

Being True to the *trans*:- Samuel R. Delany's *Stars in My Pockets Like Grains of Sand* and the Transglobal Imagination

JOSÉ LISTE-NOYA, Universidade da Coruña

A whole world, that's a big place.

— Samuel R. Delany, *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand*

Science fiction in its most conventionally generic modes, for example the pulp clichés of ever-popular space opera, is ironically yet appealingly transglobal in its “popping around the universe” as the main narrator of Samuel R. Delany’s *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand*, Marq Dyeth, describes his own literal cosmopolitanism.¹ At the same time, in only apparent paradox, science fiction often relies on real-world geopolitical divisions, nationalist and imperialist, to sustain its post-nationalist scenarios. Samuel Delany’s last major work of science fiction, *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand*, published in the literally and science-fictionally fateful year of 1984, is both a speculatively transnational and a quite literarily *transglobal* piece of science fiction. The socio-political extrapolation enacted by his science-fiction novel can be seen to follow out the often unacknowledged political dynamic inherent in a move towards the transnational by extending it into the untrodden terrain of the transglobal. It does so, however, without overlooking the stubbornly pervasive presence of cultural misreading, political cross-purposes and seemingly inevitable, perhaps intentional antagonistic violence between and within worlds.

With its loosely federated galaxy of more than six thousand planets, each riddled with its own ultimately incommensurable internal differences compounding the external, interplanetary contrasts, Delany’s novel expands onto a cosmic scale the

geopolitical make-up of our own asymmetrically globalizing if not yet fully global environment. It thus provides a science-fictional foregrounding of the transnational and globalized imaginary, of the differential effects, deferred consequences and often irresolvable questions of cultural deference that arise when one inhabits an interconnected multicultural multiplicity, in actuality a multiplicity of multiplicities or a ceaselessly differing universe of differences, a counter of sorts to Orwell's dystopian vision in 1984 of enforced sameness justified by simulated antagonistic difference. If science fiction is "a kind of narrative native to a culture undergoing the epistemic changes implicated in the rise and supersession of technical-industrial modes of production, distribution, consumption and disposal; a world of culture which has virtually replaced nature, remade it, and stands at the edge of destroying it," according to Damien Broderick, Delany's novel provides a heterotopian version of this globalizing environment that rehashes the polarity between the utopian and the dystopian as well as the fruitless antithesis between the natural and the cultural.² Antitheses tend to either domesticate or hierarchize difference; Delany's fiction tends to render the oppositions that subjugate the different and the alien dialectically transgressive.

The Science-Fiction of the Transnational: The Global and the World

"Science fiction" is an oxymoronic label as it combines the empirical, reality-defining factuality of science, though the usually distorted science of hypothetical future technological breakthroughs, and the imaginative, world-creating—even if empirically unsubstantiated—dispensations of fiction. The label terminologically echoes the unstable internal dynamics of other labels such as the "transnational." The analogy, indeed, might serve to bring out the logically self-debunking nature of the term "transnational," itself a combination of fact and fiction, currently an amalgam of nationalist division and difference only ambivalently overrun by globalizing tendencies given the differentially connective but also homogenizing vectors of the latter, as well as the cautious desire expressed in the prefix *trans-*. This is the desire that aspires to not only cross the borders and limits that crisscross the globe, that ironically make it global yet also impede its full realization as such, but to quite literally cross them out, in a sort of Derridean tracing of the deconstructed, crossed-out term that allows it to linger in its non-presentness. In other words, the transnational is still in thrall to the dictates of the *national*, the imposed inevitabilities of nationalist identification, and not yet (ever?) in the throes of the *trans-*, the weightless, space-like experience of the political vacuum of a truly *postnational* (un)grounding. In worldlier yet still not quite earthly terms at present—for it has no politically material articulation as yet—this would be the global bringing into imaginative but also perceptual purview of that which Jean-Luc Nancy has proposed as the open, plural singularity of world(s), the process of *worlding* that is the co-creation of worlds and worldlings such as us. We do not just live in *a* world, he suggests; we live *in* and *as* worlds and worlds live (in and as) us. The world is subject, not just the inertly objective site for unworldly, globally

delimited selves.³ In other wor(l)ds, the immanent finitude that he defines as characterizing existence, as opposed to the transcendent infinitude of aspiring totalizations such as that of the global, is precisely what ensures the worldly openness of life in the plural.⁴ An absolute, truly transcendent globality would be a self-enclosed, self-perpetuating system with no outside, no opening to the other; yet through the relationality and interconnectivity that globalization brings into view one also becomes unavoidably aware of the utter singularity of existence, of how “any being [and any world, any reality, any identity] must be exposed to an outside in order to exist or be what it is.”⁵ In other words, there is no absolutely self-contained being, whether a self, a national identity, a creed or a cultural formation, for these entities unwittingly predicate their own singularity upon their exposure to the equally unshareable singularity of others. The totalizing impetus of globalization both unearths and attempts to smother this shared experience of exposure as and to singular others. At the same time, Nancy admits that the plurality of world(s) that the very movement towards global (en)closure allows one to discern currently lacks a convincing, non-totalizing political rationale with which to counter the homogenization of difference that techno-economic globalization portends behind its façade of commodified diversity. Delany’s personal and literary practice also confronts head-on this paradox of our era’s apparently enthusiastic embrace of difference, fully aware of the political effects of this commodification of the diverse: “[T]he greatest threat to freedom is not direct forbidding of options but rather the homogenization of all options out of existence in the name of tolerance and acceptance.”⁶

In this light, science fiction has been posited not only as the narrative genre that comes closest to offering a recognizable “cognitive mapping” of our late capitalist moment, whether in conservative or adversarial modes, but also as providing a necessary mediating function in the passage to such a paradoxically totalizing system for an emergent transnational public and readership.⁷ In a sense, science fiction provides an inverted form of realism for the representation of a global reality of informational flows and virtual exchanges that, in Fredric Jameson’s famous words, is inherently unmappable. But if, as Ciscsery-Ronay, Jr. has asserted, science fiction has always been global, though dominated for historical and economic reasons by its Anglophone core, it has also always been imminently transglobal in its fictional imaginings of technological transcendence of humanity’s earthly limits.⁸ The transglobal here is strictly a literalization of the transnational. “A whole world, that’s a big place,” Delany’s novel constantly reiterates, countering the temptation of defining totalizations.⁹ Hence the transference of the question of the national to the question of a world opens up the plural nature of the realities that national identity strives to coerce into a manageable polity. Science fiction’s object-orientation, the attention it pays to constructing a convincing alternate world that also casts light on our own worldly contexts, as opposed to literary fiction’s focus on the subject as imperious creator of its own world, implies its participation in what Brian McHale has defined as postmodernist fiction’s ontological dominant, the recognition that to perceive reality

anew, initially a subjective, phenomenological impulse in modern writing that explains modernism's epistemological concerns, is to inhabit a new or other reality.¹⁰ A global totality is not just seen from different vantages; the global is dispersed as such amongst the singularly plural and plurally singular—to employ Nancy's intentionally non-totalizing expression—particularizations of world. World becomes *worlds*; in parallel, the transnational ideally fulfils its potential not in the reinforced sovereignty of the homogeneously global but in the effective *trans*-cendence of the imperialist jockeying for power exercised by those ambivalently globalizing agents called nation-states.

Imagining the Transglobal: The Desire of/for the “trans-”

The transglobal imaginary of Delany's novel articulates fictionally what the label of the transnational ambivalently aspires to.¹¹ At the same time, the novel also concedes the currently enforced, global curtailment of such personal and political desire for the truly worldly, the always singular multiplicity of any world(s). The transglobal is still resolutely governed by hegemonic forces that carefully contain and conduct the play of cultural and political differences under the auspices of an information-fueled power structure that posits itself as the spontaneously given state of affairs. The novel's universe is still tainted by shades of the “Old Earth,” as our home planet is referred to in the novel, lost in the mists of a mythicizing nostalgia for that which interstellar humanity no longer recalls. Delany's science-fictional scenario projects spatially, into outer space, the socio-cultural complexity and the sheer alienness that imbues merely *human* arrangements on our own “Old Earth,” now ironically converted in the novel into a mythical fable of human origins, a differential, non-originary origin echoed even in the changing status of the signifier itself (“Eld Eyrth,” “Oh Urth,” “Eurd”; even “Earth” itself refers to “the sixth world so named after Old Earth itself!”).¹² This is so because the *prehistoric* departure from Earth, this finite globe, is the actual birth of “woman,” the true birth of the world(s) of those sentient beings formerly called in totalizing, exclusionary fashion, “man.” And so, the science fiction cliché is rendered true by being turned on its head: “The dawn of space travel is the birth of woman.” Man's departure for outer space is both the extraterrestrial beginning of humanity's true history and also the discovery of the species' true *womanhood*, free of hierarchical dichotomies and repressive definitions. History begins in the novel quite literally in *her-story*, the feminist pun materialized.

With this simple yet far-reaching inversion, Delany foregrounds his trademark concerns with gender identities and sexual preference, exploring in the process the intimate connection between sexual desire, gendered modes of socialization, and the political articulations they support. The transnational rendered transglobal also encompasses the *trans*-sexual in this novel, understood in a more general sense as the absolutely uncategorizable nature of desire as it roams free (in some, not all, of the worlds imagined by the novel) of any preassigned gender or even strictly human

relations. Thus, “woman” here refers to all manner of sentient, intelligent beings, irrespective of gender and even species ascription. The pronominal play this affords jolts our gender and sexual prejudices, for *pre-judices* they are, discursive dogma rather than thoughtful contemplations of actual human practice. They are socially conditioned, pre-given modes of channeling desire. In a simple pronominal twist, Delany makes clear the prejudicial nature of conceiving of desire and its social enactments in this way. Thus, in the novel’s world all intelligent beings are “she,” while “he” is reserved for the object of sexual desire, irrespective of its *gender* though the very notion is rendered somewhat superfluous, at least in its strictly biological usage. The radical decoupling of sexual desire and socially assigned gender is rendered literally linguistic through this pronominal assignation, almost a pun which nevertheless pinpoints the contingencies underlying such assignations. The referent of desire, not just the signifier, has also undergone slippage. Textual play allows Delany to envisage the political effects of allowing desire such social leverage.

All of which, I suggest, we can align with the desire of / for slippage inherent to that prefix *trans-* as a counter to the paradoxical stoppage imposed by certain notions of the global, the endless spiraling of the exchange of difference within a carefully contoured sameness. Delany’s fictional universe is as literally *cosmo-politan*, a polity of cosmic proportions, as is foreseen, perhaps overly optimistically, by the likes of sociologist Ulrich Beck as the unavoidable outcome of globalization. If globalization is “operationalized as interconnectedness,” specifically in our current geopolitical conformation as connections between nation-states, Delany’s transglobal galaxy subscribes to the criteria Beck proposes for strictly economic globalization while intensifying the contradictions involved by connecting whole planets rather than individual nations: “indifference to national boundaries, space-time compression and an increasing network-like interconnectedness between national societies.”¹³ In the novel, these measures are policed by the world-transcending, hence transglobalizing presence of the “Web,” a networking of the galaxy, really a network of networks, exerting effective power through the control and exchange of information. The effect is to expand out onto a cosmic scale the tension between a homogenizing totality intent on order and control, violently imposed if necessary, and the irrepressible multiplicities that that very totalizing movement unavoidably allows to enter into relation. If as Beck suggests this epochal shift called globalization is not just a necessary, predictable phase of the ongoing process known as modernization but rather the dawning of a new “*conditio humana* [...] with fundamentally ambivalent contingencies, complexities, uncertainties and risks which, conceptually and empirically, still have to be uncovered and understood,” then Delany’s novel seems to offer an exercise in this excavation of the future in order to trace via the estrangement devices of science fiction the processes of the present that that future will have (hypothetically) made explicit.¹⁴

Set on various worlds that depict differing attitudes to difference itself and to the technologically mediated “complex interconnectivity” of a transglobal

environment, much of the novel's events and encounters—the major event of the novel could be considered *encounter*—take place on Velm, the home planet of the main narrator, Marq Dyeth.¹⁵ Eschewing simplistic reductions, Delany depicts Velm's environment as a heterotopian mix of utopian tendencies in its southern hemisphere, Marq's own habitat, where difference is not only tolerated but actively sought out, whereas the north is still subject to dystopian bouts of extreme racism and ethnic or, rather, species cleansing. Society in the arid south is constituted as a bi-species polity of human and “evelm,” a tri-gendered reptilian species, both species equally termed “women” as intelligent, sentient beings; together they form both technologically enhanced reproductive groupings called “nurture streams,” rather than the “egg and sperm” reproductive lineages we term families, and interact sexually in socially sanctioned, plurally gendered modes. By presenting such varied but still recognizable science-fictional analogies to our contemporary social and sexual arrangements and doing so in a self-critical, carefully contextualized mode, Delany's novel resists its own tendency to political simplification in the interest of asserting its utopian impulse, while also managing to recognize the singular multiplicities encountered at all levels of social organization and the personal articulations they condition without determining absolutely.

Delany's novel, amongst other defining pairings of our epoch, deals with the familiar and the alien, the singular and the multiple, identity and diversity, information and knowledge, the world and the globe(-al). Overarching all these pairings, it deals with difference and desire, the desire of and for difference(s) and the difference of desire, the difference(s) desire makes. The rogue element here is desire, of course, the “third creature” that upsets such pairings, as the protagonist and main narrator Marq Dyeth imagines it in a moment of sexual enthusiasm.¹⁶ Given Velmian society's cultivation of difference and its grounding of social harmony on the desire for difference, the novel's main theme could be considered to be desire itself, though desire's own ambivalence, the novel stresses, also associates it with the power-inflected domains of the systematic and the homogeneously organized, the seduction of the unifying global itself. Desire derails the totalizing conceptual reach that such paired terms routinely aspire to, momentarily overwhelming rigid categories in an ambivalent surge of transsubjective flows that makes all “innocent by contamination.”¹⁷ The blurb on the twentieth-anniversary edition of the novel sums up the novel's topic as “information itself,” seemingly establishing its relation to the impersonal forces of globalization in a technology-oriented and technology-dominated universe, but immediately goes on to link information with the novel's key character nexus and thus with the theme of desire in its manifestly sexualized forms (though the notion of the biopolitical obviously does away with any fixed distinction between embodied sexual desire and the desire intrinsic to power). This connection between sex and power, this sexual-political intercourse, takes the form of the biotechnically acquired knowledge of the apparently perfect sexual fit that exists between Marq Dyeth and Rat Korga, the latter the sole survivor of the devastated

planet of Rhyonon and, hence, of special interest to the shadowy administrators of this galactic federation. This is knowledge that the Web has acquired through his rescue and is now apparently employing for what remain unexplained and unforeseen reasons but which nevertheless have something to do with politics and power, specifically with what the late Foucault called “governmentality,” the exercise of power for the production of subjects through positive means rather than coercion, subjects that allow themselves quite willingly or unconsciously to be governed within a certain power structure in order to exist as *subjects*.¹⁸ Rat’s former personal history, condensed as we will see in his acronymic name, predisposes him to this subjective production, the production of a subject, that his loss of a planetary home requires. On Rhyonon he had quasi-voluntarily undergone a neurological procedure termed “Radical Anxiety Termination,” a sort of high-tech lobotomy realized in seconds at the level of the brain’s neuronal connections that effectively made of him a “slave” as far as his social and labor status was concerned, lacking any agential will but unquestioningly satisfied with his lot. Combining traces of African American slave history with the socio-ideological interpellation that all subjects in a given society undergo, Delany elaborates this ingenious conceit that will have multiple ramifications throughout the novel as it explores the tensions between individual singularity and communal identity, even in a world that avowedly embraces difference. What impedes exercise of any free will is also what neurologically disables Rat from participating in the neural hook-up with “GI,” General Intelligence, a virtually telepathic form of web access. It thus also places him outside the informational control of the Web, for the Web is responsible for this informational access and the restrictive channeling imposed on it at times. This explains the Web’s intensified interest in this survivor. Rat’s social and sexual marginality is what attracts and disturbs in different ways both the governmental demands of the Web and the desire for the alien of that connoisseur of the diverse, Marq Dyeth.

Desire, Power, and the Alien Subject

The (homo)sexual relation between Marq Dyeth and Rat Korga forms what plot there is in the novel, abortively played out against a background of galaxy-wide political paranoia involving the Web and perhaps the absolutely other alien race present (?) in the novel, the “Xlv” with their fittingly unpronounceable name. Also capable, like human civilizations, of interstellar travel they are so alien as to be virtually imperceptible as an empirical presence. Even whether they actually exist or not is a doubtful matter, shrouded in what seems intentional confusion on the part of the powers that be: “[T]he Xlv are a complete question mark, nor are we even sure which direction that question mark faces” (130). Their absolute otherness provides a sinister foil to the narrative’s active embrace of alterity through the ambiguities of desire, especially as they seem to be in some unspecifiable way involved with the planetary threat of “Cultural Fugue,” the catastrophic breakdown of the global due to cultural

and technological tensions.¹⁹ The desire of / for alterity projects its political implications in this way. Desire itself, like the notion of alterity, reveals itself at both a personal and (cosmo-)political level to refuse fixed definitional limits; more specifically, both notions require careful contextualization and articulation. Like the desire inherent in the movement towards the transnational, they can be forces for radical change, the concerted but never fully consensual acceptance of multiplicity, or the means of enforcing rooted stasis, the roots of interested changelessness. The two, desire and the transnational, Delany makes clear, always go together just as, as we have seen, out of homogenizing totalities such as the global the singular plurality of worlds become visible. It is on this discovery of the alien singular within a context of threatened containment of the multiple strange that Delany's novel focuses, both at a macro-political level and in the micro-physical realities the former permeates.

In this light, the novel appears as an aborted romance, its mysteriously manipulated, explicitly sexual romance relation aborted by the mysterious interventions of a biopolitical, transglobal techno-power. In a conscious reversion to a transgressive (because homosexual) romance stereotype, it tells a story of desire technologically and politically manipulated: the encounter between the "slave" Rat Korga from a destroyed planet and the "industrial diplomat," Marq Dyeth, interstellar traveler and cultural sophisticate. In rescuing the former, the Web's "spiders," the informational engineers who have woven the network into existence, have discovered by advanced technical means that the two are each other's perfect erotic object. The Web proceeds to arrange their meeting for undisclosed reasons, possibly an experiment in socio-cultural and political engineering perhaps useful in managing social desire on a galactic scale, only to abruptly terminate it at novel's end when unforeseen, even excessive public enthusiasm for the presence of the stranger seems to endanger social equilibrium on Marq's world, Velm. Rat attracts attention precisely as the survivor of the loss of a world, a status that renders him an object of interest, of desire, for both the populace at large and for the Web, drawn to his very worldlessness as an unforeseen obstacle to convenient, controllable classification. Rat Korga can be seen as an example of what Giorgio Agamben refers to as the "homo sacer."²⁰ He is literally so in his former status as an unwitting slave and, later, more ambivalently given the reversal of his political import for the Web, as a subject both outside the pale of legitimate agency but also as a figure that lacks a classifiable political identity. He has to be literally remade technologically and re-worlded culturally in order to banish this unacceptable indeterminacy. But the novel traces, through the self-reflexive, other-embracing but still endlessly surprised eyes of Marq Dyeth, how that process enables him to tentatively discover his own agential role in acquiring a viable identity through the socio-cultural modes and means at hand.²¹ The resistance he unconsciously offers is the result of his being a *subject* and not just a passive *object* of desire, disruptive and heterogeneous in his undeniable singularity much as he is physically rebuilt in hybrid fashion as a human cyborg.

In this respect, this tale of forcibly aborted desire does not shy away from the dangerous ambivalence of desire itself and its unstable relations to power, to the desire that is power. Like the ambivalence of the global, exploited for purposes of hegemonic totalization or celebrated as the encounter of the incommensurably plural, desire can be both dangerously universalizing, especially when harnessed to the inertia of established power structures, and disruptively particularizing, as in Marq Dyeth's concluding paean to the singular world-constituting nature of his own perverse desire—and all desire, it should be clear, is *perverse* in its singular insistence and resistance to domestication and fulfillment.²² Desire permeates the novel's other main themes and explorations of the “object,” the material, discursive environment within which the “subject” is articulated and articulates itself. Science fiction, Delany has insisted, “concerned with the organization (and reorganization) of the object, that is, the world, or the institutions through which we perceive it,” focuses on how the subject is necessarily articulated through and sometimes against these institutions, usually modes of social and ideological discourse that acquire or require material implementations. Science fiction's imagined worlds pose questions such as: “How is the subject excited, impinged on, contoured and constituted by the object? How might beings with a different social organization, environment, brain structure, and body perceive things? How might humans perceive things after becoming acclimated to an alien environment?”²³ That “alien environment,” we have seen, can also mirror the dawning strangeness of our own contemporary globalities. But this alienness, the novel makes clear, is also that of desire and desire is an intrinsic, ambivalent element in the constitution of that alien environment, whether the fictionally singular world of the novel or the “singularly plural and plurally singular” world that we inhabit.²⁴

The Politics of Information and Desire's Knowledge

The novel's particular object–world is governed by the presence and exchange of information, the most valued commodity, the one that enables and even brings into existence the exchange of all other commodities. Marq Dyeth's role as what the novel calls an “industrial diplomat,” a label that conjoins the economic and the cultural, is precisely that of a cultural go-between facilitating the appropriate information exchange that makes the galaxy's trade go around. Information is sought and desired but we can also say that information itself is desire as Rat Korga discovers early on when, despite the mental tampering that reduced him to the status of a submissive slave–worker on his home planet, he is allowed to experience this desire in illegal, technologically mediated exposure to GI, General Information, a media technology prohibited on his authoritarian former world. GI is facilitated by a neurologically implanted network connection that enables instant access to virtually all knowledge (though it often provides, Wikipedia-like, information that is out of date and is notoriously weak in areas such as history; this latter quip makes sense as instantaneity of knowledge access tends to blur temporal distance and make history itself, with its

own intrinsic temporal otherness and incommensurability, disappear into a historicized, commodified gallery of atemporal images).²⁵ Information works here to connect but also keep in place. The Web, for example, discourages interstellar travel, most voyaging taking place in virtual forms that are more *real*, that is, informatively exhaustive, than the real thing. Information as commodified facticity—Delany's anticipatory nod at the most lucrative product of our web technologies—is both desired object and objectification of desire, a congealing of the singular knowledges desire might bring forth. That is, knowledge becomes defined as that which can be informationally packaged and transferred, rather than associated with an endlessly creative process of singular articulations. As such, information becomes a means of control, a conversion of the knowledge proliferation it may promote into the knowledge-production process that thinks of knowledge as fixed, exchangeable product, not singularly useful, endlessly contextualizable process. Nevertheless, information is countered and complemented here by desire, by desire's own modes of information, even if in a usually asymmetrical, uneven way. Desire's forms of knowledge are an ambivalent, never wholly convergent mix of the known and the unknown, a fragmentation and pluralization of information and/or knowledge, for desire's object, its *objet a*, to use the Lacanian term, remains forever out of reach, always singularly unrepresentable. Or, to put it in the terms I am exploring here, information as commodified entity is globalizing in its homogenizing impulse; desire as the "third creature" beyond either total social or agential control, plurally creates the world(s).

Fear and desire motivate the migratory and diasporic burgeoning of the transnational, for those upon whom it is imposed and for those who actively and usually in a privileged manner partake of its cosmopolitan offerings; fear and desire both provoke the globalizing sameness that aims to contain and control its necessary opening to the diverse; fear and desire pervade the major political conflict in *Stars* but also tinge the Web-controlled encounter between Marq Dyeth and Rat Korga. Ultimately, one wonders whether, in all these spheres, fear and desire are not the same thing or, at least, find themselves endlessly coalescing in human interactions, whether social or personal. The novel, indeed, depicts how they partake of each other at all these levels. Fear as social response is often enough, if not always, a denial of repressed desire, a violent suppression of unbidden desire's violation of self-sameness; desire contains this ambivalence in its insistent yet anxiety-ridden probing of the different, the desired object seducing one out of sameness and thus also violating the self's flimsy self-assuredness, making Marq, for example, "half blind with terror" for all his sexual sophistication (194). Delany constantly reiterates throughout his writing that desire, for all its singular alterity, is nevertheless socially articulated in prescribed ways. At the same time, the socialized and socializing discourse of desire is constantly countered by the rhetoric of sex, the actual, singular practices that it strives to normalize. In a Foucauldian vein, Delany stresses the social contextualization that even

those practices that resist normalization undergo and must undergo to even be comprehensible as such.

This ambivalence is mirrored in the socio-political division currently ravaging much of this fictional galaxy, that between the modes of social structuration that go by the names of the “Family” and the “Sygn.” These two modes of social desire are distinguished by their antagonistic attitudes to the different. The former is identity-centered, the latter is oriented toward active acceptance of difference; the former characterized the authoritarian social structure of Rat’s world, the latter the tolerant tendencies of much of Marq’s world. The novel’s major scenic set pieces, culturally defamiliarizing echoes of Jane Austen or Henry James–like social occasions, dramatize this opposition by contrasting the racist and bigoted Thants, a family group from the planet Zetzor set to become familial dictators of another planet, Nepiy, on the verge of self-destructive turmoil, with the difference-loving Dyeth “nurture stream,” literal celebrators of difference down to their interspecies sexuality and non-phylogenetic reproductive practices (119–20). What is contrasted here is a polarity obviously present in our own world: the hierarchical, sameness-as-identity structure of the Family, with its ideals of determinately ordered familial and social relations, and the endlessly differentiating “ripples” of social and personal relationships of Sygn societies (202). Delany’s novel fictionally embodies this socially implemented desire for difference through a flexible reproductive technology that makes such social and familial structuring a question of choice, not a *natural* imposition. He thus makes explicit the ideological underpinnings and consequences of these kinship relations, as the sameness of biological inheritance becomes the difference of non-sexual reproduction. In an ironically comedic tour-de-force of social and cultural etiquette gone awry, Delany pits the conscious cultural and racial chauvinism of the Thants against the uncomprehending Dyeths, purveyors of absolute toleration who can make no sense of absolute, intentional intolerance, in a formal dinner scene that itself becomes an example of non-natural cultural singularities and, thus, inevitable, possibly threatening misunderstandings of human custom and interchange. It all revolves around Rat Korga himself, who as an essentially cultureless, worldless being contrasts with the rigidly culture-bound Thants, insultingly disdainful of the lizard-loving perverts of Velm. The former slave runs up against the intellectual enslavement inherent to certain forms of culture.²⁶

The very differences, however, militate against the Thants’s potentially murderous denial of difference. The novel provides a panorama of the multicultural, though a multiculturalism shorn of any encompassing homogeneity as mere toleration of difference within the supposedly acultural parameters of a totalizing global system, the objective ostensibly sought by the Web in this case. Cultural identity here is always a “whole matrix of cultures,” rather than any unitary identity, always exercising incessant change through both globalizing “exchange” and disseminative “contamination”: it is not just a collage of cultures coalescing together jigsaw puzzle–

like, but a multiplicity of singularities, sharing their very differences rather than pooling their sameness (186, 239).

The Utopian Impulse of the *trans*:- The Singular World(s)

The utopian element here, the utopia of cultural desire for difference, subsists together with the possibly dystopian cultural desire for the same, the desire for a sort of *atopia* in that it denies place for any future change. That Delany's focus is on the present is revealed in the novel's abrupt ending and the Web's intervention, again setting everything in its supposedly preassigned place. The power struggles between these different options is momentarily and somewhat sinisterly put on hold. Marq Dyeth, diplomat, translator, commercial facilitator, and cultural anthropologist of sorts, fulfils the role of what the anthropologist Clifford Geertz labels "merchants of astonishment."²⁷ Marq learns early on in his profession that his "job, was not to be surprised at the universe's human variety. Later I realized that it was not to be surprised that nonstop surprises would henceforth be my life."²⁸ They—both Geertz the anthropologist and Delany's "industrial diplomat"—are systematic dabblers in what resists any self-enclosed systematization, the endless variety of human or, as the novel would have it, *women's*, lives. What is truly (trans-)global are the singular worlds that make up and shake up the global web while, as Marq is forced to acknowledge in submitting to his own Web's shutdown of the irrepressibly diverse, toleration of difference remains in the main an ideological front for the real business of controlled, homogeneous exchange.

Science fiction, we have seen, though focused on the *object* or the objective processes, both material and ideological, that conform the subject's world, precisely reveals in that way the desire, conscious and unconscious, political and personal, involved in such globalized, transnational or transglobal imaginings. This is the singular desire that totalizing conceptions of the global homogenize into near non-existence through commodification or consumerist seduction; but it also includes the distortion and enforced modification of the desire for stability and staying the same, the other side of the fear of unchosen change, that migration and diasporic flows both articulate and are a response to, sometimes a desire-laden one that successfully intimates the multiple singularities of worlds as opposed to globalization's weblike categorization and shutting down of difference and possibility. Delany's postulated conflict between the "Family" and the "Sygn," intentionally played off against each other by the Web's tentacular designs of order and domesticated exchange of difference in the interests of rational, commodified orderliness, embodies this contemporary scenario and also breaks it down into its always singular articulations, drowned out though they may be by obvious power asymmetries. Yet his heterotopian universe, a realistic mix of dystopian threats and realities and utopian urgings, much like ours, enacts the resilience of singular desire, the difference of the alien that resists complete naturalization. The "web of wanting" of unappeased and unappeasable desire

opposes its world-constituting singular enactments to the web of denial that collective enterprises of homogenized global exchange present as communal and consumerist desire.²⁹ This latter is an interested production of wanting as lack.

The novel closes with Marq Dyeth's confrontation with the Web official responsible for the absencing of Rat. It takes the shape of a pained defense of his own singular "world," and is followed by a series of reminiscences of "morning" and the signifier *morning's* contingent contextualizations as seen from the vantage of the interstellar traveler's arrival at a new world. Reverting once again by association to the "dawn of space travel" cliché, a cliché made literal by meditating upon what space travel does to the apparent givenness of the experience of morning, what Marq passionately defends is the "flower" of possibility that blooms in a world of singular desire as opposed to the "web" of entrapped actuality that globalizing predispositions weave. Morning as seen from space by the interplanetary traveler inverts the perspective of the globally imprisoned, perceptually constricted vision of the planet-dweller. It becomes a threshold of possibility given the unmooring of fixed time and space—and the representations they ground—that space travel enables. In near Thoreauvian vein, morning becomes a state of mind, a discovery of the possibility of (a) world(s): "To arrive on a world at dawn, despite GI's preliminary scatter of information, is to read the whole roster of signs you are used to for morning over the expanse of what you see, and at the same time see those meanings start to transpare as one begins to see the possibilities—a world of possibilities—clear behind them" (335). Yet even here, true to the social and cultural complexity the novel has traced, Marq underlines the experience's intimate connection with both desire and power: "to arrive on a world in the morning is a decision completely at the whim of those conscious priorities that run from pragmatics to aesthetics. Power and desire are both given voice, each allowed their necessary pages in the decisionary printout" (335). Such an experience, a literal vision of the global from outer space that reveals its inherently transglobal drift, allows one to perceive signs "loosed from a world" become free-floating signifiers no longer rigidly connected to their cultural referents, including the sign of "morning" (339).

The reminiscences of morning and its infinite possibilities segue into the contemplation of the singularity of worlds that desire constitutes for each particular individual. Each particular self has her own "map of the universe" beside the official "coordinates" imposed on all, Marq stresses in despairing dialogue with Japril, the Web official responsible for the disappearance of Rat Korga (341). Each individual accrues and applies her own informational data set, information singularly contextualized by her personal desire in an ongoing process that, as befits desire, never finds a definitive object but is also "information to confound the Web and not to be found in any of its informative archives."³⁰ Thus, the loss of Rat is not just the loss of the desired object but an undermining of this world-constituting process of desire itself: the unattainability of the object of desire both impels desire in its transcendent urge and constitutes a (the subject's) world. The "web of wanting" of unappeased and

unappeasable desire opposes its world-constituting singular enactments to the web of denial that collective enterprises of homogenized global exchange present as communal and consumerist desire.

What Marq has lost is the desired other, the loss of the erotic object, and that has led to the loss of desire itself. This virtually Lacanian impasse that Marq finds himself in leads to what the impasse itself rehearses: the desire for / of desire itself, the desire of the possibility of one's own singular and singularly displaced, *perverted* world. He is left waiting—floating in freefall, looking down on an unknown planet—for another day to dawn. Fittingly, he is literally waiting for the globe to turn, figuratively for the conversion of the pre-given global into the true creative gift of a world. From outer space the possibility is made literal, paradoxically, in the spinning, gravitational movement of the globe itself, always producing a new dawn in its only ever contingently chartable revolutions, the transglobal movement always and endlessly giving birth to the possibility of new worlds.

Notes

Research for this essay has been financed by the Spanish government's Agencia Estatal de Investigación (AEI) and the Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo Regional (FEDER/UE), reference nº FFI2015-66767-P.

¹ Samuel R. Delany, *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand*, 20th anniversary edition (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004): 100. All further references to the novel will be to this edition. Delany has critically defended the “paraliterary” status of science fiction in contrast to what he somewhat ironically calls “mundane” literature. He defends the former as a specific mode of reading “far more concerned with the organization (and reorganization) of the object, that is, the world, or the institutions through which we perceive it” (*Starboard Wine: More Notes on the Language of Science Fiction*, rev. ed., Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2012: 178).

² Damien Broderick, *Reading by Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1995): 158.

³ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World or Globalization* (Albany: State University of New York, 2007). See especially the first section, “Urbi et Orbi,” on this notion of “world” as opposed to the idea of the global.

⁴ Nancy's thought is complex and multifaceted as he employs in quasi-Derridean fashion the language of metaphysics in order to leave behind metaphysical presuppositions that reassert notions of grounded being, undifferentiated presence, transcendent absolutes or totalizing infinitude. In the case of the phenomenon of globalization, this accounts for his reflection on how the aspiration to a transcendent or totalizing globality reveals the finite and, therefore, endlessly plural, paradoxically infinite world(s) which relate to each other precisely through their sharing of that which is utterly singularly to each one. This exposed singularity is also what makes of each finitude an infinite experience of opening to others; and community is not

absolute communion of a shared essence but this communication / exposure of finitude, of my singularity. As he states in his *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), there is “being-in-common” in that to be is to share this finitude, this singularity, but there is no “common being” as what is shared is precisely this finite singularity, that which is not common to all and which exposes me to all others and vice versa. As he puts it, “community means, consequently, that there is no singular being without another singular being” and “there is no communion of singularities in a totality superior to them and immanent to their common being” (28); rather than “communion,” there is “communication” which “consists before else in this sharing and in this compearance (*com-parution*) of finitude” (29). The “essence of community” is the exposure of finitude, the sharing of this exposure. This explains the radically non-totalizing nature of his thought of being and community and it is not hard to see how Delany’s novel explores in its own terms a similar—yet still singular!—concern with what Nancy has famously described as “being singular plural,” the fact that everything (humans, things, animals, communities, thoughts, cities, etc.) exists, in the words of Marie-Eve Morin in her *Jean-Luc Nancy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), as “a melee of traits and not a definable unity” but, at the same time, “it possesses its own recognizable tone and lets itself be identified in the process (or *as* the process) of disentanglement from other singularities” (37). The story of Rat Korga in Delany’s novel dramatizes this process in all its cultural, political and psycho-sexual imbrications.

⁵ Marie-Eve Morin, *Jean-Luc Nancy*: 31. Delany’s novel rehearses this point in multiple contexts, rendering the alien-encounter motif of science fiction a model for all inter- and sometimes even intra-cultural exchange. The alien reveals the strangeness within the culturally familiar and, at the same time, becomes itself uncannily familiar through this very revelation.

⁶ Delany, *Starboard Wine*: 183. Delany is here referring literally to the “reading of science fiction as science fiction” but, given his vision of science fiction as a mode of reading and as a type of fiction that deals with the present through its significant distortions projected into the future, this reflection encompasses the political effects of such reading modes and contemporary socio-political relations in general.

⁷ The expression is, of course, Fredric Jameson’s in his *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso Books, 1991). By it he refers to the necessary attempt to represent what for him resists representation, “the whole new decentered global network of the third stage of capital itself” (38) for which postmodernism provides the “cultural logic.” Though he has been criticized for its totalizing intentions, the solution he proposes is the elaboration of a dialectical totality, a new map of the postmodern world, which would encompass its positive and negative aspects in a new master narrative. This is not a return to mimetic representation—undermined by postmodernity’s/globality’s decentered and deterritorialized flows, its time-space compression, its informational blurring of levels of reality or its “technological sublime” as revealed in its electronic apparatuses of virtual, self-reflexive reproduction—but rather an ideological intervention which enables “a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to [a] vaster and properly unrepresentable totality” (51). In the literary or narrative sphere, this is the role that he sees science fiction as playing, providing a fictional cognitive mapping of a present whose history escapes us by

imagining a hypothetical future which both defamiliarizes that present but also allows us to begin to imagine a history of the present and offer alternatives to it. As he puts it at length in his *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005): “the most characteristic SF does not seriously attempt to imagine the ‘real’ future of our social system. Rather, its multiple mock futures serve the quite different function of transforming our own present into the determinate past of something yet to come. It is this present moment—unavailable to us for contemplation in its own right because the sheer quantitative immensity of objects and individual lives it comprises is untotalizable and hence unimaginable, and also because it is occluded by the density of our private fantasies as well as of the proliferating stereotypes of a media culture that penetrates every remote zone of our existence—that upon our return from the imaginary constructs of SF is offered to us in the form of some future world’s remote past, as if posthumous and as though collectively remembered” (288).

⁸ See Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., “What Do We Mean When We Say ‘Global Science Fiction’? Reflections on a New Nexus,” *Science Fiction Studies* 39, no. 3 (2012): 478–93. “Globalization of one form or another has been the default vector of sf from the beginning” (488), he asserts, but also concedes the hegemonic roles played out within the global as within the science fiction genre itself by affirming that “sf is as important for a post-nationalist, culturally expansive, technologically dominant elite as historical and realist fiction were for the nationalist bourgeoisie” (481). He expands upon this point specifically in an earlier article, “Science Fiction and Empire,” *Science Fiction Studies* 30, no. 2 (2003): 231–45.

⁹ Delany, *Stars*, 66.

¹⁰ Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1987).

¹¹ This is an ambivalent process because, as Arjun Appadurai has pointed out in his “culturalist” view of the formation of transnational identities in today’s globalizing environment, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota P, 1996), “[e]ven as the legitimacy of nation-states in their own territorial contexts is increasingly under threat, the idea of the nation flourishes transnationally” (172). He sees this as a failure of the political imagination that can see no way beyond the defining parameters of nationhood. Thus “deterritorialized groups” seek emancipation from “existing nation-states” by embracing “the very imaginary they seek to escape” (166). This confirms the notion that the transnational still depends upon nationalist conceptions of social and cultural articulation—hence, the imperialist stewarding of the process of globalization by hegemonic nation-states—as the bipolar dynamics within nation-states also reveals, the fact that “in many societies the nation and the state have become one another’s projects” (39). This also reveals, however, the imaginary status of such projects—though eminently *real* in the actual materializations of these symbolic desires (or desire for the symbolic). A post-national condition beyond imagined nationhood remains only fitfully glimpsed through the likes, for example, of science fiction.

¹² Delany, *Stars*, 109, 110.

¹³ Ulrich Beck, “The Cosmopolitan Perspective: Sociology of the Second Age of Modernity,” in *The Transnational Studies Reader: Intersections & Innovations*, eds. Sanjeev Khagram and Peggy Levitt (New York: Routledge, 2008), 222.

¹⁴ Beck, “Cosmopolitan,” 223.

¹⁵ “Complex interconnectivity” is the term used by John Tomlinson to describe the nature of contemporary globalization in his *Globalization and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999). He understands globalization as “the rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependences that characterize modern social life” (2) but the emphasis on the complexity of these interconnections is an attempt to focus on the “essentially *dialectical* character” (26) that is revealed in the impact of the global on the local and, simultaneously, the always localized contextualization, if not contestation, of the global. In the process, the reception of the global is pluralized while the local articulates itself, constitutes its own world, in response to that global connectivity and, in turn, projects its local articulations as interventions in the global arena.

¹⁶ Delany, *Stars*, 195.

¹⁷ The passage from which this expression is taken is worth quoting in full as it ties together the two facets of desire I am trying to trace: its purely personal or singular enactments between desiring subjects—though the very notion of a centered subjectivity is upset by the workings of desire—and its equally ambivalent presence within our collective political and ideological constructions. The passage in question begins with a reflection on the galaxy’s political split between difference-embracing “Sygn” systems and the essentialist, identity-oriented “Family” to focus on what they share in the shape of a destabilizing, boundary-transgressing desire: “Perhaps because, with the Family trying to establish the dream of a classic past as pictured on a world [Earth] that may never even have existed in order to achieve cultural stability, and with the Sygn committed to the living interaction and difference between each woman and each world from which the right stability and play may flower, in a universe where both information and misinformation are constantly suspect, reviewed and drifting as they must be (constantly) by and between the two, a moment when either information or misinformation turns out to be harmless must bloom, when surrounded by the workings of desire and terror, into the offered sign of all about it, making and marking all about it innocent by contamination” (Delany, *Stars*, 80–81). Expanding upon the chapter title of this section of the novel, “The Flower and the Web,” this is the moment that the flowering of desire rends the web of an ordered / disordered reality, the personal and socio-political moment of both “desire and terror.”

¹⁸ Foucault develops this conception of power throughout his latter writings. He usefully sums up his views in the short essay, “Governmentality,” where he alludes to the security and discursive apparatuses, including social institutions and disciplinary forms of knowledge, that are now taken for granted as basic elements of our socio-political and bio-political realities but which, as he shows through his meticulous historical research, were absolutely necessary for the creation of the modern subject and the acceptance of modern reality. Government is not about merely exerting power over a subject population but basically about molding it, making

it a *subject*: “In contrast to sovereignty, government has as its purpose not the act of government itself, but the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, and so on; and the means the government uses to attain these ends are themselves all, in some sense, immanent to the population; it is the population itself on which government will act either directly, through large-scale campaigns, or indirectly, through techniques that will make possible, without the full awareness of the people, the stimulation of birth rates, the directing of the flow of population into certain regions or activities, and so on” (“Governmentality,” in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984, Volume Three*, ed. James D. Faubion, New York: The New Press, 2000, 216–17).

¹⁹ Turning the science-fictional convention of the alien itself on its head in a period, the 1980s, that also saw a theoretical elaboration and celebration of the notion of alterity and the other, Delany fictionally articulates a critique of the paradoxically consoling idealizations of the figure of the other. The Xlv are truly alien aliens, a wholly unassimilable other that as such renders one crucial aspect of difference, the simple fact that it is *different*, not just a temporary lack of sameness or a difference that can eventually be likened via simile to the same: “The Xlv are truly alien. In this epoch of brilliant translation devices that have broken through to hundreds of species on dozens of worlds, *no one* has managed to establish any firm communication with the Xlv” (Delany, *Stars*, 87).

²⁰ Agamben, in his *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), employs the ancient Roman juridical figure of the “homo sacer” to reflect on the proliferation in globalized modernity of subjects lacking precisely that status as subjects, individuals placed outside the perimeters of legal protection in a sort of legalized no-man’s land (refugees, political dissidents, illegal immigrants, prisoners lacking any assigned national status, etc.). In a later work, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), Agamben expands this notion of literally worldless subjects—or subjects whose *world* either has been denied any officially recognized existence or has quite literally been stripped away from them—in a consideration on the extension of this supposed a-legal “exception” to the functioning of law / power in general in the contemporary world. He sees this “exception” as foundational to the law itself as the means of submitting life totally to the auspices of sovereign power. Rat Korga’s status in the novel is precisely of this order though the events of the novel convert his *worldlessness* into the means of questioning accepted modes of *worlded* identity. Thus, after awakening to the realities of his existentially orphaned state—not just the loss of a place and mode of life that, given his subordinate, marginal status, he admits “wasn’t much” but also the loss of what he didn’t really know he even had until he lost it, a world: “all the things I didn’t know that made what I did know what it was”—he proclaims in a pained tone that is also a veiled threat: “What world will I have? ... now you *must* give me a world. Or I may take ten, thirty, or a hundred. And then what would you do with me?” (Delany, *Stars*, 164).

²¹ Ulf Hannerz has usefully explored the constitution of subjective and cultural identity in contemporary globality. He insists on the way “individuality is generated in cultural process” yet, at the same time, argues for the “part such individuality has in cultural organization,” stressing the multiple, culturally idiosyncratic modes of acquiring a modern identity

(*Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*, London: Routledge, 1996: 39). Like Delany's planetless character, Rat Korga, the contemporary self is both rooted in the local culture(s) and necessarily routed by the global repertoire at her conditioned disposal: "As she changes jobs, moves between places, and makes her choices in cultural consumption, one human being may turn out to construct a cultural repertoire which in its entirety is like nobody else's. It may be that each of its varied components is shared with different sets of other people, yet to the extent that the repertoire is integrated—to the degree that it becomes a perspective, a self—it becomes an individual matter" (38–39). The singular, though often drowned out in the communal, is always a unique, changing articulation of the plural.

²² Delany has reflected theoretically on the ambiguities of sexual identity and sexual practice by insistently focusing on the category of the *perverse* as a paradoxically discursive entity present within the conventional. His fiction explores perversion in order to combat the rigidity with which the categorizations of gender, sex, and desire have been traditionally deployed. This is the gist of his talk / essay, "Aversion/Perversion/Diversion," in which he resituates perversion *within* rather than *beyond* its conventional other, convention itself. In doing so, he stresses that perversion is itself socially articulated as and within discourse and, hence, is inevitably socially policed. In other words, perversion is institutionalized, even if only as the excluded other of the institutionalized discourse of desire. The rhetoric of sex, however, the endless and endlessly changing praxis that resists and bends that discourse in always ambivalent ways that must be socially contextualized, resists that containing institutionalization usually by establishing its own hidden counter-institutions. Delany's fiction and theoretical writing is an attempt, in different modes, to be true to the *trans-*, to the impasses, slippages and enforced deviations of desire in the real world. Or, as he puts it at the end of his essay, "through occasional appeals to the averse, I am trying to put a bit of the perversity back into perversion" ("Aversion/Perversion/Diversion," in his *Shorter Views: Queer Thoughts & The Politics of the Paraliterary*, Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1999, 143).

²³ Delany, *Starboard Wine*, 178.

²⁴ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000): xiv.

²⁵ This is one characteristic that Fredric Jameson famously attributed to postmodernism, the fiction of late capitalism, whose major embodiment for him was cyberpunk science-fiction as represented by the novels of William Gibson.

²⁶ The novel suggests all culture is metaphorically a mode of enslavement for we all exist and subsist as "slaves of custom," especially those, like Marq, who are professionally conscious of this (Delany, *Stars*, 303). Ironically, it is the former slave, Rat Korga, who draws the attention of all because he has been stripped of this cultural containment. He fascinates because his a-cultural state offers an alternative to this enslavement to the culturally customary. To employ one of the culturally singular metaphors of Velm, a world where taste takes on the cultural importance that sight has for us, Rat is "[d]irect, clear, a unique flavor around which all complexities clarify" (288). The novel's formal set pieces foreground this contrast between the subject lacking any cultural filter and thus vulnerably open to all and the other-denying self-enclosure within one's own culture considered as impervious refuge: "Somehow the whole

dinner had become polarized between Rat, who would accept anything offered and—since manners demanded one not feed the same person twice—the Thants, who, accepting nothing, had become a dam against which all must eventually break” (303).

²⁷ Geertz underlines the anthropologist’s necessary stance of “anti anti-relativism”: “It has been the office of others to reassure; ours to unsettle.... we hawk the anomalous, peddle the strange. Merchants of astonishment,” in his *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000: 64.

²⁸ Delany, *Stars*, 199. The subscript in “job_i” indicates one of the utopian elements Delany introduces in his novel, an indication of its painstaking attention to the “object,” the social, institutional, economic and discursive context that a science fiction novel must create in order to convincingly explore an alternate world that reflects on our own. Velm structures its labor relations in what seems a utopian way, facilitated by the instantaneous knowledge acquisition proffered by G.I. and whose consequence is the elimination of wage-labor exploitation for all can quite literally work at anything. The result is that subjects like Marq engage in work at different levels signaled by the subscript: job₁, job₂, job₃. The first seems to refer to their vocations, that which they choose as their profession in an uncoerced mode; the second is engaged in occasionally as a sort of social labor, enabling a working knowledge of other spheres of society and thus forwarding social harmony; the third encompasses all forms of domestic tasks, now attributed the dignity of socially important labor.

²⁹ Delany, *Stars*, 344.

³⁰ Delany, *Stars*, 342.

Selected Bibliography

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

———. *State of Exception*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Beck, Ulrich. “The Cosmopolitan Perspective: Sociology of the Second Age of Modernity.” In *The Transnational Studies Reader: Intersections & Innovations*, edited by Sanjeev Khagram and Peggy Levitt, 222–30. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Broderick, Damien. *Reading by Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Csicsery-Ronay, Istvan, Jr. “Science Fiction and Empire.” *Science Fiction Studies* 30, no. 2 (2003): 231–45.

———. “What Do We Mean When We Say ‘Global Science Fiction’? Reflections on a New Nexus.” *Science Fiction Studies* 39, no.3 (2012): 478–93.

- Delany, Samuel R. *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand*. 1984. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004.
- . *Shorter Views: Queer Thoughts and the Politics of the Paraliterary*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1999.
- . *Starboard Wine: More Notes on the Language of Science Fiction*. Rev. ed. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2012.
- Geertz, Clifford. *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Foucault, Michel. *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984, Volume Three*. Edited by James D. Faubion. New York: The New Press, 2000.
- Hannerz, Ulf. *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. London: Verso, 1991.
- . *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*. London: Verso, 2005.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Inoperative Community*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.
- . *Being Singular Plural*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- . *The Creation of the World or Globalization*. Albany: State University of New York, 2007.
- Tomlinson, John. *Globalization and Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999.