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Ruining Representation in the Novels of China Miéville: A Deleuzian Analysis of Assemblages in Railsea, The Scar, and Embassytown

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RUINING REPRESENTATION IN THE NOVELS OF CHINA MIÉVILLE: A DELEUZIAN ANALYSIS OF ASSEMBLAGES IN *RAILSEA*, *THE SCAR* AND *EMBASSYTOWN*

(Spine title: Ruining Representation in the Novels of China Miéville)

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by

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Graduate Program in Theory & Criticism

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

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Ruining Representation in the Novels of China Miéville: A Deleuzian Analysis of Assemblages in *Railsea*, *The Scar* and *Embassytown*

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Abstract

This work explores the social and political potentialities of body-assemblages in China Miéville's novels *Railsea*, *The Scar* and *Embassytown.* Using the theories of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari, my analysis focuses on the manner in which assemblages within these texts resist unification and reification under representational frameworks and forge new identities based on an ethical appreciation of difference, fluidity, and creative self-actualization. Whereas representational schemas privilege supposedly ahistorical, transcendent, and cognitive-based iterations of identity divorced from material contingencies, the assemblages at work in *Railsea*, *The Scar*, and *Embassytow*n instead focus on embodied-knowledge and fluid, emergent notions of identity, society, and political reality. It is this latter strategy that allows the variable assemblages within the novels to combat oppression and forge new types of communities, environments, and identities that produce affirmative and liberating solutions to political and individual conflicts.

Keywords

China Miéville, Deleuze, Guattari, Assemblages, Representation, Difference, Bodies, Embassytown, The Scar, Railsea.

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Introduction: Taking Miéville Beyond Representation

> We don't know what a body is because a body is always in excess of our knowing it, and provides the ongoing possibility of thinking or otherwise knowing it. It is always in excess of representation, and indeed, of all representations. This is part of Deleuze's point: that we don't know what a body can do, for the body is the outside of thought, which doesn't mean that it is unthinkable but that we approach it in thought without fully grasping it.[1]

Enter China Miéville: contemporary poster-boy of British science-fiction and fantasy, the most well-known and commonly-read purveyor of the New Weird literary movement, Leftist scholar and political activist. As of July 2012, Miéville has published ten novels, a handful of short fiction and numerous scholarly works. What makes Miéville so fascinating, however, is his now-signature way of re-combining and stretching the limits of genres, his taking-up of the grotesque, the non-human and the weird. He is fundamentally concerned with "rediscovering the fantastic's capacity to make the familiar strange and to provoke us to see how the world might be otherwise.[2] It is this desire to provoke the reader, to render strange and unfamiliar the everyday that is intrinsically tied to Miéville's political and theoretical leanings. His fantastic fictions take up the political as a very real force involved in the making and re-making of cities, communities, and language; of human and non-human individuals: what we can observe, indeed, is the taking-up of bodies – all types – as social and political assemblages constantly in the process of reconfiguration.

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[1] Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space* (Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2001), 27.

[2] Sherryl Vint, "Introduction: Special Issue on China Miéville," *Extrapolation* 50, no. 2 (2009): 197.

Much of the existing literature on China Miéville's works focuses on his Marxist politics and how they interpenetrate and inform his works (Vint, 2009; Palmer, 2009; Cooper, 2009; Freedman, 2003 and 2006). At the same time, Miéville revels in contradictions, contradictions that have become characteristic of the New Weird literary movement. To quote from Sherryl Vint, the New Weird "roughens things up and refuses to resolve contradictions."[3] At the same time, however, it is these contradictions – unresolvable oppositions – within Miéville's texts that undermine scholarly attempts to reduce his novels to a Marxist and dialectical framework. In other words, imposing a Marxist political framework onto the novels themselves sometimes works, and sometimes doesn't. Miéville is too tricky for that. What initially appears as the leading-up-to a dialectical resolution in which contradiction is resolved and "one sees antithesis transforming itself into unity,"[4] in fact falls flat. Something different emerges.

Political and theoretical contradictions are only the start. Miéville seems to revel in the setting up of oppositions. The meeting of opposites, however, is never clearly resolved: "It seems that when opposite qualities or entities meet, this meeting exacerbates the energies in each, producing an unstable situation in which the opposites exist in a zone of interaction or overlap and are no longer opposites."[5] For example, Miéville is at once fascinated with the singular individual – of "isolated strength and concentration," [6]

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[3] Id. 198.

[4] Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (New York and London: Continuum, 1986), 8.

[5] Christopher Palmer, "Saving the City in China Miéville's Bas-Lag Novels," *Extrapolation* 50, no. 2 (2009): 226.

[6] Id. 227

while simultaneously concerned with group solidarity and community politics. In *Railsea* we have Sham, the protagonist responsible for the main propulsions of plot, of event: Sham does, at different points, "plug-in" to differential machine assemblages, to different communities; however, his identity can never fully and finally be resolved into one or another social or political group. He acts as a line of flight insofar as he is a solitary loner who, by virtue of his literal and figurative nomadism, instigates transformations in the various communities in which he takes part. Sham's singular importance is never sacrificed for the communal.

The irreconcilability of opposites – opposites that nevertheless create something *new* by virtue of their conflict - is a pattern that is repeated throughout Miéville's texts. Miéville's conclusions famously resist closure, resist full-blown revolution and resist clear-cut endings. Miéville himself writes that

> To me, consolation is about an aesthetic which eases the relationship of the reader to reality, which smooths over contradictions. Walter Benjamin said somewhere that the purpose of historical materialism should be to rub history "against the grain." It seems to me that consolation does the opposite-it smooths away…I try to avoid it with various techniques. One is to undercut narrative security - I would claim that the endings of my books aren't downbeat, but they certainly try to undermine straightforward closure… The other thing, of course, is a continuing refusal to posit societies as internally coherent, consistent, bounded, and essentially safe. They are fractured and dangerous. The dynamics tearing them apart (the dynamics that lead to narrative) are intrinsic.[7]

Throughout *Railsea*, *The Scar*, and *Embassytown*, not to mention his numerous other novels, Miéville treats us to fantastic fictions that always pull back from neat and tidy conclusions. In *Railsea*, Sham removes himself from the rails but the conflicts he leaves

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[7] Joan Gordon and China Miéville, "Reveling in Genre: An Interview with China Miéville," *Science Fiction Studies* 30, no. 3 (2003): 373.

behind are never resolved. In *The Scar*, gruesome civil war results in peace for some, but increased insecurity for others. And in *Embassytown*, a new order emerges out of civil conflict but this partial peace is always-already tainted by the awareness that peace is only one stage in a cycle of more general disorder and social conflict. From this, we can observe a certain tendency within Miéville's texts, a kind of "pulling back" insofar as the parts are never sacrificed for the whole. This is a tendency that narratively and philosophically circumvents a dialectical – and entirely Marxist – reading of Miéville's works.

This is not to say that Miéville's works do not contain an explicitly Marxist critique – to deny that would be an obvious mistake – but only to recognize that the contradictions inherent in these texts do lend themselves to differential readings, readings that only make them more complex and more rewarding. It is Miéville's revelling in contradictions, in oppositions that are never fully resolved dialectically, that, in my reading, opens up a space where Deleuze – and Deleuze and Guattari – can slip through and make of Miéville's works something new. Instead of the creation of a third term made possible through negation, what we can observe running through Miéville's works is the affirmation of difference, multiplicity, and divergent flows that can never be fully explained through a dialectical framework.

In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze writes that "dialectics proposes a certain conception of the tragic: linking it to the negative, to opposition and to contradiction. The contradiction of suffering and life, of finite and infinite in life itself, of particular destiny

and universal spirit in the idea, the movement of contradiction and its resolution."[8] Within a dialectical framework, contradictions – the relation between one and its other – is always resolved through a necessary negation. The contradiction that maintains the tension between two opposites is resolved but in such a way that negation, rather than affirmation and difference, is produced. As Deleuze writes, the dialectical will

> is an exhausted force which does not have the strength to affirm its difference, a force which no longer acts but rather reacts to the forces which dominate it…such a force brings to the foreground that negative element in its relation to the other. Such a force denies all that it is not and makes this negation its own essence and principle of its existence.[9]

Naturally, there is tragedy in Miéville's novels as well as a certain dialectical tension at play, but this conflict is never resolved, I would argue, through negation. Alternatively, conflicts within *Railsea*, *The Scar*, and *Embassytown* result in the emergence of differential strains – through a differentiation that emerges and affirms its own life, affirms *potentialities* that emerge to disrupt the dichotomization of conflicting forces. These oppositions are never resolved; rather, difference emerges that transforms the very essence of these oppositions and the binary thinking that formerly connected them. What is created, through these tensions, is not a third term, a representational "whole" produced through a negation that makes One from two, but rather the creation of the multiplicities, of *difference* itself.

Some critics, some Marxists – and most likely Miéville himself – would resist Deleuzian interpretations of the following three works. That said, and as I have

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[8] *Nietzsche and Philosophy* 10.
[9] Id. 9.

previously suggested, there is a strain of difference, an opening or line of flight in the works themselves that lends itself to Deleuze's particular theoretical style. Deleuze famously wrote that

> I saw myself as taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous. It was really important for it to be his own child, because the author had to actually say all I had been saying. But the child was bound to be monstrous too, because it resulted from all sorts of shifting, slipping dislocations, and hidden emissions that I really enjoyed."[10]

This passage provides a fitting description of my goal in the following work: to take Miéville from behind with Deleuze as an ally; to see what his texts do and enact when they are compelled or coaxed into slipping outside of intended meanings.

Introducing Deleuze (and Guattari): Preliminary Terminology

The central question of my thesis, therefore, is what do Deleuze (and Guattari) have to say that can contribute to re-thinking *what assemblages are* and *what assemblages can do* in the texts *Railsea* (2012), *The Scar* (2002) and *Embassytown* (2011). What I am fundamentally concerned with in my reading of Miéville is *bodies*, and the interaction of these bodies. Rather than use the term "bodies," the Deleuzoguattarian term "assemblages" (or "machinic assemblages") is apt because it allows us to think about variable entities – humans, objects, non-humans – as "wholes whose properties emerge from the interactions between the parts."[11] In other words, it is

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[10] Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 6.

[11] Arturo Escobar and Michal Osterweil, "Social Movements and the Politics of the Virtual: Deleuzian Strategies," in *Deleuzian Intersections: Science, Technology, Anthropology*, eds. Casper Bruun Jensen and Kjetil Rödje (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 191.

vital to think of assemblages in terms of their *affectivity*: the ways that different flows and forces affect and alter one another, and the power relations that inhere in these relations. As Deleuze and Guattari write,

> We know nothing of a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body.[12]

Following this thought, my attempt throughout is not to think of body-assemblages in terms of what they *are*, but rather in terms of what they *do*, how they interact, how they *become*.

Each chapter of my thesis is organized around the analysis of one particular type of assemblage and the power relations that contribute to its becoming(s). First, I will address the geographical, spatial and individual (human and non-human) assemblages that come about in *Railsea*. In chapter three, I will address the making and un-making of Bodies without Organs in *The Scar*, with a particular focus on individual (human and non-human) bodies interpenetrating one another. In the final chapter, I will explore language within *Embassytown* insofar as language itself is taken up as a force within an assemblage that includes political and social actors, both communities and individuals. In each of these sections, I will address the multiplicities and flows that interact to form particular types of bodies; however, this discussion will always be tempered with the understanding that the flows inherent in differential assemblages are "never simply open

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[12] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 257.

to a free flow of energy or desire, but [are always] cut through with relations of power."[13] Assemblages, therefore, can never entirely break free from social and political – and for that matter, *material* – conditions. What Deleuze and Guattari present, in the figure of their Body without Organs (a figure that will be discussed in the following section) is *not* a free-flowing entity capable of re-making itself at any whim. The flows of the assemblage are always subject to certain organizing principles, certain social and political conditions, some more harmful than others. The use of the term "assemblage," therefore, in no way implies a return to a purely constructivist theory of subjectivity. The term "assemblage" is useful insofar as it allows for an understanding of bodies as always multiple, always (potentially) in flux, always affecting and being affected by other bodies. Assemblages, therefore, to reiterate Grosz, are always *in excess* of the representations we use to make sense of them. Assemblages tend to circumvent clear-cut and striated identities. As we have seen, body-assemblages are inevitably informed by power relations and are thus striated to a certain extent; however, there is always some element, some *difference*, that emerges in excess of identity, of representational schemas.

Ruining Representation: Ontologies of Becoming and Representational Logos

If assemblages are perpetually in motion, if they are indeed neither fully here *nor* there, and sometimes in between; in short, if assemblages *resist identification*, how is it

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[13] Jessica Ringrose, "Beyond Discourse? Using Deleuze and Guattari's Schizoanalysis to Explore Affective Assemblages, Heterosexually Striated Space and Lines of Flight Online and at School," in *The Power In/Of Language*, eds. David R. Cole and Linda J. Graham (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 51.

possible for us to theorize their importance, their social and political affect? In order to answer this question, and in order to conduct my analyses of Miéville's works, I draw from Deleuze's pivotal *Difference and Repetition* for guidance. It is in this work that Deleuze draws out and delimits his theories of representation, becoming and (as the title would suggest), repetition and difference.

For Deleuze "representation" – or what is commonly referred to as "representational logos" – privileges ontologies of solidity. The goal of representation is to establish fixed and stable ontological determinations that are then assumed to be foundational. The logic of representation "operates by establishing a fixed standard as the norm or model"[14] so that divergence from this norm is automatically classified as deviant and assigned minority status. All types of assemblages are measured against this norm; they are always *subjected* to the organizing function of representation. In this sense, the logic of representation denies the true constitution of affective assemblages insofar as it attempts to stabilize bodies into models, fixed forms, or "wholes." In other words, the logic of representation misrecognizes its objects by confining them to representations, to being rather than becoming, taking bodies as inert objects rather than vital and dynamic assemblages that, by nature, resist representation.

The alternative to representation is a *fluid* ontology of creative becoming, or what Deleuze calls the *logic of difference*. Such a force disrupts the logic of representation, in fact "delegitimizing the primacy of the model and its exact repetitions or copies by

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[14] Dorothea Olkowski, *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1999), 2.

undermining the stability of representational categories."[15] Difference does not fight the logic of representation on its own terms but instead reveals that representation in no ways reflects what assemblages really *are, what they do, or how they act.* The oppositional – or negative – character of difference is therefore not truly negative at all. Rebelling against representation is itself an *affirmative* act insofar as differences emerges through activity – through forces - that are entirely distinct from the existing order and incompatible with representational organization.

It is significant to note that the logic of representation depends on the maintenance of a certain degree of *objectivity* whereas, on the other hand, difference is about *specificity*, about the flows of actual events and the interrelated power relations that define them. The logic of difference asks: where and how is the individual situated, involved, penetrated and penetrating their immediate environment? This is a question that takes *as its ground* the *specificities* and *situatedness* of individual assemblages, including the very real and material conditions that condition them. Alternatively, the logic of representation depends on the maintenance of a certain degree of (illusory) objectivity. In other words, the logic of representation takes for granted a certain degree of *distance* between the perceiver and the perceived so that, theoretically, the "viewer is no longer limited by 'his' position as material being."[16] In this sense, the logic of representation depends on the abstraction of things from life. It attempts to snatch objects and

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[15] Id. 3.
[16] Id. 8.

individuals from the world – both perceived and perceiving – in order to perpetuate the illusion that things can always be reduced to their representations.

That said, and as postmodern thought has taught us, "distance and aperspectivity [have] specific social roots and implications."[17] The logic of representation wrongly *compels* us to take up things in the world as inert matter without considering their specificity in time and space, a specificity that is integral to the becoming of the assemblage and its parts. Difference, on the other hand, is always concerned with situatedness, with events that rise up from specific temporal-spatial environments and real social conditions.[18]

It is from this theoretical base that I return to Miéville's novels, novels that bring into sharp relief the very real and messy effects of time, place, and politics. And yet, despite the vivid battles, the constant flux of bodies, landscapes and language, each novel, in its own way, illustrates characters at one extreme or the other of a pendulum-like oscillation between adopting either a representational or differential logic. The novels that I will address all pose a similar question, a question that is significant to theory as much as it is to real life: Will we take up with the differential? Adopt the assemblage? Or shall we adhere to what is – and can – be known, pinned down, identified? Taking Miéville's novels as a starting point, it is my hope that the following work reveals the extent to which these questions are not only theoretically significant, but also infect and indeed leak into the very real fabric of the everyday, compelling us to

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[17] Id. 10.
[18] Id. 8.

consciously interact with and think creatively about the existing social and political assemblages of which we are, inevitably, a part.

Chapter 2: Geographical Bodies, Motion and Perspective in *Railsea*

Like all of China Miéville's works, *Railsea* is populated by both human and nonhuman actors that intersect and form assemblages at different speeds, for different ends. This chapter will address the geographical bodies of *Railsea* and the manner in which the nonhuman "earthly bodies" of the text interact with and interpenetrate human bodies to form distinct assemblages. Throughout, my discussion will be informed by the assumption that "reality is the result of dynamic processes in the organization of matter and energy that leads to the production of life forms; things come into being through dynamic process of matter and energy driven by intensive differences."[1] This perspective is useful, first, due to the fact that it disrupts a conception of ontological reality as a totality in which the *parts* are subjected to the *whole*, and second, because it takes into account the myriad of dynamic forces at work in constructing reality without hierarchizing their affects. These dynamic or "intensive" forces include individual actors as much as they include the very material and spatial contexts in which individuals dwell and interact. Indeed, space itself is a central actor in assemblages insofar as individuals and communities are transformed by – and also constantly *transforming* – the material and spatial environments of which they are a part. As Elizabeth Grosz writes,

> The subject's relation to space and time is not passive: space is not simply an empty receptacle, independent of its contents; rather, the ways in which space is perceived and represented depend on the kind of objects 'positioned' within it, and more particularly, the kinds of relations the subject has to those objects.

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[1] Arturo Escobar and Michael Osterweil, "Social Movements and the Politics of the Virtual," in *Deleuzian Intersections: Science, Technology, Anthropology*, eds. Casper Bruun Jensen and Kjetil Rödje (New York and London: Berghahn Books, 2010), 190.

> Space makes possible different kinds of relations but in turn is transformed according to the subject's affective and instrumental relations within it."[2]

Following Grosz, this chapter attempts to untether spatiality from "conceptual impositions" that conceive of space as universal, ideal, regulated and objectively (i.e. mathematically) measurable.[3] Insofar as we take space as a dynamic actor contributing to variable assemblage, it is therefore essential that we understand the role of *movement* in contributing to the constitution of space itself and the individuals actors positioned within it. Indeed, "space does not become comprehensible to the subject by its being the space of movement; rather, it becomes space through movement, and as such, it acquires specific properties from the subject's constitutive functioning in it."[4] In this sense, space is not merely a geometrical plane upon which movement "occurs;" rather, *space itself is inherently mobile* and constantly contributes to the making and re-making of the variable social and political assemblages that transverse it.

In the following chapter, I will outline the two dominant styles of motion that take place in *Railsea* and the correspondence of these different kinds of motion to distinctive assemblages within the novel. Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between logos and nomos, arborescent and rhizomatic assemblages, as well as their differentiation between optic and haptic perception, will serve as a conceptual guideline for making sense of these forces within the text. Throughout, my analysis will address the ways in which the

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[2] Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 92.
[3] Id. 94.
[4] Id. 92.

geographical, nonhuman and human bodies within the text both cohere to and rebel against representational logic by taking up different types of movement and speeds, as well as distinctive styles of perception. To conclude, I take up Jane Bennett's theory of "thing-power"[5] as it pertains to the bodies at work in *Railsea* insofar as Bennett's speculative materialism provides a new lens for re-conceptualizing space, objects and geographical bodies that, I would argue, coheres to and elaborates the Deleuzoguattarian theory of morphogenesis[6] or becoming. Conceptualizing non-human, spatial and geographical body-assemblages in this manner defies representational logic, which tends to marginalize nonhuman bodies as inert and lifeless. What is produced, instead, is an affirmative, non-anthropomorphic model of becoming that reconfigures our relationship to space and landscape.

Introducing *Railsea*

Railsea takes place in a fantasy world composed of multiple nation-states, each with their distinctive customs, religions, and social mores. Each state is separated by the vast ocean-like expanse of the railsea: sunken-out earth that stretches beyond perception and is criss-crossed by a proliferation of rail lines. Miéville characterizes the railsea as follows:

> Long straights, tight curves; metal runs on wooden ties; overlapping, spiralling, crossing at metalwork junctions' splitting off temporary siding that abutted & re-

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[55] Jane Bennett, "The Force of Things: Steps toward an Ecology of Matter," *Political Theory* 32, no. 3 (2004): 348.

[6] Declan Sheerin, *Deleuze and Ricœur: Disavowed Affinities and the Narrative Self* (London and New York: Continuum, 2009), 69.

> joined main lines. Here the train tracks spread out to leave yards of unbroken earth between them; there they came close enough together that you could have jumped from one to the next…where they cleaved, at twenty thousand angles of track-meets-track, were mechanisms, points of every kind…& on the approaches to them all were signals, switches, receivers, or ground frames.[7]

From the very start the reader is treated to a highly rhizomatic landscape, an illustration of Deleuze and Guattari's "machinic assemblage" made literal. The railsea is simultaneously full of opportunity and, insofar as it is described as a "tangle"[8] full of dangers. It is populated by burrowing animals of varying sizes, most of which are fierce predators willing to attack any human or nonhuman that steps off the rails and out of the protection provided by their particular train. The most distinctive of these creatures is the moldywarpe, an animal that "ploughs" through the earth, creating ragged terrain by virtue of its erratic hunting patterns. Moldywarpes are hunted by mole trains in the same way that whales have been and continue to be hunted in our world.

The novel traces the paths of several trains and their various movements, tracking their motivations and relationship to the railsea, the numerous nation-states, and the creatures that live beneath the surface of the rails. The individuals and collectivities that populate this world are each defined by their particular relation to the railsea; they function as forces and flows that "plug-in" to the machinic-assemblage of the railsea in distinctive ways. Some hunt moldywarpes, while others sail military vessels and patrol borders; others have no purpose except to pursue their own brand of nomadism. The railsea is not only populated by rails and monsters, it is also full of "salvage:" ancient and

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[7] China Miéville, *Railsea* (New York: Del Rey Books, 2012), 10.
[8] Ibid.

modern debris; the leftovers from de-railed and ransacked trains, old computer parts, archaeological rubbish from past eras. The novel starts on the *Medes*, a mole-train directed by Captain Naphi, a woman on the hunt for a particular moldywarpe called Mocker-Jack. Throughout, the reader follows the adventures of the teenaged protagonist, Sham, who starts his journey as a crewmember of Naphi's *Medes* but who, as the narrative progresses, becomes increasingly mobile.

Optic and Haptic Perception

Throughout the novel, the relationship to the railsea can be described in terms of motion, rhizomatic and striated spaces and movement, but also in terms of *perception*. In order to analyze the assemblages and forces at work in Railsea, I turn, first, to Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of "optic" and "haptic" space, and the relation of these concepts to distinctive perceptual frameworks. For Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* and Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*, the deployment of space corresponds with one of two perceptual schemas: the optic and the haptic. Optic space is that "regularized or governmentalized terrain that is produced by and settled by optic habits."[9] As Kaustuv Roy writes, optic or state space "is the domain of representation and recognition, and assumes a certain common sense perspective of the constancy of spatiality that aids simplification and the reduction of variables into manageable parameters."[10] Deleuze and Guattari relate optic space to state power, insofar as the segmentation of space facilitates

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[9] Id. 494.
[10] Kaustuv Roy, "Power and Resistance: Insurgent Spaces, Deleuze and Curriculum," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 21, no. 1 (2005): 32.

the control of flows and compels them to move in prescribed directions. As such, optic space is colonized by governmental or state authority, and its continued governance of space legitimizes and extends its power. Optic space reinforces existing and hegemonic power relations through the colonization (and continued re-colonization) of space. The result of an optic perspective is that space is rendered ideologically invisible and virtually static. It is a variable to be taken into consideration only insofar as it provides a rubric that prescribes legitimate or illegitimate pathways.

Within Railsea, Naphi – the Captain of the mole-train *Medes* – orients herself according to a fundamentally optic perception of the railsea. Naphi is first and foremost concerned with capturing her "philosophy:" a world-view embodied in the flesh of an "island-sized" moldywarpe. It is this aspect of the text that has provoked critics to refer to *Railsea* as a re-telling of *Moby-Dick*, and, indeed, Miéville seems eager to expose and undermine the representational logos at work in Melville's realist novel. Captain Naphi has her own personal Moby-Dick and her obsession is no less intense than Ahab's. Mocker-Jack – an immense "tooth-coloured" moldywarpe – directs Naphi's movement and prescribes the *Medes'* rhythm and relationship to space. The railsea is taken for granted as a constant variable within the representational system configured by her "philosophy," and the landscape itself becomes secondary to the conquest.

In perceiving and relating to space in such a way that the railsea becomes an ambient, constant, and neutral background, Naphi simplifies and reduces her plane of vision so as to more clearly perceive Mocker-Jack – at least theoretically. What occurs, instead, along with a strategic reduction of the railsea to an inert and lifeless container, is

the foreclosure of various possibilities. Naphi's strategic plans to capture Mocker-Jack in fact delay the process because the railsea is, in actuality, always affecting both Mocker-Jack and the *Medes*. At the same time that Naphi's movement is controlled by her philosophy, her philosophy ironically refuses to sit still – it refuses to become the One that she wants it to be. As Roy writes,

> Optic space is ruled by optical metaphors such as representation and repetition which are useful for control over distances. When we assume that things or phenomena repeat, or are representations of an ideal form, we no longer have to worry about their uniqueness. Difference can thus be reduced to the Same so that they do not overpower the mechanisms of control.[11]

The adoption of an "optic" perspective thus legitimizes the maintenance of the status quo, of a particular static order, for the sake of maintaining control. The result of such a perspective is that positive change is foreclosed; the different, the new, the emergent, are immediately shut down in favour of the Same. As such, the railsea is perceived as a representational surface that "repeats" itself ad infinitum just as Mocker-Jack is perceived as a stable (i.e. predictable) phenomenon or "ideal form" whose differential motion or becomings are disregarded for the sake of simplicity. Reinforcing this analysis is Naphi's revealing explanation of her unique relation to Mocker-Jack:

> You know how careful are philosophies...how meanings are evasive. They have to be parsed. Here again came the cunning of unreason. I was creaking, lost, knowing that the ivory-coloured beast had evaded my harpoon & continued his opaque diggery, resisting close reading & a solution to his mystery. I bellowed, & swore that one day I would submit him to a sharp & bladey interpretation.[12]

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[11] Id. 32.
[12] *Railsea* 104.

Naphi's proclamation that she intends to force Mocker-Jack to "submit" to interpretation is equivalent to a declaration of loyalty to optic perception and representational logic. Mocker-Jack's "evasive" qualities detract from Naphi's attempt to understand it. In an effort to control her philosophy, she seeks to reduce it [Mocker-Jack] to a final interpretation, thus enclosing Mocker-Jack in a conceptual framework that denies difference and motion for the sake of control.

Unlike Naphi, however, the young protagonist Sham takes up a perspective that corresponds to what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the "haptic." The haptic is a perceptual stance proper to nomadism insofar as it takes up space as always-already deterritorialized and changeable. Haptic space is likened to "insurgent space," whose "gradients are produced region by region, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, through connections, deterritorializations, intensities and observances."[13] Whereas the optic model tends to conceptualize space as "composition" of elements that compose a unified image, the haptic perspective is fundamentally concerned with discrete moments, discrete couplings, that create spontaneous assemblages. The goal of hapticity is not to reconcile elements within a unified whole, but rather to observe the development of variations and flows so as to better connect with them. In this sense, hapticity – insofar as it fundamentally non-Euclidean – privileges the empirical (that is to say, the contingencies and specificities of the material) over and above space as a pure and mathematical representation.[14] Haptic space "Does not restrict itself to outlines or borders and therefore

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[13] Kaustuv 32.
[14] Grosz 95.

to the recognition, representation, or recovery of things or objects."[15] Instead, haptic space describes elements in motion, things and events constantly "slipping into each other to produce hybrid multiplicities that cannot be fully assessed using representational criteria."[16]

Sham's haptic perspective is first made visible (and perhaps "activated") in his encounter with photographic image of the edge of the railsea. While raiding a wrecked train early in the novel, Sham finds a chip of computer memory lodged in the dirt beneath the train. As a salvage enthusiast and collector, Sham is initially reluctant to tell Naphi of his findings; however, duty overcomes his sense of entitlement and Naphi confiscates the memory chip after confronting Sham. Soon after, Naphi decides to take Sham with her to investigate the contents of the memory chip. Naphi manages to find a shop that provides access to ancient "ordinators" and proceeds to click through the confusing images preserved on the memory chip. Sham is principally caught by one image in particular:

> The prow of the train was visible like a fat arrow in the middle of the shot, pointing at an oddly foreshortened horizon. The line it was riding was an unnaturally straight stretch, the two rails bisecting the view all the way to where perspective knitted them together. & to either side of it – was nothing. No other rails at all, Empty earth. Empty earth & one straight line. One line in the railsea. Couldn't be. There's not nor can there be any way out of the tangle. A single line could not be. There it was. Railsea. But not. Land stretched like some pegged-out dead animal in an Anatomy & Butchery class.[17]

I quote this passage at length for several reasons. This description of the photographic image echoes Deleuze's description of difference, or rather, his diagrammatic take on

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[15] Id. 33.
[16] Kaustuv 35.
[17] *Railsea* 84.

what difference would "look like" in contrast to the representational model that has dominated since the Renaissance until the advent of the twentieth century.[18] Single-point perspective favours a particular hierarchical arrangement of space, so that objects in the foreground are dominant and the eye follows an "infinitely receding horizon" into the distance. The observer is intended to perceive the image from a distance, to perceive the objects depicted *as* objects *only*, to objectify that which is represented and maintain an intellectual rather than sensible relationship to the work.[19] Deleuze, however, would have us disregard such rules, as we can observe in the following passage from *Difference and Repetition*:

> Let us imagine something which is distinguished – *and yet that from which* it is distinguished is not distinguished from it. The flash of lightning for example, is distinguished from the black sky, but must carry the sky along with it…one would say that the bottom rises to the surface, without ceasing to be the bottom. There is, on both sides, something cruel – and even monstrous – in this struggle…where the distinguished is opposed to something which cannot be distinguished from it, and which continues to embrace that which is divorced from it.[20]

The photograph that entraps Sham's attention and Deleuze's imaginary image, above, are alike in several important ways. The prow of the train is described like a "fat arrow," drawing attention away from the foreground and into a horizon that defies conventional laws of perspective insofar as it is "oddly foreshortened." The geometrical symmetry of the image is segmented by the straight lines that divide the screen. Here the lines – the single track rails – are *distinguished* from the expanse of the railsea, but in the same

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[18] Olkowski 16.
[19] Id. 16.
[20] Deleuze qtd. in Olkowski 16.

moment, the railsea refuses to be rendered distinct from the single rails. As such, the two features are simultaneously distinct and yet interact in one assemblage. They are not singulars arranged within a unity, but are rather particulars emerging out of a particular milieu that resists unification. The rails, like the "flash of lightning…[that] carries the sky along with it" carry the expanse of the railsea so that the "bottom" – that fat arrow in the immediate foreground –*destabilizes* the composition of the image. Instead of becoming a stable point of departure that *unifies* the image, this element actually disrupts what has come to be considered visual or perspectival equilibrium. The result is that space, in this perceptual framework, is fundamentally *open* rather than *closed*; the possibilities for movement are unlimited as opposed to narrowly circumscribed. Whereas representational logic demands that we approach space within the confines of a particular perceptual schema, the haptic approach provides new options for both engaging with and utilizing space insofar as the opportunities for engagement are not predetermined in advance, but rather emerge as a result of temporal and spatial contingencies.

It is significant that Naphi dismisses the images of the "edge of the railsea" that Sham is so desperately attracted to. Sham perceives space as differential vectors, as haptic assemblages that open up an infinity of virtual possibilities for movement and the [re]definition of spatial coordinates. For Naphi, the images are merely more of the same. The images are merely representational; they represent a solid grid unimportant except as a kind of container for Mocker-Jack, never revealing but always already revealed. Deleuze's passage, above, reveals that perception, insofar as it is one constitutive element of intellectual movement, in fact creates and recreates space insofar as perceptual

tendencies contribute to the delineation and, ultimately, the creation, of space itself insofar as our perceptual habits orient our very real and material interactions with space. Sham's movement is pivotal and theoretically-important due to the fact that is demonstrates how space – alongside perception and movement – can be deployed to produce new political and social possibilities. Whereas Sham constantly recreates space as haptic, engaging with the geographical space of the landscape as an actant with its own drives, Naphi, in her ignorance, constantly reproduces that space as optic insofar as she maintains a perspective of the railsea as fundamentally inert and ambient. The precise ways that Sham engages with space as "haptic" will be explained in the following section, as we move from a discussion of perception to movement, and space.

Arborescent and Rhizomatic Spatiality and Motion

In order to further analyze the various types of matter, motion, and assemblages that occur in *Railsea* I will turn now to Deleuze and Guattari's delineation between two main types of movement and spatial composition: first, arborescent, striated or representational space and second, *rhizomatic* or *heterogeneous* spatiality. Theorizing space and motion "makes it easier to identify the forces that inhabit or traverse a particular terrain, in order thereby to generate new relations of becoming or look for transformational possibilities therein."[21] In this sense, spatiality – and motion – necessarily create and/or delimit the types of social and political relations that are

[21] Kaustuv 30.

possible in any single milieu and thus determine precisely what types of assemblages can emerge.

The first type of space/movement characterized by Deleuze and Guattari is that of arborescent, striated, or representational space. Striations function according to two stages of articulations. First, striation "chooses or deducts, for unstable particle flows, metastable molecular or quasi-molecular units upon which it imposes a statistical order of connections and successions (forms).[22]" Striated space is therefore fundamentally concerned with attributing order – or imposing order – onto mobile forms. The connections formed are "statistical" insofar as they can be measured, are over-determined (or over-coded), and are hierarchically ordered. The second articulation "establishes functional, compact, stable structures and constructs the molar compounds in which these structures are simultaneously actualized…the second formulation sets up a stable functional structure and effects the passage from sediment to sedimentary rock."[23] Whereas sediment – in geological terms – remains mobile and unformed, like sand before it becomes rock, striated space actualizes selective virtual potentialities contained within matter, thus compelling particular actualizations (usually in terms of utility). The role of striated space, therefore, is to reproduce *functional* and *stable* space *and* movement which is, more often than not, achieved by articulating forms out of molecular or formless matter. This type of space or movement is also called "arborescent" insofar as the organization and creation of striated space centers on pre-established conceptual pivots:

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[22] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: A Thousand Plateaus (*Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 40.
[23] Id. 41.

"arborescent systems are hierarchical systems with centers of *significance* and *signification*, central automata like organized memories."[24] In this sense, striated space is space that *signifies;* it is organized around specific conceptual forms that recur throughout the entire structure, like memories unconsciously orienting an individual's thought along different patterns. In short, striated space conforms to a Euclidean and *optic* model in which the "mathematization and axiomatization of space permitted space to be considered homogenous, universal, and regular;" in this model, space can be "represented according to a single, definitive model."[25]

In contrast to the Euclidean, striated, arborescent model of space, Deleuze and Guattari propose something entirely different. Deleuze and Guattari take up a position more aligned with what Elizabeth Grosz associates with the modern development of post-Newtonian and non-Euclidean geometries.[26] What they call nomadic, rhizomatic, or heterogeneous space is where "potentialities for resistance increase."[27] Whereas arborescent movement, spatiality, and thought rely on the sedimentation and *overcoding* of forces, the rhizome is fundamentally concerned with movement, "lines of flight," and passages across and through existing structures.[28] Rhizomatic movement is concerned with producing *becomings* that do not occur in *opposition* to identity, to signification, to unity, but rather "enable a trait, a line, an orientation, an event to be *released* from the

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[24] Id., 16.
[25] Grosz 94.
[26] Id. 97.
[27] Kaustuv 31.
[28] *A Thousand Plateaus* 9.

system, series, organism or object"[29] that has a primarily unifying effect. The events, motions and forces that contribute to the release of "lines" (virtual potentialities) from an arborescent and sedimented system are called deterritorializations. Deterritorializations, in this sense, create a kind of "opening" in a previously self-contained system, allowing new possibilities to emerge. Here we can see how rhizomes are conceptually related to both nomadism and heterogeneity. The parts are never reduced to a totality that "plots a point, fixes an order."[30] Instead of creating One from multiple, rhizomes reproduce and sustain *heterogeneity*, that is to say, the *multiplicitous*, the plural, the diverse. Similarly, the nomad relates to space as deterritorialized; the nomad has no territory and exists in the "intermezzo" between mapped (and striated) pathways and points.[31]

Now that we have offered descriptions, it is time to bring them to life; to consider not *what* they are, but *how* they are; how these differential movements act, produce, and interfere with the creation of distinct assemblages. In *Railsea*, we can observe both arborescent and rhizomatic movement taken up in particular ways, propelling events and actants in different directions, and illustrating Deleuze and Guattari's theories of movement in action.

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[29] Grosz, *Space* 134.
[30] *A Thousand Plateaus* 7.
[31] Id. 380.

Organizing the Railsea: the Differential Movements of Naphi and Sham

Throughout *Railsea*, when Captain Naphi's ship the *Medes* reaches one town or another and the crew relax in pubs, the reader is treated to a series of conversations between drunken captains, punctuated with monologues that describe the nature of their distinct "philosophies." Sham explains that

> Not every captain…had [a philosophy] but a fair proportion grew into a close antipathy-cum-connection with one particular animal, which they had come to realize or decide embodied meanings, potentialities, ways of looking at the world. At a certain point…the usual cunning thinking about professional prey switched onto a new rail & became something else – a faithfulness to an animal that was now a world-view.[32]

It is here that Miéville makes explicit the relation between literal or "real" speed, kinds of movement, and the manner in which motion orients the relationship between bodies, *creating* space in the process of its [motion's] unfolding. Here, too, Miéville makes clear the analogy between physical motion and the movement of thought. One could even say that thought is itself a bodily event.[33] Thought can never be extracted from materiality and the corporeal, just as physical movement is always affected by intellectual activity. The two modalities mutually inform the movements of one another.

The motion of Captain Naphi exemplifies the first type of movement/spatiality described by Deleuze and Guattari – that of state, striated, or representational space. Mocker-Jack is the unity, the pivot, the One, the master (and unattainable) signifier[34] of Naphi's motion. As Deleuze and Guattari write of striated space, the principle of

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[32] *Railsea* 95.
[33] Abigail Bray and Claire Colebrook, "The Haunted Flesh: Corporeal Feminism and the Politics of (Dis)Embodiment," *Signs* 24, no. 1 (1998): 37.
[34] *A Thousand Plateaus* 8.

connection of root-structures [arborescent organizations] is to "plot a point, fix an order."[35] Naphi's movement is directed always by the plotted "point" of Mocker-Jack, its location literally fixed and blinking on the train radar, guiding the movement of the *Medes*.

In the case of Captain Naphi, movement on both planes – the physical and the intellectual – is subject to an *organizing principle* that directs thought *as well as* its material effects. The moldywarpe is never more than an arbitrary signifier that serves as an organizing principle, a center that directs both thought and motion to particular ends, confining her movement in the process. Here we can observe the construction and iteration of those "conceptual pivots" around which arborescent movement is organized: Naphi's pursuit is less about *capturing* the moldywarpe than it is about remaining within its *center of gravity*. Her pursuit is concerned with allegiance to the structural effect of a singular and organizing principle – a structured and structuring *logos* – rather than the *content* of the principle. As Sham snarkly comments, "Ah, there it was. So this philosophy was about *speed*. Acceleration."[36] Here we can observe the degree to which Naphi's philosophy is concerned with "keeping time" and maintaining an equivalent rhythm so as to remain embedded within the conceptual structure represented by Mocker-Jack. Capture is not the point. Indeed, Sham asks, "What happens when the evasive

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[35] Id., 7.
[36] *Railsea* 102.

concepts you hunt, get found?[37]" The answer is: they do not exist to be *found*, they exist to *order*; to order movement and thought, and thought's movement.

Insofar as Naphi thinks and acts according to an arborescent and Euclidean model, Naphi's perception of the railsea reduces it to a *grid* organized around the principle or philosophy of Mocker-Jack. In other words, Naphi establishes herself as one "point" in direct opposition to another (Mocker-Jack) and as such, disavows the degree to which the railsea itself contributes to, and is indeed constitutive of, a distinct assemblage that is *fundamentally spatial and material* as much as it is philosophical. In this sense, Naphi relates to the railsea as though it is Euclidean or "optic" space. Deleuze and Guattari make use of the concept of Euclidean space to describe state-ordered space insofar as all parts of Euclidean space have the same characteristics, and space remains unaffected by what occurs within it.[38] The result is that space "drops out of sight" insofar as it is treated as a "neutral ambient background."[39] Naphi's relation to space corresponds to this model insofar as she treats space – the body of the railsea itself – as a kind of neutral and inert container that houses Mocker-Jack but does not – and cannot – interact with it or her ship in any active way. Naphi relates to the railsea as though it is a grid mapped out in advance,[40] and as such, her perception of the railsea is fixed. It is the representational background against which Mocker-Jack – the organizing principle – moves, while the geographical environment remains ideologically invisible.

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[37] Id., 264.
[38] Grosz 94.
[39] Kaustuv 30.
[40] Id. 31.

Another way to conceptualize this difference in speeds is to follow the opposition between unification and multiplicity. In Naphi's case, multiplicity – represented by the diversity and activity of the *Medes* and its crew – is made to cohere to the principle of unity, to the laws of the existing (representational) structure. As Deleuze and Guattari write, "whenever a multiplicity is taken up in a structure, its growth is offset by a reduction in its laws of combination."[41] Here I take "growth" as *movement*, which, in Naphi's case, necessitates that the *Medes* move in a predetermined direction established a priori by the principle that governs her identity. The *Medes* is itself a kind of assemblage, a multiplicity; however, the virtual capacities of that assemblage are foreclosed when it is taken up in the signifying structure symbolized by Mocker-Jack. In other words, the virtual potentiality or futurity of the assemblage becomes limited when it is coerced into a structure constructed around a principle of unity. Mocker-Jack serves as unifying catalyst provoking certain kinds of movement, allowing certain tendencies of the assemblage-body-*Medes* to come into effect at the expense of others. The result is limited and/or reduced movement and the foreclosure of particular virtual tendencies for the sake of reinforcing an over-coded principle of unification.

Sham's Rhizomatic Nomadism

Unlike Naphi, the journeys of protagonist Sham Yes ap Soorap take him away from the well-populated and predictable areas of the railsea, into "dusty barren stretches

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[41] *A Thousand Plateaus* 6.

of plain-&-rail near the edge of the world [where] maps are contradictory."[42] The fact that Sham is a native of Streggeye, a nation of individuals with particularly rhizomatic tendencies who describe themselves as "the Diffuse College…the scattered siblinghood; the Antiplaced; the Universal Diggers,"[43] perhaps foreshadows his eventual development into rhizomatic patterns of movement. Sham has no particular interest in philosophies. His interest lies, instead, in salvage and myths, both of which lead him away from the *Medes*, the charted regions of the railsea, and into unpopulated and isolated regions. The movement of Sham's body reflects his thought insofar as he has no particular objective, only a desire to explore. Unlike Naphi, whose philosophy directs her along striated passages, following the lead of her philosophy, Sham's movement is fundamentally rhizomatic.

That said, Sham starts on a predetermined arborescent path; as a loyal crew member of the *Medes* and an adherent to Naphi's philosophy, Sham, too, initially conforms to a representational logos. As the novel progresses, however, we can observe Sham's transition into differential patterns of movement. This transition is signalled by sharp narrative shifts that occur both literally and figuratively. Although Sham's ejection from the *Medes* – perhaps the first moment in which Miéville signals Sham's divergence from arborescent pathways and its striated trajectory – is, at least initially, forceful and undesired, he soon takes up a new speed, a new rhythm.

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[42] *Railsea* 60.
[43] Id. 108.

This first shift occurs when the *Medes* docks at a town called Manihiki. Young as he is, this is the first time in Sham's life when he is able to wander, to indulge in drink, and, most importantly, investigate the notorious salvage markets of Manihiki. Amongst the salvage markets, Sham hears a myth about two orphaned children who are searching for the impossible: the limits of the railsea. Upon meeting the orphans – Caldera and Dero Shroake – Sham learns that they are the children of adventurous parents who died in a train-wreck on their journey to discover "a way out of the railsea… something beyond the rails."[44] The Shroake children are planning to complete their parent's journey. The Shroake children are the first in the novel to question the conventional understanding of the railsea as a divine creation, as a type of "writing in heavenly script"[45] that "rose out of the earth"[46] as a result of divine intervention. Instead, the children locate the origin of the railsea at a fight between two railroad companies in which both drained the oceans, polluted the earth, and created the tangle of existing lines in an attempt to destroy one another's trains and business. As Caldera notes, "they destroyed each other & all they left were the rails. We live in the aftermath of business bickering."[47]

This is an important moment, and revelation, for Sham, because it corresponds to a split away from a representational understanding of the railsea. While the railsea has, up until this point, been conceived as a kind of neutral and naturally-occurring environment; an environment that merely exists because it *must*, the Shroakes expose the contingency

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[44] *Railsea* 180.
[45] Id. 181.
[46] Id. 182.
[47] Id. 183.

of the railsea as a body-assemblage created through specific social and material events. To perceive the railsea as a "natural" landscape ordained by the hand of god(s) is to conform to representational *logos* in which [geographical] bodies are reduced to neutral and inert containers for activity rather than active assemblages created in particular socio-political contexts. One could argue, as well, that this shift in perspective and understanding contributes to Sham's transition from striated to rhizomatic movement. For Sham, this conceptual shift opens up new opportunities for relating to and moving across the railsea. He would become something different: "He wouldn't be a salvor, nor would he be a train doctor nor a moler either. He'd be something else."[48] What he becomes, instead, is an explorer: a nomad.

Before Sham can embark with the Shroakes to the "ends of the railsea" he is kidnapped by pirates. This event, coupled with Sham's emerging awareness of the railsea as a body-assemblage in motion, signals another shift, another departure: a departure that is also a deterritorialization. Although Sham's kidnapping is at least initially inhibiting, this event inaugurates a shift from occupying striated space to deploying rhizomatic trajectories. His deterritorialization is, to be sure, a kind of disorientation; however, deterritorialization, writes Roy, is fundamentally "enabling" rather than "disabling" insofar as deterritorialization allows for "new possibilities that could not be imagined otherwise – there is a surge of strength that comes from the new space of the multitude."[49] The possibilities opened up by Sham's unfortunate kidnapping are revealed

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[48] *Railsea* 203.
[49] Hardt and Negri qtd. in Kaustuv 31.

a chapter later, when combat breaks out between the pirates who captured him and a military vessel patrolling the railsea. Sham manages to escape onto an isolated stretch of land before his captors and their ship are destroyed. Although he remains stranded for a few days, Sham is rescued by the Bajjer, a tribe also known as the rail-nomads. It is at this point that Sham partakes in new routes and pathways that are ordered differently than those habitual movements of "identitarian space.[50]" It is as if his kidnapping quite literally shakes him out of the complacent attitude he adopted while serving Naphi and conforming to her striated trajectories.

Here we can observe, finally, the adoption of the second variety of movement as it is described by Deleuze and Guattari. After being adopted by the Bajjer nomads, Sham sets off to find Naphi and claim her ship for his own purposes. Upon reaching the *Medes*, Sham convinces Naphi to go after the Shroake children, promising her that the mission will be a quick detour rather than a complete departure from her quest for Mocker-Jack. It is here that the Medes joins forces with other types of travelling bands and most notably, the Bajjer nomads, to form what Miéville calls a "multitude"[51] that departs for "the X. X the Unknown. Off the edge of the map."[52] The ship, insofar as it becomes untethered from the literal "point" of Mocker-Jack on a blinking ship radar, becomes a metaphor for rhizomatic movement, providing an example of the degree to which social and political assemblages are always in the process of becoming-different, becoming-other. The *Medes,* coupled with the Bajjer nomads, form their own distinctive assemblage, making

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[50] Kaustuv 30.
[51] *Railsea* 338.
[52] Id. 340.

use of the railsea in a new way, as a distinctive force with its own formative contributions.

The social and political effects of this shift are made explicit by Miéville through metaphor. The *Medes'* trek into uncharted territories concludes with a rather epic battle that results in, first, the destruction of Mocker-Jack, second, the destruction of an "Angel" and, third, what is akin to a kind of exodus outside of the physical barriers of the railsea that have, since the beginning of the novel, symbolized the "capture" of human and non-human agents within the representational schema of capitalism and nationalism.

Mocker-Jack, insofar as he acts as a conceptual pivot, a "philosophy," serves, as we have seen, as a metaphor for dogmatic and transcendent philosophies and ideological systems. It is significant, then, that after Sham has convinced Naphi to forsake her hunt, Mocker-Jack *reverses* the hunt and comes after the *Medes*. Here we can see the irony of Naphi's obsession: the power relation is not one-sided; it is, in fact, a double-bind insofar as Naphi, despite wanting to break out of acquired habits and ways of thinking and perceiving the world, is chased down by the very philosophy she wants to escape. Here Miéville points out the degree to which we can never simply "step out" of one philosophical or ideological framework and into another; rather, we remain haunted by our own allegiances, by ghosts of a prior structure that influenced our being, our very constitution.

The second major symbol that Miéville makes use of in the conclusion is that of the "Angel." The Angels, in short, are massive, murderous, divine creatures that guard the edges of the railsea, patrolling it so as to prevent ships from moving beyond the rails.

Angels have a similar symbolic function as Mocker-Jack insofar as they, too, symbolize the authority and dogmatism of ideologies that, quite literally, prevent individuals from thinking and perceiving outside of prescribed representational schemas. Significantly, the Angels are constituted of both flesh and machine-parts; they are both divine and *constructed:* the Angel's "wheels were many sizes, an irregular flank of them, of interlocking gears. Tusked with weapons. It did not have, nor did it need, windows. There was no seeing out or in: it was an avenging rail-riding chariot of wrath."[53] The constructed, *cybernetic* quality of the Angels emphasizes the degree to which Divine entities and the religions they represent are, I would argue, in fact constituted within and by particular historical and political contexts to serve as further means of social and political control. Furthermore, the fact that the Angels have no windows, no way of *seeing*, suggests that such concepts, ideologies, and perceptual schemas are, in fact, *blind* to empirical conditions, to actual events and the *situatedness* of social and political events insofar as they present themselves as objectively-occurring, "natural" phenomena rather than contingent and socially-constructed systems. The supposed "neutrality" and "objectivity" of representational logic is here revealed as fundamentally *violent* insofar as it forecloses and marginalizes alternative ways of being and engaging with the world that would deny and undermine its authority.

In the final battle, Sham, taking over control of the *Medes*, brings these two massive symbols to their demise. With both the Angel and Mocker-Jack on their tail, Sham directs the ship in such a way that, in order to reach the Medes, their two enemies

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[53] *Railsea* 373.

are forced to cross paths. The resulting clash between the Angel and Mocker-Jack results in both destroying one another and, finally, falling off the edge of the railsea into a black abyss: "the Angel disintegrated into shadows, became a shower of burning. The island sized [moldywarpe] glowed ghostly as it fell, until the dark that filled the trench beyond the railsea swallowed it, & the Medes was left above emptiness, waiting for the sound of impact, a sound that never came."[54] This epic conclusion symbolizes the destruction of representational logic and the triumph of deterritorialized space and motion over and against the striated and arborescent. It is only after adopting rhizomatic movement, after Sham untethers himself from the logical of Euclidean perception, that such an overthrow becomes possible.

This defeat, too, is only made possible insofar as the variable components – the Medes, The Bajjer nomads, and the railsea itself – are all conceptualized as intensive forces acting together as a machine-assemblage that works against the logic of representation. The defeat of the Angel and Mocker-Jack required that Sham *utilized* space, related to landscape and spatiality, in a fundamentally rhizomatic or nomadic fashion. The adoption of space as one component in an intensive assemblage is signalled by Miéville's descriptive language: the manner in which the railsea is described gradually shifts to correspond with Sham's transformed understanding of – and relation to – the landscape. The railsea becomes "wild" and "unmappable," the rails lead to seemingly bottomless holes in the ground, they criss-cross more frequently like cross-hatch on a

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[54] Id. 380.

dark etching, and navigation becomes entirely contingent on the *very particular material conditions of the railsea at any one moment in the journey*. The railsea and Medes, Sham and the Bajjer nomads, come together to create a multiplicitous assemblage with "no subject or object, only determinations, magnitudes and dimensions"[55] in relation to one another. Sham, insofar as he challenges Naphi and takes up the Medes as a kind of line of flight that moves away from conventional and striated routes, instigates the reconfiguration of forces and trajectories that become fundamentally nomadic.

It is only after they defeat Mocker-Jack and the Angel that Sham, Naphi, and the rest of their "multitude" are capable of moving beyond the rails, beyond the striated pathways established by bickering railway corporations. Here we can observe the achievement of a specific type of freedom, unconditioned and set loose from the pre-determined pathways determined by the rails – and the petty capitalist ideologies that they symbolize. As Miéville writes, the "way was now open."[56] What occurs, in the opening up of new pathways, is the production of "lines" with "no units of measure, only multiplicities or varieties of measurement."[57] Why is this so vital? Why is openness so valuable, to Sham, to Miéville, and even to Deleuze and Guattari? This openness allows for the creativity of new ways of being, new ways of conceiving and being in-the-world that are not preconditioned, not merely given to us as *rules*. For Deleuze and Guattari, and indeed, for Sham, too, openness is not valuable in and of itself but only insofar as it

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[55] *A Thousand Plateaus* 6.
[56] *Railsea* 417.

[57] *A Thousand Plateaus* 8.

allows the emergence of new "rails" of thought and mobility that deny oppressive representational schemas. In order to fully draw out and delimit the implications of such "openness" and its implications in terms of spatiality and motion, we will now turn to Jane Bennett's theories of thing-power and its application to the assemblages in *Railsea*.

The [Thing-] Power of the Railsea

It is important to note that the railsea itself is neither striated nor smooth, neither *essentially* arborescent nor rhizomatic. Nor is the railsea merely an inert entity upon which trains pass. While space, and in this case, the physical and geographical environment, are usually conceptualized as "mere background to events and phenomena,"[58] it is important, as we can observe in the work of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari, to "rupture the sense of space as inert, ambient, or neutral."[59] Although the "topographic characteristics of space [are] often made invisible and pushed into the background," these same geographies and landscapes inevitably "determine the possibilities and limits of what may occur within it,"[60] thus provoking and making possible certain becomings-with other nonhuman and human bodies. As the novel progresses, the railsea takes on a new form. This shift in descriptive language reflects the aforementioned transition from optic to haptic perception and from striated to rhizomatic space and motion. It is at this point that the railsea *as* actant is, in a sense, "activated:" it is no longer described as a passive space but as an uncannily lively space, a "wild land

[58] Kaustuv 30.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.

punctuated with anomalies"[61] that rebels against representation. Miéville describes this region of the railsea – an area far away from those well-mapped-out regions populated by moldywarpes and mole-trains – as follows:

> A fringe of unknownness spreads form a point at the northwestern edge of the world. There are patches of troublesome sparsely sketched-out rails eastward of that mountain & monster-bounded place. The darkest polar iceholes of the south have their terrible aspects. & so on. At these wild parts the rails seem drunk on rarities. The rails misbehave. Switches do not do as they are bid, ground is not so strong & stable as it appears…the iron itself has been made to mess with trains. A most scandalous wrongness.[62]

We witness here how Miéville presents a different vision of space, a vision of geography itself as vital and active rather than passive. As Keith Woodard writes:

> Rarely are environments passive media for interacting bodies; more often they actively participate in the composition of affective sociality. Accordingly, affect expresses not only relations between formal or typological bodies, but also…the forceful proximities and involvements of environments. The materialities attached to such situations, it seems, are something much more than simple spaces of affect. Rather, they are affective spaces – or 'sites' – participating fully in immediate, forceful engagements.[63]

The railsea can thus be construed as an active rather than passive participant in the creation of social and political forces. The railsea cannot be defined as inherently striated or smooth because it is, like any and all bodies, a site of "transitory, impermanent, and generative transformation,"[64] engaged in various deterritorializations and reterritorializations at different speeds and levels, connected with the multifarious forces – human or nonhuman – that penetrate or pass over its surface.

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[61] *Railsea* 274.
[62] Id. 285.
[63] Keith Woodward, "Affective Life," *in A Companion to Social Geography*, eds. Vincent J. Del Casino Jr., Mary E. Thomas, Paul Cloke, and Ruth Panelli (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 332.
[64] Id. 330.

What is being described in *Railsea*, therefore, is a particular relation to and between bodies, mediated by speed and motion. What Miéville constructs is a vision of the Earth as an inherently mobile and lively body that corresponds to Deleuze's materialist ontology of morphogenesis. As Sheerin writes:

> Deleuze rejects the view that reality is made up of fully formed objects identified by their essence or 'core set of properties that defines what the objects are'…For Deleuze, something else is required to define what an object is – and following Schelling he turns to dynamic processes that are immanent to our world of matter and energy.[65]

According to the morphogenetic model, the Earth – whether we're speaking of the railsea itself or any other layer of *Railsea's* fantasy world – is not inert and reducible to representation; it is, instead, fundamentally altered and redefined by the flows and the bodies that transverse it. This is what Manuel DeLanda, following Deleuze, refers to as a "zone of intensity" in which "intensive qualities" interact to create something entirely new.[66] In *Railsea*, these "intensive qualities" include the diversity of bodies –the *Medes*, Sham, the railsea itself – that produce "spontaneous flows and movement"[67] by virtue of their interactions, and by virtue of their inherent differences that combine to create something new.

It is here that I would like to turn to Jane Bennett's speculative materialist theory of "thing-power" insofar as it draws from and indeed makes something new from

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[65] Declan Sheerin, *Deleuze and Ricœur: Disavowed Affinities and the Narrative Self* (London and New York: Continuum, 2009), 69.
[66] Manuel DeLanda, "Space: Extensive and Intensive, Actual and Virtual," in *Deleuze and Space*, eds. Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 82.
[67] Id. 81.

Deleuze's theory of morphogenesis. Bennett's speculative materialism provides a different lens from which to analyze the assemblages at work in Railsea; "thing-power" speaks to bodies in-the-making, bodily *becomings* both human and *non*human. It is difficult to understand the theoretical underpinnings of Miéville's fictional works if you do not take his landscapes, worlds, and geographies as vital characters within each fiction. In this sense, Miéville shows the underlying vitality of nonhuman bodies that are regularly explained away as inert and neutral backgrounds upon which actants move and affect change.

On the contrary, all things, human or nonhuman, intervene and insert their own flows, their own energies, into any one event or what Bennett calls "ecology." The geographical bodies in Miéville's works are almost always involved in the process of change, revealing in the process the extent to which matter cannot be reduced to an inert surface upon which energies flow, but instead, must be seen as *implicated* in these events and flows, both producing and being produced by other actants. As Bennett suggests, the theory of "thing-power" grants the possibility that "(nonhuman) things and their powers can have a laudable effect on humans [and] articulate ways in which human being and thinghood overlap."[68] In other words, there is a "slippage" between the nonhuman and the human,[69] so that the inside of one opens itself to the other, and vice versa. The result is the making-permeable of the boundary between "inert matter and vital energy, between

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[68] Jane Bennett, "The Force of Things: Steps toward an Ecology of Matter," *Political Theory* 32, no. 3 (2004): 348-349.
[69] Id. 349.

animate and inanimate" so that "all things, to some degree or other, live on both sides."[70] To quote Deleuze, "just as there is a halo of instinct in intelligence, a nebula of intelligence in instinct," there is a "hint of the animate in plants, and of the vegetable in animals."[71]

Moreover, the theory of thing-power acknowledges that nonhuman bodies or "things" are *distinct* from human things, but *not* less valuable or active than human actants by virtue of their difference. What is at stake, then, is a vision of the world that does not reduce all things to an anthropomorphic perspective, a view that conceives of nonhuman bodies, matter, objects, and space itself as "vital players"[72] alongside human bodies rather than a mere representation screen upon which movement and events happen. Throughout *Railsea*, we are given accounts of the Earth as fundamentally lively, and, frequently, dangerous. Sham describes earth that "boiled, that oozed with life, ready to take him at his first stumble."[73] Here Bennett's appropriation of Thoreau proves useful: "Thoreau's notion of the Wild, that is, his idea that there is an existence peculiar to a thing that is irreducible to the thing's imbrication with human subjectivity…in the foreground is a Lucretian figuration of materiality as capable of free or aleatory movements."[74] The rails, too, are frequently described as possessing a particular vitalism: "the rails misbehave," and the switches between lines "rarely do as they are bid."[75] This suggests that, for Miéville, it is not only nature but matter, regardless of origin, inorganic

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[70] Id. 352.
[71] Gilles Deleuze qtd. in Jane Bennett 353.
[72] Bennett 349.
[73] *Railsea* 128.
[74] Bennett 249.
[75] *Railsea* 285.

or organic, that is capable of free movement. The movement of the railsea is fundamentally "wild" insofar as it cannot be reduced to human taxonomical or representational accounts.

The resulting worldview, in plain terms, is a materialism that takes all bodies, all things, all humans, as components of a "protean flow of matter-energy and figures the thing as a relatively composed form of that flow."[76] The railsea is one component of a constituted assemblage, participating in an ecology, which, for Bennett, can be defined as the "study or story of the place where we live, or better, the place *that* we live… that place is a dynamic flow of matter-energy that tends to settle into various bodies, bodies that often join forces, make connections, form alliances.[77] The railsea is a nonhuman body with its own force, affecting and being affected by the bodies that traverse it. The railsea, as I previously suggested, is not, in *essence*, either rhizomatic or arborescent, it is rather *produced as one or the other* depending on the flows and trajectories that interact with it. The human subjects of *Railsea*, too, are always composed and recomposed by their relation to their material environment and the infinity of particles and bodies that surround them: "A material body always resides within some assemblage or other and its thing-power is a function of that grouping. A thing has power by virtue of its operating in conjunction with other things."[78] As such, the railsea as a geographical body is distinctive but simultaneously gains its strength within the context of a specific spatio-temporal "grouping" of elements.

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[76] Bennett 352.
[77] Id. 365.
[78] Id. 353-354.

At the same time, thing-power materialism, as Bennett refers to it, is a difficult pill to swallow. Conventionally, understanding "things" involves reducing them to a anthropocentric framework. We want to be able to understand thing-bodies, hence the priority given to the logic of representation. Representational logic gives us a sense of (illusory) control and keeps the human term in a position of authority. After all, we are accustomed to an anthropocentric world-view in all other things "submit." This is why thing-power materialism, on the other hand, dislodges this hierarchy so that humans are no more or less active or important than nonhuman matter. In the same moment that thing-power materialism refuses the superiority of the human term, it simultaneously confuses it. This is to say that thing-power materialism takes for granted a certain degree of slippage between "objects" and "subjects," resulting in a confusion of bodies and flows. This moment of confusion, however, is also a moment of potentiality. The point at which the boundary between human and nonhuman becomes permeable is also the point at which it "becomes possible to discern a resemblance between one's interior thinghood and the object-entities exterior to one's body."[79] For Bennett, this "sympathetic link" constitutes a "line of flight from the anthropocentrism of everyday experience, [allowing] thing-power comes to presence."[80]

What we can take from Bennett, and Deleuze, therefore, is a new understanding of space and bodily power. When we take up space as a representational surface, we remain locked within a particular ontological framework that tends to limit how we can

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[79] Id. 366.
[80] Id. 366.

think about different forces while also limiting what they are capable of doing and/or what assemblages they can or cannot (actively) participate in. In order to dislodge this schema and its corresponding ideological blindness, it is vital that we reconceptualise earthly bodies and our relation to them. Following DeLanda, it is vital that we conceive of human and non-human forces as "attractors" or intensities that "act as the structure of a space of possibilities."[81] In other words, we must un-tether ourselves from the dominant representational logic in such a way that the inherent possibilities of human and non-human assemblages can emerge, creating new intensities, new social and political possibilities. Throughout its pages, *Railsea* forges "sympathetic links" between the human and the non-human, the human and the spatial, the geographical. It is in fact these very sympathetic links that facilitate and produce new lines of flight, new ways of being-in-the-world. It is vital that we – as individual humans and human communities – conduct ourselves in such a way so as to treat space and landscape as contributing elements within a larger assemblage, an assemblage with "thing-power" that is always-already inherently political.

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[81] Manuel DeLanda, "Space: Extensive and Intensive, Actual and Virtual," in *Deleuze and Space*, eds. Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 83.

Skin and Scars: Bodies without Organs in *The Scar*

From the geographical assemblages and thing-power exemplified in *Railsea*, we now turn to the skin assemblages, individual (post) human bodies and their complicated intermingling in Miéville's epic pirate fiction, *The Scar*. Throughout this novel, Miéville raises the question: What does skin *do*, what does it signify and how can it become-other to itself? The manner in which skins are deployed in *The Scar* calls into question a conventional understanding of the skin as an enclosing envelope. Instead, skin is used to provoke and signal multiple becomings and the production of differential bodily assemblages. Throughout this novel we are treated to numerous examples of split skins, skins that dissolve and transform, skins that are scarred by different types of violence.

Conventional theorizations of the skin reinforce an idea of the skin as fundamentally fixed; in this model, the skin possesses an *enclosing* quality insofar as it represents and allows for an understanding of the human as a fixed and whole subject. As we look into the mirror, our skin contributes to the (unconscious) assembly of the Self as a unified composition, as though the body is the vessel presenting the singular "I" to the world. The Other, as well, becomes accessible to us – as a fixed *object* – as a result of the skin's perceived enclosing quality: "we assume that we can know the other through the site of the skin and through its marking."[1] While the skin preserves and marks us, differentiating one from the other, it is also perceived as a screen upon which interiority is projected so that the Self is not only protected but *projected* onto the surface of the

[1] Ahmed, Sara and Jackie Stacey, "Introduction: Dermographies," in *Thinking Through the Skin*, ed. Sarah Ahmed and Jackie Stacey (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 4.

flesh.[2] And yet, the skin itself – taken not merely as an object of theory but as a lived and material interface – rebels against such characterizations. The skin is not merely a representational or performative surface; rather, the skin "opens up various spheres, physical and beyond, for human encounters."[3]

As such, this chapter will analyze and deconstruct this conventional understanding of the skin before turning to a Deleuzian analysis of the skins and body-assemblages that occur in China Miéville's *The Scar*. To begin, I will outline conventional psychoanalytic conceptualizations of the skin as a kind of ego-sack or barrier distinguishing the interior Subject from its outside. The term "outside" in this context signifies both the exterior environment of the Subject and the bodies that occupy this space, as well as the individual body itself as a kind of screen that represents or stands-in for the Subject as a whole. Essential to this critique will be the deployment of a Deleuzian theoretical framework that draws from, in particular, the theory of the Body without Organs developed by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* as well as their ontology of *becoming*. Like the theories of the rhizome, hapticity and multiplicity that I made use of in the previous chapter, the BwO and "becoming" are both opposed to a representational *logos* that privileges unity, Being, and Reason at the expense of difference and "becomings." An employment of Hélène Cixous' theory of the scar will complement and expand on my Deleuzian analysis.

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[2] Ibid. 4.

[3] Bernadette Wegenstein, "Getting Under the Skin, or, How Faces Have Become Obsolete," *Configurations* 10 vol. 2 (2002): 253.

My use of "scarring," in this context, describes a *strategy* by which assemblages – individual human (and nonhuman) bodies, geographical bodies, social and cultural bodies – are literally and figurative remade, forced to move in variant ways that have the opportunity to, on one hand, open up Deleuzoguattarian lines of flight, or, alternatively, to close down and re-territorialize social and political potentialities. It is vital that we continue to critique these conceptualizations of the body/skin due to the fact that they reinforce a *logos* of representation insofar as reason, order, and the unification of parts under a general principle (that of the "I" or "self") is privileged over and above an appreciation of fluidity and difference. In theorizing skin in this fashion, my intent is to reveal the degree to which conceptualizing the skin as fundamentally *open*, as a fluid plane of immanence rather than a representational surface, opens up new possibilities for bodily becomings that cannot be immediately "locked-in" to one representational schema or another, psychoanalytic or otherwise. Opening up the skin may not be pretty, but it does, I would argue, allow for the development of new types of being, new types of relating, that have positive and affirmative outcomes. Miéville's *The Scar* not only stages these becomings, it also reveals the opportunities and social potentialities that can emerge from the adoption of the Body without Organs. These outcomes are made visible through fiction but also inevitably resonate in reality, in our day-to-day lives.

Psychoanalysis and the Skin

Before turning to a Deleuzoguattarian analysis of skin and assemblages, we turn first to psychoanalysis. It is essential that we examine psychoanalytic theories of the

body, the skin, and its relation to the construction of subjectivities insofar as Deleuze and Guattari develop their own theories of embodiment *in response to* classical (i.e. Freudian and Lacanian) psychoanalysis. In examining psychoanalytic theories of embodiment and subjectivity, we become better positioned to understand the source and content of Deleuze and Guattari's critique.

For Freud, in *The Ego and the Id*, the "body-ego is a border-surface, a psychic hull that constitutes the contact between the outer world and the psyche."[4] The skin, as border, stands in for the body as a whole insofar as the body is perceived as the vessel that separates and differentiates the psychic, interior individual from the 'outside' (whether that 'outside' be conceptualized as the external world or the numerable 'others' that occupy it). The skin "becomes a metaphor for the entire body"[5] because the body is seen as a kind of incidental skin-sack that preserves the psychic-self, keeping it safe. According to this model, therefore, the body is perceived as a fixed and fundamentally separate border-site, differentiated from the Self (the inside) and its material environment (the outside). The body ("body-ego") therefore becomes both a representative surface *and* a border site; however, in *both* incarnations, it remains fixed and passive. The body and the Self *are* intertwined, but in such a way that the Cartesian mind-body dualism is maintained.

A corresponding schema is equally at work in Lacan's work. Gazing into the mirror, experiencing the Lacanian Mirror Stage and entering into the Oedipal triad is

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[4] Wegenstein 250.
[5] Ibid.

when the infant "gets into its own skin, building up its ego on the basis of its own (mis)recognition in the mirror in the wake of a functional fragmentation."[6] Lacan's mirror stage reinforces this idea of the body as a matte screen with the skin serving as a fixed surface allowing the infant to recognize itself *as a composed entity*. The infant's *identification*[7] with the mirror-image – or Imago – enables the constitution of a Subject. The perceived fixity of the skin provides a springboard against which the ego projects itself and develops in the process. As a result the ego is figuratively "built up" on the skin surface. It is at this stage that the previously fragmented and jumbled parts of our bodies become ordered in representation. We order the parts so as to be able to recognize that jumble of organs and meat parts as a distinctive and unified Self. In this sense, the iteration of the body as fixed occurs in the same moment that the supposedly interior and psychic Subject becomes fixed (or is compelled to forcibly undergo a kind of process of representational fixation).

At the same time, Lacan reinforces the fundamentally fictive or "Imaginary" content of this process. What is established in the mirror-stage is an "Ideal-I" based on misrecognition.[8] In other words, the closed self that we construct via the mirror-stage is always a fiction, a fiction of the symbolic that obscures our fundamental "lack." As such, Lacan acknowledges that the body is not fixed, that the Subject we (mis)recognize in the mirror is itself fictional; however, for Lacan, there is no way out of this fundamentally

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[6] Id. 251.

[7] Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the *I* as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York and London: Routledge, 2001): 1.

[8] Id. 3.

nihilistic and solipsistic system. We privilege representation because it acts like a protective bandage that constantly obscures but never does away with the fundamental "lack" underneath. In this sense, Lacan recognizes the fiction of representation but nevertheless maintains that it is inevitable – and, indeed, *necessary* – that humans always resort back to representational norms.

Lacan's schema helps explain why we live in a society so consumed with presentation and representation. Skin – and the fixity of the body – is treated as an "interface for 'establishing signifying relations with the outside world" insofar as it is conceived as an "inscribing surface for marks left by others."[9] The fixity of the skin/body not only allows us to recognize ourselves, but also to communicate and, in a sense "read" others. Taken in this way, the skin is merely a representational surface always subsumed under one or another rubric of understanding. Moreover, such theories of the skin take for granted an understanding of the individual as distinctive and isolated: We are all sacks of skin hiding a psychic lack that can never be filled, incapable of engaging with and becoming-other through interactions with other flows, other bodies, other assemblages. As Lacan himself writes, we take on the "armour of an alienating identity."[10] For Lacan, this is merely the reality of the Symbolic: if we want to be an "I" (and how could we not be an "I," after all?), we have to take with it the baggage (the lack, the disavowal of the Imaginary, etc.) that comes with it. Indeed, it is not even a matter of wanting or not

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[9] Tina Takemoto, "Open Wounds," in *Thinking Through the Skin*, eds. Sarah Ahmed and Jackie Stacey (New York and London: Routledge, 2001): 110.
[10] Lacan 3.

wanting: we enter the Symbolic by virtue of being human, by virtue of our being social beings.

The psychoanalytic model therefore presents the body as a screen inscribed upon by differing representational schemas, so that the psyche (or unconscious libidinal drives) are always affecting an inert and passive body. I would argue that psychoanalysis sustains a Cartesian dualism (or mind/body split) insofar as the body *shows* what the psyche cannot *speak*. Furthermore, we only enter into the Symbolic - into social "adult" life - by virtue of an organizational process whereby the body, for one, is organized so as to represent a solid surface and therefore, a unified "I." In this sense, psychoanalysis is fundamentally about *organizing*, de-coding, understanding; even if that understanding involves nothing more than a fatalistic acceptance that "representation reigns." For Deleuze and Guattari, psychoanalysis makes the body/subject into what they call an "organism;" psychoanalysis organizes the flows of the body/subject so as to reveal a "functional, compact, stable structure" by virtue of a process of stratification.[11] The process of stratification organizes the flows of the assemblage, creating "phenomenon constituting an overcoding: centering, unification, totalization, integration, hierarchization, and finalization."[12] The danger of such stratification is that assemblages become limited; they become over-determined and defined in advance. Following Foucault, rendering the body/Subject an organism is a disciplinary act, an assertion of biopower insofar as only certain types of bodies/Subjects are allowed to become, while

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[11] *A Thousand Plateaus* 41.
[12] Ibid.

others, if they do not fit into an existing schema, are dismissed as marginal, as "Other," as abject. Indeed, even the classification (what Deleuze and Guattari would call the "overcoding") of so-called "abnormal" forms of embodiment serves a representational schema insofar as the authority to classify, the power to name and differentiate the "normal" from the "abnormal" reinforces the authority of a hegemonic system that *controls by way of* classification.[13] As Deleuze and Guattari write, the organism is "already the Judgement of God, from which medical doctors benefit and on which they base their power."[14]

In opposition to this schema, Deleuze and Guattari ask that individuals not submit themselves to pre-existing systems of interpretation that situate them in one or another representational category. They write, "Invent self-destructions that have nothing to do with the death drive. Dismantling the organism has never meant killing yourself, but rather opening the body to connections that presuppose an entire assemblage, circuits, conjunctions, levels and threshold, passages and distributions of intensity."[15] In other words, they ask that individuals resist their own "subjectification;" that they resist falling into the trap of *identification* in which their body or their Self can be defined as one or another variation in a classificatory schema. Alternatively, they suggest a process of self-actualization, of experimentation.

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[13] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol.1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).
[14] *Thousand Plateaus* 159.
[15] Id. 160.

This is a theory of "positive difference" that suggests "the body itself might have effects and modes of being not reducible to its status as image."[16] This perspective, in contradistinction to psychoanalysis, posits that "bodies are not the effects of representation…identity is not an effect of the imposition of a differentiating structure or language. Existence itself is a field of singularities: differing relations and effects."[17] For Deleuze and Guattari, then, bodies – assemblages – are capable of breaking outside of these representational schemas that attempt to "lock-in" identities by organizing what are, in fact, fundamentally mobile flows into predetermined and supposedly objective and ahistorical patterns. The nature of these flows, and Deleuze and Guattari's alternative theories of subjectivity and embodiment, will be explored in the following section, where we turn, finally, to *The Scar*.

The Scar/Remaking

In the previous section, I demonstrated that the skin is conventionally perceived as a barrier separating the inside from the outside, the self from the Other. The skin becomes a stand-in for the body itself, and is treated as an interface capable of inscription and re-inscription. As a sight of inscription, the body is represented as more or less monstrous, more or less smooth, more or less porous. As long as it *envelops* the unruly body, obscuring the messy meat from sight, the skin allows the body to be represented as an *organism*; an organized system. The body, therefore, is treated as a product of

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[16]Claire Colebrook and Abigail Bray, "Haunted Flesh: Corporeal Feminism and the Politics of (Dis)Embodiment," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 24, no. 1 (1998): 41.
[17]Id. 40.

representation, a product of signifying systems, *affected by* thought but not, in any way, *affecting* thought. In *The Scar*, however, the body is frequently split open and flayed to reveal that which lies beneath, denying the dichotomization of inside/outside. The bodies within the text deny psychoanalytic theories of the skin/body/self by enacting different trajectories, actualizing possibilities. It is in this way that Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari's theories of embodiment are brought to life, not merely theoretically, but in actual and material situations that, though fictional, gesture towards a new understanding of bodies and subjectivity that is both politically useful *and* affirmative.

The majority of *The Scar* takes place in the city of Armada, in the fictional world of Bas-Lag that Miéville uses in many of his works. Bas-Lag is a speculative world with its own history and populations, its own politics and societies. Armada, however, is particularly distinctive and extraordinary, even in the midst of Bas-Lag. Armada is a floating pirate-city constructed of the remnants of plundered ships, boats, and other oceanic flotsam; it is a "flotilla of dwellings; a city built on old boat bones."[18] In this sense, it is like a reanimated body, a Frankenstein-assemblage. Its components are frequently split, readjusted and recombined to suit the crew and the population. As we observed in *Railsea*, the cities and landscapes of Miéville's novels are often treated as central characters in his fictions and Armada is no different. It is a fundamentally mobile and Gothic assemblage characterized by its dark corners and gritty streets: "Armada moved constantly, its bridges swinging side to side, its towers heeling…[it is] a city of esoteric shapes. Its hybridity was stark and uncharming, marred with decay and

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[18] *The Scar* 75.

graffiti."[19] Despite these descriptions that mark Armada as a fundamentally uncanny locale, Armada is not merely a gritty pirate city; it is also, and most significantly, a compound hybrid, something entirely new:

> The vessels had been reclaimed, from the inside out. What had once been berths and bulkheads had become houses…but the city had not been bounded by the ships' existing skins. It reshaped them. They were built up, topped with structure: styles and materials shoved together from a hundred histories and esthetics into a compound architecture.[20]

In this sense, Armada is amorphous and quite literally difficult to 'pin down,' not merely because it is constantly cruising Bas-Lag's oceans, but because it cannot be characterized in any one way. Its geography resists closure insofar as, for one, the city is unbounded and always in the process of construction or reconstruction, but also because its identity is indefinable: a non-identity. Armada is compiled of so many structures, styles and materials that it cannot be reduced to one or another description or representation.

Similarly, just as Armada's streets and structures are constructed from plundered ships that are literally stitched together, its population consists of passengers and crew abducted from those pirated ships. As a result, Armada and its many districts are populated by numerous species that intermingle and come into conflict. There are upwards of ten species that inhabit Bas-Lag. One of these is the Remade, who possess horrifically reconstructed bodies that have been manipulated by the government as punishment for various crimes. In Miéville's short story, "Jack," the narrator puzzles over the nature and intent of these Remakings:

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[19] Id. 75-76.
[20] Id. 75.

> Sometimes the magisters pass down sentences that you can understand. One man kills another with a blade, take his killing arm and replace it, suture a motorknife in its place, tube him up with the boiler to run it. The lesson's obvious…But I can't explain to you the woman given a ruff of peacock feathers, or the young lad with iron spiderlimbs out his back, or those with too many eyes or engines that make them burn from the inside out…the Remakings that make them stronger, or weaker, or more or less vulnerable, Remakings almost unnoticed, and those that make them impossible to understand.[21]

While the explicit intent of Remaking is to increase utility, to render that criminal a productive machine-hybrid more amenable to the city's industry, remakings can also be anti-utilitarian, fundamentally aesthetic. And at the same time, the function of remaking, though originally punitive in intent, takes on a new function and significance when it is re-staged in the social, political and cultural space of Armada. On New Crobuzon, the most advanced and populous city in Bas-Lag, remakings theoretically correspond to individual's unique crimes. The body is rendered grotesque so that the skin serves as a screen reflecting a purportedly deviant interior, a rebellious subjectivity. The body is treated as a text that can be read as a signifier of monstrosity in relation to the crime. In this sense, remaking, at least its original intent, has an enclosing and representational function. The particularities characteristic of the individual are reduced, instead, to a conceptual structure determining what constitutes "deviance" and, alternatively, what constitutes "normalcy." In this regard, representational logic and disciplinary logic work hand-in-hand. Remaking is about coercing the individual body to "represent" (its deviance), sacrificing particularity in the process. Additionally, this logic works off the

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[21] China Miéville, "Jack," in *The New Weird*, eds. Ann and Jeff VanderMeer (San Francisco: Tachyon Publications, 2008): 133.

assumption that the skin is a reflective surface that can be re-inscribed to 'sign' the human into a new being. This is true, in the sense that the body is always affecting the subject's so-called "interior" identity (and vice versa); however, such conceptions wrongly assume that the skin is a mere sign – a tool in service of representation – rather than a malleable and porous element of an assemblage always in the process of becoming-other to itself.

That said, as the narrator of "Jack" suggests, the process of remaking sometimes results in "slippages." These slippages reveal that representational logic does not always work by analogy (i.e., a remaking that reflects the crime so that the individual's specific brand of "deviance" is reported to the world). Representational logic can, if need be, adopt a kind of irrational disciplinarity so that misunderstanding itself – as in the case of the woman with the ruff of peacock feathers – serves as punishment. On the other hand, one could read these slippages in representational and disciplinary logic as a loop-hole in the system itself: what was intended as a punishment, as an attempt at overcoding, instead opens up possibilities for affirmative becomings and lines of flight.

The production of such bodily lines of flight corresponds to what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the Body without Organs. In opposition to the psychoanalytic model, in which the body is perceived as a passive surface that reflects the interiority of the Subject, Deleuze and Guattari conceive of the zone of the body as a "plane of consistency" or "field of immanence" upon which various intensities cross and interact.[22] Whereas the typical – that is, disciplinary – remakings in *The Scar* reiterate a

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[22] *Thousand Plateaus* 89.

psychoanalytic model insofar as the body is rendered monstrous in order to "show" a supposedly damaged Self, certain "alternative" remakings take up these "slippages" to create new types of bodies, bodies that are capable of new types of relations, new types of movement. The Body without Organs – or BwO – is fundamentally concerned with these possibilities, the opportunities made possible by the creation of the "new."

It is here, in the example of the BwO, that we can observe the significance and value of defining bodies as *assemblages* rather than inert signing surfaces. The BwO is an assemblage insofar as it is non-hierarchized and therefore the physical body is not reducible to its status as a representational surface. Instead, materiality informs the becomings of the Self as much as the Self informs the becomings of its material counterpart(s). To follow up from the prior section, the BwO is concerned with "dismantling the organism"[23] so that the body can no longer act as a representational surface signalling one or another type of disciplinary subjectivity into Being. Indeed, as Deleuze and Guattari write, the BwO privileges "becomings" rather than "Being" insofar as becomings are concerned with the intermezzo, the in-between spaces and the borders of clear-cut identities.[24] Becomings are "passages" between solid states of Being[25] and signal the body/Subject/assemblage in a state of transformation, deterritorialized and untethered from the stratifications and sedimentations of the organism. In this sense, the

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[23] Id. 160.
[24] Id. 293.
[25] Id. 293.

Body without Organs is a way of perceiving and living the body as an assemblage. It allows for an

> altogether different way of understanding the body in its connections with other bodies, both human and non-human, animate and inanimate, linking organs and biological processes to material objects and social practices while refusing to subordinate the body to a unit of a homogeneity of the kind provided by the bodies' subordination to consciousness or to biological organizations.[26]

The Body without Organs, therefore, destratifies the body in such a way that opens the body to flows, allowing it to "plug-in" to other forces and bodies in its immediate environment. While the organism takes "identity or unity as ground or ordering logic," the BwO focuses on the *parts* rather than the creation of a whole; it is concerned with the "movements of linkage and connection."[27]

While the creation of the Body without Organs opens up new possibilities for self-actualization and community, destratifying the organism is never a pretty or simple process. Insofar as BwOs cannot be classified within pre-existing systems that determine what is "normal" and what is "abject," BwOs signal a particularly threatening style of monstrosity. The "creative involutions" characteristics of the becomings of the BwO "bear witness to an inhumanity immediately experienced in the body as such, unnatural nuptials outside the programmed body."[28] In the following section, I will further explore

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[26] Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994): 164.

[27] Dianne Currier, "Feminist Technological Futures: Deleuze and Body/Technology Assemblages," *Feminist Theory* 4, no. 3 (2003): 325.

[28] *Thousand Plateaus* 273.

Deleuze and Guattari's theories of the BwO and becomings through the examination of a particular example in Miéville's *The Scar*.

The Remaking of Tanner Sack

We turn now to Tanner Sack, a Remade expatriate of New Crobuzon. Tanner Sack comes onboard the Armada as a refugee; he is recently Remade and was on route to a labour camp when his ship is attacked and overcome by the Armadans. While most of the "normal" humans respond poorly to the abduction, Tanner Sack is pleased to become a citizen of Armada, where Remade and criminals are absolved of their crimes. At Armada, Tanner Sack is given the opportunity to redefine his already deformed body to suit his own purposes. Because Armada is a floating city, with many of its engineers working under water, Sack – himself an engineer – decides to undergo a series of surgeries so that he can easily move through and under the city. In short, Tanner Sack decides to become amphibian. This process of elective remaking is not simply a movement from one unified identity to another, from human to amphibian. Rather, Tanner's self-motivated remaking results in a prime example of what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as an assemblage:

> A functional conglomeration of elements [in which] the component elements are not taken to be unified, stable, or self-identical entities or objects, that is, they are not grounded on a prior unity. In each assemblage the particles, intensities, forces and flows of components meet with and link with the forces and flows of the other components.[29]

[29] Currier 325.

Instead of denying the original remaking that left him with two infectious and inert tentacles extending out of the front of his body, Tanner incorporates these new appendages into his bodily schema, embracing these new components so that they become a fundamental part of the assemblage of his body. No single element in the assemblage is granted priority over any other. There is no set and pre-established unity or hierarchy of parts. As such, assemblages function in such a way that each element contributes to the entire assemblage but is nevertheless differentiated, possessing its own "liveliness," its own intensity. This explains why, while working underwater, the two tentacles that extrude from Tanner Sack's chest "wave in the current, but also according to their own faint inclinations."[30] The tentacles are not subsumed under a pre-existing bodily schema, nor are they rejected outright as foreign prostheses. The tentacles are a part of Sack's body-assemblage but nevertheless remain distinct. In other words, Sack's tentacles contain their own "forces and flows," forces and flows that "*link with* the flows of the other components"[31] of Sack's body.

This example demonstrates the degree to which – as we observed in *Railsea* – the immediate ecological environment comes into an affective relationship with the human and nonhuman bodies that live in it. The latent possibilities and affirmative becomings provided by remaking become more explicit in the shift from New Crobuzon to Armada. While the process and intent of remaking is a disciplinary and merely humiliating act from a New Crobozun perspective, the function and intent of remaking gradually shifts

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[30] *The Scar* 72.

[31] Currier 325.

into something more productive after the Remade are (forcibly) relocated to Armada. It is as if the city itself – its very hybridity and composition – facilitates this shift in perspective. As we have previously seen, the environment in which individuals dwell is *itself* a kind of body-assemblage, always intersecting with and contributing to the (re)production of new flows, new intersections and lines of flight. It would appear, then, that the interaction between Tanner Sack and Armada itself is a fruitful intersection of elements; an engagement that produces particularly creative opportunities for Tanner's own becomings. Significantly, Tanner Sack only begins to embrace his new appendages after his relocation to Armada. And furthermore, this affective relationship works both ways: as an engineer, Tanner, too, is a vital contributor to the making and *re*making of Armada itself.

Tanner's increasing comfort in his own skin culminates in his decision to pursue elective remaking at the hand of a "chirurgeon." Chirurgeons combine thaumaturgy (magic) with more conventional science and medicine. The reader is treated, first, to a rather grisly depiction of Tanner Sack being split open:

> On the first day, as Tanner lay deep in chymical and thaumaturgic sleep, the chirurgeon opened him. He scored deep gashes in the sides of Tanner's neck, then lifted off the skin and outer tissue, gently wiping away the blood that coursed from raw flesh. With the exposed flaps oozing, the chirurgeon turned his attention to Tanner's mouth. He reached inside with a kind of chisel and slid it into the pulp of the throat, twisting as he pushed, carving tunnels in the flesh…When the sun came up, he closed up the flaps of skin in Tanner's neck, slimy with gelatinous gore. He smoothed them down, his fingers tingling with puissance as the gashes sealed.[32]

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[32] *The Scar* 154.

The final stage in Tanner Sack's transformation, and perhaps the most grisly and visible, is the creation of webbed fingers and toes:

> Finally, the chirurgeon performed by far the easiest, if the most visible, alteration. Between Tanner's finger and his thumb, he stretched a membrane, a web of rubbery skin that he pinched into position, tethering it in Tanner's epidermis. He removed Tanner's toes and replaced them with the fingers from a cadaver, sewing and sealing them onto Tanner's foot.[33]

As readers, we witness the cycle of Tanner Sack's transformations: in his first disciplinary and compulsory remaking, followed by his own self-imposed surgeries. In both cases, the organs are rendered slippery, the skin is forced open, the body is fundamentally open – only to be closed once more. But there is more going on here than mere suturing up and disguising wounds so as to aid in the next cycle of reterritorialization. Tanner Sack's skin is punctured but it is also extended, fundamentally reconfigured.

Sack's transformations illustrate the pendulum-like – and fundamentally grotesque – movement takes place between Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization of the organism and the Body without Organs (BwO). Here we witness the deconstruction of a re-territorialized Remade body, a body that was originally resurfaced, rendered posthuman, for disciplinary and utilitarian reasons. The original, violent procedures that de-territorialized the organic and "natural" organization of Tanner's human body – and identity – inevitably re-territorialized, establishing new strata and a new organism for the purposes of state control. In voluntarily remaking his already posthuman body, in opening his skin and literally and figuratively *rearranging and disassembling* his organs,

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[33] Id. 156.

Tanner Sack instigates another deterritorialization. This deterritorialization can and should not be conceived as Sack "reclaiming" his body and identity from the New Crobuzon authorities that inscribed their own unity, their own disciplinary order, onto and into his flesh. *This* elective remaking, this deterritorialization, unlike the first, reclaims deterritorialization itself from serving a disciplinary and representational model. Whereas Sack's initial remaking involved a deterritorialization of the human, a deterritorialization whose only purpose was to immediately reterritorialize and overcode a new body to better signify state power, Sack's second and self-elected remaking has different ends, ends that are fundamentally creative.

Although devoid of aesthetic or artistic intent, Sack's elective surgery can be likened to contemporary artist Orlan's surgical performance pieces, in which her skin is torn, removed, and reassembled in pseudo-medical settings that are frequently recorded and watched by a live audience. In one of these recordings, "Successful Operation Number 5," Orlan explains that "the skin is deceptive. Breaking the skin's surface does not necessarily assure something good. One doesn't get anything more. All the same, the skin does tell something about the individual. It is after all the skin which is torn, separated, cut to create life."[34] Following Deleuze and Guattari, it is not the material, the content – this is to say, the organs themselves – that are relevant. It is the form or formlessness, the fluidity (or immobility) of matter rather than matter itself that determines whether we are creating an organism or a Body without Organs. When Orlan says that "one doesn't get anything more," she points to the fact that the act of cutting,

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[34] Orlan qtd. in Wegenstein 248.

distorting, or penetrating matter does not, in itself, provide us with avenues for creative transformation. There is no inherently creative or active power in ripping apart supposedly solid forms. As we can see in the example of Tanner Sack's first, disciplinary remaking, such transformations can just as easily serve to reinforce state power and its representational *logos*. The body does not become "more" as a result of these acts; rather, the body becomes other(ed). The result of 'othering' process depends on the de-organization and re-organization of the matter as much as it does on the cutting. In other words, it is not the cutting of the skin but what results from the cutting, that is, what we do with the disassembled parts, that determines the political potential of the act.

The social and political impact of Tanner's elective remakings is two-fold: on the one hand, and as we have already suggested, Tanner's elective self-transformations allow him to deterritorialize his body so that it no longer "signs" and/or represents disciplinary state power. In this sense, his elective remakings have a micropolitical effect insofar as they reconfigure his very relation to space, to community, in a positive and affirmative way. Beyond the individual level, Tanner's elective remakings also allow him to take a more active role in Armadan (and, at least initially, anti-Armadan) politics. He becomes an untethered line of flight that acts to undermine sources of oppressive power so as to provoke positive change in his immediate - and regional - community. In this sense, the remakings are symbolic of a particular kind of sea-change towards affirmative action and politically-minded activism. At the same time, the significance of remaking is not *only* metaphorical: the material reconfiguration of bodies enables a new relationship to space and other assemblages that has an inherently political quality.

The Lovers

As we have seen, *The Scar* explores the skin as a kind of psycho-geography that dissolves boundaries between the interior Subject, the landscape of the body and its surrounding psychic, social, and physical environments. We have discussed the becoming of one such assemblage: Tanner Sack and his multiple remakings. The following section will address a different, though equally significant, body-assemblage at work in *The Scar*: the Lovers. Armada is split up into different ridings, each of which is ruled by one or several individuals responsible for maintaining order. The Lovers are the two individuals, a man and a woman, who rule over Garwater – the largest and most influential (and therefore the most resented) district of Armada. Upon arrival in Armada's Garwater district, the Lovers provide a quick speech to those crew and passengers abducted from the *Terpsichoria*. What they say is of little import; what is observed by Bellis, one of the human protagonists, is more notable:

> What had made Bellis stare at them both with fascination and distaste, what commands her attention, were the scars. Curling down the outside of the woman's face, from the corner of her left eye to the corner of her mouth. Fine and uninterrupted. Another, thicker and shorter and more jagged, swept from the right side of her nose across her cheek and curled up as if to cup her eye. And others, contoured to her face….He was adorned with identical, but mirrored marks…as if he were the woman's distorted reflection.[35]

The Lovers, in other words, scar one another to signal their distinct relation. The scars are doubled: marks imposed on one are necessarily inscribed on the skin of the other. Throughout the novel, we are given very few insights into this relationship, and the

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[35] *The Scar* 73.

Lovers are notoriously private. It is the woman who appears in public and speaks when necessary, with her male double remaining silent. At a later point, however, Bellis is granted a unique insight into their lives. She finds herself underneath their bedroom, listening to their love-making:

> Cautious and slow, as if they might somehow see her, Bellis craned her neck and listened. Words fluttering across registers, uttered with quick breaths. Mewing, pleading, delighting…and words coming through the metal….'love…soon…fuck…yes and…cut…now…love…' The words were thick. Bellis recoiled from them – physically…two streams of words, male and female, overlapping and interweaving and inextricable"[36]

It is no surprise that the Lovers' acts provoke fear and disgust in Bellis. They are, after all, engaging in "monstrosity" (and becoming monsters). Helene Cixous provides a useful description of scars when she writes that "the scar is a visible or invisible fibrous tissue that really or allegorically replaces a loss of substance which is therefore not lost but added to."[37]

Scars, in this sense, replace or signify the point of departure of the body from a stratified and over-coded organization to a Body without Organs. In other words, scars show the surface of the body denying its role as coded surface, rebelling against its metonymic relation to the coherent and closed Subject. The scar points to this rebellion against representation that establishes the body as fixed so that the Subject, too, can be perceived as a closed, interior psychic space ordered according to what Deleuze refers to as the *logos* of representation. In this sense, scars "excavate" the interior and the the solid

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[36] *The Scar* 351.

[37] Hélène Cixous. *Stigmata: Escaping Texts*. (Oxfordshire and New York: Routledge, 2005), xxi.

body, rendering it "holey" and pierced, thus separating the various segmented and overcoded parts in order to make the body expressive of a nomadic *nomos*. Scars have a deterritorializing effect on the body-as-fixed-surface: "[Scars] sting, pierce, make holes, separate with pinched marks and in the same movement distinguishes – re-marks – inscribes, writes. Scars wound and spur, stimulate."[38] Scars thus stimulate becomings but also *reinscribe* the body, creating new types of stratifications. It is this double-determination – opening the body to becomings, and in this manner, opening up the Subject so that it is open to new trajectories, new movements of desire, and, simultaneously, the re-coding, the re-stratification that occurs, that renders scarring a "sign of fertilization, of germination"[39] rather than mere mutilation.

In an interesting passage, the effect on Bellis – a notoriously xenophobic and anti-social woman – is described as follows:

> She felt as if she would sick up…But it was not the violence, not the knives they used or what they did, that horrified her. It was the emotion itself, the intense, giddying, slick and sick-making ardour she had heard in their voices that appalled her. They were trying to cut through the membrane between them and bleed one into the other. Rupturing their integrity for something way beyond sex.[40]

It is here that we can see played out Deleuze and Parnet's statement that becomings involve

> making a line or bloc shoot between two people, producing all the phenomena of a double capture, showing what the conjunction AND is, neither a union, nor a juxtaposition, but the birth of a stammering, the outline of a broken line which

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[38] Id. xiii
[39] Id. xiv.
[40] *The Scar* 352.

> always sets off at right angles, a sort of active and creative line of flight…AND….AND…AND….[41]

The fact that Bellis only catches fragments of their speech, so that their words, too, appear like stammering, reinforces this idea of the Lovers' acts – the sex, the violence – as a "bloc of becoming," an "a-parallel evolution"[42] in which there is not a fusion of the two into one, nor the development of a sense of "belonging" to one another. Instead, the Lovers are engaged in a flow that is distinct from them but also constitutive of a particular relation. Deleuze refers to this as a double capture: a conversation and encounter in which something emerges "between the two, which has its own direction."[43] Their sexual/violent activity serves as a kind of entrance into the other and out of the self; or perhaps more significantly, instigates the blurring of boundary that distinguishes the One from the two (or the multiple). Neither undergoes individual transformation; rather, what occurs is a mutual transformation that also occurs in *excess* of their couplings.

As Deleuze and Parnet write, these kind of encounters – what they refer to as "nuptials" – deny binary machines[44] insofar as such encounters do not involve two distinctive forces in contradistinction, but rather for a mutually-informative "bloc of becoming."[45] Binary-machines reinforce a representational *logos* that captures singularities within a conceptual framework that articulates them through (qualitative)

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[41] Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II* (New York and West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2007), 9-10.
[42] Id. 7.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Deleuze & Parnet 2.
[45] Id. 2.

resemblance or (quantitative) equivalence.[46] In this act, however, the relationship between the Lovers cannot be measured in terms of resemblance (in regards to the mere symmetry of their scars), nor in terms of equivalence (in regards to their union or what could be conceived as a becoming-one; that is, the unification of two into one stable organism). This is why it is important that Miéville describes their coupling as "two streams of words, male and female, overlapping and interweaving and inextricable."[47] The Lovers are not One, nor two. They are an assemblage in which different flows intersect, two [but also, multiple] streams in which a multitude of elements are at one time in contact and interacting but also differentiated, that is, not subsumed under a unifying structure of signification.

It is appropriate that the Lovers' sexual relationship is laced with masochism insofar as their activity (which is neither merely sexual nor merely violent) opens each participant to a different kind of interior world, an alternative geography that is grafted onto the body *and* the psyche. Both individuals are scarred and in this sense, they are both reconstructed and rendered pliable through an inscription process that reorients their relationship to one another, to themselves, and to the diversity of interwoven spatio-temporal milieus (political, social) that populate the novel. The act of inscription, in this case, cannot be conceived as a mere surface activity that starts and ends at the skin. Instead, the mutual scarring of the Lovers renders inscription an act of entry and exit, an act that fundamentally denies the fixity of the skin as screen. Scarring/inscription

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[46] *Difference and Repetition* 30-34.
[47] *The Scar* 351.

involves the mutual interpenetration of the Lovers who become literally and metaphorically split open, disavowing the fixity of borders intended to differentiate one body from the next, the self from the other, psychic from 'real' spaces. The inside is quite literally rendered external by virtue of these tattoo-like marks that seem to materialize or rise up onto the surface of each of the Lovers. In using skin as this way, as a kind of passport, psychogeographical landscape and mark of difference, Miéville reveals the pliability of the skin, the non-fixed quality of the skin-surface that is not in binary opposition to the interior Subject, but rather, is always opening up flows between these strata, deterritorializing body-assemblages to that interior-exterior distinctions become irrelevant.

It is no wonder, then, that Bellis responds with such horror. The Lovers' violence – the scarring of the skin – does not represent union, imitation or ownership (all of which would involve the reduction of the multiple and the Other to a representational rubric). As Deleuze and Parnet write,

> Becomings are not phenomena of imitation or assimilation, but of a double capture, of non-parallel evolution, of nuptials between two reigns…Nuptials are the opposite of a couple. There are no longer binary-machines: question-answer, masculine-feminine, man-animal, etc. This is what a conversation is – simply the outline of a becoming.[48]

What occurs, then, between the lovers is a kind of nuptials rather than a coupling. "Coupling," of course, maintains binary logic insofar as it maintains a dichotomous relationship between two unified bodies defined through this opposition. On the other hand, nuptials instigate an opening of the self onto another, onto *others* and other *flows*.

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[48] Deleuze & Parnet 2.

Binaries such as male-female, self-other, interior-exterior are all rendered fluid in the particular events of becoming. Bellis is not horrified by the violence of the act, but by this active and creative process by which the integrity of the self is forcibly but joyfully torn open.

As we have seen, *The Scar*, like *Railsea*, is fundamentally concerned not with what bodies *are* - that is to say, what they represent or symbolize - but rather what bodies *do*, what they are capable of producing and *activating*. And in *The Scar*, in particular, the image and reality of the skin is used to demonstrate the thing-power of bodies, the inherent malleability and potentiality of the flesh, and, more generally, materiality in general. The skin cannot be conceptualized as a mere surface, as a passive container for an otherwise whole Subject. Instead, we must conceptualize the skin as a permeable membrane, a plateau upon which flows and intensities intersect and engage. Significantly, these flows are not confined to individual bodies; rather, these flows cross over and into other bodies, other environments, other spaces, to form assemblages with their own distinctive thing-power. Furthermore, we must conceptualize the body as active, as always-already implicated in and affecting the psychic or mental flows that constitute individuals. Such flows, such assemblages, may indeed be monstrous, may indeed defy classification, but rather than attempt to coerce such anomalies into existing classificatory categories, Miéville demonstrates the value in allowing such monsters to exist, to flourish, and to experiment.

Chapter 4: The Paradox of Language in *Embassytown*

The next text that we turn to is *Embassytown*, a novel that departs slightly from Miéville's typical oeuvre insofar as it leaves fantasy aside to play in the murky waters of classic science-fiction. Like all of Miéville's novels, *Embassytown* is an intricate web that explores social and political relations; in *Embassytown*, however, these concerns are analyzed through the lens of language and discursive experimentation. As in *Railsea* and *The Scar*, embodiment is a central issue; however, in *Embassytown*, Miéville focuses on the manner in which language mediates between and indeed contributes to the formation of different types of bodies: communities, political groups, and individual human and non-human bodies. In what follows, we will flesh out the theoretical underpinnings of *Embassytown* by drawing from Deleuze's theory of repetition, including Alastair Pennycook's utilization of *Difference and Repetition* to theorize language as a local practice, in addition to Deleuze and Guattari's discussions of the Body without Organs and the model of death. In analyzing *Embassytown* through this theoretical lens, we can observe the degree to which discourse is always-already informed and informing the "real;" that is, the social, political and material context in which it is played out. Language is, in fact a kind of *body*: a body that is always mutually penetrating and affecting the ideological and material milieu of which it is an essential component.

An Introduction to *Embassytown*

China Miéville's 2011 novel *Embassytown* takes place on one of the many planets colonized by the nation-state Bremen, in an alternate science-fiction universe. Arieka is

occupied by two main species: the Terre (humans) and Ariekei. The latter are natives of Arieka, and are also called Hosts. Ariekei are blob-like creatures that hear and communicate through fin-like protrusions of flesh called fanwings. Ariekei communicate in a dialect that is called simply Language: it is conceived as a "pure" and Divine language insofar as there is no disjunction between the signifier and signified. The Ariekei cannot think that which is not; they cannot conceive of the concept of a lie, of a slippage in which the signifier would slip away from its referent. As such, in Language, there is a one-to-one relation between what *is* and what is communicated orally. Regular Terre can understand Language (if trained); however, they cannot speak it because of its double quality, a characteristic that I will explain further in the following sections. The two languages – Language and Anglo-Ubiq, the main Terre language - are fundamentally incompatible. As a result, relations between the colonizers (the Terre Bremenites) and the Host Ariekei are tenuous at best, and require consistent regulation and diplomatic maneuvering.

The intermediary that facilitates this relationship – including the trade of goods and services – are the Ambassadors: genetically-produced doppels born and raised in laboratory-like camps on Embassytown. The Ambassadors are trained – and enhanced - to share one mind. This is made possible through rigorous training and cybernetic prostheses that link their consciousnesses and allow the Ambassadors to speak the double-voiced Language of the Ariekei. The Ambassadors, insofar as they are the only ones capable of communicating with the Ariekei, constitute a specific class and a particular center of political and cultural power. Although the central role of the

Ambassadors is to advocate for Terre needs, their power extends beyond mere trade relations. Indeed, the Ambassadors take on god-like proportions for the Terre locals insofar as they are perceived as liminal and non-human by virtue of this ability to surpass the boundary separating two fundamentally incommensurable cultures.

Embassytown is narrated by Avice Benner Cho, a Terre native of Embassytown who, upon reaching adulthood, became an Immerser: one who explores what is known as the "out:" the infinite and expansive regions of the galaxy. Avice returns to Embassytown after meeting and marrying a linguist – Scile - who specializes in obscure languages, and in particular, Ariekei Language. Avice begrudgingly returns to Embassytown so as to satisfy Scile's desire to study the Ariekei and their dialect.

Soon after Avice's return, however, a new Ambassador arrives from Bremen. The new Ambassador, EzRa, is an anomaly unlike Embassytown Ambassadors. Impossibly, EzRa is not a doppel: EzRa consists of two distinct individuals with distinct minds. Unlike the Language of Embassytown Ambassadors, the Language of EzRa functions like a drug to the Ariekei who become addicted to their voice and unable to function without it. Later, EzRa is succeeded by EzCal, who is constructed and trained to have a similar effect on the Ariekei. The development of this addiction creates numerous conflicts that become central to the plot of the novel, conflicts that address the clash and evolution of social and political events and discourse. Indeed, what starts as an addiction, an anomaly to be controlled, eventually results in the complete reorganization of Ariekei and Terre relations.

Language, Lies and Repetition

In order to fully understand the theoretical implications of *Embassytown* and its approach to language and social practices, it is vital that we understand and deconstruct the significance of Ariekei Language. Following a Deleuzian framework, Ariekei Language is an example of *logos*, pure representation, insofar as Language points to what *is*; it describes what *is* without creativity, without fluidity. As Avice narrates, "Each word of Language meant just what it meant. Polysemy or ambiguity is impossible and with them most tropes that made other languages languages at all."[1] The significance of Language and its limits are made clear by Avice's conversation with a former Ambassador, Bren:

> 'How do you say "that" in Language?' I asked Bren. 'Like that one.' I pointed. 'Which glass do you want? That one.'
> 'It would depend.' He looked at the glass by his counter. 'Talking about that one, I might say...'
> 'No I don't mean any specific one, but in general, that one.' Pointing. 'Or that one.' Moving my hand. 'Thatness.'
> 'There's nothing.'
> 'So how would I distinguish that glass and that one and that one?' I tallied them with my finger.
> 'You'd say "the glass in front of the apple and the glass with a flaw in its base and the glass with a residue of wine left in it."'[2]

To put it simply, the Ariekei cannot speak in generalities; instead, they describe events, situations or things with these constructed similes. The one-to-one link between what *is* and what is *said* confines the Ariekei in a pre-symbolic bubble that is, throughout the novel, exploited by the Bremenites and the Ambassadors.

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[1] China Miéville, *Embassytown* (New York: Del Ray, 2011), 295.
[2] Id. 285.

One of the most interesting results of this idiosyncrasy is that the Ariekei partake in ceremonies of simile or example-making. Avice, for example, was selected to become a simile as a child. She becomes, as a result, "the girl who was ate what was given to her" by undergoing a ceremonial and painful process, albeit a process that also grants her certain privileges and social status. Avice remembers being taken into a "crumbling dining room" where the Ariekei performed "precise mimes" as she complied with their wishes, feeling nothing but a vague sense of impatience and discomfort as she waited for them to "perform the actions that were necessary, that would allow them to speak their analogy."[3] Avice becomes an article of Language used to describe certain things or events: "It was like the girl who ate what was given to her;" or, to use the example of another simile, "it was like the boy who weekly swam with fishes." As Avice writes, "in the main my simile was used to describe a kind of making do. Spanish Dancer and its friends, though, by some odd rhetoric, by emphasis on a certain syllable, spoke me rather to imply potential change."[4] It is significant that Avice's simile is – even before the conflict – associated with change insofar as she plays such a vital role in eventually revolutionizing Ariekei language and society.

Another essential component of Language is the very structure of Ariekene vocalization: the Ariekei each have double-voices, described as the 'cut' and 'turn,' two entwined series of sounds that form Language only in combination. Already, the idea that Ariekene Language is in some way Divine, akin to speaking Truth itself, is undercut by

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[3] Id. 25.
[4] Id. 115.

the necessitation of a double-voice, a voice that can only speak insofar as it is doubled and therefore fundamentally fractured. Ariekene voices are indeed fractured, but we are made to understand that this double quality is not disunity or "lack;" this doubled-voice in fact represents the opposite: the unity of Language is made possible by the coming together of two dissimilar though complementary strains that become *more-than* or perfected rather than *lessened* by their interdependency. Both strains – the cut and the turn – are produced by single Ariekei so that the two are folded into the unity of the One, of the Same.

Despite the rigid structure of Language, the Ariekei are equally intrigued by the *limits* of that structure, whether those limits be performed by their own kind or, unwittingly, by the Terre Ambassadors that speak it. The Ariekei are collectively intrigued by the possibility of a signifying rather than referential language: a language that, in their minds, allows for and in fact depends on lying for its effectiveness. Lying – at least initially – is conceptually impossible for the Ariekei. Their thought and Language are intricately tied so that nothing can be conceived unless it can be spoken, and nothing can be spoken unless it is "real:" the Ariekei, in other words, cannot make the leap from simile (such-and-such is *like*) to metaphor (such-and-such *is*). As such, lying, for the Ariekei, requires a certain degree of self-delusion, of *forgetting*, of a near-impossible manipulation. The Ariekei practice lying in public forums, making a sport of it by organizing Festivals of Lies wherein Ariekei crowd arenas to listen to their more prolific compatriots go head-to-head in lying contests. Only a select few are capable of it, and even then, their "lies" are usually slurred half-truths: "When the object was yellow, the

Host trying to lie, an Ariekei with a scissor-shape on its fanwing, shuddered and retracted several of its eyes, gathered itself, and in its two voices said a word that would have translated as something like "yellow-beige." It was hardly a dramatic untruth, but the crowd were rapturous at it."[5] This quote exemplifies the most common and easiest way to lie: to go slow. As Avice describes,

> They would try to conceive the untrue clause—near-impossible, their minds reacting allergically to such a counterfactual even unspoken, conceived without signification. Having prepared it mentally, however successfully or un-, they would pretend-forget it to themselves. Speak each of its constituent words at a certain speed, at a beat, separated, apart enough in the mind of a speaker that each was a distinct concept, utterable with and as its own meaning; but just sufficiently fast and rhythmic that to listeners, they accreted into a ponderous but comprehensible, and untrue, sentence.[6]

Here we can observe the acting-out of Deleuze's statement that repetition is the "double condemnation of habit and memory; it is the thought of the future. It is in repetition and by repetition that Forgetting becomes a positive power while the unconscious becomes a positive and superior unconscious."[7] In learning to lie, the Ariekei use repetition to forget their customs, their conventional ways of speaking, thinking, and communicating. In other words, the act of lying, insofar as it involves a kind of play-forgetting, subverts the logic of the Same, the logic of representation, and the particular regime of signs represented by Language. Whereas what Deleuze calls the "theatre of representation" depends on the reification of a particular and coded relation "of the concept to its

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[5] Id. 85.
[6] Id. 128.
[7] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 7-8.

object… in the form that it assumes in this memory and this self-consciousness,"[8]the Festivals of Lies work against this form, this strict code between concept and object, against the coding and indeed the mundane and oppressive habits acquired and sedimented in memory and rational consciousness. This "pretend-forgetting" requires that the Ariekei set aside their rationality and work from an intuitive rather than rational stance; a stance that requires that they *forget themselves* insofar as their "selves" are heavily conditioned by the discursive and representational systems that constitute them as speaking subjects in the first place.

The slow-lying technique, the use of "forgetting as a force"[9] is counterbalanced by the other, rarer technique, but a strategy that is no less significant: "It was the more base and vivid, and by far harder. This was for the speaker to collapse, in their mind, even individual word-meanings, and simply to brute-utter all necessary sounds. To force out a statement. This was quick-lying: the spitting out of a tumble of noises before the untruth of their totality stole a speaker's ability to think them."[10] Although repetition is inherent in both lying techniques, the latter technique requires, to an even greater extent, a denial of representational logos. Whereas Ariekei Language conventionally functions along the parameters of what Deleuze calls the "theatre of representation," the act and art of lying shifts the Ariekei experimenters into the "theatre of repetition." Whereas the theatre of representation "always refers back to the concept" - the general, the rational,

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[8] Id. 11.
[9] Id. 8.
[10] China Miéville, *Embassytown* (New York: Del Ray, 2011), 128.

the code - the theatre of repetition brings to the fore "a language which speaks before words, with gestures which develop before organized bodies…with spectres and phantoms before characters – the whole apparatus of repetition as a 'terrible power.'"[11] When the concept is disavowed, the theatre of repetition becomes a stage upon which "something effectively new" can emerge in history.[12] In this sense, the act or attempt at lying is, for the Ariekei, an act of *creative propulsion* that undermines the authority of the representational logos that centers and stabilizes Language. The lies that they create - through the "quick-lying" technique, at least - demonstrate the emergence of the unconscious as it dominates and indeed usurps the habitual workings of logic. When Deleuze writes of a "language that speaks before words," he is speaking of precisely *this* kind of slippage; a slippage that is made possible by disavowing the urge to *organize* so that a differential strain emerges, producing a line of flight that *departs from* the existing representational system. The "collapse" of language that occurs in quick-lying creates a fissure between the referent, its conceptual presence and its sign, thus denying the conceptual-coding process through which things make "sense." Through lies, the Ariekei seek to push the boundaries of Language and in this way, push the boundaries of what can be thought, of what Language *does* and *produces*. One can imagine Deleuze jovially nodding his head in appreciation of the Festivals of Lies, likening them to fervid readings of beat poetry in a crowded bar. Lying is like poetry insofar as it dislodges the regime of conceptual representation, creating "terrible" and monstrous phantoms in place of Truth.

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[11] *Difference and Repetition* 10.
[12] Id. 10.

And yet these phantoms point to the creation of something new, of the taking-up and taking-hold of a new history.

Language and Politics

The lies that emerge, in this sense, are indeed "spectres" and "phantoms" that haunt the Ariekei *and* the Terre insofar as these phantoms point to the very "terrible power" inherent in repetition. The Terre inhabitants of Embassytown and the Ambassadors attend the Festival of Lies with a kind of wariness, an unspoken and ambiguous fear of the act and its implications. Naturally, the Ariekene fascination with linguistic experimentation, with the disharmony that can be produced from Language, is perceived by most of the Terre population as threatening. Indeed, the Ariekei's growing fascination with – and increasing skill at - lying foreshadows an unwelcome paradigm shift from the perspective of the Terre and Staff that occupy Embassytown. There are those that conceive of such developments as a Fall from the Divine, from Truth. Some, like Avice's devout husband, Scile, consider lying akin to the corruption of beings communing with and communicating the Divine. Others – such as the Ambassadors and Bremen's spy, Wyatt, are wary of lying for entirely different, though parallel concerns. Both, I would argue, are wary of Ariekene linguistic creativity for the same reason: the threat of a paradigm shift, of a shift in Ariekene consciousness that would threaten their political and ideological power. What appears, initially, to be Terre concern for the maintenance of an originary and "untainted" Ariekene culture and Language is later

exposed as a desire to maintain the status quo, to sustain boundaries delineating "us" from "them:" the colonizer from the colonized. Here we can see how the

> Colonized [are] never quite able to internalize properly the cultural codes [of the colonizing power]…the colonized could be civilized, but would never be quite the same. This contradiction underpins the maintenance of the power and privilege of the colonizer. It maintain[s] a border of difference between colonized and colonizer, whilst simultaneously legitimating colonial conquests and the [colonizer's] burden to civilize the Other.[13]

Maintaining the so-called "purity" of Ariekene culture and Language justifies further expansion and exploitation of Ariekene goods, services and land insofar as they remain "othered:" always-already locked within a particular representational regime that justifies the might of the colonizer over the so-called "un-tainted" and "primitive" colonized. The Ariekei, despite their advanced technologies and biorigging, are always conceived by Embassytowners as "stuff from an antique world—we looked at our Hosts and saw insect-horse-coral-fan things. Those were chimeras of our own baggage. There they were, the Hosts, humming polyphonically in reveries that were utterly their own."[14] They are not subjects as much as objects continuously "othered" in order to maintain a particular power relation in favour of the Terre colonizers.

It is inevitable, then, that the Ariekei – insofar as they are under sway of a logic of representation but consistently make attempts to usurp it through Deleuzian repetition – come to challenge the dominant Terre view of them as mere "antique stuff;" indeed, the Ariekei begin to threaten the very system upon which the Bremenites and Ambassadors

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[13] Cheryl McEwan, *Postcolonialism and Development* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 47.
[14] *Embassytown* 121.

base their power. Those groups and individuals with interests to preserve predictably strike back. Here we can observe the degree to which discourse – language itself – is capable of destabilizing or, on the other hand, reinforcing existing power relations, social relations that are not abstract but have very material and real affects. In other words, the "terrible power" of repetition lies not merely in its capacity to create linguistic monsters; these monsters stretch their limbs into the territory of the real, making-monstrous the very material fabric of the social and political.

The first event that points to the "revenge of the Same" - of the revenge of representation - is not so much an attempt to co-opt difference but to quell it immediately through violence. Several Ambassadors and Scile arrange for the assassination of one of the most notorious and famous Ariekei Liars during one of their Festivals of Lies. Avice, initially shocked, catches Scile's eye immediately after the event and comes to the sinking realization that the assassination was planned. This event reveals the degree to which the Ambassadors are threatened by Ariekene linguistic (and intellectual) developments. Furthermore, the assassination demonstrates just how far the Ambassadors are willing to go in order to maintain themselves in positions of political and ideological power.

The assassination of the famous Ariekei Liar inaugurates a new period in Terre-Ariekei relations, a period in which the Ariekei's fascination with the potential slippages inherent in Language/language eventually becomes *weaponized* against them as a means to reinforce the power of the colonizer and their representational logos. This process starts with the introduction of the Ambassador EzRa, who, as we have previously stated,

denies tradition and Embassytown custom insofar as EzRa is composed of non-doppels with their own minds. When EzRa speaks Language, it is not the content but rather the sonic dissonance, the slippage and lack of simultaneity between the cut and the turn that stimulates the Ariekei, rendering them passive and servile in the face of EzRa the "god-drug." The difference between regular Ambassador-speech and that of EzRa is explained by former Ambassador Bren:

> 'You know what Language is to them,' Bren said. 'What they hear through the words. So, if they hear words they understand, they know are words, but it's fractured? Ambassadors speak with empathic unity. That's our job. What if that unity's there and not-there?' He waited. 'It's impossible, is what. Right there in its form. And that is intoxicating. And they mainline it. It's like a hallucination, a there-not-there. A contradiction that gets them high.'[15]

Ariekei are (to put it lightly) intrigued by the *fissure*, the disunity, of EzRa's speech. This fascination echoes and derives from that same creative urge that compels the Ariekei to lie: both reveal a fundamental malleability at the heart of Language/language, and as such, a similar tendency, a similar line of flight, is visible (and virtual) in both situations. EzRa's verging-on fragmented Language and the act of lying point to a *break* – a potential deterritorialization or freedom from referential and *purely* representational Language. This "slippage" is the first sign of transition – what is described by Avice as "something changing. A colour or its lack, a motion, a palsy."[16] In this sense, EzRa's speech points to a fissure in the unity of the purely referential Language, a fissure that is also signaled by the act of lying. Both provoke an "opening" of representation so that a

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[15] Id. 169.
[16] Id. 118.

line of flight emerges and the purity of the thought-object relation is rendered ambiguous. Both situations - EzRa's speech and the practice of lying - point to a split from the Actual and a taking up of the virtual so that he Regime of Signs skips out of its own coded logos and into differential variations. The regime, in other words, is cut open in both cases, resulting in the unleashing of a monstrous language, a monstrous social situation.

Although EzRa's speech contains within it virtual possibilities for deterritorializations, the potential of their split-speech is foreclosed and manipulated to become destructive (a pure negation). This is why it is important to note that EzRa's speech is not destructive in-itself, but only insofar as it enters into a particular political and social milieu and is made to reinforce an existing representational system. EzRa's speech and its effects emerge in a context that, by virtue of its all-encompassing power of representation, immediately forecloses opportunities for (re)creation. The fissure instead becomes an opportunity to reproduce control: with the Ariekei weakened by their addiction, dying in the streets when "cut-off" from the particular drug of EzRa's voice, the Ambassadors take advantage of this situation to strengthen their power, and, implicitly, the power of the colonizer over the colonized, the power of representation over repetition. After observing the Ariekei's initial responses to EzRa's speech, the Terre and Ambassadors utilize it as a political weapon (limiting their exposure, etc.) so that the Ariekei are transformed into docile and unthinking Oratees, or Language-addicts. The introduction of EzRa and his destabilizing (and destabilized speech) is crippling: the Ariekei lose their agency and as a result, become more susceptible to control. The result is sickness: an unappetizing fury of *chemical* rather than mental disorder that nevertheless

affects the social and cultural conduct of the Ariekei. Their practices, their honour-based customs, become effaced and irrelevant by the destruction caused by the god-drug: "Cams showed those in their dotage instar wandering with pendulous food-bellies, some stumbling by their random ways into Embassytown. No Ariekei tended them. It was shocking. There were rumours that in periods between EzRa-word highs some Ariekei were eating these struggling elders, as evolution intended but their culture had abjured."[17] Such acts are so shocking because of the traditional care and empathy usually displayed by Ariekei to their ailing elders. Despite the fact that their elders – those in their "dotage" – become essentially mindless blobs of organic matter, incapable of Language, the adult Ariekei conventionally treat their elders with great respect, bringing them to diplomatic meetings and involving them in social and political life up until the point at which they begin to decay. Here, again, Miéville emphasizes the interrelation between discursive change and its material effects: the effects of language are not merely abstract, but rather infect and inform the playing-out of the real. The colonizer's language infects the colonized, and in the process, destroys their originary manner of being-in-the-world. In this context – with the establishment of EzRa as god-drug - we can see the creative potential – the fundamentally revolutionizing potential – of destabilized Language become a purely destructive and nihilistic force. In other words, the virtual potentialities of destabilized discourse become circumvented into merely destructive avenues that destroy identity and old customs without the additional (re)construction of the new community practices that would usurp and replace the old in a type of regeneration.

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[17] Id. 205.

What we can observe, in the actions of EzRa and their successor, EzCal is the iteration of what Deleuze and Guattari call a regime of signs, i.e. the regulation of variables by an intralinguistic power structure.[18] All language, all discourse, is inherently malleable; in all language, there is a "line of variation [that] includes possible but as yet unrealized pronunciations…future variables that may or may not come into existence" but that are, nonetheless "virtually present within each individual pronunciation of the word."[19] A regime of signs misrecognizes the inherent malleability of language by grouping together a particular collection of signs, of pronunciations, of meaning that become sedimented and therefore come to represent a particular "standard." The regime of signs is concerned with organizing language by foreclosing virtual variables so as to promote and constantly (re)produce a representational *logos*. The fact that one regime of signs becomes dominant while alternatives are dismissed or repressed is never merely a chance event, but always occurs as a result of "certain practices specific to a culture or way of life."[20] As Deleuze and Guattari write, "we are not saying that a people invents this regime of signs, only that at a given moment a people effectuates the assemblage that assures the relative dominance of that regime under certain historical conditions."[21] In order to assert power over the Ariekei, the Ambassadors speak Language as though it is a single entity, denying the fact that language/Language theoretically "consists of a

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[18] Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 146.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Olkowski 30.
[21] *A Thousand Plateaus* 121.

plurality of languages, a multiplicity of semantic words."[22] It is in fact this constructed illusion of singularity - the maintenance of Language by the Ambassadors - that enslaves the Ariekei who cannot, initially, think beyond the literal. In promoting Language and quelling experimentation the Ambassadors maintain both ideological and political control over the (colonized) Ariekei. They remain locked in a regime of signs that, despite being of their own making, is coopted to serve a particular political system. Quite literally, the actual is prioritized over and against the virtual, so that the virtual possibilities of language are immediately foreclosed for the sake of political and diplomatic benefit.

The "capture" of the Ariekei within the Terre-reinforced regime of signs reveals the degree to which difference can be brought back into the existing system to serve its own logic. The Terre Ambassadors notice the emergence of lines of flight and, instead of allowing for the development of new trajectories, circumvent and compel those differential flows to conform to existing conceptual channels. In this sense, difference is coopted, becoming merely "more of the Same." This is made apparent by one conversation that takes place between multiple Ambassadors. One Ambassador suggests that the Ariekene revolution "is just a glitch between two evolutions. How would they accommodate it?...This doesn't mean anything…They'll listen themselves to death before they'll try to change."[23] Here the Ambassador is speaking of both the Ariekei and their own culture, their own diplomatic hierarchy: the "glitch" – linguistic, social, and political - produced by EzRa's introduction is a step forward, *not* for the evolution of the Ariekei

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[22] Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 146.
[23] *Embassytown*180.

but for the evolution of Terre-Ariekei relations. In other words, the suffering of the Ariekei is conceived as one step in an evolutionary process whereby the planet becomes increasingly controlled by Terre influences. The Ariekei are forced to "accommodate" the glitch that is always only conceptualized, i.e. made to signify, within a political and bureaucratic – representational - context. Ironically, the Ambassadors constantly refuse to make sense of the trauma in any other way: "it doesn't mean anything…" except what we *want* it to mean. Instead of recognizing the perhaps liberatory potential of discursive fragmentation, the Ambassadors and Staff view the addiction as instrumental, as the means to an end, putting their faith in the Ariekei as passive subjects of Bremen, mere "antique baggage" of a less advanced time.

It is important to note, however, that neither Anglo-Ubiq, insofar as it is a signifying language, nor Language, insofar as it is a pure and referential form of communication, can be entirely defined as a regime of signs or a deterritorialized form of expression. In other words, both, at different times, conform to both a representational logos and make fundamentally rhizomatic departures and deterritorializations. It is their usage, the deployment of Language/language that renders them one or another. And simultaneously, the categorizations are always-already porous. The porosity of categories is made visible in the varying ways by which the Ariekei respond to and attempt to rebel against the god-drug and the regime of signs or representational logos of their own Language, a Language that is used to oppress them.

Revolutions: the Oratees, the Absurd and the Liars

The Ariekei respond to their addiction in three ways. The first group are the Oratees: Ariekei rendered passive and unhealthy because of their addiction to EzRa the god-drug. It is significant that Miéville uses the term "Oratees" to describe the addicts insofar as it is a play on "orator:" an individual skilled in public speaking. The term is used ironically, in one sense, insofar as the addicted Ariekei are rendered voiceless and servile due to their addiction; they are the opposite of orators because they cannot speak for themselves. Simultaneously, however, they are orators insofar as their addiction *speaks for them* by reinforcing the power of Language. It is through the helpless, violent and degraded addicts that the despotic rule of Language is fully fleshed out and made visible. Its potentialities are foreclosed and its tyranny reigns: as such, the Oratees reveal Language at its most powerful stage, speaking the tyranny of regimes of signs by virtue of their *inability to speak it*. They become *acted-on* by Language, *subjects of* Language and *subjected to* Language and in this way silently speak or express its insidious logic.

The second group is what Avice comes to call the Absurd, a group that attempts to reclaim their agency through self-mutilation. The Absurd despise their addicted compatriots, embarrassed by the inherent weakness of their species. They call the Oratees a word in Language that means "weak, sick, languid, lotus-eaters" insofar as they take what is given to them, they consume the speech-drug that is essentially force-fed to them by EzRa and the Ambassadors. In order to "cure" themselves of this disease, the Absurd mutilate themselves by amputating their fanwings, an act charged with symbolic and political meaning:

> ‘They know the world’s ending,’ said YlSib. ‘And some of them want to bring in a new one. They despise the other Ariekei…They’re going to start a new order.’
> ‘How . . . ?’ I remembered the stubbed and ruined fanwings. They can’t call them that anymore, because they can’t hear, or speak, they’ve no Language. ‘Oh, I . . .’ I said. ‘Oh, God. They did it to themselves.’
> ‘To escape temptation,’ Bren said. ‘It’s a vicious cure but it’s a cure. Without hearing, their bodies stop needing the drug. And now, the only thing they hate worse than their afflicted brethren is the affliction.”
> “Or, to put it another way, us,” said YlSib.[24]

These acts of self-mutilation are significant, and not only because the fanwing, beyond being the organ of speaking and hearing, is akin to the “mind’s main doorway.”[25] Here, language and the effects of discourse are literally inscribed on the body, rendered horrifically material. The fanwing, too, insofar as it is the corporeal “site” of language, is responsible for the maintenance of community. Lacking fanwings, Avice conceives of the Ariekei as “rebels [of a] fractured community, without speech…with no truth left for them at all. Language, for the Ariekei, was truth: without it, what were they? An unsociety of psychopaths.”[26] Here again we can see a direct link between discourse and its material and political effects insofar as, without Language, the Ariekei cannot (supposedly) communicate; their movement is random. They become untethered signs in a preexisting political and spatial milieu, and in the process of destabilizing themselves, destabilize and reconfigure that milieu.

On the other hand, what Avice initially perceives as acts of absurdity, of self-mutilation, can also be conceptualized as attempts to deterritorialize, to reclaim power

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[24] Id. 206.
[25] Id. 273.
[26] Id. 274.

and agency apart from an "identity" as such. Despite Avice's assumption that, without fanwings and the capacity to speak, the Absurd become "an unsociety of psychopaths," the Absurd *do* create their own ways of communicating and of forming communities. It is perhaps Avice's own prejudices that prevent her from conceptualizing the existence of communities not based on "Truth" and Sameness, but rather, difference. It is only after observing (via web-cam) an Absurd attack on the Terre army that Avice begins to reconsider her initial judgment of the Absurd:

> It was the freakish precision with which the Absurd coordinated attacks that had started me thinking. They were communicating: there was no other explanation for such efficient murder. Languageless, they still needed and made community…I'd seen them gesticulate. Their commandos or commanders indicating with their giftwings. The Absurd had invented pointing. With the point they'd conceived a *that*. They'd given the jag of the body, the out-thrust limb, power to refer. That that was the key. From it had followed other soundless words.[27]

The self-mutilation of the Absurd not only frees them of their addiction to EzRa, but also frees them of Language – and their originary sense of community and identity – in general. Freed from referential Language, they are deterritorialized desiring-machines that can never be entirely solipsistic: there is always a point at which reterritorializations occur, when the desiring-machine assemblages (that constitute individual Absurd and their rebel community) must find new ways to "plug in" - to make new connections and communities. Although the material quality of such mutilations is important, self-mutilation is also a social act insofar as the cuttings act as deterritorializations,

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[27] Id. 295.

modifications of an assemblage, that create new lines of flight and, however, painful, a particular type of freedom.

Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between the organism and the Body without Organs is a useful way for conceptualizing the significance of the Absurd and their self-mutilations. Deleuze and Guattari refer to the organism as "a signifying totality"[28] insofar as the organism is attracted to and imposes organization and constraint onto assemblages in order to contain tendencies that would render it unidentifiable. After all, only those things, bodies and events with a clear-cut identity can be *represented*. In this sense, the organism is always tied into and indebted to a representational *logos* and a specific regime of signs. The self-mutilations of the Absurd, on the other hand, symbolize the making of Bodies without Organs insofar as they quite literally result in the "dismantling" of the organism, "causing asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate."[29] These "asignifying particles" and "pure intensities" can be observed in the Absurd's use of discrete gestures and "glances," subtle but potent signing techniques that change meaning depending on the contextual framework. These acts of self-mutilation, although they do, indeed, point to the deterritorialization of the body, also, and more importantly, point to the deterritorialization of existing social and political systems; the deterritorialization of community itself.

At the same time, however, the Absurd manically deterritorialize their bodies – and their community – in such a way that nothing new can come from their actions; they

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[28] *A Thousand Plateaus* 4.
[29] Ibid.

represent a pure negation. In this sense, the virtual potential of the Body without Organs is foreclosed. To elaborate this point, Deleuze's differentiation between the experience and the model of death is particularly useful. What the Absurd embody is the *model* of death over and against the experience of death.[30] Whereas the experience of death is about adopting multiplicity, about achieving new pathways for desiring-flows, about becomings, the model of death is about repelling the organs, destroying the body; the model of death is a pure negation, a deconstruction of the organism that is purely negative:

> The death model appears when the body without organs repels the organs and lays them aside: no mouth, no tongue, no teeth – to the point of self-mutilation, to the point of suicide. Yet there is no real opposition between the body without organs and the organs as partial objects; the real opposition is to the molar organism that is their common enemy. In the desiring-machine, one sees the same catatonic inspired by the immobile motor that forces him to put aside his organs, to immobilize them, to silence them, but also, impelled by the working parts that work in an autonomous or stereotyped fashion, to reactivate the organs, to reanimate them with local movements.[31]

The model of death is exemplified by the self-mutilation that tends towards self-destruction lacking any affirmative basis. The Absurd lack that desire for *life* that would activate the creative potential of their deterritorializations in order to create something new: new communities, new language, new bodies. Whereas the "model of death" is about negation, a process of *lessening*, the experience of death "occurs in life and for life,

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[30] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 330.
[31] Id. 329.

in every passage or becoming, in every intensity as passage or becoming."[32] It is a matter of "constantly translating, converting the death model into something else altogether."[33] At least in the initial stages of rebellion, the Absurd lack this desire for translation, for the New.

Although the Absurd do, to some degree, point to the potential political power of the death model as a means of disassembling unities and representational systems, it is the third group of Ariekei - the smallest and perhaps most vital group - that instigates the most significant political and social changes. During the point at which the civil war between the Ariekei Absurd and the Terre-Ariekei army reaches its peak, Avice is called to a meeting with Bren, a former Ambassador YlSib, and several Ariekei whom, despite being addicted, are trying to manage their addiction without resorting to self-mutilation. This desire to be freed from their own infliction is intrinsically related to their desire for linguistic experimentation, to be freed not only of EzRa but to be freed from Language itself: "They resented their new druggy craving and their newer inability to disobey…But it dovetailed with what they had always wanted to achieve: their longtime striving for lies, to make Language mean what they wanted."[34] Whereas the Absurd embrace the experience of death, employing the death drive to rebel against the organism represented by EzRa, the Ambassadors, and the socio-political structure they represent, what Avice calls the "conclave of Liars" is concerned with something different, a liberation sourced

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[32] Id. 330.
[33] *A Thousand Plateaus* 330.
[34] *Embassytown* 262.

from a different craving. This is a liberation that does not merely employ manic destratification in an attempt to achieve freedom; rather, the Liars seek to achieve freedom that is more fundamental, that emerges from a different space of awareness. Whereas the Absurd use deterritorializations in a reactive and violent manner, the Liars are fundamentally concerned with affirmation.

When Avice meets with the Liars, their leader, an Ariekei that Avice refers to as Spanish Dancer because of its brilliant markings, explains: "We want to decide what to hear, how to live, what to say, what to speak, how to mean, what to obey. We want Language to put to our use."[35] In these words, Avice perceives a different kind of dissent: a dissent that is not merely reactionary but that is fundamentally about changing speech in order to change the very fabric of social relations. The changes produced by the Absurd are socially and politically significant insofar as they produce new types of communities, new types of social relations; however, the intent of their self-mutilations was not (at least initially) to *affirm*, but to *deny*: to deny the power of the colonizers, to deny existing political relations that rendered them weak and servile. What the Liars want to achieve is the affirmation of a new order rather than merely a denial of the old. It is a menacing task, and fundamentally more risky.

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[35] Id. 262.

Learning to Lie and the Power of Repetition

With the help of several other Terre sympathizers, Avice sets to the task of teaching the "conclave" of Liars how to lie, how to signify. After weeks of practice, Spanish Dancer is the first to show signs of change.

> 'What happened?' YlSib stuttered. 'Something's happened to them.'
> Yes. Something in the new language. New thinking. They were signifying now—there, elision, slippage between word and referent, with which they could play. They had room to think new conceptions.
> 'We changed Language,' I said. A sudden change—it couldn't undo. 'There's nothing to . . . intoxicate them.' There only ever had been because it was impossible, a single split thinkingness of the world: embedded contradiction. If language, thought and world were separated, as they just had been, there was no succulence, no titillating impossible. No mystery. Where Language had been there was only language: signifying sound, to do things with and to.[36]

Following Deleuze, we can observe how true difference – the very univocity of being – comes to the fore through repetition that produces the new – the different - rather than merely reiterating the Same. In the initial stages of being de-programmed (or, one could say, re-programmed into language) the Ariekei focus on repetition, bringing something new into each reiteration of the same: "While he spoke, the Ariekei moved around me like flotsam in a current, and they said the phrase I was and tried to make it into new things, to think of new things they could insist that it, I, my past, was like."[37] In other words, the Ariekei learn how to make connections between disparate things and events, transforming simile into metaphor. Repeated language, in this case, is revealed to be

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[36] Id. 310.
[37] Id. 260.

"very much part of a creative process…repetition, which we might have thought to be a matter of the Same, turns out to be a matter of the Different, the obscure."[38]

Through mimesis, mimicry, and Deleuzian repetition, the Ariekei coopt the language of the colonizer to unsettle the boundaries of that language, its link to authority and its despotic usage. Repetition, as a result, reconfigures social and political relations insofar as the "mimicry of dominant powers, arts and discourses unsettles those powers and creates a new relationship between colonized and colonizer."[39] The Ariekei, once they learn to lie, become freed from their addiction to EzRa and in this manner, usurp the power of their colonizers. They take up and dissemble the dominant regime of signs, de-coding it and revealing its constructed nature.

As we have seen, this significance of this breakthrough is not merely linguistic. Alastair Pennycook draws from Theo van Leeuwen's understanding of discourse as "recontextualized social practice" to demonstrate that language is not a metaphysical practice, not merely abstract. Rather, "the things we do socially are recontextualized as discourse when we do them in language, or more broadly as part of a social semiotics; language practices are social practices."[40] Pennycook does, however, modify van Leeuwen's original theory, suggesting that the use of the term "recontextualization," when applied to linguistic experimentation, in fact contains that experimentation – and its potential effects - within the realm of language and theory. Pennycook argues, instead,

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[38] Alastair Pennycook, *Language as a Local Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 36.
[39] Id. 44.
[40] Id. 34.

for the use of the term "relocalization" to describe the inherently social and political implications of language and discursive experimentation. For Pennycook – and Deleuze - language and its repetition is a fundamentally social, communitarian practice, rather than a merely abstract activity. In this sense, it is not enough to say that language is "recontextualized," it is also relocalized insofar as discursive changes involve an interaction with a particular local community and culture, an interaction that changes the meaning and significance of the language as much as it changes the identity of the locale.

The material effects of linguistic experimentation are made visible throughout *Embassytown*, particularly after Spanish Dancer's initial birthing into language. No longer addicted to EzRa's speech, Spanish Dancer recruits a group of Ariekei to communicate with the Absurd, to try and stop them from destroying the Oratees and the Terre. In a pivotal scene, Spanish Dancer and his conclave of Liars approach an incoming army of Absurd marching on EzCal's army of Terre and Ariekei addicts. With EzCal's voice on the loudspeakers, the Oratees are immediately crippled. In order to prove that they are cured, in order to stop the onslaught of Absurd and the seemingly inevitable civil war between Terre-Ariekei and Absurd, Spanish Dancer and his fellow Liars move to the front, waving their still-intact fanwings to show the Absurd that they are neither mutilated nor afflicted by EzCal's speech. The resulting awareness flows through the Absurd army like a wave:

> Information moved desperately slowly among the Absurd— even their quickest thinkers still had only a tenuous understanding that they could transmit information. What they said to each other at first with their waving and upheld limbs was simple: Don't attack. Following that: Something is happening. The information was discombobulated with distance, moving backwards through the

> rank. At the front, gestures got close to: They can hear but are not addicted. Farther back, ranks of the Absurd told those behind them simply: *Stop*.[41]

Once the Absurd begin to understand, first, that they can conquer their addiction and second, that they can actually understand and communicate without fanwings, the Absurd join forces with the Liars – christened, at this crucial point, as the New Hearing – and begin to rebuild a new type of community. The Terre-Ariekei forces fall back and become discombobulated, lacking the newly-established social awareness of the New Hearing-Absurd group. When Avice returns to Embassytown to speak with the Ambassadors, she comes with a message: "Ambassadors don't get to be the only real people anymore."[42]

It is important to note that the New Ariekei do not merely coopt the Anglo-Ubiq of the Terre; rather, their birth into metaphor, into lies, results in a complete reiteration and reorientation of social identity. In other words, what is created is not only the development of a new language - what becomes Anglo-Ariekei - but rather the (re)birth of an entire social milieu, a reconfigured assemblage. When the Ariekei lie, as they learn language by imitating Avice's proclamations, they appropriate Anglo-Ubiq, using mimesis; however, "it is important to see mimesis as 'a deliberate performance of sameness that necessarily threatens, or at least modifies, the original."[43] In this sense we can see the importance of recognizing that language is not always-already a despotic signifying chain circling around a central signifier. Alternatively, language must be

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[41] *Embassytown* 324.
[42] Id. 302.
[43] Pennycook 44.

conceived as an experimental and discontinuous chain made *new* through repetition that deterritorializes rather than returns to a central logos or signifier. The act of mimesis allows for the production of lines of flight that shoot away from the regime of signs. The *lack* of language – the fact that language, As Avice muses, uses *lies* to speak truth, and in this way, speaks *more true* – renders it creative. Language is, indeed, a kind of fall from a type of Divinity, but it is this *fall* that renders it socially and politically significant.

Here we can observe *language itself* being made into a Body without Organs; however, it is important that this BwO is not conceived as an "expression of a fragmented, shattered organism, which would presuppose a destroyed totality or the freed parts of a whole."[44] The new language adopted by the Ariekei is not shattered, not a negated mirror image of the original organism represented by Language. This new language is akin to a Body without Organs insofar as it involves, instead, the combination of flows, lines, trajectories, that combine in new ways so that the parts are not reducible to the whole. It is neither a language based on untethered chaos nor a language focused on the unification of identities, meanings, and significations. Instead, this language is fundamentally concerned with untethering, unravelling and reorienting the manner in which the material of language – and the social and political realities that it speaks – is configured. In other words, this "untethering" releases the parts from the totality of a whole[45] that reduces and regulates singularities under a systematic and unifying logos.

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[44] *Anti-Oedipus* 326.
[45] Ibid.

Equally significant is that, in making language itself a Body without Organs, the Ariekei and their Terre sympathizers deny an instrumental or teleological perspective of language. Indeed, what makes the New Hearing's linguistic experimentation so effective is that it is not focused on a particular end-point or result; experimentation – and repetition itself – is not used instrumentally but rather taken up as a process in itself. In other words, Spanish Dancer and his compatriots "make something new of repetition itself," making it "the supreme object of the will and of freedom."[46] In this sense, repetition becomes a rhizomatic act insofar as it is not concerned with connecting points, but rather, the spaces and flows that exist between them. As Deleuze and Guattari write of the nomad's relation to space, "although the points determine paths, [the points] are strictly subordinated to the paths they determine…every point is a relay and exists only as a relay. A path is always between two points, but the in-between…enjoys both an autonomy and a direction of its own."[47] In this sense, it is not the *result* but rather the *process* of movement that renders the New Hearing's activity so liberating. Indeed, if the New Hearing only managed to dismiss one representational regime in order to take up and confirm another, they would remain equally oppressed: their oppression would only shift its focus. In this sense, it is vital that we conceive of this particular revolution as a deterritorialization rather than the establishment of a new system. True repetition, writes Deleuze, "refers to a singular power which differs in kind from generality, even when, in order to appear, it takes advantage of the artificial passage from one order of generality to

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[46] *Difference and Repetition* 6.
[47] *A Thousand Plateaus* 380.

another."[48] In other words, what initially appears as a sudden shift from using Language to being birthed into signifying-language, a language of "lies," is not, in actuality, the exchange of one "order of generality" with another. The Ariekei do not forsake Language in order to be birthed-into the order of Anglo-Ubiq as it exists amongst the Terre. Deleuze's point, here, is that such binarizations are necessarily fictional, or rather, constructed, to suit a representational model. What occurs is not the taking-up of one point at the expense of another, but rather the movement of a line, of a trajectory, that depends neither on the starting or end point, but achieves its potential in the median, in the chaotic flow of transformation.

Throughout *Embassytown*, Miéville makes visible what Alan Bourassa, following Walter Benjamin, calls the paradox of language: "It is what we control – and there is no doubt that skill does tame the flux of language, makes it into an instrument – but it is the very same language that can suddenly show itself to us as a relentless revelation, a lighting that withdraws from understanding as it founds the very possibility of understanding."[49] Miéville uses the strange non-human Ariekei to illustrate this power, the uncanny and powerful double-bind of language and repetition as the creation of something new. The Ariekei, birthed into language, open themselves to this flux, that revelatory "lighting" that allows for new configurations of discourse and, as a result, social reality. Learning the mechanics of signification is akin to learning oneself in a new way, of adopting anew self-awareness and social identity. Although the Ariekene fall into

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[48] *Difference and Repetition* 3.

[49] Alan Bourassa, "Literature, Language, and the Non-Human," in *A Shock to Thought: Expression After Deleuze and Guattari*, ed. Brian Massumi (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 62.

language is akin to a fall from purity, from the Divine, this fall is also, and more importantly, an entrance into the world, into freedom.

Conclusion

Throughout *Railsea*, *The Scar*, and *Embassytown*, we have witnessed numerable assemblages in motion, created and destroyed, reconfigured and rendered more or less mobile. Each type of assemblage – geographical, spatial and non-human in *Railsea*, individual and post-human skins/selves in *The Scar*, and language and political communities in *Embassytown* – all have one thing in common: they all resist the stratifying and overcoding function of representation. The political and social value in theorizing political and social change through the lens of the "assemblage" is made clear by Lorraine Tamsin in her text *Deleuze and Guattari's Immanent Ethics.* She writes:

> The work of Deleuze and Guattari [is concerned with] *active* rather than *reactive* solutions that exercise an affirming belief in the earth and the invention of a new people rather than the negative turning away from the earth manifest in ethical and political perspectives grounded in transcendental ideals and universal, normative conceptions of the subject.[1]

In other words, thinking bodies as assemblages rather than as self-contained units or predetermined forms allows us to think, act, and ultimately *live*, in more creative ways. It entails an appreciation of the ways that environments and bodies, political and social communities, engage and inform the becomings of one another, and therefore calls for an ethics of difference. Rather than merely being affected by forces, by existing systems and representational schemas, assemblages, by definition, are always-already opened and *opening* to differential flows. Thinking in terms of "assemblages" necessitates that, in

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[1] Lorraine Tamsin, *Deleuze and Guattari's Immanent Ethics: Theory, Subjectivity, and* Duration (Albany: State University of New York, 2011), 150.

conceptualizing politics both micro and macro, we seek to understand the interaction of unfolding forces and how these forces manifest particular effects.[2]

Indeed, what Deleuze and Guattari reveal, in conceiving of political and social bodies as assemblages, is the degree to which those stratified systems, those representational schemas presented as ahistorical and objective are, in fact, themselves constituted "on the basis of an assemblage of historically contingent factors."[3] When we conceive of these apparently objective representational regimes as assemblages, we can better conceive and conceptualize change; indeed, change becomes possible when we recognize representational schemas as themselves inessential and historically-constructed. Conceptualizing bodies in such a way allows us to conceive of new possibilities, to think of the "otherwise" to existing ways of life, of politics, and of embodiment. Understanding these flows and the potentialities of assemblages allows us to develop and enact "*more skillful interventions* in the flows of life with more joyful results for the multiple components of the bodies (of various kinds) involved."[4]

It is this awareness that allows us to see – and therefore instigate the transformation – of "entrenched power" that predetermines the "hopes and expectations of what one can do and Become."[5] In *Railsea*, these interventions result in the break from an optic and striated perspective that reduces spatiality and geography to a mere inert and passive surface. These interventions - the (de)regulation and experimentation of spatial-

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[2] Id. 150.
[3] Jeffrey Bell, "Between Individualism and Socialism: Deleuze's Micropolitics of Desire" (presentation, meeting of the Association for Political Theory, Grand Rapids, Michigan, October 17, 2003), 19.
[4] Tamsin 150.
[5] Bell 21.

geographic assemblages – involve composing "better relations of speed and rest."[6] Here, differential speeds, differential perspectives result in the *untethering* or *interruption* of the representational logic that (previously) governed the railsea. It is this conscientious intervention, this questioning of the existing regime and its power that allows Sham to form new relationships, to develop new communities, and, ultimately, forge a more ethical relationship with his immediate landscape insofar as the railsea is taken up by Sham as an *active* participant in the creation of social and political realities.

In *The Scar*, these interventions allow Tanner Sack to reconfigure his physical body to his own ends. Tanner Sack realizes that he is not confined and defined by the disciplinary remakings imposed on him by the state. Alternatively, Tanner reclaims his "deformity" so that it signals "otherwise." His reconfigured body comes to symbolize lines of flight rather than deviance; indeed, what, through the lens of the state appear as "abnormalities" instead come to represent the emergent potentialities of the post-human body.

And in *Embassytown*, these interventions enable the Ariekei to break out of the representational schema that defines them as the passive and primitive colonized "Other" and reclaim a different kind of discourse, linguistic and communitarian. The Ariekei find a "line of flight" within their own Language and take advantage of this in order to create a new language, a language that does not speak *for* them (insofar as it is a representational language *imposed* on them by their colonizers) but instead enables the

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[6] Tamsin 150.

Ariekei *to speak for themselves*. Indeed, their linguistic experimentation is a gateway that makes possible the emergence of reconfigured social and political assemblages.

Each of these assemblage-bodies choose to "think the outside; to be truly creative and cause the system to become other"[7] by taking up assemblages in new ways. They create assemblages that are not merely *alternatives* to representational logic; rather, these differential strains of becoming reveal the "other" or what Deleuze calls the "outside" of that representational logic. These BwOs, rhizomatic flows, and strains of becoming *dissemble representational logic from the outside,* bringing into sharp relief the very constructedness of that logic. What Deleuze calls "becoming revolutionary" entails "becoming creative. It entails tapping into a line of flight, shamelessly asking the right questions, in order to transform the system or assemblage of power."[8]

Simultaneously, "instilling creativity into our lives, becoming revolutionary" does not entail complete and utter destratification or the embrace of purely chaotic flows. We cannot escape – nor would we want to escape – a certain amount of stratification, of territorialization. We need a certain degree of social and political order; we must "keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn, and small supplies of significance and subjectification, if only to turn them against their own systems."[9] What creativity, what "becoming revolutionary" entails, in fact, is a "break," an "interruption" in the existing order so that *questions* arise, questions that have a fundamentally "transformative"

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[7] Bell 21.
[8] Id. 22.
[9] *Thousand Plateaus* 160.

potential.[10] It is this “break,” this “outside” that we must embrace and foster if we want to transform the existing order, become freed from the limiting confines of representational systems, and, indeed, embrace a creative life based on an ethical relationship to – and celebration of - difference.

[10] Bell 21.

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