingly blurred.[12] In metafictional science fiction, then, particularly that which fits into the category of performative metafiction, the critical text and the creative text become one in the same. As such, metafictional science fiction's exploration of its own inner space therefore stretches the limits of traditional conceptions of both science fiction's remit, particularly in terms of the novum, and how a text exhibits metafiction and self-reflexiveness in general.

Limits II: Expanding the Novum with Narratology

Samuel R. Delany, in one of the appendices to his novel *Triton* (1976), argues that 'Science fiction *is* science fiction because various bits of technological discourse (real, speculative, or pseudo) – that is to say the "science" – are used to redeem various other sentences from the merely metaphorical, or even the meaningless, for denotative description/presentation of incident.'[13] If the texts analysed in this thesis share one common feature, it is that the science they all utilise as a springboard is literary science – narratology. This narratological focus allows them to foreground typically metafictional concerns (that is, textuality, genre, fictionality, etc.) as metonym rather than metaphor through the use of the science fiction mode. Science fiction's mega-text creates a stable platform upon which these highly theoretical worlds may be built.

Metafictional science fiction therefore uses and presents its scientific content in a unique fashion. These texts trade mimesis and metaphor for poiesis –

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[12] Currie, Mark, 'Introduction' in *Metafiction* (London: Longman, 1995), pp. 1-18, p. 5.
[13] Delany, *Triton*, p. 336.

the process of bringing-forth or 'model-making'[14] – and thus foreground the text's status as a piece of fiction. It is this exchange of metaphor for metonymic poiesis that gives these texts their performative aspect: instead of allegorical or metaphorical texts, where textual aspects may be understood as one-to-one correspondences, these texts actualise fictional aspects. In effect, this crucial distinction means that these metafictional science fiction texts do not *represent* creative, editorial, or readerly acts; they *are* these acts. For example, in *Dhalgren*, Kid does not represent an internal author as he might in an allegorical understanding of the novel; he *is* an internal author.

Significantly, this emphasis on poiesis rather than mimesis illustrates a major deviation from the Suvin-esque understanding of the science present in science fiction that underlies many understandings of the mode. The vast majority of science fiction takes scientific progress as its springboard, and commonly draws upon technological advances in particular. In the past, science fiction nova have largely been limited to the biological, physical, and computing sciences. The New Wave saw a growing interest in the social sciences due to its preoccupation with inner space, but science fiction remained largely aligned with the academic sciences. The texts analysed here illustrate a move away from these disciplines towards an understanding of the arts as sciences, and in particular, a conceptualisation of literature which has a scientific component at its core. That is, the methodological and theoretical content of the arts and the literary arts in particular becomes fertile ground for the creation of science fiction worlds in these texts.

Using literary 'science' as a basis upon which to build a science fiction world foregrounds a text's narratological aspects. Therefore, these texts understand and present narratology as precisely what it is: the scientific study of narrative. Each of the texts analysed in this thesis approach this study of narrative in a different fashion. Some, such as *Frankenstein Unbound*, *Breakfast of Champions*, and *Dhalgren* break down narrative boundaries – both literal and thematic – in order to do so. Others, such as Russ's novellas and Adams's novels, employ multiple forms of implicit, parallel commentary worlds. Whilst each of these texts may be understood as recognisably science fictional with regards to nearly any definition of the mode, they use their narrative mode as a means of

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[14] Scholes, Robert, *Structural Fabulation: An Essay on the Fiction of the Future* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), p. 18.

exploring narratology in a methodical, hypothetical fashion. Because the science at stake in these texts is literary science, these texts become metafictional due to their scientific content. In effect, it may be possible to understand these texts as narratological fiction, a term which shares much with Mark Currie's relabeling of metafiction as 'theoretical fiction'[15] because of its implied critical engagement with literary theory. If metafictional science fiction is understood as a kind of theoretical fiction, then this further erases the boundary between the creative text and the critical text. These science fiction texts therefore share a common thematic with more familiar forms of metafiction. As a result, these texts become metafictional through their engagement with literary theory on a metonymic level.

Limits III: All Science Fiction has the Potential to be Metafictional

Another effect of the similarity between metafictional science fiction texts and metafiction, particularly as it may be understood as theoretical fiction, is that metafictional science fiction's self-reflexivity trickles down into other pieces of science fiction as well. For example, while texts such as Arthur C. Clarke's *2001:A Space Odyssey* or Brian Aldiss' *Helliconia* trilogy are neither overtly nor covertly metafictional in the way that the texts analysed in this thesis are, they both share with these texts an underlying ontological structure. Their hypothetical impetus and their reliance on possibility implicitly creates worlds that, out of logical necessity, belong to some other incompossible world. The incompossibility of science fictional worlds with the actual world therefore creates an implicit break between the narrated world and the actual world and, despite any attempts to suspend one's disbelief on the part of the reader, the science fiction text brings with it the inherent knowledge that it is totally fictional. Science fiction's conjectural formulation – the 'what if' of all fiction – becomes foregrounded due to its own hypothesizing.

As was mentioned earlier, science fiction's use of language to articulate possible worlds means it bears a certain structural congruence with metafiction. Furthermore, this specific use of language to create new worlds suggests that this type of science fiction may be understood as a 'dual-text' in Rose's terms. On one level, it is the performed science fiction text: full of all the familiar surface structures of the mode like aliens, space-ships, and robots. On a secondary level,

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[15] Currie, Mark, *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1998), p. 51-2.

however, it also contains a sustained level of hypothesising about a world completely incompossible with that of the reader, thus giving the text an underlying polyphonic structure. Science fiction texts, therefore, have the potential for metafictionality, and can easily incorporate metafiction into their narratives because of congruent ontological structures. Rather than pushing at the limits of what might be considered science fiction, this understanding of the ontologies that both science fiction and metafiction share expands the possibilities of what might be considered metafictional. Poiesis, in this understanding of metafiction, is not limited to passages enquiring about the nature of fiction; here it includes and indeed foregrounds the creation of the fictional world itself and its ontological distance from that of the actual world. The argument that science fiction texts may be subtly metafiction even when they do not directly invoke metafictional concerns expands the traditional understanding of how metafiction is commonly seen in texts.

Limits IV: Chronology, Medium, Genre, Gender

For reasons of space and force of argument, this thesis largely limits itself to texts written during the New Wave era. The metafictional trend in science fiction does continue even after the end of this movement, and in this way, it is possible to conceive of the New Wave not as a time period or stylistic movement, but a set of sensibilities. In particular, it is characterised as a drive towards stylistic excellence and experimentalism.[16] New Wave sensibilities and stylistics are much wider in scope than the thirty years that most science fiction historians give the movement. While the texts explored in this thesis might be considered part of a metafictional cluster of science fiction in the 1970s and 1980s that arose due to New Wave stylistics and sensibilities, that is not to say that these texts are the sole examples of metafictional science fiction, nor that this trend is limited to this historical period. Issues of authorship and textuality may be seen in science fiction as early as Olaf Stapleton's *Star Maker* in 1937[17] and examinations of

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[16] Roberts, Adam, *The History of Science Fiction* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 231.

[17] '… cosmos upon cosmos, each more rich and subtle than the last, leapt from his fervent imagination' (Stapleton, Olaf, *Star Maker* (London: Orion Books, 1999), p. 229. The narrator's portrayal of the Star Maker as the creator of the various worlds the narrator visits (in separate chapters, as if distinct narratives) seems very closely aligned to ideas of an Author-God and his or her textual creations. Though not sustained throughout the narrative, this portrayal of the Star Maker

possible worlds and text-worlds continue into the present day with texts such as Sherri S. Tepper's *The Margarets* (2007), Ursula K. LeGuin's *Changing Planes* (2003), and Charles Yu's *How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe* (2010). Each of these texts wrestle with concepts surrounding what it means to create a fictional world, how that world might be created and, importantly, places this creation at the centre of the plot.

Many recent texts that engage with science fiction's textuality, however, are either not part of a particular subgenre or are part of the so-called 'slipstream' subgenre, which seems to have taken over from the New Wave in its experimentalism and its relationship with 'literary fiction'. Interestingly, a large number of these texts deal specifically with time, and are written by women. The texts by Tepper and LeGuin mentioned above are only two of many pieces of 'female' science fiction that highlight their own fictionality, both through an engagement with quantum mechanics and possible worlds. Kage Baker's time-travelling cyborgs in her series *The Company* (1997-2010), though not slipstream texts, also engage with ideas of written history and the mutability of textual time. As problematic a piece of science fiction as it is, Margaret Atwood explores similar concepts in her dystopian future history, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). It is significant that this flush of female science fiction writers engaging with textual issues comes much later than those of their male counterparts and it is interesting that almost all of these texts work through the foregrounding of narrative time. Given science fiction's preoccupation with time through stories about the future and alternative histories, this should not seem surprising. It is interesting, therefore, that there are a number of female writers using narrative time as a metafictive device at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first and it is an area worthy of further close study.

Limits V: Beyond Science Fiction

The connection of the texts analysed in this thesis with the science fiction 'slipstream' in general is also worth some significant study. Though the slipstream subgenre is generally considered to be a type of fiction with characteristics of both science fiction and mainstream fiction that sits somewhere

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blurs the creation of worlds by some creative force and the creation of possible worlds by an author.

in the increasingly small space between the two,[18] it is possible to include in this category such texts that enter into the liminal area between the *avant garde* and science fiction from the amodal side of the boundary, and many of these texts engage with similar issues to those identified in this thesis. David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004), for example, contains a series of nested narratives that foreground their fictionality and therefore also the fictionality of the overall text[19]. In an interesting parallel to what appears to be happening in female science fiction, Scarlett Thomas's novel *The End of Mr. Y* (2006) foregrounds fictionality through a method of time travel not structurally dissimilar to the phenomenology of reading. Both of these novels have much in common structurally and phenomenologically with science fiction, and are further evidence of the pervasive influence of science fiction on postmodernism and contemporary 'literary' fiction.

Limits VI: Definition Issues

The logical trajectory of this thesis traces the development of metafictional science fiction from the standard metaleptic device of the internalised novel, reader, and author seen in *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*, *Breakfast of Champions*, and *Frankenstein Unbound* to the fragmentary and increasingly incomprehensible linguistic and stylistic labyrinths found in *Dhalgren*. Each text engages directly with its fictionality in one fashion or another, and examines its own textuality with the same scientific rigour applied in other science fiction to technological and scientific progress. These science fiction texts therefore examine not only scientific possibilities but also linguistic and narrative possibility. Science fiction's curiosity about the future therefore transmutes into curiosity not only about its own possibilities, but the myriad possibilities of fiction in general. Such inquisitiveness therefore implicitly links metafictional science fiction to the largest debate in science fiction criticism: that of its definition. Whereas metafiction in science fiction does not directly talk about definition issues but rarely, metafictional science fiction, through its attempt to extend the mode's boundaries, therefore always implicitly engages with the debate over definition.

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[18] Kelly, James Patrick, 'Slipstream', in *Speculations on Speculation: Theories of Science Fiction*, edited by James Gunn and Matthew Candelaria (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005), pp. 343-351, p. 343.

[19] *Cloud Atlas* was nominated for the Booker Prize and the Nebula and Arthur C. Clarke awards, tying the novel deeply into both 'literary' and science fiction modes and emphasising its liminal status.

According to Damien Broderick, 'to read fiction of any kind is to help create a world built out of words and memories and the fruitfulness of the imagination. Usually we miss the complexity of this process. Like poetry and postmodern fiction, all sf tests the textual transparency we take for granted, contorting habits of grammar and lexicon with unexpected words strung together in strange ways.'[20] Metafictional science fiction foregrounds this very process and, in doing so, expands science fiction towards its very limits.

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[20] Broderick, Damien, *Reading By Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 15.

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