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Samuel R. Delany uses myth to explore the choices his characters have as they venture on their quest. Each quest is like a maze; stumbling through, the characters learn about themselves and change. Through this change, they gain better control over their lives and the power to affect others.

The three novels show Delany using myth in three ways: (1) combining and following the myths to prove that they are still valid with regard to predicting human behavior, as in Nova; (2) updating a mythical concept to prove that while the essence of the myth is still valid, the context can change to fit the times, as in Babel-17; and (3) inverting myth to prove that the myth must sometimes change completely to remain valid, as in The Einstein Intersection. In Nova the protagonist lives out two myths: Prometheus and Achilles. The decision of the protagonist to search for the elusive element called Illyrion gives him

self-knowledge. This knowledge enables him to manipulate the situation to his advantage so that by the end of the novel he has annihilated his opponents and ensured the survival of his own empire--but at the cost of great pain for himself. In Babel-17 Delany presents a modern creation myth, emphasizing control of inward chaos rather than outward chaos. The heroine begins with a lack of self-identity; she is capable of speaking for others but has no voice of her own. As she gradually learns about herself, she gains better control over a powerful weapon, a language called Babel-17, which she uses to end a war. In The Einstein Intersection mythical patterns lie at each turn in the maze; but the main character is free to choose to follow each pattern or to break it. He finally learns that he controls the myth, and that he has power even over life and death.

In each of these novels, Delany approaches myth differently. The characters illustrating these different approaches in their quests were all successful. Using Greek myth Delany proves that the characters in his novels have control of their destiny. If in fact Delany is describing a universal human condition, then the reader also can choose the path of his life; he can choose to follow, change, or reject the pattern before him.

A STUDY OF MYTHIC IDENTITY IN THE NOVELS OF SAMUEL DELANY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In Samuel R. Delany's novel The Einstein Intersection the frustrated protagonist demands, "Why can't you just ignore the old stories?"[1] The answer comes from another character: "Myths always lie in the most difficult places to ignore" (p. 125). Mythology pervades all of man's culture: science, religion, art. Myths have been studied for many reasons. Theories which try to explain the presence of myths abound. Man may not completely understand ancient mythologies, but he can't "just ignore the old stories"; they are too much a part of him and his heritage.

Man uses myth to learn and to teach. One way to use myth to teach is through literature as Samuel R. Delany does in his science fiction novels. This paper will show how Delany uses Greek mythology to explore the choices his characters have in the working out of the quests each lives out in the course of the novel. By using mythology in this way, Delany creates new myths in the context of science fiction. This chapter will first discuss mythology and science fiction in general: people's reasons for reading myths and science fiction and theories dealing with myth's function. The second part of the chapter will deal with Delany and myth: others' views of Delany's use of myth, Delany's views concerning myth as spoken by characters in the novels, and the outline and terminology used in the next three chapters dealing with Delany's use of

mythology in three of his novels: Nova, Babel-17, and The Einstein Intersection. These three novels were chosen because they were all written within a three-year period. Also, they represent a period in Delany's writing distinct from the simplicity of his first trilogy and the longer and more complex later two novels. These three novels are discussed not in chronological order but in the order of the complexity of their use of myth.

Just as there are many reasons to read literature, there are many reasons to read the literature of mythology. One of the earliest noted authorities on mythology, Thomas Bulfinch, wrote in the nineteenth century. In the introduction to his book, Bulfinch states the two reasons he wrote the book on mythology:

> Our readers may thus at the same time be entertained by the most charming fictions which fancy has ever created, and put in possession of information indispensable to every one who would read with intelligence the elegant literature of his own day.[2]

Bulfinch enjoyed the myths when he was younger; he wants others to share this amusement. Too, a knowledge of these myths will enrich a reader's appreciation and understanding of allusions in more modern literary works. Bulfinch also values the history involved in mythology:

> The tales, though not to be trusted for their facts, are worthy of all credit as pictures of manners; and it is beginning to be held that the manners and modes of thinking of an

> age are a more important part of its history than the conflicts of its peoples, generally leading to no result.[3]

Another noted authority, Edith Hamilton, also claims the study of Greek mythology will lead to a better understanding of the history of Greece and, in addition, a better understanding of its cultural offspring:

> They [the tales of Greek mythology] do throw an abundance of light upon what early Greeks were like--a matter, it would seem, of more importance to us, who are their descendants intellectually, artistically, and politically, too. Nothing we learn about them is alien to ourselves.[4]

Michael Grant, writing a hundred years after Bulfinch and twenty years after Hamilton, agrees with both about the importance of Greek mythology in connection with understanding history and literature, but more importantly, in connection with the "potent, almost violent, flashes of inextinguishable, universal truths"[5] that myths generate. Not only do myths present truths, but "[t]his particular brand of enlightenment is difficult or impossible to grasp by more logical and rational means, and would elude non-mythical presentation."[6] Thus, these truths can be perceived in myth and perhaps by no other means but myth.

Science fiction has undergone the same development of reader appreciation that myth has. At first, science fiction in America was read primarily for the amusing stories told. Hugo Gernsback, a magazine editor who first encouraged the composition of science fiction literature, published weird stories of adventure which contained new scientific

"hardware." When John campbell took over editorship of a pulp magazine, he emphasized the effects of technology on people in the stories he chose to publish. These pulp magazines popularized science fiction to the general population in the United States. In the 1940's, called the "Golden Age," a sense of history became important; stories tended to have a more exact location in time and place. And style as well as content became important. Recent science fiction literature has continued to mature; Delany, the critic, can make the futuristic statement: "Put in opposition to 'style,' there is no such thing as 'content.'"[7] Science fiction, like mythology, can be read for pure enjoyment. Both can be read to learn the "manners and modes of thinking of an age"--the past age for myth, and the present age projected into the future for science fiction. Myths generate "flashes of truth" from the past that are relevant today. Delany uses Greek myths to create new myths in his science fiction. Thus one individual creates myth. Myths of the past were created by a community over a period of time. Delany consciously makes his myths; older myths were probably not formed by such an individual effort. The development of past mythologies is a controversial subject for theorizing.

Myths are important in assisting us to understand history, literature, and universal truths. Their importance cannot be denied. Controversy exists not so much about their benefit but about their genesis. The explanations for the origins of myths are many. G. S. Kirk in his book, The Nature of Greek Myths, discusses five theories for the development of myths in the context of the outside world. He also talks about four psychological theories of myth.[8] He cautions the

reader not to be content with analyzing myths using only one theory; myths are complex tales which may have different levels of meaning.[9] To try to stuff all myths into one mold would seriously mutilate the characteristics of some of them. But each theory helps us to understand some of the myths.

The first theory, advocated by Max Muller, maintains that all myths are "nature" myths. The characters, situations, and events of the stories all correspond to natural phenomena. Zeus, as king of the gods, lives in the sky and controls the weather. The sun god travels from the eastern horizon to the western horizon each day. This theory was accepted for quite awhile, even though most of the myths have no connection with natural events. When this theory was officially challenged by Andrew Lang, he proposed another one to take its place, which he called "aetiological." The root word, "aition," is the Greek word for a cause;[10] therefore, the aetiological theory implies that myths were created to "scientifically" explain the cause of something in the world. Hellespont is so called because a young girl named Helle drowned there. Sickness, old age, and other evils entered the world because Pandora uncovered the jar holding in all of these ills. The third theory was proposed by Bronislav Malinowski who thought that myths were "charters" for social customs and beliefs. Thy myth gave the precedent for the custom or institution, but it did not explain the custom scientifically; in fact, the more imaginative the tale the better the likelihood it would be remembered in a myth. The fourth theory, presented by Mircea Eliade, states that the purpose of myths is to reestablish the "creative era." The past was a golden age; telling the tales of the past

re-creates that former orderly world. The myths also allow humans a share in creating the present world. Telling the story of how the goddess of agriculture found her lost daughter, resulting in a growth of crops once again, will increase the growth of present crops. The fifth theory proclaims that myths are closely connected to rituals; the extreme form of this theory states that all myths come from rituals. All five of these theories are useful in explaining some of the classical myths. None of them can explain most of the myths. All five deal with man and his relationship to the outside world, both his natural and social environment. Other interpretations of myth, however, deal with the individual psyche of man.

The four complex, psychological theories dealing with the interpretation of myth are connected with four men: Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Ernest Cassirer, and Claude Lévi-Strauss. As in the previous chapter, the evaluation of these theories is based on Kirk's analysis in The Nature of Greek Myths. Freud compared myths to dreams. The subconscious manipulation of emotions and experiences in dreaming could be the process of myth-making. Kirk agrees with Freud about the connection between myths and dreams. But he does not believe that myths are "the dream-relics of society in its infancy"[11] because the growth of a society and the growth of an individual are quite different. Carl Jung also recognized that dreams and myths could reveal some of the unconscious mind. But he saw them "as revelations of what he called the 'collective unconscious,' an inherited and continuing involvement of mankind with certain key symbols . . . [called] 'archetypes.'"[12] Kirk agrees with Jung that men depend on the traditional forms of expression, like ritual

and myth, just as much now as they used to. But he disagrees with Jung's idea of archetypes because, according to him, these symbols have not been shown to occur repeatedly in many sets of myths. Cassirer, however, treated myths as an emotional, not intellectual, product. Kirk objects to Cassirer's (and Jung's) idea that a certain symbol will evoke a certain emotion in all people at all historical times. Lévi-Strauss' theory states that mythology's function is not to give philosophical proofs but to change our emotional responses to contradictions. In his book entitled Claude Lévi-Strauss, Edmund Leach explains: "Lévi-Strauss has argued that when we are considering the universalist aspects of primitive mythology we shall repeatedly discover that the hidden message is concerned with the resolution of unwelcome contraditions of this sort [life and death]."[13] According to Lévi-Strauss, man's problems present themselves as opposite poles: desire vs. reality, the individual vs. society. Myth provides models that resolve these contradictions. Kirk denies that society, the human mind, and myths can all always be treated as computers with a binary system of classification. Lévi-Strauss' theory is useful in interpreting some of the classical myths, just as each of the other above theories are also capable of helping us understand the myths. But no one theory can be called universal--the theory that can explain all of mythology.

No one universal interpretation of myth has been agreed upon. Writers, especially, can use myth metaphorically to enhance the meaning in their works. This is one reason Thomas Bulfinch wrote his book on mythology: to educate readers so they could understand mythological allusions. By understanding the allusion, the metaphor becomes clear

and the meaning of the literary work is enriched. A knowledge of mythology will help readers of three of Samuel R. Delany's novels to see what he is trying to tell them about their own lives. Many critics have recognized Delany's use of mythology. Two who talk about myth in general in Delany's writings are George Slusser and Jane Weedman. Slusser discusses man's options when faced with the pattern of the myth. He contends that: "In no way, then, is a man fated to relive any given mythic paradigm, or to follow any archetypal literary pattern. And yet somehow, if that man is to remain human, and recognizable as a hero, he is obliged to relive them."[14] Delany's heroes have the same mythic patterns in front of them as the early heroes had, but they still have the free will to choose their own paths and control their own destiny. Jane Branham Weedman discusses myth in connection with the main characters in the novels and their differences from mythical heroes:

> Through his double consciousness, Delany has acquired a different perspective and motivation for his use of myths. He emphasizes the individual instead of the archetype and demonstrates cultural change rather than progress. His heroes/heroines are not traditional archetypes despite their mythical references. They are more: they are the new archetypes of modern man and society, and this mythopoesis is what distinguishes Delany's works.[15]

Delany's heroes are more than Jung's categorized archetypes. They combine elements and make choices concerning their future as individuals in their society. Delany's own thoughts as expressed by his characters

in his novels reflect the same idea: man as an individual makes his own choices.

Delany talks about myth in the three novels discussed here, but in The Einstein Intersection his discussion is most straightforward. As he says in that novel, "[T]he central subject of the book is myth" (p. 71). Each of his characters are combinations of mythological archetypes, but, as Weedman put it, "they are more" than that. Mythical patterns crowd around them. The main character is confused about these patterns; he thinks they are prescriptive, even though another character tells him differently:

> "The stories give you a law to follow--"
>
> "--that you can either break or obey."
>
> "They set you a goal--"
>
> "--and you can either fail that goal, succeed or surpass it."
>
> "Why?" I [the main character] demanded. "Why can't you just ignore the old stories? . . . I can ignore those tales!" (p. 124)

He is told that he can not just ignore mythology: "you have to exhaust the old mazes before you can move into the new ones" (p. 33). Another character puts it in another way: "we have to exhaust the past before we can finish with the present" (p. 78). Delany makes two points: first, mythology is an integral part of humanity and can not be lost without losing a part of ourselves and our future, but secondly, we are not restricted to the paths that mythology sets before us. Both of these

points are made clearer in Nova where mythology is bound up in the Tarot cards. One philosophical character tells a member of the crew:

> ". . . the seventy-eight cards of the Tarot present symbols and mythological images that have recurred and reverberated through forty-five centuries of human history. Someone who understands these symbols can construct a dialogue about a given situation. There's nothing superstitious about it. . . . [They] only become superstitious when they are abused, employed to direct rather than guide and suggest."[16]

The purpose of myth is to "guide and suggest," not to "direct" our actions. The crew member says the cards are all fake and, therefore, have no connection with humanity in the present and the future; mythology has been treated in the same way, as old stories with no relevance for today. Katin, the philosophical character who most nearly speaks for Delany, replies:

> "A very romantic notion. I cotton to it myself: the idea that all those symbols, filtered down through five thousand years of mythology, are basically meaningless and have no bearing on man's mind and actions, strikes a little bell of nihilism ringing. Unfortunately I know too much about these symbols to go along with it." (p. 111)

Using the Tarot cards to represent mythology in general in Nova, Delany once again emphasizes the value of myth. He implies that intelligent people realize mythology's influences on the way man thinks and acts

today. In Babel-17, another of Delany's novels, the remark made about the main character symbolically refers to mythology as well: "She cut through worlds, and joined them--that's the important part--so that both became bigger."[17] Mythology has its basis in the world of the past, but its ideas cut through time to join human beings. The people in the past became more real to the present, as Bulfinch and Hamilton stated earlier in this paper. And the people of the present have the myths of the past to guide them in forming their futures. Samuel Delany demonstrates three ways people can be guided using myth. Three of his novels--Nova, Babel-17, and The Einstein Intersection--reveal the choices people have concerning myth.

Myths set up patterns which can be very useful at a time when a person's world seems very chaotic, without order. This chaos can be outwardly caused as in a war time situation, or inward, as in a shaken self-concept. Man's first reaction to chaos is to try to impose order. Order can be imposed by following a mythic pattern. Delany illustrates the fact that order can be imposed by using myths, but not necessarily following them exactly. In the three novels under discussion, Delany presents three choices for man. One option is that two myths can be combined to create a pattern for the hero; this he does in Nova. Lorq Von Ray is a combination of the characteristics of Prometheus and Achilles. Delany combines these two myths in Lorq who follows their mythical patterns to prove that the myths are still valid with regard to predicting human behavior today. Delany also shows that this combination is really a new pattern, creating a hero for today's society. A second option for man in using myths is presented in Babel-17. The

mythical concept of creation is demonstrated in this novel. In contrast to the Greeks who defined their values in relationship to society and the physical world outside themselves, Rydra Wong is more concerned with defining her values in relationship to herself. The Greek creation myths tried to order the physical chaos of the world outside themselves; Delany's novel tries to order the chaos of the inner turmoil of the main character, Rydra Wong. Her communication abilities are so highly developed that within her mind she has the thoughts and feelings of five galaxies of people. But she has lost control over ordering the most important voice of thoughts and feelings: her own. The chaos in her mind mirrors the chaos of her world which is at war. This in turn reflects the chaos of the beginning of the world, when creation, or "ordering," began. Delany illustrates that the mythical concept, in this case, creation, is still valid; but the context, from outer world to inner being, has been changed to fit the times. A third option in using myths is presented in The Einstein Intersection. As already mentioned, this novel is about myth. The other two novels discussed in this paper use myth; this novel openly discusses myth, its patterns and its meaning. The main character, Lobey, tries to follow the patterns of the myths and almost fails in his quest. He does not realize that myths, according to Lévi-Strauss' theories, are sometimes contradictory and often concern a resolution to contradictions. Lobey is finally led to understand that the inversion of a myth is also true; it is up to him to alter the pattern of the myth to make his own destiny. Delany argues that myths are patterns only. Man has choices; he can alter that pattern in order to succeed. Delany combines myths, updates mythical concepts,

and inverts myths in his three novels to show their validity to characters on their quests. He gives the reader a mythic framework within which to view the actions and aspirations of his characters.

The idea of quest is important in the novels under discussion. The main character in each of these novels thinks he/she is searching for one object: Lorq Von Ray in Nova wants Illyrion, a rare fuel; Rydra Wong in Babel-17 wants to learn about and meet the people who speak this new language called Babel-17; and Lobey in The Einstein Intersection wants to get his girlfriend back from the dead. But the word "quest" carries within it two meanings: the act of seeking and the thing sought, both the process and the product, the search and the thing sought. A quest is a deliberate attempt by a person to define himself. A goal is set by which to measure his success or to distinguish the endpoint of his journey. But the real worth of the quest is not just attaining that goal. The process of reaching toward it stretches the individual's capabilities so that he becomes more than he was at the beginning. His definition of who he is also grows. He learns how far his limits extend. A quest is an opportunity for the individual to stretch and grow as a human being, realizing his innate potential. The goal at the end of the quest may not be the same as when the individual started the quest. As the person grows, so do the dimensions of the quest. Their search is not easy. There are many different paths to choose from and many dead-ends and detours in this maze. To find a route that will lead them to their goals, they must ask questions. The answers they receive often do not lead them in the direction of their stated goals; rather, the answers make them question themselves and their goals more. Through the

questioning process, the characters learn more about themselves and are able to change. This self-knowledge enables them to define their real goal: self-identity. With the knowledge of who they are, the characters can become the people they want to be by changing themselves. They now have more conscious control over their lives. This sense of control leads to more self-confidence and surety on their part. Other people who lack this confidence will cluster around those who have it because order is so essential in people's lives, especially if the world around them is chaotic. Characters who can control their own lives can also have power over others' lives--to change them for the better or for the worse, or both. The characters in Delany's three novels follow this process of questioning as they move toward their goal of self-knowledge. They change themselves because of their questioning. With the realization of who they are comes the power to affect their world. Lorq Von Ray, in accepting and realizing his name, upsets the economic structure of the galaxy. Rydra Wong, in accepting the dark side of her nature, begins the process of ending an intergalactic war. And Lobey, in accepting the chaos of reality, discovers his power over life and death. Each has transcended his/her mythic archetype since Delany's characters assert the importance of the individual; they have no outward orientation but merely seek to affirm their individuality.

CHAPTER II

HEROIC QUESTS FOR FIRE AND FAME

In his novels Samuel R. Delany demonstrates that there are at least three ways characters may use myth. The main character in Nova follows the same mythical patterns as two Greek heroes, Prometheus and Achilles. Some of their heroic characteristics seem to be opposites of each other. Prometheus is "the supreme non-moral trickster,"[18] while Achilles, a demi-god, is the most nearly perfect embodiment of the Homeric code of honor as a warrior. Prometheus is known for his mental ability whereas Achilles is known for his physical prowess. Prometheus is honored for what he has given mankind; Achilles is honored for the qualities of manhood which he embodies. In addition to these opposing characteristics, these heroes embody similar characteristics. They both symbolize rebellion: Prometheus rebels against authority and Achilles against being a nonentity. They both know they will have to suffer the painful consequences resulting from their rebellion. By combining the characteristics of these two heroes into one person, the main character of Nova, Delany has created a new hero--one who is god-like and mortal, nonmoral and moral, a player and a fighter. The character combines intelligence with physical action. He rebels against authority and laughs in the face of death. These Lévi-Straussian contradictory characteristics of Jungian archetypal heroes are united in a new hero for a new age, but this new hero follows the paths of the Greek heroes.

This new hero is Lorq Von Ray. Lorq is god-like in that he attempts a superhuman action: his quest is to figure out a way to cut the cost of obtaining Illyrion, an all-important element used as fuel, and thus bring about the downfall of an economic empire. He discovers the element in abundance in the center of an imploding star, a nova, which seems unreachable until an old friend mentions a past experience. Lorq must contend with not only the seeming impossibility of his task but also competition in the form of Prince Red, the one-armed heir to the Red-shift Limited empire. In order for Prince Red and his empire to survive, he must fight for stasis; whereas, in order for Lorq and his empire to survive, he must fight for change. After the initial confrontation where Lorq receives an injury to his face, he inquires into his family history in order to understand why Prince Red wishes to destroy him. Armed with that knowledge he begins his quest for Illyrion. Along the way he defines himself and his reasons for the quest; his self-knowledge allows him to reach his goal. He obtains the Illyrion and defeats his enemy both economically by flooding the market with Illyrion and physically by causing the death of Prince Red. But Lorq's own health is doomed.

One of the Greek heroes that Lorq resembles is Prometheus. Prometheus is an immortal Titan, a name which comes from the Greek word "titainein" which means to stretch or strive to do the deed.[19] Prometheus stretches and grows as a character when he attempts an almost impossible task: he tries to outwit Zeus, king of the gods. He does this at the last meal that the gods and man eat together, where the question of what to sacrifice to the gods has arisen. Prometheus

separates the sacrificial animal into two piles. The one pile has the choicest selection of meat and innards but is disguised in the ox's paunch as the worst part. The other pile contains the bones wrapped in the fat and is made to look like the flesh and, thus, the better part of the animal. Then Prometheus tells Zeus to choose which part of the sacrifice the gods shall receive from then on. Zeus chooses the fat and bones, although Hesiod in his Theogony, one of the earliest books narrating the Greek myths, relates that Zeus does see through the trick before he makes his choice.[20] Zeus is enraged at the audacity of Prometheus to even consider trying to trick him. By his deception Prometheus reaches beyond his place in the divine hierarchy. Lorq Von Ray also reaches beyond his station in his society. He defies his "ruler": a company called Red-shift Limited, represented by Prince Red. He tricks Prince Red by concealing where the all-important fuel called Illyrion can be obtained. And by his actions the great federation of Earth does not gain control of the Illyrion, just as the gods do not receive the best part of the sacrifice.

Prometheus has been called the supreme non-moral trickster. He is supreme in that he is an immortal Titan, one of the earliest beings in Greek myth, ancestors of the Olympian gods and goddesses. He is a trickster in that he tries to dupe Zeus himself. But the question arises as to why he perpetrates this deceit. Did Prometheus love mankind and therefore side with them against Zeus, as Aeschylus proposes in his play Prometheus Bound?[21] If so, man was not totally aided by Prometheus. Because of Prometheus' deceit, Zeus punished men by withholding fire from them. When Prometheus stole fire for them, Zeus retaliated by punishing

both. He chained Prometheus to a mountaintop and had an eagle[22] or vulture[23] devour his renewed liver each day. To Prometheus' brother Epimetheus, Zeus sent a beautiful woman who released all the ills into the world. But perhaps Prometheus' purpose may simply have been to outwit Zeus, as G. S. Kirk thinks in The Nature of Greek Myths: "Why he [Prometheus] champions men is never made clear; probably he dropped into the role by the accident of being a trickster figure, one suitable to undertake the futile but engaging contest of wits with Zeus."[24] Prometheus, a Titan, challenges Zeus, an Olympian god, in a game of wits. But, on the other hand, Prometheus may also be the instrument for the maturation of Zeus as a humane godhead.

Lorq Von Ray is also a titan in his times. Webster's New Standard Dictionary defines titan as a "person of magnificent physique or of brilliant intellectual capacity." Prometheus and Lorq share these qualities. In their first meeting as adults, Lorq is called handsome four times by Ruby Red, sister to Prince Red who is Lorq's bitter enemy. Lorq shows intelligence in planning how to obtain Illyrion and keep Prince Red in the dark about his scheme. Prometheus is intelligent, as is shown in his name which means "forethought."[25]

Prometheus and Lorq are both tricksters in that they both challenge a high authority: Prometheus deceives and steals from Zeus, and Lorq steals from Prince Red and his economic empire. Lorq also comprehends the ethics of his situation. He tells his crew that where they will be going, all law has broken down--man's and the natural laws; Lorq believes no law can bind his actions. In one confrontation with Prince Red, Lorq states his reason for this deadly race for Illyrion which will cause

economic chaos if Lorq succeeds: "The reason I must fight you is I think I can win. There's only that one. You're for stasis. I'm for movement. Things move. There's no ethic there" (p. 183). Just as Prometheus matches wits with Zeus, Lorq battles with Prince Red because there is a chance that he may win: Lorq also fights for change. Michael Grant, in tracing the historical development of the Promethean myth in Myths of the Greeks and Romans, claims "Prometheus stood for the urge to revolt against static tyranny."[26] Delany believes that change is a part of life and that "Stasis is death" (p. 180), as Lorq argues. The change that the seven tons of Illyrion would bring in Lorq's world would strike down one-third of the cosmos, raise up another, and let one more go staggering (p. 209). Both Lorq and Prometheus effected great changes in their worlds.

Prometheus is perhaps best known for his gifts to mankind. These gifts include, according to Aeschylus in Prometheus Bound: "sense and mind," "numbers," the harnessing of animals, seamanship, medicine, "the many ways of the prophetic art," and "the benefits hidden deep within the earth . . . In a brief utterance learn the whole story: all arts come to mortals from Prometheus."[27] All these gifts arise from the intellect. But Prometheus' most famous gift is fire. Fire is extremely important to mankind. According to Michael Grant in Myths of the Greeks and Romans, "fire is the material basis of civilization."[28] The controlled use of fire is one property that distinguishes man from the other animals. Fire is one of Lévi-Strauss' contradictory symbols. Fire has secular uses, such as for cooking and in manufacture, as well as sacred uses, as in sacrifice and as a punishment.[29] Primitive man first

used fire to keep warm, to cook food, and to drive away wild animals. Later fire was also employed in the creation of pottery, tools, and weapons. Since Prometheus brought fire to man, it is not surprising that, as G. S. Kirk puts it in The Nature of Greek Myths: "In the later tradition Prometheus developed into a general technological benefactor, one who brought men the arts not only of healing, mathematics, medicine, navigation, and divination, but also of mining and working metals."[30] Fire is the foundation of technology and, therefore, of civilization. Fire also has sacred uses. Offerings to the gods were burned; these sacrifices were in honor of and an appeasement to the gods. If the god's anger was not stilled, punishment could come in the form of fire. Zeus' thunderbolts were his weapons. With them he defeated his father and took over the throne as king of the gods. He threatened to destroy the inhabitants of the earth with his thunderbolts of fire but decided on a flood instead because even Zeus was "afraid that the holy aether and the long axis of the heavens would catch fire from so many flames,"[31] as Ovid relates in his Metamorphoses. Fire, when controlled, is beneficial for man; when out of control, it is destructive.

In Nova the fire the hero seeks to obtain for mankind is Illyrion, a rare but extremely important element used as fuel. Illyrion is the basis of the civilization in Nova. It is so important that the word is capitalized throughout the novel. It powers everything from the spaceships that unite galaxies by shrinking the physical distances between them to the musical instrument called a syrynx that unites the people of these galaxies by bringing them together physically and emotionally.

Illyrion is employed in furnaces beneath the surface of a planet; enough heat is generated to provide an atmosphere on the surface capable of sustaining human life. But just as Illyrion unites, it can also separate. Two of Lorq Von Ray's crew members are brothers who have a third brother working in the Illyrion mines. All three brothers were inseparable until they were forced to work in these mines for a time as punishment for a crime. One brother decided to continue working there after his sentence was completed; the other two did not remain. Thus, their fraternity is broken up by Illyrion. At the end of the novel, the super-abundance of Illyrion brought back by Lorq makes mining for it obsolete, and thus unites the brothers once again. The possession of Illyrion also separates galaxies economically. Earth is a member of the Draco Federation, where Illyrion first was manufactured at great expense; one of the largest companies of Draco is Red-shift Limited, owned by Aaron Red, Prince Red's father. Lorq's father is the head of the Von Ray company/empire, the largest force behind the Pleiades Federation. The Outer Colonies, which can mine Illyrion naturally and less expensively than manufacturing it, could become an independent federation; at the time of the novel different companies own mines on these worlds. Red-shift Limited feels threatened by this lowering of the cost of Illyrion so it strikes out at anyone with Illyrion. The Von Rays own an Illyrion mine; Prince Red attacks Lorq Von Ray.

Fire is an integral part of the novel Nova. Illyrion is the basis of the novel's technological civilization. The plot revolves around the main character's quest for fire, his search for Illyrion. The names given the people and communities deal with fire. Fire is colored red.

"Red" is the last name of the family causing the conflict in the novel. Lorq's enemy is called Prince Red. Prince Red's sister reinforces the color imagery; her name is Ruby Red. The community of planets including Earth is the Draco Federation. A dragon is a mythological fire-breathing monster. It uses fire as a weapon for self-preservation and destruction. Red-shift Limited in the Draco Federation feels threatened economically by Lorq's quest. And so Prince Red tries to stop Lorq, either by talking him out of his quest, by killing him, or by reaching the Illyrion first. The Illyrion can be found in the center of a nova, an imploding star, a fiery furnace where all the elements are smelted from raw matter. Lorq must go through this fire to obtain his quest.

Not only is fire important physically in the novel, but also it is important emotionally. The fire of passion has spurred men to greater achievements than they might ordinarily seek; it has also driven people into destructive actions. Lorq loves Ruby, but his race for Illyrion is more intense. Prince Red's hate for Lorq is so deep that he allows it to override his better judgment; he attacks Lorq when he sees him with his hands on Ruby's shoulders and endangers her life as well as Lorq's in his outburst. The fire of intense emotions is as important in the novel as the fire of Illyrion.

One Greek hero who was intensely emotional is Achilles, the other mythical character whose heroic pattern the main character in Nova follows. According to the book Classical Mythology, Achilles was "the greatest of the Greek warriors."[32] More than anyone else, he exemplifies the Homeric code of honor for a warrior. His most famous exploits are retold in the Iliad. In fact, the whole epic poem revolves around

Achilles in the tenth year of the Trojan War. Robert Graves translates the opening lines of the Iliad as follows:

> Sing through me
> That anger which most ruinously
> Inflamed Achilles . . .
> . . . first taken when
> Proud Agamemnon king of men
> An insult on Achilles cast . . .[33]

Morford and Lenardon in Classical Mythology claim that the principal theme of the Iliad is the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles.[34] Both Agememnon and Achilles had received young girls as spoils of war. Agamemnon was forced to return his girl; so, he took the one allotted to Achilles. This greatly angered and dishonored Achilles, who immediately withdrew himself and his army from the war. He only returned when his friend, wearing Achilles' armor, was killed by Hector, a Trojan prince. Then Achilles re-enters the war, routing the Trojans and defeating their greatest warrior, Hector, by killing him and dragging his corpse behind his chariot. The anger of Achilles, first directed at Agamemnon and then at Hector, is finally appeased; his honor and glory have been established. This glory is the quest of Achilles. But the quest was his choice. The mother of Achilles knows that if her son goes to Troy to fight in the Trojan War, he will die: she "learned that Troy could not be taken without Achilles; she further knew that he could live long and die ingloriously or go to Troy and die young and glorious."[35] At first she tries to prevent Achilles from departing for Troy. According

to Myths of the Greeks and Romans, Achilles himself knows that he will not live long after Hector's death.[36] Yet, Achilles chooses death and with this choice, he accepts mortality over immortality. His choice will ensure the Greeks victory and bring about the downfall of the Trojan empire, even though Achilles himself will not live to witness the end of the war. Greece will utterly destroy the city of Troy much as Achilles annihilated Hector. But Achilles will survive in his fame as the greatest Greek warrior and will serve as an example not only of an heroic figure but also of the maturation required for the development of a hero.

In Nova Lorq Von Ray follows Achilles' pattern. Lorq is a mortal man and knows the punishment he must bear if he continues on his quest; he will be trapped in a body in which all sensory nerve endings are jammed into constant stimulation because he will have to look at the nova at close range. Lorq's friend Dan looked and is experiencing this living torment:

> "Most people go blind in blackness. I have a fire in my eyes. I have that whole collapsing sun in my hand. The light lashed the rods and cones of my retina to constant stimulation, balled up a rainbow and stuffed each socket full. . . . There's a choir crouched in my ears, shouting down into my skull twenty-six hours a day." (p. 2)

Like Achilles, Lorq chooses to fight and live his short life gloriously rather than live safely, long, and ingloriously. Like Achilles, he will bring about the downfall of one empire to establish the superiority of

his own empire--at least for the moment. Like Achilles, he will lose his friend Dan and destroy his enemy, Prince Red. Anger is the basis for all the actions in the Iliad and Nova. Lorq tells his aunt that on this trip to a nova "the only thing that propels us is my outrage" (p. 142). This outrage is a result of Prince Red's actions and attitude. Even from the very beginning, Prince Red tries to control Lorq. In their first meeting as children, Prince Red established dominance over Lorq. He badgered Lorq into sneaking out at night and caused Lorq physical pain when he mentioned Prince Red's prosthetic arm. As adults, Prince Red again dares Lorq into a risky adventure. Later he attacks Lorq when he sees him and his sister together. Prince Red chases Lorq through a crowd of people, grapples with him on the ground, and then rips through his face from chin to forehead with his prosthetic arm and fingers. But Lorq's outrage is caused by more than a physical scar he bears on his face, just as Achilles' anger is caused by more than the loss of a girl as his share of the plunder after a battle. For Achilles, Agamemnon's action was an insult to the great honor due Achilles. Achilles would not be the great man that he was if he allowed this slur on his name to go unchallenged; but Achilles, too, must learn to temper his anger and to become humble. Likewise, Prince Red's attack on Lorq was more than a sudden burst of anger against Lorq; it was a flare-up of a deep smoldering hatred against the Von Ray name and empire. Lorq's anger is reinforced by Prince Red's boastful attitude: "I can do anything, anything I want. You're trying to stop that" (p. 145). Prince Red is trying to hold the economic situation of the world as it is; he fights for stasis. Lorq struggles for change, even if this change will

bring about the chaotic upheaval of an empire, as Achilles' actions did to Troy.

Lorq knows the value of change in society because he has just undergone changes within himself. Before Prince Red's party, Lorq was a contented nineteen-year-old. Life was good to him. Rich enough to own his own yacht, intelligent enough to sail it, and competent enough to win races with it, Lorq had self-confidence in abundance. For him it was no problem to finish exams, participate in a race and place second, and then leave on a three-day sail to Earth for a party. Lorq was accustomed to the high place in society where money had placed him, and it surprised him when he realized how "dazzled this young man [a crew member] . . . was before the wealth, visible and implied, that went with a nineteen-year-old who could race his own yacht and just took off to parties in Paris" (pp. 57-58). At the masked ball, however, Lorq learns about another attitude, one that does not hold him in awe.

At the party, Prince Red hands Lorq a pirate mask, specially made for him. Prince's sister Ruby informs Lorq of her brother's implied insult to him. Lorq, who has been so sure of himself, "looked down at the pirate's head, confused" (p. 71). This is only the beginning of his confusion. He falls in love with Ruby and is firmly rejected: "[h]er eyes snapped from the brim of her glass to lock his. 'I'm Aaron Red's daughter and you are the dark, redhaired, high, handsome son--of a blond thief!'" (p. 73). Lorq retorts:

> "What's all this talk of thieves, piracy, and mocking mean?" Anger not at her but at the confusion she caused. "I don't

> understand and I don't know if it sounds like anything I want to" (p. 73).

Ruby's words have caused Lorq to question his identity; at first he wants to back away from thinking about the answers, just as Achilles at first did not wish to join the Greeks when they were leaving to begin the Trojan War or, once a part of the war, to swallow his pride and accept his responsibility to aid his countrymen. Then Prince Red enters, sees Lorq touching Ruby, and attacks him. He chases Lorq to the edge of the island. Cornered, Lorq turns to face his enemy and, symbolically, to face the answers to the questions he asked earlier. Prince Red, with his mechanical arm, slashes Lorq's face and his security. Lorq searches for the reason for Prince Red's vicious attack. Since the present provides no logical explanation, Lorq's father must teach him about the past if Lorq is to understand and be prepared for any future confrontations.

Prince Red's hatred stems from economic concerns. When powerful corporations of the Draco Federation tried to expand into the Pleiades group of planets, one man fought to keep the Pleiades independent from Draco. He used every means available--including threats, theft, and killing--to keep the companies out. His name was Von Ray, Lorq's great-great-grandfather. One of the companies that tried the hardest but failed to gain control was Red-shift Limited. The Von Rays established an economic empire in the Pleiades that rivals Red-shift Limited in the Draco Federation. Red-shift manufactures the starships that transport people and products from planet to planet. As Lorq's father explains,

"Red-shift is transportation, and when the cost of transportation goes down compared to the number of ships made, Red-shift feels its throat throttled" (p. 82). The cost of transportation went down once because the Pleiades system is more compact than the Draco Federation; Von Ray was responsible for thwarting Red-shift's monopoly plans. The cost of transportation would be still cheaper because mining Illyrion is less expensive than manufacturing it; the Von Rays own an Illyrion mine. Prince Red feels his empire threatened and lashes out at the offenders: "I am angy. I am furious! I am Prince Red--I am Draco! I am a crippled Serpent; but I'll strangle you [Lorq]!" (p. 145). Prince Red is like Zeus, king of the gods. He wants to be the supreme ruler and will not allow any changes to upset his tyranny. Lorq, like Prometheus, challenges his reign. The seven tons of fire called Illyrion that Lorq will bring will open the way for new technological advances, just as the fire Prometheus gave man instigated technology. Lorq knows where to find this Illyrion that will topple the Red-shift empire. Prometheus knew a secret that would unseat Zeus from his throne; Prometheus knew that the son born of a particular woman, whom Zeus loved at that time, would be more powerful than his father. Just as Zeus feared Prometheus and his secret and the Trojans feared Achilles and his prowess in battle, so Prince Red hates and fears the Von Ray name.

Cognizant of the past, Lorq now better understands the present. Like Achilles, he is faced with a choice. He can choose the safe path, live a long life, and make no mark on the world, or he can choose the dangerous way, be fairly certain he would be injured or killed, but know he will have made a name for himself. Achilles will be honored as the

greatest Greek warrior while Lorq's name will mean "the man who pushed Draco over the edge of tomorrow" (p. 208). The name that he bears, "Von Ray," is part of his identity. George Slusser in discussing Nova says: "[Names] are hollow masks dropped in the stream of time, the focus of change. A name is worn by a succession of individuals or peoples who discover their own identity in the process of living the one they inherited."[37] The same definition is compatible with the way a myth can be viewed: a pattern of behavior that is seen by individuals or peoples who discover their own identity in the process of living the myth they have inherited. Slusser goes on to say "that the mask is both hollow and real, that a name both predestines and does not."[38] A myth offers a pattern. Man is not forced to follow the pattern, but he can not deny its existence. Lorq bears the Von Ray name/mask. Prince Red forces him to don momentarily two more masks; one is of a pirate, and the other is a scar on his face--both representing something ugly. Lorq has never associated ugliness with himself, and he wants to know why Prince does. Lorq's father, to answer him, must explain this other mask he wears--the Von Ray name--which Lorq has taken for granted all his life. His father wants him to take the responsibility that goes along with the name: "You're a young man who may someday control one of the largest fortunes in the galaxy. If I ask you a question, I want you to remember who you are when you answer me" (p. 79). As Lorq comes to realize, the Von Ray name means many things to many people. To one of Lorq's new crew members from the Pleiades Federation, Von Ray is "Everything. [A] great, good family [it] is" (p. 28). Prince Red and his father call the Von Rays pirates and barbarians. Lorq's father explains the heritage behind the name. The Von Rays were men who made a change in the

universe. Lorq's great-great-grandfather started the business and, as a by-product, the feud. His great-grandfather built the business into an empire rivaling Red-shift Limited. His grandfather began the process of establishing friendly ties with Earth, after the Pleiades had been granted sovereignty, by donating money and buildings to education. His father tried to break down the conflict even more by marrying a woman from Earth and doing business with Red-shift Limited. Now it is Lorq who must bear the name and discover his own identity in the process of "living the name he has inherited." The only way the Von Ray empire can survive is to knock down the price of Illyrion and make spaceships cheaper than Red-shift Limited can; Lorq accepts this challenge as his investment in the Von Ray name. He realizes the extent of his inheritance when he pauses by his reflection in a mirror: "where the scar [on his face] entered the kinky red, he noticed something. The new hair growing was the same color and texture as his father's, soft and yellow as flame" (p. 85). This represents Lorq's decision to choose living out his name and seeking his own change in the universe. He accepts his heritage.

With a knowledge of his past, Lorq begins his quest for his identity, still cocksure and over-confident. He obtains a special crew and ship: "there was meticulous planning, movements oiled, meshed, propelled by confidence in our own precision" (p. 142). But this first expedition fails. Lorq had taken into consideration every variable except the one called human nature. One crewman and friend, Dan, had gotten curious about what a nova looked like. Disregarding orders, he looked out. The over-stimulation of his senses caused him to lose control of his part of

the ship and forced Lorq to cancel the rest of the mission. Lorq realizes he does not have as much control over the situation as he would like. In fact, the situation itself is chaos, as he tells his new crew:

> "We have to go to the flaming edge of that imploding sun. The whole continuum in the area of a nova is space that has been twisted away. We have to go to the rim of chaos and bring back a handful of fire, with as few stops as possible on the way. Where we're going all law has broken down."
>
> "Which law do you mean?" Katin asked. "Man's, or the natural laws of physics, psychics, and chemistry?"
>
> Von Ray paused. "All of them." (p. 21)

If familiar surroundings have been twisted away into chaos, then a person must turn inward to find order. When Zeus turned against Prometheus and chained him to a rock, Prometheus had no one to turn to for assistance. So he withstood the punishment defiantly, instead of humbly begging forgiveness, because he knew his actions were right:

> But he [Zeus] will never win me over
> with honeyed spell of soft, persuading words,
> nor will I ever cower beneath his threats
> to tell him what he seeks.[39]

Prometheus must endure his punishment until Zeus is humbled--intellect overpowers and subdues tyranny. Unlike Prometheus who from the outset could endure all that befell him, Lorq at the party did not have this inner confidence. He became as confused as his surroundings. His first

expedition failed for the same reason. His next attempt for the Illyrion would have a better chance of success, Lorq believes, because as he says, "[b]efore, the Roc flew under half a man, a man who'd only known victory. Now I'm a whole man. I know defeat as well" (p. 142). Outward security is not as necessary to him now as it had been: "[w]hat sort of a race would it be if I knew I was going to win?" (p. 104). Lorq does not need computer-precise control; he would rather trust himself now in a situation. Prince Red points out: "We are both playing this one by ear, Lorq. Ashton Clark has set the rules" (p. 180). Ashton Clark was a philosopher and psychologist who dealt with man's relationship to his job; he theorized that man "must exert energy in his work and see changes occur with his own eyes. Otherwise he would feel his life was futile" (p. 195). Lorq is neither letting computers control his expedition nor is he hiring people to make the trip in his stead. He is there in person, exerting his own energy, controlling the situation from his captain's seat on the ship. Prometheus himself set the two sacrificial offerings before Zeus, asking him to choose which one he wanted. And he stole the fire from the heavens to give to man. Achilles chose to fight the Trojans in the front lines, not direct his army's movements from behind the battle. Likewise, Prince contacts Lorq person-to-person, not via messengers or through business channels. Lorq and Prince Red are present to witness the changes that occur because of their influence.

Lorq demonstrates not only control over himself but also the power of control over the lives of others. The inner stability that he has achieved makes him nonchalant about Prince's opinions; he does not even

care to listen to the two messages Prince Red sends him. Lorq seeks the location of the next nova from his aunt at the institute, but his questing will change her life as well as his own. She tells him, "You have placed me in this position: of having to make a decision that ends a time of great comfort for me" (p. 143). She gives him the information, though, for she wants Lorq to succeed. Katin, one of Lorq's crew members, states the influence and control Lorq has on his and the rest of the crew's lives:

> We were drifting, Mouse, you and I, the twins, Tyÿ and Sebastian, good people all of us--but aimless. Then an obsessed man snatches us up and carries us out here to the edge of everything. And we arrive to find his obsession has imposed order on our aimlessness; or perhaps a more meaningful chaos. . . . I want him to win his infernal race. I want him to win, and until he wins or loses, I can't seriously want anything else for myself. (p. 201)

Lorq gains control over Prince Red by defeating him twice: once by using the syrynx to push him over the edge of a cliff into the fires of a molten river and again by flying him toward the center of a nova where Prince loses hope of surviving and causes his own death. Finally, the tons of Illyrion that Lorq brings back from the nova will ensure the supremacy of the Von Ray empire over Red-shift Limited, the prosperity of the Pleiades Federation, and a new way of living for the people on all the worlds. Lorq has exerted his power to control and change the lives of people around him, just as Prometheus and Achilles changed their

worlds. Prometheus ensured the survival of man with the gift of fire. Achilles' presence at Troy forecast victory for the Greeks; his individual prowess, especially in killing the bravest and best of the Trojans (Hector), brought victory closer. Prometheus and Achilles both chose their destiny. Lorq, on a similar quest has made the same choices.

Delany blended the myths of Prometheus and Achilles creating a new hero for modern man. Prometheus means "forethought." Intelligence is a necessary ingredient for success. Achilles earned his fame through his courage in stressful times. The modern hero, exemplified by Lorq, needs both his mind and his heart to succeed. Wisdom and passion united form a powerful weapon, allowing the individual to exert control over events around him. Both Greek heroes rebelled against a larger force and could control that force in some way. Zeus finally had to relent and allow Prometheus to be released from his torture. Death claimed Achilles' body, but his spirit and fame survive. Through these heroes' intervention, major changes were made in the world. Too often today the expression is heard, "What can I do? I'm only one person." Delany seems to be saying that one person can "do" something. The two myths demonstrate the rise of the importance of the individual. At first it is Prometheus, an immortal god, who champions the power of individual action. Then Achilles, a demi-god (half-man, half-god), rises to great heights through his own endeavors by doing the best he can with his abilities. And finally there is Lorq, a mortal man, who defies all natural and human laws to journey into a nova. Each hero is confronted with a situation where he can allow events to shape his future, or he can shape his own destiny. Each hero chooses to participate actively instead of

passively. He learns that he can control the "now" to attain a desired future. He learns that one individual can make a difference in the world.

The problems of today still seem titanic. But today's world does not have immortal gods. The focal point of action now is man. If something needs to be done, then man must initiate the action. Flying superheroes who rescue the earth appear on Saturday morning television but not in reality. Today man himself must champion his ideals. Prometheus provides an example of superhuman endurance and steadfastness. His myth exemplifies the power of the intellect. He defied the gods to suffer a living death. Achilles, like Prometheus, took charge of his own destiny. He chose to live and to die as a man. Achilles matures and learns to temper his emotional outbursts. He chooses to be involved in life and to accept the price for his humanity--death. For Lorq both alternatives are possible: in reaching for Illyrion he may find death at the hands of Prince Red or his sister, or he may sustain irreparable injury if he reaches his goal. But he still continues. Prometheus represents the actions of wisdom; Achilles represents the wisdom of action. Modern man needs both to survive and change his society.

In Nova the main character embarks on a quest similar to those two mythical heroes: Prometheus and Achilles. The protagonist is similar to Prometheus in his struggle against authority and his search for the fiery element so necessary for civilization. He is likened to Achilles in the fire of his emotions and the importance of fame for his self-identity. Just as both Prometheus and Achilles succeed in their quests but bear the painful consequences, so to the novel's hero discovers the

element, defeats his enemy, and defines his own identity but suffers painfully at the end. The main character in his quest follows the same patterns as established by the two heroes of Greek mythology. Delany has shown that one of the choices available to modern man is to succeed by following the path or paths that past heroes have established. This combining and following of mythical patterns is still a valid method of controlling one's destiny. But it is not the only valid way of employing myths today.

CHAPTER III

IN THE BEGINNING

In the novel Babel-17, Delany presents a second method of employing mythology in a quest. The main character in this novel still follows the pattern of the essence of a myth, but the context of the myth is different. Nova deals with the actions and motivations of the main character and how they coincide with those of two heroes of Greek mythology. Babel-17 presents the creation of the main character as it resembles the creation of the world in Greek mythology. The Greek myth of creation begins in Chaos and continues into Life. The heroine of Babel-17 begins with a chaotic lack of identity but succeeds by the end of the novel in creating her self. Creation in Babel-17 is an act of control of inward chaos rather than control of outward chaos as in the Greek myth.

This novel suggests two biblical myths: the Tower of Babel and the opening lines of the book of Genesis. The Tower of Babel is the story of a vain man who decides he can reach heaven by building a structure tall enough from earth. As punishment for this man's vanity and to halt construction of the project, God transforms the unity of the workers all speaking a single language into the chaos of individuals talking in a multitude of different tongues. This myth represents an attempt to explain the diversity of languages in the world and the problems of communication that separate persons. In Babel-17 the communication problems already exist. The Invaders, an outside force, have inflicted

some of the chaos upon the Alliance, which includes earth, through war and effective sabotage with the use of a new language called Babel-17. The main character, Rydra Wong, is attempting to control this chaos by decoding Babel-17 and by bridging the gaps in communication between people and within herself. Genesis opens by acknowledging the existence of the word, which is love, at the beginning of the universe. This concept is also found in the Greek myth of Eros (Love) being born from Chaos. While the biblical mythological interpretation offers many insights into the babble of Babel-17 and the beginning of love, this paper will relate the novel to the Greek myth of creation which offers an inclusive pattern by which the reader may interpret the confusion existing within the world of Rydra.

Babel-17 begins in the midst of a twenty-year war in the universe. This outer chaos mirrors the inward chaos of the main character: Rydra Wong, a well-known poet. Although Rydra is extremely popular, she realizes that her poems reflect others' thoughts and ideas, and not her own. But when she attempts to express her own ideas, she discovers she cannot find the words. In an attempt to clarify her thoughts, Rydra decides to decode a new language called Babel-17. This language was first thought to be a code; it was being used by the enemy in this war to sabotage strategic military operations. Rydra begins her quest to decode Babel-17 for several purposes: first she wants to help her side in the war, second she wants to meet the beings who could think in such a precise way as this new language implies, and third she wants to control the chaos in her own mind by facing her fears. To facilitate this decoding process, she gathers a crew and captains her ship to the place

where the next sabotage attempt will occur. Enroute, her own ship is sabotaged and thrown off course with major mechanical problems. At her destination, an assassin murders important officials. Rydra's ship is once again tampered with, and she and her crew are flung into space. Just before certain annihilation, they are rescued by a ship traveling in the space between the two groups at war. On board Rydra meets the Butcher, a strange amnesia victim who both frightens and fascinates her. Using her knowledge of Babel-17, Rydra assists the Butcher in defeating an enemy vessel and foils an assassination attempt on the captain of Butcher's ship. Although her understanding of Babel-17 is almost complete, Rydra is ready to give up her quest because this new language causes her such pain when she uses it. But before she leaves this ship, she feels she has one more communication gap to fill. She has noticed the Butcher's lack of the use of "I" and "you" in his conversations. She wants to teach her friend those terms and thus fill the need for identity she feels in him. In so doing, she learns more about her own self, her "I." After another battle with the enemy, Rydra enters Butcher's mind telepathically and realizes her fears and the dark side of her own nature. But Babel-17 now holds both Rydra and the Butcher in telepathic union. Rydra's friend and psychiatrist breaks the language's hold on their minds by discovering the true identity of the Butcher. By helping another person Rydra has learned to control her inner chaos; now she can exert control over outside events. She changes Babel-17 into a weapon for her side and will use it to bring a quick end to the war.

The novel begins with the inner chaos of the main character but ends with the main character in control of her own life. From her confusion,

Rydra has created a new life for herself. Her acts of creation parallel the Greek myths of the creation of the world. According to Greek myth, in the beginning was Chaos. Critics disagree about what the term "chaos" means. Edith Hamilton calls it the "formless confusion of Chaos brooded over by unbroken darkness."[40] Thomas Bulfinch describes it as "a confused and shapeless mass, nothing but dead weight, in which, however, slumbered the seeds of things."[41] But G. S. Kirk in The Nature of Greek Myths claims that "Chaos in archaic Greek means 'gap' rather than 'disorder.'"[42] Michael Grant in Myths of the Greeks and Romans interprets Chaos in Hesiod's Theogony to mean "the gaping void, the primordial abyss."[43] On the other hand, in Classical Mythology, Ovid's Chaos is translated into "not a gaping void but rather a crude and unformed mass of elements in strife from which a god (not named) or some higher nature formed the order of the universe."[44] Viewing chaos as either the empty space of nothingness or the confusion of all elements but with no form has the same result. In the beginning, nothing was formed. And then began the ordering. From Chaos came Night and Erebus. Edith Hamilton defines Erebus as "the unfathomable depth where death dwells."[45] The Greeks reckoned their day from sunset to sunset; so, their new day began with the sunset and darkness. Thus, it is natural for them to consider the darkness of night and death to be the first formed from Chaos. The myths diverge on what was formed next. In Classical Mythology Morford and Lenardon claim that Night and gloom (Erebus) produced Day.[46] Michael Grant in Myths of the Greeks and Romans states that from Night and Erebus came Day and Aether, "the bright untainted upper atmosphere":[47] from night and gloom came day and light. Edith Hamilton tells of Light

and Day being created from the offspring of Night and Erebus; that offspring is Love: "[f]rom darkness [Night] and from death [Erebus] Love [Eros] was born."[48] In a play by Aristophaes, called The Birds, the darkness and gloom of Night brought forth an egg from which came Eros; Eros and Chaos together then produced living beings.[49] Morford and Lenardon simply list the offspring of Chaos: Gaea (Earth), Tartarus (a dim place in the depths of the ground), Eros, Erebus (the gloom of Tartarus), and Night.[50] Eros can be thought of as a child of Night and Erebus or as a child of Chaos. But here the myths converge again: living beings are created by the union of Chaos and Eros. Michael Grant sees Chaos as "matter" and Love as the "force"; it takes matter and a generator to create life.[51] Chaos is the "crude and unformed mass of elements," and Eros is the life-giving spark; or, Chaos is the "gaping void" which Eros leaps and joins to bring to life. Gaea (Earth) brings forth Uranus (the Sky, or Heavens). They produce offspring that are living, somewhat like men but yet not quite human. These monsters are powerful and destructive. Earth and Sky also produce the Titans, the youngest of whom, Cronus, overcomes his sire and fathers the next generation of immortals who will be known as the gods of Olympus. These gods control the world in Greek myth. Thus, from the confusion of Chaos came darkness and Love; Eros provides the spark that generates life from Chaos. The living beings thus formed control the world around them.

The Greek myth of creation begins in Chaos. The novel Babel-17 begins in the same way. To understand Rydra, it is first necessary to understand the age in which Rydra lives. On the planet Earth a general seeks out an ex-cryptographer/poet to help his government break a code

that threatens defeat for Earth in this war. War, like Chaos, is confusion. The daily lives of people are disrupted and quite often terminated. Industry must change gears to accommodate military endeavors. Concentration shifts from the needs of individuals to the needs of the war effort. This confusion causes a break in communications. The gap thus formed drives people apart even more. In Babel-17 the twenty-year war has created just such a gap. Six embargoes have strangled one port city on Earth, forcing its citizens into panic, riots, and even cannibalism. The embargo is a shell that separates them from other people on the planet. The two groups of people who work in this city are also split into Customs and Transport. General Forester sums up Customs' attitude: "Them [Transport people]? It's like trying to talk to something out of your bad dreams. Transport. Who can talk to people like that?" (p. 225). One of Rydra's crew members verbalizes Transport's view to a Customs Officer:

> "Aw, you hide in your Customs cage, cage hid in the safe gravity of Earth, Earth held firm by the sun, sun fixed headlong toward Vega, all in the predicted tade of this spiral arm-- . . . And you never break free! . . . You have nothing to say to me." (p. 47)

Even between individuals there exists this break in communication, this silence. When General Forester leaves Rydra, he is in a highly emotional state; he has fallen in love with her but has tried to conceal it. He thinks: "I didn't communicate a thing! Somewhere in the depths the words, not a thing, you're still safe. But stronger on the surface

was the outrage at his own silence" (p. 16). The shell of an embargo, the cage of Customs, and the silence of individuals all widen the gap between people. At the War Yards on another planet a shield protects the planet from the rays of a sun, but it also shields the people's minds "[s]o they don't have to think about what they're doing" (p. 112). Even Baron Ver Dorco, the head of war research on the planet, recognizes the separation prevalent in his world: "We live in a world of isolated communities, each hardly touching its neighbor, each speaking, as it were, a different language" (p. 84). Isolation, lack of closeness, and communication problems all represent the world of the novel. These are Rydra Wong's times.

As Rydra puts it, "I'm part of my times. I'd like to transcend my times, but the times themselves have a good deal to do with who I am" (p. 12). The confusion in her age is a reflection of the chaos in her mind. As a poet she is popular--on both sides of the war, the Alliance and the Invaders. Her position is comparatively comfortable and safe. But now a problem challenges her security. She realizes that the thoughts in her poetry are not her thoughts but those of other people. She explains her writing process to her closest friend, Dr. Marcus "Mocky" T'mwarba:

> "I listen to other people, stumbling about with their half thoughts and half sentences and their clumsy feelings that they can't express, and it hurts me. So I go home and burnish it and polish it and weld it to a rhythmic frame, make the dull colors gleam, mute the garish artificiality to pastels,

> so it doesn't hurt any more: that's my poem. I know what they want to say, and I say it for them. . . . [But] [w]hat I want to say, what I want to express, I just ... I can't say it." (pp. 19-20)

Rydra can not find her own voice although she has always felt herself to be a linguistic expert. By the age of twelve she knew seven Earth languages and five extraterrestrial ones. She "pick[s] up languages like most people pick up the lyrics to popular songs" (p. 9). Rydra's talent made her famous in the cryptography department where she worked for several years; she had a reputation as "the little girl who could crack anything" (p. 11). Rydra's popularity as a poet is of three years duration already--at a time when fame often lasted much less time than that. But now she wants to communicate her own thoughts, and she can not: "All the misunderstandings that tie the world up and keep people apart were quivering before me at once, waiting for me to untangle them, explain them, and I couldn't. I didn't know the words, the grammar, the syntax" (p. 24). Rydra can not communicate her thoughts, her self. She has lost her "I," just as another character, the Butcher, has; and just as many people of her times have.

According to George Slusser in his critique of Samuel R. Delany's Babel-17, "People seek to name themselves in order to exist."[52] Concentration on the war and its consequences has de-emphasized the importance of the individual. Human beings feel lost in their community. They have lost their identity. One example is "Danil D. Appleby, who seldom thought of himself by his name--he was a Customs Officer" (p. 30). He

has even lost one letter in his first name. When he comments upon a Transport captain's strange body adornments, he de-names the captain and lumps the whole group together in his condemnation: "They're all so weird. That's why decent people won't have anything to do with them" (p. 33). Two of Rydra's crew members are searching for a third person to love and make their triad complete. The Butcher, Rydra's close friend on the shadowship, does not even use the word "I" or any of its forms when he is speaking. Also, he is known by an epithet--the Butcher--and not by a name. A group of people had captured him and erased his memory. When he escaped, he "escaped with nothing: no memory, voice, words, name" (p. 182). He so desparately needs a name to exist, though, that he uses his fist to pound his chest when referring to himself. But he lacks the words to name himself. He can converse with other people, but he cannot communicate anything about himself. Rydra Wong has the same problem. As linguistically adept as she is in conversing with other people, she has reached the point where she needs to communicate her own ideas poetically. And she cannot. These new ideas also frighten her. But Rydra decides to face her fears and overcome them. She will do this by unraveling the mystery of Babel-17.

Rydra's quest is to find out about Babel-17. Into the chaos of her mind has come this language. In the creation myth, from Chaos came Erebus, the gloom of the underworld. Babel-17 means death for Rydra's Earth and its allies; it is the communication that precedes major sabotage attempts that are frighteningly successful against the Alliance. Babel-17 is the gloom and loss of hope that depresses those in the military who know of its existence; its effectiveness and incomprehensibility

cause despair. In the underworld of Greek myth is a river called Lethe, the river of forgetfulness. When a soul is ready for a new life, it drinks from this river so it will forget all of its former life.[53] In the same way, as Rydra eventually discovers, Babel-17 takes away a person's identity. As she explains to General Forester, "It 'programs' a self-contained schizoid personality into the mind of whoever learns it . . . This 'personality' has the general desire to destroy the Alliance at any cost" (p. 243). This is the spy who twice sabotaged Rydra's ship: Rydra herself, when Babel-17 controlled her. By learning the language, Rydra acquires this schizoid personality. Rydra must learn to face this part of her identity.

In the Greek myths, from Chaos also came Night. Rydra knows part of the dark side of her nature. She knows her linguistic achievements are imperfect; she stuttered when she was younger and still has a tendency to do so when she is frightened. Other people call her the voice of the age in which she lives; only she realizes that her poems are not hers and is concerned. The Butcher's brutality in killing an enemy on the Invader ship and in plunging a knife into the eye of an assassin "fascinated her" (p. 164); later she accepts the fact that she is just as capable of violent actions as he is: "I thought I was afraid before because I couldn't do what you could do, Butcher. . . . But I was afraid because I could do all those things" (p. 208). When she enters Butcher's mind telepathically, her mind appears as a blinding light to him. But when she looks closer at herself, she sees the darkness growing, the darkness that is Babel-17, the darkness that caused her to try to destroy her own ship.

From the darkness of Night and the gloom of Erebus came Eros--love. Because of Babel-17 Rydra sets off on a series of adventures that eventually lead her to the Butcher and the only hope the Alliance has to defeat the sabotages. Because of the dark side of her own nature, she is at once attracted and repelled by the supposedly "evil" Butcher. His epithet presupposes an uncaring attitude toward death and killing. The scar on his arm labels him a criminal who had served time in a harsh penal institution. By his own admission, he stole money and killed eleven people in three days. But Rydra sees more in him than just his criminal side, the dark side of his nature; and she falls in love with him. Her love for the Butcher causes her to expend the time and energy needed to teach him the words "I" and "you." This knowledge makes him less lonely. It also gives him a reason for living. Before, with no "I," he had no ego, no self-identity, and no direction for his life. Now, with the "I," he may still have no past memory, but he does have a present and a future. He has a purpose to his life: to stay free and not be caught to serve in prison again. Rydra also has a direction in her life now that involves another person; after she delivers the tapes of Babel-17 to General Forester, she wants to return to Butcher.

Another parallel, however, exists between the creation myth and the novel. Day and the Aether were produced next in the Greek creation myth. Day is light, and light is understanding. Understanding comes to Rydra in two forms. She learns to speak Babel-17, and she realizes both its great potential and its basic weaknesses. The second part of Rydra's understanding is about herself; she begins to see a part of herself that she does not want to face. No one likes to think of the violent side of

human nature that is within each human being. Rydra spends so much of her time smoothing over ruffled feelings and gaps in communication that she tends to ignore her potential for violence. The Butcher compels her to look inward and to come to the realization that she is the one who is the saboteur of her own ship. Because she has finally named the enemy, she can now control that part of her brain and is no longer "in the dark" about how Babel-17 works. Darkness has given way to understanding. And the gloom and despair of Erebus is replaced by the hope and the brightness of the Aether. Because Rydra and the Butcher have named Babel-17 as the spy within themselves, there is hope that this spy can be defeated. Rydra and the Butcher can control it enough to stop the sabotage. Rydra introduces the missing elements, "I" and "you," into the language and thus changes it into a tool for the Alliance instead of against it. Now there is hope that the war will soon be over. Furthermore, the use of Babel-18, which is the corrected version of Babel-17, will bring more people together by narrowing the communication gap.

Moreover, in the creation myth the product of Chaos and Eros is life. Love is the element that generates life from matter. Likewise, Rydra's love for the Butcher begins to order the chaos in her mind. The chaos in her world will begin to dissipate when the war is over. Much as the people will begin a new life, so too Rydra will have a new life with the Butcher. One product of Chaos was Earth, the mother of all life. The planet Earth in the novel has been rescued from a deadly fate; it has a new lease on life. Earth also refers to Rydra's poetry. Rydra is talking to her psychiatrist-friend, Dr. T'mwarba who makes her realize this correlation:

"And as I see into this language, I begin to see . . . too much."

"It sounds very poetical."

She laughed. "You always say that to me to bring me back to earth."

". . . Good poets tend to be practical and abhor mysticism." (p. 26)

Poetry, according to Delany, is down to earth and practical. From the chaos of Rydra's mind comes poetry.

"Poet" comes from a Greek word meaning maker or builder. A poet, using words as the materials of construction, creates a new structure. Rydra, as a poet, is creating her own identity. She is doing this by using words, especially the words of Babel-17. According to George Slusser in his booklet The Delany Intersection, in this novel the "hero struggles to give communicable order to words." The emphasis in Babel-17 is not on deeds but on controlling language.[54] But language concerns more than just speaking with words. Many kinds of communication are studied in the novel. One word for this study is "semiotics." According to Webster's New Standard Dictionary, semiotics is the "science or language of signs." But in his article "Semiotics, Space Opera, and Babel-17," William Hardesty thinks Delany uses the word semiotics to mean "the discipline that deals with all the ways in which human beings communicate."[55] One basic human need is to communicate with another. There are many ways of communicating, and Rydra is adept at comprehending most of them. Aside from the many languages she can understand, she

also "reads" the heraldry of Baron Ver Dorco. She reads gestures and body movements to understand what a person is trying to say; for example, she is able to discern the reactions of one of her crew members: his muscles "were living cords that snapped and sang out their messages" (p. 154). She knows when he is having problems because she sees it in his muscles. Her psychiatrist tells her that her muscle-reading is more like mind-reading, but Rydra does not believe him in the beginning. Rydra talks with the three discorporate ghosts who are her crew members, but she does not use a special machine as other living beings need to. She figures out a method of remembering what they have said; this remembrance allows them to feel human by successfully communicating with someone. Rydra reads the bizarre body adornments as just another method people use to express who they are, much as sailors use tattoos. Rydra is quite proficient in understanding these communications; she knows what others are trying to say. But she can not communicate her thoughts to others. As she admits, even her poems are others' thoughts. She sums up her communication talent and problem in a conversation with her psychiatrist/friend: "It's easy to repeat; it's hard to speak, Mocky" (p. 20). She can "read" other people and say back to them their communication, thus reinforcing their identities. But "speaking" is creating and presenting one's own identity for contemplation.

Rydra can repeat others' identities, but she has a difficult time communicating her self. "In the beginning was the word. . . . Until something is named, it doesn't exist" (p. 170). Until Rydra can name who she is by communicating to others her own identity, she does not exist as herself. She is a great poet or a captain of a ship or a

cryptography expert, but she is not Rydra Wong, the person. "Words were symbols for whole categories of things, where a name was put to a single object . . .; and individual was a type of thing for which symbols were inadequate, and so names were invented" (p. 126). Rydra wants to "invent" or create her identity. She does this by learning and thinking in a new language called Babel-17.

The first step in her quest is to talk to someone. That someone is Dr. T'mwarba. Rydra is not asking for his permission or even asking for his advice. She uses him as a sounding board to clarify her own thoughts, to strengthen her determination to begin this quest. Her next step is to make preparations for a journey to the place where she can find answers to her questions; her destination is the War Yards on another planet. For this journey she will need help: a crew to pilot her ship to this distant planet. When she chooses these crew members, she looks for compatibility factors. She needs people with whom she can talk. After careful study, she has learned enough about Babel-17 that she can compose a message to send to whomever would be transmitting in that language, should the opportunity arrive for her to do so. Rydra is afraid of the language and of the people who think in that language. But she reaches out to try to communicate with them anyway. By facing her fears and eventually naming their source, she is controlling her inward confusion. At the War Yards a transmission in Babel-17 is received. Rydra sends back her pre-taped message. This broadcast may have saved her life because it could be the reason the Butcher convinced his captain to rescue Rydra's pilotless ship as it was about to plunge into a star and destroy itself. The Butcher knows Babel-17 but does not realize it;

the Invaders sent him as a spy into Alliance territory, giving him knowledge of Babel-17 with which to destroy the enemy but taking from him his memory, his name, and even the concept of himself as an individual. Rydra decides to try to teach the Butcher about his "I." This, as George Slusser writes, forces her to clarify her own "I"; "[a]nd at the heart of self she discovers another paradox, that of the communication process itself: the 'I' must be abandoned to another, a 'you,' before it can be known at all."[56] Or, as he puts it in another way, "monologue becomes dialogue only when she enters Butcher's mind, and gazes on new, terrifying areas of her own being in the mirror of another."[57] Rydra in fear links her mind telepathically with the Butcher's mind. In his mind she sees her fears conquered. Once when she was thirteen, Rydra had been extremely frightened in an incident with a myna bird. The bird had been taught to say, with earthworms as a reward, "Hello, Rydra, it's a fine day out and I'm happy" (p. 28) as a surprise for Rydra. But Rydra telepathically saw in the bird's mind that this meant only that another earthworm was coming. Still in link with the bird's mind, Rydra screamed because she saw the earthworm as almost as tall as she was and that she was expected to eat it. In the Butcher's mind, Rydra sees herself as the Butcher, killing and eating huge worm-like creatures to keep from starving. Rydra's fear has now been faced. In the Butcher's mind Rydra thinks about the definition of "I" and, as a mirror reflection, the definition of "you": "I/Aye/Eye, the self, a sailor's 'yes,' the organ of visual perception" and "You/Ewe/Yew, the other self, a female sheep, the Celtic vegetative symbol for death" (p. 205). These "I" and "you" words reflect opposites as well as similarities. Aye is positive and

the no of death is negative. The eye is passively viewing life; the ewe is actively living life. Man, other animals, and plants are all living things. The words themselves are homonyms--pronounced the same but with different spellings and meanings. But by their very opposition, they define each other. There can not be only one word called a homonym; two are necessary. "Hot" would be an unknown quantity were it not that "cold" also exists. For a person to know himself, he must know someone else: "the 'I' must be abandoned to another, a 'you,' before it can be known at all." Rydra becomes the Butcher telepathically and thus is able to see herself more clearly. This knowledge about herself will allow her to change: "What you perceive you change, Butcher. But you must perceive it" (p. 204). Rydra sees herself as a lot bigger than she thinks she is; she perceives herself as she is. Now she can change.

Change is necessary for Rydra to grow as a person and as a poet. But it is also necessary to become free. Up until she links up with the Butcher's mind, Babel-17 has controlled her actions. She unconsciously almost destroys her own ship twice. Even when she purposely thinks in Babel-17 and uses it to destroy her enemies, her bodily reaction afterwards is to become physically ill. When she perceives herself, she changes her view of herself. Now she can control Babel-17 enough to stop the sabotage. But she is still not completely free. Babel-17 prevents her from being herself in gestures and tone of voice and all the little qualities that make a person an individual. Her mind is locked with the Butcher's mind to help him control Babel-17. To free both people, one more thing is needed: his memory.

Delany begins Part Five of the novel with a poem by Marilyn Hacker, the last two lines of which are: "I ask cold air, 'What is the word that frees?' / The wind says, 'Change,' and the white sun, 'Remember'" (p. 211). To be free, a person must remember what happened in the past but must keep changing and growing toward a future. A person must plant his feet on solid earth yet keep his eyes fixed on the heavens; he must know where he's been and where he's going. Rydra and the Butcher have both changed and grown because of their relationship. Rydra knows from where she comes. But the Butcher had his memory taken away by the Invaders. When Dr. T'mwarba with Rydra's help figures out how to return his memory, both he and Rydra are freed from Babel-17's control. They in turn, now control Babel-17. This gives them mastery of the war situation, and they can quickly bring it to an end.

Rydra's quest is completed for the moment. She has ordered the chaos in her mind and created her identity. Out of the darkness and self-doubt has come understanding and self-confidence. This growing and changing has freed her from control by others, and given her a new outlook on life. She takes charge of events around her and will thus affect the lives of others for the better. All people go through periods of self-doubt. Delany says that the only way of overcoming these fears is to face them honestly. Fear breeds confusion, and confusion breeds fear. Those would be dark days for the people involved. But a person can remember the past, as in the patterns of the Greek myths, and can choose to form his identity out of the chaos.

As already stated in connection with Prometheus in the previous chapter, the focus of today's world is not on the gods or the superhuman

forces creating the universe. Today the focus concentrates on man and his role in the dynamics of life. Man today does not seek control by outside forces. He chooses to decide for himself how to think and feel and react. He takes control of his own life rather than allowing society, external forces, or other human beings to determine the direction in his life. When an individual gains control of his inner chaos, he then can come to terms with the outer chaos. Thus he can affect positive changes in his world.

CHAPTER IV

THERE IS NO DEATH, ONLY MUSIC

In Nova the main character combines and follows the mythic patterns of two Greek heroes and in his quest creates a new kind of hero for the present. In Babel-17 the main character embodies the essence of the myth of creation, although the context of the myth has changed from the outer chaos of the universe to the inner chaos of the individual. In the third novel, The Einstein Intersection, Delany illustrates another choice man has in using Greek mythology today: man can invert the mythical patterns to achieve his quest. Lévi-Strauss calls myth the "resolution of unwelcome resolutions."[58] Delany goes one step farther and says the resolution of the quest may be a contradiction of the myth itself. For Delany, myths are so versatile that even their inversion can provide a model to assist man on his quests. The choice and decision, as always, rest with the person himself.

Delany's The Einstein Intersection concerns one individual's quest to find his dead girlfriend and to kill whatever killed her. Lobey, the main character, lives a peaceful and happy existence until something kills Friza, his girl. This "something" is killing many individuals who are "different." Lobey's friend and mother-advisor tells Lobey he must seek out and destroy this something. First Lobey must kill a huge bull to prepare himself for the quest. After its death, Lobey learns that there is a chance he can get Friza back. He rescues a dragon and joins

a group of dragon herders on their way to the city to sell their stock. The dragon herders broaden Lobey's view of the world. He learns a lot about other people and behaviors and a lot about himself--including his own "difference." Lobey discovers that much of the music he plays on his machete/flute comes from the minds of those around him. He also learns about the character he is seeking: Kid Death. When Lobey nears the city Branning-at-sea, he is unsure about who he is and what his quest is. Once in the city Lobey becomes even more lost in the mob of beings around him. Spider, the leader of the dragon herders, points out to him the next place to go to get some of his questions answered. At the pleasure palace Lobey meets the Dove who presents him with a choice. He can have the illusion of Friza or he can ask for the real Friza from one of his friends, Green-eye, who is dying. When Green-eye does not bring Friza back, Lobey in anger kills him. The next day a discouraged Lobey meets Kid Death for the fourth time. Kid Death attempts to kill Lobey, but Spider intervenes. Lobey plays music on his machete to prevent Kid Death from destroying Spider while Spider is killing Kid Death. Afterwards, Lobey realizes that he, like Kid Death and Green-eye, has power over life and death; he could bring back Green-eye, who then could return Friza. But Lobey has learned much in his quest and realizes he has so much more to learn before he should take that action. At the end Lobey once more leaves his familiar surroundings on a quest, only this time he is more certain of the nature of the quest: self-knowledge.

This novel revolves around the hero's attempts to define his identity through the mythical patterns in which he wanders. "The central subject of the book is myth" (p. 71), as Delany tells the reader in one

of the autobiographical segments that begin some of the chapters. Casey Fredericks in The Future of Eternity discusses myth in this novel as "a search for form in a chaotic world."[59] Lobey and the other inhabitants of earth truly live in a chaotic world. They are aliens who have come to an abandoned earth. The reason for all of the earth people's departure is not explained precisely: they could have advanced to another level or they could have destroyed themselves. But these aliens have arrived and "tried to take their form, their memories, their myths. But they don't fit" (p. 139). The human body form is changing through genetic mutations. Some music, a ghost-town of a city, and the memory banks of a saucy computer named PHAEDRA are the only memories that remain of human beings. And their myths remain. Earth's new inhabitants are radically different from human beings, and the world is very much changed from our known world. Because of this, as Casey Fredericks notes in "Revivals of Ancient Mythologies in Current Science Fiction and Fantasy," "only our myths could be useful to them because only myths are free and uncategorical enough to be of use in a world that operates under laws that are completely at odds with our own."[60] The aliens are trying so hard to become human; so, they use any and all of the myths. That is why so much mythology pervades the novel.

Steven Scobie in his article, "Different Mazes: Mythology in Samuel R. Delany's 'The Einstein Intersection,'" divides all of these myths into three levels: fictional myth, religious myth, and historical myth.[61] The fictional myth includes heroes from Greek mythology; while people do not believe in the stories literally, they do believe that they contain some truth. The religious myth refers to stories believed

to be true by many people today as part of their religion. Kid Death stands for evil and the devil, Satan. Spider, the leader of the dragon herders, claims to be Judas Iscariot who will turn over Green-eye to be killed. Green-eye is Jesus Christ. H. Jane Gardiner in her article, "Images of The Wasteland in The Einstein Intersection," points out the similarities between Green-eye and Jesus Christ.[62] Both had a partheno-genic birth; they had no corporeal father. At their births, wise men came: to give honor to Christ and to curiously examine Green-eye. Both are celibate by choice. They both go into the desert to evaluate their self-identity: Jesus Christ through prayer and Green-eye by herding dragons. Both are tempted in the desert by the devil, both enter their home city in a triumphal procession on the eve of their betrayal, and both die on a tree. Green-eye, like Friza and Spider and Lobey, is different. Kid Death would like to kill Green-eye, but Green-eye is beyond Kid Death's reach. It is Lobey, Green-eye's friend and betrayer, who destroys Green-eye's chance to enter the city secretively and quietly, and whose last stroke of his machete ends Green-eye's life.

Along with fictional myth and religious myth, there is also much historical myth. Historical myths are based on historical fact and have become embroidered into mythical legends. As one of Stephen Scobie's students remarked, these aliens "have made myths out of us."[63] The human race are like gods to these new inhabitants. So the heroes of this world become the heroes of myth. Popular culture is represented in four major characters. Bonny William, alias Kid Death, stands for William H. Bonney, alias Billy the Kid, whose supreme accomplishment in life was death; he is known for having killed twenty-one men in the

twenty-one years he was alive. Spider is Pat Garrett, Billy the Kid's friend who betrayed him. The Dove represents Jean Harlowe, a sex symbol from the movies. And Lobey becomes Ringo Starr, "the one Beatle who did not sing" (p. 12). All death and all life is termed "the great rock and the great roll" (p. 12). Twentieth-century popular culture heroes--criminal, movie star, and musician--have become the myths of this new earth.

These modern myths, however, are just different versions of older myths, the myths of the Greeks. Kid Death is Hades, who rules over the dead. Death has power from which no one escapes. Kid Death tells Lobey, "I'm bringing you down here to me. If I didn't want you, you'd never find me. Because I do want you, there's no way you can avoid me" (p. 55). The Dove is Helen of Troy, the most beautiful woman on earth, every man's desire; because of the Dove's special talent, the ability to change into the person most loved by her client, she is the most desired person in the city. Spider is Minos, a king and a judge in the underworld. Lobey must talk to Spider in this city and must answer his questions adequately before Spider will allow him to go to the place where the Dove is, in order to seek Friza. The Dove's palace is like the land of the dead in that the people there do not believe in the real; ghostly illusions keep them happy and contented. These characters represent persons in Greek mythology, but the mythological emphasis revolves around the main character, Lobey.

Lobey is similar to three characters in Greek mythology: Pan, Theseus, and Orpheus. A Homeric hymn describes Pan as "a noisy, merry god."[64] He is the god of flocks and shepherds and goatherds. He even

physically resembles animals because he has the horns of a goat on his head and goat's hoofs instead of feet. All wild places are his home, and he personifies Nature itself. He is also known for his music. According to Bulfinch, when the nymph named Syrinx whom Pan was pursuing changed into reeds, he cut the reeds and fashioned them into a musical instrument which he called a syrinx.[65] Pan became an expert musician, although not as good as Orpheus, and led the nymphs in their dances in the wilds. Pan survives today in the Christian description of the devil; from the fun-loving merry god of nature he has become the symbol of evil. Pan also survives in the word "panic." Edith Hamilton explains his connection with the word: "Sounds heard in a wilderness at night by the trembling traveler were supposed to be made by him, so it is easy to see how the expression 'panic' fear arose."[66]

Lobey is very much like Pan. He is a goatherder, just as Pan is the god of goatherds. Lobey's description is also animal-like:

> Ugly and grinning most of the time. That's a whole lot of big nose and gray eyes and wide mouth crammed on a small brown face proper for a fox. . . . I have a figure like a bowling pin, thighs, calves, and feet of a man (gorilla?) twice my size (which is about five-nine) and hips to match. (p. 1)

Lobey plays a musical instrument: his machete, which has twenty holes in the cylindrical blade and a mouthpiece in the handle. He also leads individuals in the dance. At the end of the novel when Lobey is in the Dove's palace, she invites him to play, not realizing Lobey's unique musical talent. Lobey also can reach into the minds of the Dove's

patrons and play the music that they have hidden there. Thus, as Pan's entrance into the minds of travelers inspires fear, the experience of chaos, so Lobey's entrance and his playing back of their music helps the people to order the chaos in their minds. Just as Rydra Wong in Babel-17 reads the poems in others' minds, so Lobey reads the music in their minds. By acting as sounding boards or mirrors, both characters could quell some of the chaos in the people around them. Unlike Rydra, Lobey finds his own song a lot sooner and with sadness; the song mourns the death of his Friza. In taking the music from another's mind, Lobey first startles that person, which could lead to panic. But Delany demonstrates that the opposite is true also; instead of causing chaos, the music clarifies a person's thoughts so that the people in the Dove's palace realize their illusions and dance their way toward reality. As Spider explains to Lobey, "They're hungry for their own future. . . . The Dove leads them in the dance, now" (p. 146).

The second Greek mythological character that Lobey resembles is Theseus. As an adventurer, Theseus is best known for his battle in the labyrinth with the half-man/half-bull creature called the Minotaur. The city of Athens has been forced to send a tribute of seven maidens and seven youths periodically to King Minos, who sends them into the labyrinth where they wander until the Minotaur finds them and devours them. Theseus has just arrived in Athens after a series of heroic confrontations with evil men and monsters. He volunteers to be one of these youths so that he can kill the Minotaur and end the tribute. He is assisted by King Minos' daughter Ariadne, who has fallen in love with him. She gives him a ball of thread with which to find his way out of

the labyrinth, should he be successful in destroying the Minotaur. He does succeed, but the myths diverge on his choice of weapons. Edith Hamilton writes that Theseus killed the Minotaur with his bare hands.[67] Thomas Bulfinch says that Ariadne provided him with a sword with which to slay the Minotaur.[68] After the Minotaur has been killed, Theseus returns to Athens and begins his career as a political hero.

Theseus is the national hero of Athens. G. S. Kirk in The Nature of Greek Myths states that the name Theseus means something like "Establisher."[69] When Theseus returns to Athens after defeating the Minotaur, he becomes the new king. Then Theseus breaks with tradition and introduces a new idea: he establishes a democracy in Athens. Edith Hamilton explains his actions: "He declared to the people that he did not wish to rule over them; he wanted a people's government where all would be equal. He resigned his royal power and organized a commonwealth, building a council hall where the citizens should gather and vote."[70] Theseus also wins a special place in the hearts of the people when he gives sanctuary to Oedipus, an unhappy and ill-fated man who unknowingly commits the unforgivable crimes of killing his own father and marrying his mother. For Theseus' kind action of offering a safe home for Oedipus, he becomes for the Athenians "the embodiment of merciful human justice," as Michael Grant relates.[71] So Theseus becomes known for his adventurous exploits and his humanitarianism.

Like Theseus, Lobey destroys a monster and liberates a city. Lobey's monster is also a man-like bull. It is a huge creature: according to Lobey, "His eyeball must have been big as my head" (p. 21). It is like a man in that "there were hands with horny hairy fingers thick as my

arm where he should have had forehooves" (p. 21). Unlike the Minotaur of Greek mythology, this creature is not endangering anyone. It has kept itself confined to the proximity of the source cave. But Lo Hawk, the male leader of Lobey's village, tells Lobey they must hunt down the beast and kill it. Lo Hawk gets injured and sends Lobey on alone to destroy the creature because "[y]ou must learn to hunt, and hunt well" (p. 24). Theseus knew the reason he had to destroy the Minotaur was to save lives. The monster's death marked the end of his quest. Lobey's purpose for confronting the bull is less clear to him. But it marks the beginning of his quest. La Dire tells him he must hunt down and destroy whatever killed Friza. In the source cave, Lobey broadens his purpose for the quest. Lobey follows the bull into the labyrinthian passageways of the source cave where he kills it. Then he meets the computer called PHAEDRA (Psychic Harmony and Entangled Deranged Response Associations). In Greek mythology Phaedra was the daughter of King Minos who became the second wife of Theseus. She fell in love with the son of Theseus, who rejected her. In despair she killed herself but left a note accusing the son of dishonoring her. Theseus cursed his son, and the gods soon fulfilled his curse by causing the death of the young man. Theseus learns too late that it was his wife Phaedra who betrayed him, not his son. Lobey also encounters PHAEDRA, but she represents a completely different character.

S. G. Fredericks in his article "Revivals of Ancient Mythologies in Current Science Fiction and Fantasy" calls Lobey's confrontation in the cave with the bull and the computer the hero's descent into the Underworld to experience old humanity's "collective unconscious," using

Jung's terminology.[72] Most great heroes in Greek mythology ventured down to the Underworld, the land of the dead, to ask for guidance from the souls who are there. Lobey searches for the bull in the source cave, an unexplored labyrinth of a bygone era. He converses with a computer, the sole/soul remains of the consciousness of humanity. In this case, though, PHAEDRA does not betray this hero. She admits that she cannot guide him out of the cave, and she suggests to him that he might get Friza back. But PHEDRA offers no other help than to tell him, "You're in the wrong maze . . . And I'm the wrong girl to get you into the right one" (p. 34).

Theseus, after the Minotaur's defeat, freed the people of Athens to govern themselves soon after his arrival in that city. Lobey liberated the people of Branning-at-sea to seek their own future. They had been living under the Dove's illusions. But the music that Lobey played put order back into their minds, just as Theseus put power back into the people's hands. He returned the future to these people; they can control their own destinies.

Lobey is like Pan in physical appearance and Theseus in his exploits. But his quest closely resembles the pattern of another mythological character: Orpheus. Orpheus is best known for his music. According to Bulfinch, he is "a poet whose music moved even inanimate objects."[73] G. S. Kirk discusses Orpheus' "wonderful power of drawing to him birds, beasts, fishes, even stones, by his singing and lyre-playing."[74] With his music, Orpheus had power over living things: no animal would attack him. But his power also extended over non-living things: he could "move" inanimate objects, both physically and emotionally. By

endowing inanimate objects with motion, Orpheus is making them come alive. In this way he has power over life and death. His music gives him power over life and death in yet another way. When Orpheus' beloved Eurydice dies, he ventures down to Hades to bring her back. With his beautiful music, he charms his way into the abode of the dead. There his music pleads his case for him, and he wins. Eurydice will follow him back to the land of the living if Orpheus does not look back at her until she is out of the underworld. Orpheus at the last instant does look back and therefore loses Eurydice once more.

Lobey, like Pan and Orpheus, is noted for his music. Like Orpheus, Lobey loses his beloved Friza and attempts to get her back from the dead. But Lobey's maze does not follow the exact pattern of the Orpheus myth. Orpheus is told not to look back or he will lose Eurydice. Lobey holds the Dove, changed into the illusion of Friza, in his arms. He loses her when he looks away, when he looks at the reality of Green-eye dying on a tree. When Orpheus loses Eurydice the second time, he has lost her for good; there is no other chance of returning to Hades to get her. But Lobey realizes at the end of the novel that he has the opportunity of getting Friza back. He, like Orpheus, has the power over life and death. Lobey can bring back the ones he has killed. His last stroke with his machete killed Green-eye. Green-eye has the power to create. If Lobey brings Green-eye back, Green-eye can bring Friza back. The Orphic myth this time does not have to end in sadness. Orpheus chose to look back and thus lost his Eurydice. At the end of the novel, Lobey knows that he could bring Green-eye back. He chooses not to do so at that moment,

but that does not mean he never will. Lobey still has the opportunity to regain Friza.

The return of Friza is the goal of Lobey's quest. After her death Lobey loses his interest in life. All is chaos to him, the nothingness of anything substantial. Nothing seems important to him any more. His friends try to pull him out of his depression by giving him a reason to move: Lo Easy says, "Help us hunt for the two missing kids [goats]?" (p. 11). Lo Hawk tries also: "Come hunting, Lo Lobey. There's a bull been seen a mile south. Horns as long as your arm, they say" (p. 11). The hunt is like a quest. Both are a search for something; both challenge the individual to reach his highest potential. A quest gives a person a direction in his life, a goal for which to strive. Lo Easy and Lo Hawk try to interest Lo Lobey in a hunt, but it is La Dire who finally breaks through his apathy. She tells him he is needed in a different kind of hunt: he must "kill whatever killed Friza" (p. 12). This idea finally touches Lobey and he comes out of his shell. He goes to Lo Hawk to help in hunting the huge bull. Lobey becomes frightened of the bull, especially when it injures Lo Hawk. But Lo Hawk commands Lobey to continue the hunt alone and kill the creature. Lo Hawk realizes that on Lobey's quest he will have to face his fears and destroy them in order to succeed. Lo Hawk does not understand the nature of Lobey's quest as La Dire does, but he tries to teach Lobey how to hunt or quest. H. Jane Gardiner in her article, "Images of The Waste Land in The Einstein Intersection," refers to the killing of the bull as a ritual, a representation or rehearsal for the hoped-for event but not the reality of the event itself.[75] Just as Theseus wandered through the maze of the

labyrinth in search of the Minotaur, Lobey wanders through the passage-ways of the source cave in search of the bull. But just as Theseus' determination and courage serve as an example for others, Lobey's maze also has a deeper meaning. It represents his search for his identity. Casey Fredericks in his book The Future of Eternity states that "the problem for the quest-hero of the novel, a male normal named Lo Lobey, is to find out what he is."[76] At first this identifying process is negative. As Stephen Scobie points out in his article "Different Mazes: Mythology in Samuel R. Delany's 'The Einstein Intersection,'" Lobey first defines himself in the loss of another. The music he plays to mourn Friza is his own melody, not one taken from another character's mind. Orpheus likewise is remembered for his loss of Eurydice and his descent to the land of the dead to regain her.[77] La Dire breaks through Lobey's emotional barrier by suggesting a negative hunt: a quest for revenge on whoever killed Friza. But she realizes, as Lobey does not at first, that there is more to his quest. She tries to teach him about mythology and the variations possible and, indirectly, about himself:

> "Let's talk about mythology, Lobey. Or let's you listen. . . . You remember the legend of the Beatles? You remember the Beatle Ringo left his Maureen love even though she treated him tender. He was the one Beatle who did not sing, so the earliest forms of the legend go. After a hard day's night he and the rest of the Beatles were torn apart by screaming girls, and he and the other Beatles returned, finally at one, with the great rock and the great roll. . . . Well, that myth is a

> version of a much older story that is not so well known. . . . In the older story Ringo was / called Orpheus. He too was torn apart by screaming girls. But the details are different. He lost his love--in this version Eurydice--and she went straight to the great rock and the great roll, where Orpheus had to go to get her back. He went singing, for in this version Orpheus was the greatest singer, instead of the silent one. In myths things always turn into their opposites as one version supersedes the next." . . .
>
> "Did he bring her back?" [Lobey asks.]
>
> "No."
>
> [Lobey] looked from La Dire's old face and turned [his] head in her lap to the trees. "He lied, then. He didn't really go. He probably went off into the woods for a while and just made up some story when he came back."
>
> "Perhaps," La Dire said. (pp. 12-13)

La Dire points out that details of myths are different and that even inversions of the same myths are possible. When Lobey denies the truth of the people involved, La Dire acknowledges that even Lobey's ideas may be accurate. Lobey remains unconvinced, and La Dire realizes he must discover for himself his identity by following his own maze on his quest.

Lobey's quest is not the simple purpose of revenge as he believes it to be in the beginning. His maze and quest become more complicated as he meets more characters and asks more questions. When Lobey talks with the computer PHAEDRA, she suggests that he might get his Friza back.

Now Lobey is questioning others about the method to accomplish that, along with questioning them about the whereabouts of Kid Death in order to kill him. Then Lobey is told that he is different. At first he is puzzled about the nature of his difference, but no one will tell him what it is; he discovers later that his difference is his talent for playing the music in other people's minds. When Lobey leaves his village, the maze becomes even more confusing. Outside of his home, he finds out about the multiplicity of views that people can have. While herding dragons, Lobey learns that his "Lo" title signifies nothing. The survival of the individual is what counts; being alive is more important than being normal. Many of the herders are different, but differences here are not shameful; they are probably contributing factors to the individual's survival. Just outside of the city, Branning-at-sea, Lobey learns that people in the city have yet another worldview. "La" and "Lo" are titles reserved for upper class families, regardless of the individuals' normalcy or survival characteristics. Lobey is told to keep his differences to himself. To speak about them would classify him as vulgar; to point out other people's differences would insult them. Lobey keeps asking questions: about life in the city, about Kid Death, about the Dove. But his questions revolve around the same single point with which he started out: his quest for Friza. Even when he finds out that he has inadvertently betrayed his friend Green-eye by spoiling the possibility of his quiet re-entry into the city and endangering his life, Lobey still has only one thought in mind; "What will happen? . . . I mean what's going to happen to me" (p. 113). Though Lobey has asked a lot of questions, he has not really listened to

the answers. His mind is set on one path toward one goal, and he does not realize that his maze has alternative passageways and alternative goals.

Lobey seeks to order the chaos in his mind by insisting on permanence as the stabilizing factor: "I've got to find Friza. Nothing changes. I've got to destroy the Kid. It's still the same" (p. 113). In this way, Lobey resembles Lo Hawk. In the village, Lo Hawk and La Dire have a standard argument when a problem arises concerning the titling of an individual. Lo Hawk denounces the laxity in modern ways and tries to return to the past. He calls it "the beginning of the end. . . . We must preserve something" (p. 6). On the other hand, La Dire argues that there is no such thing as going back, only moving forward into the future. She thinks it is "[t]he end of the beginning . . . Everything must change" (p. 6). La Dire has tried to teach Lobey about their changing world by talking about mythology; she tells Lobey that he himself embodies two mythological characters, Ringo Starr and the older Orpheus myth--the same story but with many changes. Lobey refuses to see the point. Later Spider, the leader of the dragon herders, tries to teach Lobey the same point.

At Branning-at-sea, Lobey enters Spider's house to receive his pay. Spider wants Lobey to understand about change in their world before he will tell him where to find Friza. By asking Lobey questions, Spider is forcing him to vocalize his ideas and thus test them. To lead him to understand mythology, Spider first relates the stories of two mathematicians, Einstein and Gödel:

> ". . . Wars and chaoses and paradoxes ago, two mathematicians between them ended an age and began another for our hosts, our ghosts called Man. One was Einstein, who with his Theory / of Relativity defined the limits of man's perception by expressing mathematically just how far the condition of the observer influences the thing he perceives. . . . The other was Gödel, a contemporary of Einstein, who was the first to bring back a mathematically precise statement about the vaster realm beyond the limits Einstein had defined . . . There are an infinite number of true things in the world with no way of ascertaining their truth. Einstein defined the extent of the rational. Gödel stuck a pin into the irrational and fixed it to the wall of the universe so that it held still long enough for people to know it was there." (pp. 120-1).

Einstein's world with the emphasis on the rational is past. The human beings on earth surpassed that theory. They ventured into the realm of Gödel's theory or irrationality, and soon humans left their earth. Perhaps the irrational was too taxing for the earth people, and it caused their destruction. Perhaps the humans met the challenge and evolved into a higher consciousness and simply left behind their bodies and their earth. But now Lobey's race has inherited the two theories of this planet, and Spider wants to be sure Lobey sees that both laws are still effective. Lobey argues with Spider:

> "The stories give you a law to follow--"
>
> "--that you can either break or obey."

"They set you a goal--"

"--and you can either fail that goal, succeed, or surpass it."

"Why?" [Lobey] demanded. "Why can't you just ignore the old stories? I'll go on plumb the sea, find the Kid without your help. I can ignore those tales!"

"You're living in the real world now," Spider said sadly. "It's come from something. It's going to something." (pp. 124-5).

Lobey feels that one part of his quest is doomed. Orpheus failed to bring back his Eurydice; therefore, he, Lobey-who-is-Orpheus, will also fail to get his Friza back. Spider, like La Dire, keeps telling him that there is no predetermination concerning the outcome of his endeavors:

> "Lobey, everything changes. The labyrinth today does not follow the same path it did at Knossos fifty thousand years ago. You may be Orpheus; you may be someone else who dares death and succeeds. . . . The world is not the same. That's what I've been trying to tell you. It's different." (p. 124)

"Difference" is an important word in the novel. These aliens are different from the humans who once inhabited earth. This world is different from their own. Lobey and many of the characters he meets are different. Lo Hawk is wary of titling those who are different, who differ from the norm. Kid Death fears the beings who are different and

"closes their eyes" forever. He, like Lo Hawk, wants to preserve the status quo. La Dire propounds change as the only stable characteristic of this new world, and changes are different. Lobey is at the intersection of these conflicting viewpoints. On the one hand he wants to re-establish the past by regaining Friza; life will be as it was before, and he will be happy, he thinks. On the other hand, he wants to end the past by destroying Kid Death. After the Kid is dead, the persons who are different will not be killed any more, and so they can influence changes. La Dire's final advice to Lobey also defines this intersection: "You are different. . . . You have seen it is dangerous to be so. It is also very important. I have tried to instruct you in a view of the world large enough to encompass the deeds that you will do as well as their significance" (p. 52). La Dire wants Lobey to realize that his difference is both a problem and a solution, and that the significance of his actions is as important as the actions themselves.

The dual nature of Lobey's difference is symbolically represented in his machete. Lobey's machete is both a destructuve weapon and a constructive musical instrument. With it he kills the bull and Greeneye. But with the music from it he can put order in the minds of people around him and thus free them from chaos. He uses it to mourn for Friza and free himself from inertia. He uses it at the Dove's place to open people's minds and free them from her illusions. Often in the novel, the machete is called an axe. An axe is a sharp weapon, and it is also a slang expression for a guitar, as Stephen Scobie points out in "Different Mazes."[78] G. S. Kirk in The Nature of Greek Myths relates that the word labyrinth comes from "labyrinthos," which is a pre-Greek

word based on the term for "double-axe"--a symbol that was carved on several of the stones of the palace at Knossos where the labyrinth of the Minotaur was located.[79] Not only is the machete itself capable of two functions--weapon and musical instrument--but the music itself has dual potential. Jane B. Weedman in her booklet entitled Samuel R. Delany notes that Lobey "can create order through his music or create new patterns in society through its destructive use as a weapon."[80] Just as Lorq's seven tons of Illyrion in Nova would destroy the Red-shift empire and millions of people's jobs, so the Illyrion would also ensure the survival of the Von Ray empire and create even more new jobs. By playing his machete, Lobey creates order in the minds of the people in Branning-at-sea and prevents Kid Death from escaping Spider's fatal whip. It is ironic that Lobey does not kill Kid Death with his machete in a fight, as Lobey had originally thought he would do. And, although the Kid was Lobey's intended victim, Lobey ends up killing Green-eye with it. Jane Weedman comments on the dual nature of music and Lobey: "Delany shows that while music can destroy, it can also revive or create, for Lobey learns he can bring back those he kills: himself, Kid Death, Green-eye."[81] This ability is another attribute that makes Lobey different.

Furthermore, Jane Weedman writes about The Einstein Intersection in her booklet Samuel R. Delany: "Difference is a key word in this novel, for it designates the importance of the individual and his ability to make choices, on the basis of being different from others, which affect his life, thus enabling him to question the paradigms of his society."[82] When Lobey chooses to leave his village to begin his quest, he meets

new people who teach him new points of view. Lobey wants to understand these new ideas so he asks questions. He ends up wondering about the validity of some customs. He converses with a character from the city:

> "Look," [Lobey] said. "I don't see the pattern in your formality. What I do see I don't like--"
>
> "It's not for you to judge," Pistol said. "You can accept it, or you can go away. But you can't go around disregarding other people's customs, joking with the profane and flaunting the damned."
>
> "Will you please tell me what customs I've disregarded, what I've flaunted? I've just said what was on my mind." (p. 108)

Lobey has been used to expressing himself in his village. He sees that that will not be possible in Branning-at-sea. Weedman points out: "Difference in the rural society is accepted and acknowledged as the expression of one's selfhood and abilities."[83] But in the city difference is laughed at like a dirty joke. Some children are huddled around a poster picturing two women and having the caption: "THESE TWO IDENTICAL TWINS ARE NOT THE SAME" (p. 116). Lobey does not understand, but one youngster fills him in on the joke: "'If they're not the same,' he blurted, 'they're different!' They all laughed. Their laughter was filigreed with the snicker that let you know when laughter's rotten" (p. 116). The city wants all people to be the same. Individual differences are suppressed. Lobey wants to find Friza, but he can not ask questions in the city. He can not play his music, either. In effect,

he must deny his own identity. The maze he must follow now is the same one as everyone else is following. Individuality is denied. That is why there is no music in the minds of the people of the city. When Lobey wanders through the streets of the city, he thinks, "I searched for music; heard none" (p. 116). What he does hear is noise; he fears people who know only the chaos of noise and not the order of music, and so he holds his machete tight (p. 120). Later Lobey breaks through the noise and plays music on his machete that initiates change, "the end of the beginning" as La Dire would say.

The "beginning" in La Dire's phrase refers to the Einsteinian universe represented by Kid Death. He is rooted in the past. He does have the power to change any object into another object. But that first object must already exist; Kid Death cannot create. He needs Green-eye, who can create. Kid Death needs Lobey's music because the Kid cannot order. Spider tells Lobey, "He [Kid Death] needs patterning, relation, the knowledge that comes when six notes predict a seventh, when three notes beat against one another and define a mode, a melody defines a scale" (p. 125). On the other hand, Lobey represents the "end" of this Einsteinian rational world. He opens up the realm of the Gödelian universe, the world of the future, the world of infinite possibilities--rational and irrational. Emerson Littlefield in his article "The Mythologies of Race and Science in Samuel Delany's The Einstein Intersection and Nova" discusses these two theories in relation to the mythological mazes Lobey experiences: "Lobey re-creates to some extent the myths of the Einsteinian world . . . but his experience is always a little bit different from the original figures' experience . . ."[84]

There is no Ariadne to help Lobey out of the maze after he kills the bull. Lobey may regain Friza, as Orpheus did not. In this Gödelian universe, even death itself does not follow rational rules; Kid Death and Lobey can both bring back the ones they have killed. By helping Spider kill Kid Death, Lobey "unknowingly leads his 'people' into the Goedelian universe,"[85] as Emerson Littlefield explains. La Dire calls it "the end of the beginning."

In this new world with Gödel's law effective, the basic structure of society rests on change and difference. And the irrational is as prevalent as the rational. Some of the characters in the novel have tried to escape this chaos by succumbing to the illusions the Dove represents. Some characters, like Lo Hawk and Kid Death, cling to the past to impose order on the present. But other characters, like La Dire, Spider and, finally, Lobey, realize that mythology provides order out of chaos. Casey Fredericks in The Future of Eternity states that for Lobey "it is the great myths of mankind that help him achieve, not just a sense of self-identity, but in fact a sense of the real."[86] Mythological mazes are not an escape from reality; they help define reality. Myths have the ability to order, just as Lobey's music can order. But the patterns of the myths are not set. As La Dire points out, "In myths things always turn into their opposites as one version supersedes the next" (p. 13). Myths can change drastically. The pattern and the outcome of the mythical maze depend on the individual himself. His choices determine (build) his own maze. Lobey succeeds as Theseus did; he may succeed where Orpheus could not. But it is not "Theseus" or "Orpheus" who wanders through the same maze again; it is Lobey, who sees

the similar patterns before his and must make his own choices to find his way through his maze.

The chaos in Lobey's world is similar to the chaos prevalent in today's world. People are trying to find ways to order this chaos, and the patterns of the myths are one way. Jane B. Weedman in Samuel R. Delany states:

> Delany uses myths to demonstrate not what has happened in the past but what is happening in the present. He does not propound cause and effect relationships; rather, against the backdrop of myths, he presents cultural change and how people of different cultures deal with those changes.[87]

Just as the world changes, so too the myths can change. This change may be as minor as Lobey finding his own way out of the cave after killing the bull, with no help from an Ariadne. Or, the change may be as drastic as an inversion of the myth: Lobey puts order into people's minds with his music much as Pan had put chaos, and Lobey may regain his loved one from death as Orpheus could not. Myths present a pattern, but the choice still belongs to the individual. However, the individual wandering through the maze must confront his own questions and confusions, but his destination is not predetermined. People today still have the same problems, the same mazes, and the same quests. Myths provide a pattern by which a person can order some of the chaos. But man has free will. Each person chooses his route through the maze. Sometimes the inversion of a mythical pattern is the relevant route. Change is a requisite in our culture today. Myths have the flexibility to change with our society

so that in some respect they still remain valid for people. The new hero for tomorrow is the Lobey who accepts change as essential for growth and individual choice as the deciding factor of his quest.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In his article "Different Mazes: Mythology in Samuel R. Delaney's [sic] 'The Einstein Intersection'" [sic], Stephen Scobie defines myths as "recurring patterns in human experience, archetypes, basic configurations that repeat themselves in generation after generation."[88] Myths are "patterns" or "basic configurations." But patterns can be altered, and basic configurations do not go into a lot of detail. Myths are not unalterable; details change to fit the times and the occasion. In The Einstein Intersection of all the artifacts left by humans and found by the new race of aliens on earth, only man's myths are flexible enough to be of any use to these aliens in their struggle to become human. Myths have aided man in becoming human. Casey Fredericks in The Future of Eternity discusses the use of myths today: "The old myths still remain a viable mode of energizing and organizing our thoughts toward an as yet unrealized potential in man."[89]

Casey Fredericks in another article "Greek Mythology in Modern Science Fiction: Vision and Cognition," states that some people call science fiction a new mythology, and he agrees with them: "Like every other mythology, science fiction asks those ultimate questions about the limits of man and all his imaginative extensions of himself to the very ends of time and space. . ."[90] All through the history of man, human beings have asked the same basic questions; they have ventured on the

same quests. Ultimately the purpose and the result of quests is identity. In reaching for a higher goal, a person stretches himself toward realizing more of his potential. He re-defines his own limits and discovers, as Rydra Wong did in Babel-17, "I'm a lot bigger than I thought I was" (p. 208).

The process of gaining identity is explored in three of Delany's novels. The main character in each discovers who he or she is in his/her striving on the quest. While each character is in a futuristic setting, each character also has mythical references. But the Greek mythological patterns are not exactly the same. Lorq Von Ray in Nova combines the characteristics of two Greek heroes, Prometheus and Achilles. He becomes a wise and courageous leader who defies the higher authority of natural laws and courts death by flying his starship into the center of an exploding star. Like Prometheus, Lorq seeks fire, the basis of civilization. Like Achilles, he seeks the meaning of being a man. In Babel-17 Rydra Wong sets out to learn to speak in another language but actually learns to speak the unfamiliar language of her own thoughts. The chaos of her mind mirrors the chaos before the creation of the universe in Greek mythology. The emphasis has shifted from outward control in the creation myth to the importance of inner control in the creation of an individual. The characters in The Einstein Intersection who are different are those who have mythical characteristics. These different characters are the ones who can control and change their world. Lobey combines the characteristics of Pan, Theseus, and Orpheus with the modern myth of a popular musician. But the maze that Lobey, and all of the other characters in this novel follow does

not end the same as the Greek mazes. Lobey can order, whereas Pan caused chaos. Theseus ended his quest with the death of the Minotaur, whereas for Lobey the death of the monster was only the beginning of the quest. Lobey has power over life and death, like Orpheus, only in a much greater degree. Orpheus failed in his attempt to defeat death; Lobey realizes he can defeat death, but he has not made his choice yet when, or if, he will do so.

There are key words that link all three novels, Greek mythology, and science fiction. In Nova Lorq states, "Stasis is death" (p. 180). Later he tells his enemy, "You're for stasis. I'm for movement. Things move" (p. 183). The battle and the balance is between the past and the future. Stasis is the past. Movement, because it suggests later completion of the action, is the future. In Babel-17 two lines of a poem emphasize this duality: "I ask cold air, 'What is the word that frees?' / The wind says, 'Change,' and the white sun, 'Remember'" (p. 211). To remember is to think back on what happened in the past. Change, like movement, reflects a consciousness of a future. In The Einstein Intersection these terms are embodied in two characters: Lo Hawk argues, "We must preserve something," while La Dire declares, "Everything must change" (p. 6). Stasis not only preserves the past but prevents any movement. To be free, a character or society must remember his/its past but not remain there in stasis. Greek mythology was written in the past and involves characters from the past. Today people are confronted with similar mazes of the myths. But in no way is a person forced to proceed in that maze in the same manner as the mythical hero. The quester remembers the past decision of others in this maze, but he makes

his own choices and thus changes the maze. Science fiction is usually set in the future, but its foundation is grounded in the past. Actions and problems that began in the past or present are projected into the future. The past and the present in the lives of science fiction authors also affect their works. But even futuristic mazes follow the same patterns as past mazes. The difference is the choices that are made by the characters. In Nova Lorq's decision to flood the market with Illyrion will upset the economic structure of two-thirds of his universe. The chaos that will ensue will cause many changes, some good and some bad. Babel-17 ends with the hint that soon the chaos of the war will end. Rydra has also managed to quiet the chaos in her mind. Kid Death, on the other hand, dies at the end of The Einstein Intersection. His death will make society free to change more. However, more chaos will be present because the universe will now operate under Gödel's law, where even the law and order of the finality of death do not apply any more.

Myths in The Einstein Intersection are the only remnants of human beings that can be helpful to the new aliens because only myths have that necessary flexibility in quests. The choices to be made in any quest are still left up to the individual. That is why the outcome to be achieved through one's journey through the maze is not predetermined. In The Einstein Intersection Delany writes, "Endings to be useful must be inconclusive" (p. 129). This novel does not end with the reader knowing if Friza will live or not. Stephen Scobie writes: "The individual response has still to be made: by Lobey, and by the reader. Mythology also is inconclusive: the pattern of the maze exists, but you

must still create your own as you walk through it. Myths are images, not answers."[91] Jane Weedman discusses the role of the writer as Delany defines it:

> The role which Delany defines for the artist is to observe, record, transmit, and question paradigms in a society. He indicates that it is not the artist's duty to provide resolutions to problems, only to provide order so that others may observe their situation and take their own actions.[92]

The role of mythology and the role of the author are the same: to provide order for other individuals but not to provide resolution to their problems. The importance of individual choice and individual action is emphasized. A person must remember the past to know how others followed the maze, but his own future rests in his hands. His decisions will determine his life.

NOTES

[1] Samuel R. Delany, The Einstein Intersection (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1981), p. 124. (All future references to this novel are from this edition.)

[2] Thomas Bulfinch, Bulfinch's Mythology (New York: Avenel Books, 1978), p. 1.

[3] Bulfinch, Preface, p. viii.

[4] Edith Hamilton, Mythology (New York: New American Library, 1969), p. 14.

[5] Michael Grant, Myths of the Greeks and Romans (New York: New American Library, 1962), Forward, p. xviii.

[6] Grant, Forward, p. xviii.

[7] Samuel R. Delany, "About Five Thousand One Hundred and Seventy Five Words," in SF: The Other Side of Realism, ed. Thomas D. Clareson (Bowling Green, Ohio: Popular Press, 1971), p. 1.

[8] Geoffrey Stephen Kirk, The Nature of Greek Myths (New York: The Overlook Press, 1975). The following paragraphs are summaries of Chapters 3 and 4, pp. 38-91, of this book.

[9] Kirk, p. 73.

[10] Mark P. O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon, Classical Mythology (New York: Longman Inc., 1977), p. 8.

[11] Kirk, The Nature of Greek Myths, p. 73.

[12] Kirk, The Nature of Greek Myths, p. 77.

[13] Edmund Leach, Claude Levi-Strauss (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1970), p. 58.

[14] George Edgar Slusser, The Delany Intersection: Samuel R. Delany Considered as a Writer of Semi-Precious Words (San Bernadino, CA: Bergo Press, 1977), p. 10.

[15] Jane Branham Weedman, Samuel R. Delany (Washington: Starmont House, 1982), p. 16.

[16] Samuel R. Delany, Nova (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1980), p. 101. (All future references to this novel are from this edition.)

[17] Samuel R. Delany, Babel-17 (New York: Ace Books, Inc., 1978), p. 232. (All future references to this novel are from this edition.)

[18] Grant, p. 108.

[19] Kirk, The Nature of Greek Myths, p. 115.

[20] Morford and Lenardon, p. 45.

[21] Morford and Lenardon, p. 50.

[22] Grant, p. 181.

[23] Bulfinch, p. 18.

[24] Kirk, The Nature of Greek Myths, p. 143.

[25] Bulfinch, p. 939.

[26] Grant, p. 186.

[27] Morford and Lenardon, pp. 50-52.

[28] Grant, p. 108.

[29] G. S. Kirk, Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 196.

[30] Kirk, The Nature of Greek Myths, pp. 139-140.

[31] Morford and Lenardon, p. 54.

[32] Morford and Lenardon, p. 312.

[33] Grant, p. 23.

[34] Morford and Lenardon, p. 317.

[35] Morford and Lenardon, pp. 312-313.

[36] Grant, p. 26.

[37] Slusser, p. 53.

[38] Slusser, p. 54.

[39] Grant, p. 182.

[40] Hamilton, p. 63.

[41] Bulfinch, p. 12.

[42] Kirk, The Nature of Greek Myths, p. 46.

[43] Grant, p. 95.

[44] Morford and Lenardon, p. 26.

[45] Hamilton, p. 63.

[46] Morford and Lenardon, p. 26.

[47] Grant, p. 97.

[48] Hamilton, p. 64.

[49] Morford and Lenardon, p. 25.

[50] Morford and Lenardon, p. 24.

[51] Grant, p. 96.

[52] Slusser, p. 35.

[53] Hamilton, p. 228.

[54] Slusser, p. 30.

[55] William H. Hardesty III, "Semiotics, Space Opera, and Babel-17," Mosaic, 13 (1980), 67.

[56] Slusser, p. 31.

[57] Slusser, p. 34.

[58] Leach, p. 58.

[59] Casey Fredericks, The Future of Eternity (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 61.

[60] S. C. Fredericks, "Revivals of Ancient Mythologies in Current Science Fiction and Fantasy," in Many Futures, Many Worlds, ed. Thomas D. Clareson (Kent State University: The Kent State University Press, 1977), p. 60.

[61] Stephen Scobie, "Different Mazes: Mythology in Samuel R. Delaney's [sic] 'The Einstein Intersection'" [sic], Riverside Quarterly, 5 (1971), 18.

[62] H. Jane Gardiner, "Images of The Waste Land in The Einstein Intersection," Extrapolation, 18 (May 1977), 120.

[63] Scobie, p. 13.

[64] Hamilton, p. 40.

[65] Bulfinch, p. 30.

[66] Hamilton, p. 40.

[67] Hamilton, p. 152.

[68] Bulfinch, p. 152.

[69] Kirk, The Nature of Greek Myths, p. 216.

[70] Hamilton, p. 152.

[71] Grant, p. 342.

[72] Fredericks, "Revivals of Ancient Mythologies," p. 61.

[73] Bulfinch, p. 933.

[74] Kirk, The Nature of Greek Myths, p. 170.

[75] Gardiner, pp. 119-120.

[76] Fredericks, The Future of Eternity, p. 60.

[77] Scobie, p. 16.

[78] Scobie, p. 16.

[79] Kirk, The Nature of Greek Myths, p. 155.

[80] Weedman, p. 59.

[81] Weedman, p. 55.

[82] Weedman, p. 53.

[83] Weedman, p. 53.

[84] Emerson Littlefield, "The Mythologies of Race and Science in Samuel Delany's The Einstein Intersection and Nova," Extrapolation, 23 (Fall 1982), 241.

[85] Littlefield, p. 237.

[86] Fredericks, The Future of Eternity, p. 60.

[87] Weedman, p. 16.

[88] Scobie, p. 14.

[89] Fredericks, The Future of Eternity, p. 64.

[90] Sigmund Casey Fredericks, "Greek Mythology in Modern Science Fiction: Vision and Cognition," in Classical Mythology in Twentieth-Century Thought and Literature, ed. Wendell M. Aycock and Theodore M. Klein (Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech Press, 1980), p. 103.

[91] Scobie, p. 18.

[92] Weedman, p. 15.

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