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Imagining the Unimagined Metropolis: Privilege, Liminality, and Peripheral Communities in the Contemporary Urban Situation

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Abstract

Various works of psychogeographic literature explore privileged and non-privileged communities and spaces through narrative and character development. Novels of this sort—specifically those by China Miéville, Neil Gaiman, and J.G. Ballard—feature narratives where their respective protagonists undergo a liminal metamorphosis and transform from a monotonous, albeit privileged urbanite into a free-associating inhabitant of the urban periphery: the unimagined, non-privileged space of urban detritus. By engaging with these authors' novels alongside the works of the Situationists, Walter Benjamin, Rob Nixon and others, the goal of this thesis is to explore how the dominant urban epistemologies are subverted—whether or not they should be subverted—while also analysing the representation of non-privileged communities and how they resist the dominant epistemology in an attempt to imagine the unimagined metropolis. Literature is uniquely suited to exploring this topic, with the act of comparing texts itself revealing the volatile nature of the urban environment.

Keywords

Acknowledgements

For Marianne Elizabeth Sherman
September 5th, 1962 – February 22nd, 2017
"Oh, Mama I saw the world
and it was good, and full of kindness…
And every step I took you held my hand,
and watched me grow—you'll never know
how much I love you…
And I am not afraid, I'm not afraid….
I finally grew:
Mama, this one's for you."
("Mama This One's for You" Beth Hart)

I love you, Mom… I miss you…

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Preface: On Situating Psychogeography, Liminality, and Slow Violence…

The *International Situationiste,* in their 1958 publication *Internationale Situationiste #1* define "psychogeography" as "[t]he study of the specific effects of the geographical environment (whether consciously organized or not) on the emotions and behaviour of individuals" (52). While peripatetic and travel literature invites the study of the psychological effect of a landscape on the wanderer, the Situationists, in their work, locate psychogeography as a field of study specifically within the urban environment and its influences over urban explorers. The psychological effect of the city on a particular urban explorer ultimately characterizes that city; the city is a text which is read through the psychological lens of the wanderer. Psychogeography as a field of study originates in the Paris of the 1950s with the Lettrist Group, a forerunner to the *International Situationiste* (Coverley 10). Eventually, "[u]nder the stewardship of Guy Debord, psychogeography became a tool in an attempt to transform urban life, first for aesthetic purposes but later for increasingly political ends" (Coverley 10). Psychogeography is used by Guy Debord and his fellow Situationists as a tool for liberation from the monotony of everyday urban life, and the Situationist writings are largely manifestos comprised of their theoretical conceptions such as *détournement*, the reuse of pre-existing art in a new way, and the *dérive*, a method of psychogeographic exploration.

Despite the mid-twentieth century origin of the term, psychogeography is, in fact, present much earlier—the term is "retrospectively supported […] by earlier traditions and precursors that have been neglected or wilfully obscured" (Coverely 31). Psychogeography has historical roots which date at least as far back as William Blake in the Romantic Period, whom Iain Sinclair in *Lights Out for the Territory* describes as "the godfather of all psychogeographers" (208). Of the numerous writers in between Blake and the Situationists who touch on this subject matter, one of the more influential theorists is Walter Benjamin. Published in 1982—after the fall of the Situationists—Benjamin's seminal text *The Arcades Project* is a manuscript which he began in 1927 and continuously worked on for 13 years until he was forced to flee Paris in 1940 during the Second World War (Translators' Forward x-xi). Although it is unfinished, Benjamin's

Arcades Project features an extensive investigation of Paris with specific attention to the arcades—or *les passages*. Multiple topics are covered in his work which include iron constructions, Charles Baudelaire, prostitution, the streets of Paris, and Karl Marx. Many of these concepts are explored within much older publications which were undoubtedly available to Debord and his comrades, and of all topics covered, perhaps the most noteworthy of the extensive list is the flâneur—the urban wanderer who first appears in 1863 in an essay by Charles Baudelaire (Coverley 58). A concept which has seen a recent resurgence in popularity, the flâneur in Benjamin "goes about the city not only feed[ing] on sensory data taking shape before his eyes […] often possess[ing] itself of abstract knowledge" (417)[1]. The urban wanderer for Benjamin is a romantic figure within the urban space who flits about the environment grasping at any and all stimulus in an attempt to ascertain hidden knowledge, like a poet listening to a muse. The flâneur is also a central figure in another of Benjamin's publications titled 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire—a precursor to *The Arcades Project* in which Benjamin explores Baudelaire's metaphor of the poet as ragpicker in relation to the urban wanderer: "[r]agpicker or poet—the refuse concerns both, and both go about their business in solitude at times when the citizens indulge in sleeping; even the gesture is the same with both" (*Charles Baudelaire* 80). For Baudelaire there exists a tangible link between the wandering and the collection of the ragpicker, and the poet's writing—they are effectively two solitary methods of ascertaining meaning about the world. The flâneur is effectively a fluid figure with roots in both the metropolis and in literature/writing.

While he is a center-piece of sorts to Benjamin's *Arcades Project,* the flâneur has since achieved an unparalleled level of popularity in the modern-day—so much so that it "has become a somewhat overworked figure, beloved of academics and cultural commentators" (Coverley 57). The contemporary audience is infatuated with the romantic idleness with which the flâneur strolls about the metropolis but the readers of these explorations *are not engaged* with the true intent behind psychogeography as a field of

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[1] All references in this thesis to Walter Benjamin are taken from *The Arcades Project* unless otherwise stated.

study. Because of this, the work of the Situationists has become overshadowed by the modern peripatetic narrative which is infatuated with the appeal of the flâneur. The Situationists, however, are not without their merits as they coined multiple psychogeographic terms and produced a plethora of theoretically stimulating works despite the fact that most of their "hopelessly ambitious Situationist projects rarely went much farther than the written idea" (Sadler 159). Although they disbanded in 1972, the Situationists leave behind a legacy of radical social protest as well as a unique perspective on the role of monotony on urbanism—the city must evolve into a space keyed toward eliciting specific emotions if it is to be truly understood: "[w]e must develop an intervention directed by the complicated factors of two great components in perpetual interaction: the material setting of life [the city] and the behaviors that it incites and that overturn it" ("Report on the Construction of Situations" 44).

Walter Benjamin, the Situationists, and other psychogeographic authorities comprise a lengthy history of psychogeography—one which is constantly evolving, which suggests that "psychogeography may usefully be viewed less as the product of a particular time and place than as the meeting point of a number of ideas with interwoven histories" (Coverley 11). Psychogeography is about more than the present-day situation; it is about the culmination of multiple narratives into a singular system of urban identity. Psychogeography is effectively its own literary canon, one which is fluid and invites a clearer definition of the urban environment with every additional text. Each text acts as another piece in a puzzle that is being assembled without the image on the box to guide it—the city is still a great and varied unknown, and it is only through active engagement with it that it will ever be truly experienced or defined. Urban spaces are about *more than* flâneurs wandering about; the flâneur is "a composite figure […] his predominant characteristic is the way in which he makes the street his home and this is his true legacy to psychogeography" (Coverley 65). The flâneur is an urban homemaker who seeks self-knowledge through knowing the cityscape. By engaging with the city through literary content and form the city becomes a knowable space—its psychological aesthetics are brought forth. This revelation of the hidden rhythms of the city ultimately evokes the Situationist concept of Unitary Urbanism. Through literature, the city becomes a space

which is keyed to any emotional stimulus; the city does not need to be restructured to elicit specific emotions—they are always already present. Literature, or the textual city, exists as a permanent record of a particular emotional experience and, when juxtaposed with other experiences, illuminates the city as being inherently unified, but not monotonous, in its psychological impact. The content and form of psychogeographic literature provides a broad spectrum of experience which consolidates and informs what is known as the 'city'; multiple engagements, when juxtaposed, highlight multiple facets of the urban landscape including tensions between privileged and non-privileged aesthetics and communities. Through engaging critically with works preoccupied with this dichotomy of privilege, readers are solicited to explore how the dominant urban epistemologies are subverted—whether or not they should be subverted—while also analysing the representation of non-privileged communities and how they resist the dominant epistemology in attempts at imagining the unimagined metropolis.

While the dominant frames in place limit what it is to be characteristically privileged, this power is not inherent to the frame itself, but rather, the subjects which they condition[2]. Indeed, the frames in place are granted power not through their mere construction but by the subjects who are produced according to their norms and ideals, who then reinforce the dominant frames by structuring their lives and environments according to the frame's values. Failure to be indoctrinated by these values, and failure to reproduce these values within one's lifestyle, results in isolation and even relegation to the urban periphery. This urban periphery is ultimately a liminal zone which urbanites inhabit until each citizen is able to move on to the next phase of his or her urban experience. Certain psychogeographic literature illustrates this segregation and subsequent transformation from privilege to non-privilege: novels such as China Miéville's *The City & The* City, Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere*, and J.G. Ballard's *Concrete Island*, all feature citizens, often from privileged communities who experience segregation from their original societal frameworks and the subsequent reintegration into a new urban milieu. Before the

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[2] This notion is adapted from Judith Butler's postulations on grievability in *Frames of War* (3).

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reintegration, however, each character necessarily journeys through a third, liminal, space located in-between their original sociological state and their eventual psychogeographical climate.

Arnold van Gennep's *The Rites of Passage* examines the various ceremonies of the human life cycle, such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death, with a specific focus on the liminal, in-between moments of transition from one state to another. While van Gennep is preoccupied primarily with rites or ceremonies surrounding various religious discourse in his text, he explains, quite succinctly, that "a complete scheme of rites of passage theoretically includes preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of translation), and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation) (11). Gennep's rites of passage unfolds in a three-step process: firstly, the subject is removed from his or her original sociological standing. This is followed by an in-between phase of translation until the subject is finally integrated into a new milieu. The journey from the initial status to the final one is always interrupted by an arrival and departure from a third, intermediary zone—a liminal space. Despite his preoccupation with ritual and religious ceremony, van Gennep details a basic system of sociological evolution which Victor Turner expands on in his 1967 text *The Forest of Symbols.* In chapter four of this text: "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*" Turner explains that:

> *Rites de passage* are found in all societies but tend to reach their maximal
> expression in small-scale, relatively stable and cyclical societies, where
> change is bound up with biological and meteorological rhythms and
> recurrences rather than with technological innovations. Such rites indicate and
> constitute transitions between states. By "state" I mean here a "relatively fixed
> or stable condition" and would include in its meaning such social
> consistencies as legal status, profession, office or calling, rank or degree. (93)

Turner understands van Gennep's *Rites of Passage* primarily as the gesture toward and embodiment of the transitions between fixed and stable conditions, such as social and economic standing. These gestures, Turner posits, emerge according to natural patterns and rhythms rather than any technological innovations which suggests a disconnect between liminality and the constructed cityscape—the constructed space is not

preoccupied with such rituals signifying transitional periods. Before outlining liminality in terms of biology and meteorology, however, Turner first posits that "[i]f our basic model of society is that of a 'structure of positions,' we must regard the period of margin or 'liminality' as an interstructural situation" (93). While the shift in the urban environment between social frameworks—both internally and externally—is without the same ceremonious gestures evidenced in religious or tribal (in Turner's case) situations, the city space is not without liminality; the urban environment, or simply districts within it, transforms into a liminal zone through the development of the space and the subsequent construction of situations.

In his essay "Another City for Another Life" Constant Anton Nieuwenhuys (Constant) explains that he and his Situationist comrades "are committed to changing life here on earth. We intend to create situations, new situations, breaking the laws that prevent the development of meaningful ventures in life and culture. We are at the dawn of a new era, and we are already attempting to sketch out the image of a happier life, of a unitary urbanism—an urbanism designed for pleasure" (71). Situationists—certainly Constant— are preoccupied with the creation of new situations intended to revitalize the city space. Published in 1959, Constant's article explains that the beginning of unitary urbanism is in its earliest phases of development, with the injection of pleasure into the metropolis as the central intention behind this S.I. project. This revitalization of the urban space is contingent on the inevitable breach of the structures which ultimately restrict the development of new and enjoyable ambiences. Indeed, a city undergoing unitary urbanism, according to Simon Sadler, "would primarily be unitary as a social project, ending the capitalist contest for space and prioritization of circulation in order to organize the city for the enrichment of everyday life" (117). By Sadler's understanding unitary urbanism is a project designed to end the capitalist dominance of the environment by effecting a new milieu structured around the enrichment of urban life; Situationists solicit the emergence of new psychogeographical situations designed to reduce the capitalist hold on the city by breaching the capitalist boundaries of control in place and subsequently soliciting further breaches. The reduction of the boundaries between the privileged oligarchy and the milieu of pleasurable life is not without its struggle, however,

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as the ideological frames and its subjected urbanites are uniquely positioned against such rebellion.

The exclusion and subsequent relegation of non-privileged subjects to the urban periphery is one which occurs gradually and without spectacle, which renders the issues plaguing these communities and aesthetics invisible. In his text *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* Rob Nixon introduces the idea of slow violence which he defines as "violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, and attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (2). Nixon outlines the complexity of slow violence as a temporal issue in which a particular violent act occurs over a large timespan and is thus rendered invisible to the subjects of the dominant epistemology. Indeed, "[p]olitically and emotionally, different kinds of disaster possess unequal heft. Falling bodies, burning towers, exploding heads, avalanches, volcanoes, and tsunamis have a visceral, eye-catching and page-turning power that tales of slow violence, unfolding over years, decades, even centuries, cannot match" (3). Slow violence phenomena occur over a long time and also lack any spectacle which functions as a signal to a particular issue. As a result of the elusive characteristic of slow violence, urban aesthetics, sensibilities, and forms fade into the obscurity of the urban periphery, and narratives of violence and oppression against select groupings find a voice elsewhere in forms which do not necessarily rely on spectacular demonstration. Evidently, the city is a perpetually contested space inhabited by citizens invested in restricting and perhaps, even reversing the urban refining which is facilitated by the dominant epistemology. Privileged groups— communities of urbanites who benefit from the privileged schematic—manipulate the cityscape in order to reinforce the epistemology in place and bolster their own entitled status. Such manipulations emerge as feedback loops in which the non-privileged forms and classes are systematically isolated from their environments while the dominant framework amasses ever-increasing amounts of control (these feedback loops and their construction will be explored in the chapters to come). Through this methodology of perpetual isolation resulting in more restrictive entitlement, the city is effectively refined into an unrecognizable, exclusionary system of repression whereby any citizen not of the

dominant ideological lifestyle is relegated to the urban periphery: a liminal, in-between and unimagined zone without any ceremonial gesture or spectacle marking its existence. Because this liminal state lacks any ritual or rite marking one's entrance and exit, it is measurably different from the transitional state present in religious or tribal ceremony—it is the consequential result of an oppressive force rather than a natural progression of one's life. Despite this key difference, however, the liminality experienced by the segregated urbanite still functions in much the same way as outlined by van Gennep and, more specifically, by Turner.

In his response to van Gennep's work on rites of passage Turner focuses on the paradoxical reference to what he refers to as antithetical processes—such as life and death—which can be represented by the same tokens (99). He offers many examples of this dual referencing, but perhaps the simplest to grasp is his example of the moon: "for the same moon waxes and wanes" (Turner 99). The lunar cycle (because it is a cycle) ultimately features two endpoints—the full moon and the new moon—between which the processes of waxing and waning take place; the new moon waxes into the full moon which wanes into the new moon, and the cycle repeats. During its time as either a full moon or a new moon, the moon exists within a liminal state in which it is, visibly, neither waxing nor waning, but in-between—transitioning from one process to the other (from one state to the other). Both processes are present during these periods of the lunar cycle and, as Turner surmises, "[t]his coincidence of opposite processes and notions in a single representation characterizes the peculiar unity of the liminal: that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both" (99). Turner posits that during the in-between, transitional moments characteristic of the liminal space, a subject is unfixed from both bordering states, and yet, is also of them both. The interstructural liminal zone invites an unprecedented unity between otherwise separate spaces which—in a psychogeographical framework— invariably alters the subject's interpretation of those spaces by effecting a united milieu. Turner labels the liminal space as one of unity, however, in this unity, the space also emerges as one which is alienated from its bounding states—it is both and *neither* of the bordering states. Therefore, the unity evidenced within the liminal space is influenced by, but not directly representative of, the bounding territories. This unity between the spaces

is not a unity in the standard combinatory sense of the word, but is rather, a unity of ambiences which necessarily invites an enriched urban experience—a unitary urbanism advocated by the Situationists which is influenced by the energy of the environment itself, rather than the dominant cultures within. Unity—here used as a short-hand term for unitary urbanism—represents the diametric opposite of the monotony imposed on the urbanite through cultural entitlement—the multi-dimensional, pleasurable, aesthetically-charged experience of the urban environment: a unity between the urbanite and the urban space. While the inhabitant of the liminal space may not be necessarily stable (certainly not as stable as the members of the privileged classes) he or she is able to wander through the metropolis guided by pleasure resultant from the breach of privileged forms which restrict cultural and psychological development.

The pleasure attained through the breach of the isolationist regime is ultimately facilitated by the breacher's tendency toward what the Situationists label détournement. Within their "Definitions" found in the first issue of *Internationale Situationniste,* published in 1958, the Situationists define détournement as "[t]he integration of present or past artistic productions into a superior construction of a milieu [...] In a more elementary sense, détournement within the old cultural sphere is a method of propaganda, a method which reveals the wearing out and loss of importance of those spheres" (52). The Situationists define détournement ultimately as an artistic process of reuse within a newly created and superior milieu. Furthermore, in détourning a given production it necessarily transforms into a method of rebellion against the sphere it was taken from. In the urban framework, the artistic productions which are détourned are urban sensibilities and aesthetics, and the sphere from which these sensibilities and aesthetics come is the dominant imagined epistemology. The détourned are not exactly taken from the regime, but rather, are expelled by the regime through the perpetual growth of neoliberal feedback loops (to be discussed in the chapters to come). Once these elements are expelled from the privleged city, they are adopted by the rebellious urban periphery where they are then reused to effect a unitary urbanism. As Attila Kotányi and Raoul Vaneigem propose in their essay "Basic Program of the Bureau of Unitary Urbanism," "[t]he basic practice of the theory of unitary urbanism will be the transcription of the whole theoretical lie of urbanism,

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detourned [sic] for the purpose of de-alienation. We have to constantly defend ourselves from the poetry of the bards of conditioning—to jam their messages, to turn their rhythms inside out" (88-89). Kotányi and Vaneigem announce the importance of détournement to unitary urbanism by stating that the latter relies on the inversion of urbanism—the integration of the current urban patterns of life into a superior, non-monotonous milieu where its flaws are clearly evidenced. Effecting a united urban space depends on resistance to the social (entitled) conditioning present within the environment and the subsequent negation of the frameworks in place so that urbanites can be shown the veil which has been pulled over their eyes by the ruling epistemology. The current urban climate is directed by consumerism and wealth, and lacks the proper nuance responsible for enjoyable living—citizens live among the space but they are not truly *of it*, focussing primarily on their presupposed, imagined, and stable roles within the environment rather than their psychogeographical situation. Through liminality and détournement, the members of the urban periphery are able to undergo personalized revolution and effect an urban rebellion as a collective—a rebellion which, with enough members behind it, can, perhaps, overturn the entitled, epistemologically-determined climate of the metropolis and solicit the emergence of a new, psychogeographically-driven urban experience.

Literature features into the real-world rebellion against sponsored frames by illustrating slow violence in a way which the media cannot—certainly not the way it represents spectacular events like wars or natural disasters. Nixon advocates for the power of writing, stating in his introduction that:

> [t]he challenge of visibility that links slow violence to the environmentalism of the poor connects directly to this book's third circulating concern—the complex, often vexed figure of the environmental writer-activist. In the chapters that follow I address not just literary but more broadly rhetorical and visual challenges posed by slow violence; however, I place particular emphasis on combative writers who have deployed their imaginative agility and worldly ardor to help amplify the media-marginalized causes of the environmentally dispossessed. (5)

Because the mainstream, global media is fixated on phenomena which are measured

according to spectacles, it consequently ignores those which are not representable according to any instantly visible stimulation—indeed, the epistemology of the media marginalizes the forms which do not function according to its values. Because the marginalized forms and communities are without any readily available signification, Nixon places the onus of representation onto writer-actvists: those vehement and knowledgeable few who represent acts of slow violence through their writing and solicit change from their readers. Slow violence is not measurable in the same way that a standard act of violence is as there are no explosions or visible destruction which signify the act. Slow violence is effectively illustrated through literature, however, because this fact of representation is embodied within the very form itself—the gradual violence against a particular community or urban form unfolds over the gradual progression of a narrative. Indeed, literature is a powerful tool in representing issues to a community of readers, but it is also effective in allowing a particular author to work through specific issues and even envision better, more stable worlds. In Neil Gaiman's *The View from the Cheap Seats*— his collection of introductions, speeches, and short essays—Gaiman explains that he and all other fiction writers "have an obligation to our readers: it's the obligation to write true things […] to understand that the truth is not in what happens but in what it tells us about who we are" (13). Gaiman situates literature as a crucial part of western society because, despite the fantastical elements of the story, it always informs the real world of the reader, but also the writer as he writes stories in order to discover how he feels about a particular topic (21). Literature, evidently, functions as a metaphorical bridge between the writer and the reader, and the unexplored, unrepresented issues that are occluded by the mainstream media, and invites a particular angle into issues of entitlement which are otherwise untouched.

One such literary exploration of entitlement and slow violence exists in the form of China Miéville's *The City & The City* which follows inspector Tyador Borlú as he attempts to solve the murder of a young woman in the fictional city of Besźel. As the investigation— and the narrative—unfolds, Miéville focusses less on the central investigation which ultimately structures and drives his plot forward and subtly explores the turbulent relationship Besźel shares with the neighbouring city of Ul Qoma. Curiously, each city is

geographically intertwined with the other—sharing the same topography—and only remain separate through the mutual practice of unseeing. Both Besźel and Ul Qoma effect their urban boundaries by periodically unseeing the other city to avoid breaches between the spaces. Should a breach occur, avatars who function as interurban police officers materialize from the liminal space between the cities (called Breach) and detain those who violate the boundary and, indeed, the epistemological frames in place. Miéville's text ultimately functions as a caricature for privilege as each city systematically denies the entitlement of their neighbouring metropolis, with those who breach essentially ceasing to exist altogether, regardless of urban origin. While privilege is denied to those within Breach, however, it is only the inhabitants of this liminal zone who are able to fully interpret the varied ambiences of the completed space—the synthesied Besź and Ul Qoman environment—and effect a new, non-monotonous lifestyle for themselves. This introduction and acceptance of a new urban form is facilitated through the gradual introduction to lifestyles outside of the epistemological frameworks which dominate each city through a framing of these dominant schematics whereby they are stripped of their power. Other methods of epistemological nullification are present within Miéville's text in the form of the two villains, David Bowden and Mikhel Buric; their attempts at effecting non-sponsored lifestyles fail however, because they rely on complete nullification of all other frames in favour of singularly beneficial dogma, rather than a gradual progression toward a varied ambience through détournement and subsequent psychogeographical unity.

The gradual progression toward a new ambience and the resultant unity is a requirement of mutual privileging, and both are prevalent within Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere.* In *Neverwhere* Gaiman's protagonist, a disgruntled corporate employee named Richard Mayhew, lives a life of static monotony in which he is impelled by the dominant epistemologies of his workplace environment. Richard, unlike his fellow co-worker Garry and his fiancée Jessica, however, is not completely conditioned by the ruling frames in place, and unconsciously solicits an alternative lifestyle. Because he is unsettled by his particular urban situation—plagued by the anxieties forced onto him in his workplace— Richard eventually meets a young girl named Door who can only be seen by himself and

the inhabitants of London Below. London Below is the central, fantastical setting in Gaiman's *Neverwhere* and exists as an environment unconsciously created by the ruling schematics and the privileged class, consisting of all the isolated and forgotten elements excluded from the privileging framework. These elements—the communities, forms, and aesthetics excluded by the Londoners above—are systematically stripped of all presence they once possessed and then juxtapose with other excluded elements within spaces on the urban periphery. These spaces of varied ambience are not ruled by any dominant ideological frame; however, they are still structured by them. In much the same way that Breach of Miéville's *The City & The City* is structured through the mutual unseeing of both cities, so too is London Below structured unconsciously through exclusion. Upon entering this lower environment Richard is bombarded with a unified milieu which solicits a variance in his otherwise monotonous lifestyle and he gradually accepts his new, playful interaction with the urban space. Unlike Garry and Jessica who resist the anxieties of their monotonous (albeit entitled) lives, Richard allows himself to be carried by the emotional contours of London Above into the unrestrictive experience of London Below.

Another character who is carried into an unrestrictive, excluded urban experience is Robert Maitland in J.G. Ballard's *Concrete Island.* Ballard's protagonist, unlike Richard who is carried psychologically from one urban milieu to another, is *physically* transported as he drives his car off of a freeway into the lush traffic island below. For a variety of reasons—each of his own making—Maitland is stranded within the confines of the traffic island without any hope of external assistance. After attempting to escape on his own, the entitled protagonist is severely wounded which prevents all future attempts at escape— that is, until he meets his two co-inhabitants: a sour young woman named Jane Shepherd, and an old, lumbering circus acrobat named Proctor. Before the initial meeting between the three islanders, however, Maitland suffers from a dangerously high fever and experiences a bout of delirium in which he is solicited by the varied ambience of the island itself and gradually reflects on his current lifestyles, as well as his past. As his time on the island grows longer Maitland slowly begins to change according to the harmony between his desires and the island's psychogeographical content, and shifts his priority away from escaping the island and toward domination of it—toward effecting his

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ideologically-determined norms onto the space. This attempt to indoctrinate the space according to his ideological condition inevitably fails, however, and Maitland is instead solicited by the space itself and transformed according to the united milieu of the traffic island—giving the space ultimate control over his livelihood rather than attempting to constrict the environment and its subjects according to the dominant dogma of his original urban situation.

Individually, Miéville, Gaiman, and Ballard offer their own unique critiques and analyses of the contemporary urban situation, with the tension between imagined and unimagined spaces featuring in some way. While each novel is effective in its exploration of these topics it is important to note that two of the novels—*The City & The City* and *Neverwhere*—perpetuate a privilege precisely like the city they each represent. This privilege is established through adherence to a particular genre which presupposes a specific readership, or imagines a certain community, over others. Conversely, *Concrete Island* is curiously without any structure-specific genre, presupposes no imagined community, and is therefore analogous to the unimagined space which Ballard presents. Without genre Ballard is free to establish a narrative which functions according to an internal logic rather than one which deploys certain criteria according to a template, thus allowing him to represent the violent segregation of the non-privileged metropolis without bias. Proctor—a notable supporting character in *Concrete Island*—is not the only violent character featured within the three novels henceforth explored, but he is the only character whose brutal outbursts is interpretable as a direct response to the imagined community's relegation of his habitat to the urban periphery. Despite the discrepancy in representation facilitated by genre, all three novels, both imagined or unimagined, juxtapose to illustrate the unitary urbanism which each individual narrative promotes. It is only by engaging critically with multiple texts from various communities and spaces that a complete image of the psychogeographic city is achieved, and it is only by re-evaluating the dominant epistemological frames in place, thereby allowing those unimagined urbanites, aesthetics, and sensibilities to fully present themselves, that the unimagined metropolis can be finally imagined.

Chapter 1: Uniting Against Slow Violence in *The City & The City*

In China Miéville's *The City & The City,* police investigator Tyador Borlú of the fictional city of Besźel is tasked with solving a murder mystery. During the course of this narrative, however, Miéville focusses less on the actual investigation and more on the tension between Besźel and the neighbouring city of Ul Qoma—a city which shares an intertwined, geographical landscape with Besźel. Despite existing in an interlaced structure the two cities continually unsee the other with Besź citizens unseeing Ul Qomans and vice versa. Miéville's preoccupation with the operations and interactions between these two cites is the unconscious foundation of his novel as is his exploration of the Breach: the liminal environment between the two cities which is policed by avatars who function as police officers, detaining any who illegally breach the boundary separating the cities.

Miéville's urban environment functions on a system of borders and boundaries which necessarily shape the space therein, keeping the various districts within separate from their neighbours and establishing each space as privileged (to their respective citizens). Through the establishment of epistemological frames—be they national, modernist, capitalist, or otherwise[3]—the dominant ideological biases manipulate the very development of an urban environment through relegation of ideologically-determined, antiquated communities and architectural aesthetics to the urban periphery. The borders and boundaries in place within the urban environment ultimately result in the formation of a privileged class: a cohort of lives deemed privileged according to the dominant frameworks in place who subsequently refine the city according to their privilege. This urban control consequently results in the further isolation of 'non-privileged' communities as determined through the ruling epistemology. This system of privilege and isolation is intractably resilient to criticism as the subjugation of the unimagined communities and sensibilities eludes any spectacle which signals their decimation. Herein

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[3] These frames can include politics, gender, race, and other constructs not explored in the novels featured in this project.

lies the power of psychogeographic literature which effectively outlines the elusive issues resultant from the dominant ideology governing a particular urban space; through investigation and critique, authors like Miéville are able to illustrate the tension between privileged and non-privileged frames while simultaneously outlining a possible methodology toward a unitary urbanism through liminal progression between the privileged and non-privileged states.

1.1   Borders, Privilege, and the Urban Situation

Before exploring Miéville's text in-depth it is important to establish an understanding of how cities effect their presence. In his 1954 essay "Building Dwelling Thinking" Martin Heidegger explains that "[a] boundary is not that at which something stops but […] that from which something *begins its presencing* […] Space is in essence that for which room has been made, that which is let into its bounds" (152). Heidegger postulates that boundaries are that which invite spaces into existence and that without such constructions spaces simply cannot be—they are not given any presence. The entire urban paradigm is founded on this constrictive characteristic of the boundary, indeed "building, by virtue of constructing locations, is a founding and joining of spaces. Because building produces locations, the joining of the spaces of these locations necessarily brings with it space […] But building never shapes pure "space" as a single entity. Neither directly nor indirectly" (Heidegger 156). When one builds, space is conjured into existence as a location, or as a destination that is different from any other. The urban environment, therefore, is an amalgamation of smaller locations and thematic districts juxtaposed under a single identity: the city. This identity, however, as Heidegger explains, does not represent a unified whole—a single entity. Whether a particular 'city' is predetermined as a single entity, or not, does not matter—building can never appropriate spaces as unified wholes because the boundaries between districts always serve as a partition keeping locations separate; the various districts of the city, the slums, financial districts, or housing settlements, will always remain separate from other, different districts due to the geographical and psychical borders in place between them—one particular urban aesthetic will always be identified as belonging to a specific epistemological structure (a tall

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skyscraper is associated with business and wealth, or housing). An urban space's presence begins at its outermost perimeter and flows inward toward a central locale, and this flow, by virtue of its directionality, never overlaps with that of a neighbouring, external space—be it another city, a neighbouring borough, or a rural space. While there may be overlap present within a given district, it is an overlap which constitutes a singular urban presence as everything focuses around a central identity, be it the piecemeal identity of the city itself or a particular district which necessarily shapes the larger urban ambience.

The inward flow of the urban environment's presence is detected by the Situationists in the mid-twentieth century through one of their most basic practices known as the dérive, or the "rapid passage through varied ambiences" (62). In "Theory of the Dérive", Guy Debord explains that "from a dérive point of view cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant, fixed points and *vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones*" [emphasis mine] (62). The dérive ultimately reveals the inward-directionality of urban flow that Heidegger likens to presencing; city spaces are not just physical structures but also intricate systems of psychical currents which the structures conditionally create. These currents that the structures foster into existence discourage both exit and entry, the latter of which can be viewed as a symptom of the former; if one cannot exit a space then they necessarily cannot enter another. Furthermore, if one cannot exit a space—that is, work their way to and even beyond the boundary of the space—then the urban flow must flow inward, toward a point of convergence—toward the center. What is this center? It is the space's ability to be identified as a 'district' or, on a much larger scale, as a 'city'. The metropolitan environment is only able to be distinguished from other environments because of its perceivable geographical limits, without which there can be no measurable city. This 'city' identity is not unified aesthetically, however, as the psychogeographical contours restrict urban wanderers to localized urban singularities which do not affect neighbouring zones. The Situationist conception of unitary urbanism, however, advocates the reversal of the urban flow, outward, toward the city-limit where it then terminates. In reversing the flow of presence, the center is shifted away from isolated, boundary-defined locales of convergence, and is systematically eliminated. Every aesthetic, artwork, and building within the unified metropolis is

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awarded presence and is allowed to freely juxtapose with every other stimulus in the shared space resulting in the emergence of a unified milieu through transformation into the urban palimpsest, thus allowing urbanites to emerge within a new psychogeographical framework—one which is in direct opposition to a singular, monotonous urban experience.

Unitary Urbanism as a practice of urban revolution ultimately depends upon the core Situationist concept of détournement which in "Détournement as Negation and Prelude" is defined as "the reuse of preexisting artistic elements in a new ensemble […] The two fundamental laws of détournement are the loss of importance of each detourned [sic] autonomous element—which may go so far as to completely lose its original sense—and at the same time the organization of another meaningful ensemble that confers on each element its new scope and effect" (67). Détournement extracts certain aesthetic elements from their original milieu and employs them alongside other détourned elements within a newly crafted framework thereby effecting new artistic forms. In their ruminations on détournement the Situationists view the process as one which necessitates negation:

> [d]étournement is thus first of all a negation of the value of the previous organization of expression. It arises and grows increasingly stronger in the historical period of the decomposition of artistic expression. But at the same time, the attempts to reuse the "detournable bloc" as material for other ensembles express the search for a vaster construction, a new genre of creation at a higher level. (67)

The process of détournement begins with destruction of stale forms, and the resultant synthesis constitutes a diverse, non-monotonous milieu whereby the unvaried urban forms interact to create new ambiences—like when an old warehouse is repurposed as a coffee shop, for example. The negation and subsequent juxtaposition of various détourned subjects unfolds as a refining process whereby the most basic components of these subjects are allowed to propagate and evolve into new, meaningful, and stable forms of recognition: the unified cityscape. The goal of unitary urbanism is ultimately to effect an urban milieu in which the psychology of the urbanite achieves harmony with the varied urban stimulus surrounding him or her—something which is achieved through the

reversal of presence's flow, outward toward the periphery, rather than inward toward a center, and the effacing of socio-spatial boundaries.

Heidegger's understanding of the functionality of borders ultimately challenges the Situationist assertion that boundaries must be forsaken in order to properly unite the metropolis—that the divides between public and private, and work and leisure must dissolve to properly effect unitary urbanism (Debord 69). If borders are necessary in giving presence to spaces through their transformation into locations, then surely eliminating said borders will facilitate a city's descent into abstraction as an unbounded, unimagined space. Unitary urbanism, contrary to Debord's assertion, does not require the destruction of boundaries, but rather an ignorance to their constriction through which an aesthetical unity between psychological stimulation and architecture can be reached. In "Report on the Construction of Situations," Debord argues that the concept of unitary urbanism "first becomes clear in the use of the whole of arts and techniques as means cooperating in an integral composition of the environment. This whole must be considered infinitely more extensive than the old influence of architecture on the traditional arts, or the current occasional application to anarchic urbanism of specialized techniques or of scientific investigations such as ecology" (44). Debord identifies unitary urbanism as the use of arts and techniques collaboratively thereby inviting an escape from the monotonous conventional bounds of modern urbanism. Urban advancement— especially twentieth century urban advancement (circa 1957 when Debord's "Report" is published)—heavily relies on increasingly sophisticated technologies and necessitates ecologic investigations thereby transforming the cityscape into a metaphorical laboratory. In this metropolitan laboratory, focus is on a particular architectural situation and its effects on specific urbanites; in this framework certain communities—namely, those who represent the subjective inferior halves of binary oppositions—fade into obscurity and are relegated to the urban periphery, or the outer edges of spatial presence. This periphery is not strictly geographical, however, as the urbanite's psyche is simultaneously solicited to ignore certain stimuli while remaining attentive to others, which further solidifies certain urban boundaries. Unitary urbanism is not necessarily preoccupied with eliminating these boundaries, but instead tasks urbanites with shifting alienated communities and aesthetics

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away from the periphery and toward a presence *equal* to that of the dominant architectural system's presence through a reversal of presence's flow—rather than presence beginning at a boundary and moving inward, as Heidegger theorizes, it must instead move outward and be allowed to collaborate with neighbouring aesthetics. By reversing presence's flow, the center resultant from the convergence of the inward flow dissolves, and urban unification is achieved through the synthesis of every urban aesthetic's simultaneous presence.

Alas, the Situationists disband in 1972 and their project of unitary urbanism is never fully realized; however, the momentum behind their ideas is echoed in psychogeographic literature. At the core of Situationist theory and practice is an exigence for social reform which the S.I. ultimately attempts to illustrate through their use of détournement, and urges the urban population to embrace artistically liberating actions (i.e. using and re-using a locale against psychogeographical currents). Such emancipatory acts are ultimately intended as a force of urban rebranding which effectively rewrites the city according to urbanite psychology. Debord argues that "[s]patial development must take the affective realities that the experimental city will determine into account. One of our comrades has promoted a theory of states-of-mind districts, according to which each district of a city would tend to induce a single emotion to which people will consciously expose herself or himself" (44-45). Spatial development, according to Debord's principles, should promote variety of emotional experiences whereby districts—and even the very structures within them—stimulate the wanderer's emotions in ways specific to a given district. Through the collective arousal of emotions, good or bad, the environment ultimately emerges as a unified space; unitary urbanism is achieved through transforming the city into a palimpsest of emotions which solicit the urban wanderer. The unified city is constructed according to the collective stimulation of the urbanites who inhabit it, not according to the monotony of capitalism and industry—a city in which the architecture is formed of emotionally polarized districts which evoke emotional harmony with the psychogeographic environment as opposed to a singular and stale participation. The creation of such districts, however, never evolves beyond the Situationist's theoretical models because, quite simply: everyone reacts differently to a given stimulus (what

triggers happiness in one may not in another). As there is no way to determine a uniform response to a particular stimulus, it logically follows that there can be no uniformity within a given emotional district.

While unitary urbanism in its prime condition is practically elusive, an evolution of the concept, as well as the resistance of monotony, are openly represented within psychogoegraphic texts, such as China Miéville's *The City & The City*. The novel begins with the suggestion that protagonist Detective Tyador Borlú aspires toward escaping from the monotony of his urban situation. Borlú lives in the fictional city of Besźel which borders/intercepts the neighbouring Ul Qoma; the two cities are geographically interwoven, kept apart only through the mutual practice of unseeing. In an early moment of the narrative Borlú experiences a brief moment of inattentiveness where he inadvertently observes a woman in the other city; he explains that "[w]ith a hard start, I realised [sic] that she was not on GunterStráz [Besźel] at all, and that I should not have seen her. Immediately and flustered I looked away" (12). Evidently, Borlú's position and repetitive routine within the Besźel police force has stagnated his mind with the same daily routine and he unconsciously wishes to liberate himself from the dull repetition of an urban existence which has come to nullify his psychological engagement with the space. Borlú's desire to be rid of his monotonous existence is reinforced through his persistent engagement with the fictional text titled *In Between the City and the City*. Written by David Bowden, a suspect and, evidently, the primary antagonist of Miéville's novel, *In Between the City and the City* details the theoretical histories of Besźel and Ul Qoma, as well as the alleged existence of a mysterious third city called Orciny (171). Despite detailing a great deal about Besźel and Ul Qoma—including their prehistorical moments in which they were, perhaps, a single metropolis that fractured in two—the book is banned in both cities (171) and effectively taints the reputation of its author. Bowden explains that he "was a stoned young man with a neglectful supervisor and a taste for the arcane. No matter that you turn around and say 'Mea culpa, I messed up, no Orciny, my apologies' […] You can never walk away from it no matter how hard you try" (171). Despite its poor academic standing and its illegality, Borlú obtains a copy of Bowden's book under the pretense of his current assignment and consistently refers to it during lulls

in his investigation or during moments of doubt. Borlú unconsciously demands the reformation of his urban situation and when he is presented with an ultimatum in his case—illegally breach the boundaries between the cities or let an assassin escape—he does not hesitate, and unflinchingly voids the ideological framework of unseeing. Borlú crosses into Ul Qoma thereby inverting presence's flow and irreversibly transmuting his experience of the urban environment as he ultimately transcends Besźel and Ul Qoma's understanding of borders, thus engaging with the complete and varied metropolis rather than a partial environment.

What Borlú accomplishes in breaching the implicit borders confining the two cities (and by rejecting the ideological framework which separates one city from the other) is the contextualization of the epistemological frames which govern the lives of urbanites in both spaces. These frames ultimately arrange lives within an idealized hierarchy, determined by those who control the frame (governments or other such organizations of power). These frames, however, result in biases which necessarily emerge and exclude certain lives while privileging others—in the case of Besźel those excluded are the citizens of Ul Qoma, and vice versa. Rob Nixon in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* explains that:

> [i]f the idea of the modern nation-state is sustained by producing imagined communities, it also involves actively producing unimagined communities […] Narratives of national development are partial narratives that depend on energetically incubated habits of imaginative limit, habits that hide from view communities that inconvenience or disturb the implied trajectory of unitary national ascent. Assaults on a nation's environmental resources frequently entail not just the physical displacement of local communities, but their imaginative displacement as well, indeed on the prior rhetorical and visual evacuation of those communities from the idea of the developing nation-state. (150)

By Nixon's diagnosis, lives and indeed, entire communities, are only conceivable as imagined (privileged) given a particular ideological framework—a culturally or politically determined referent around which subjects' lives are situated within a

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hierarchy and are subjectively deemed more or less apprehensible than others. These frames do not necessarily efface the life of the non-apprehensible subject, but serve instead to occlude it in favour of a particular, ideologically situated bias. Epistemological frameworks emerge out of the culturally dominant ideologies of a people; this is to say that the people in positions of power (such as governments) or contemporary sensibilities themselves ultimately control who and what constitutes an imagined (privileged) life or community. In Miéville's novel this power is given to the ironically named Oversight Committee who oversee the deployment of Breach, the inter-urban police force which detains those who illegally rupture the boundaries between the cities (61). This council is situated within Copula Hall, a building which functions as both parliament for each city as well as the lone border-crossing, and is composed of representatives from both cities—representatives who, while upholding the ideology of unseeing, actively deny privilege to all the lives within the opposing city. In Miéville's novel the creation and maintenance of a particular space (Besźel or Ul Qoma) invariably depends on voiding certain lives through the establishment of borders which presence inwardly, namely: those who do not constitute the space in question. Borlú unconsciously lives according to this ideology and can recall how "[a]s kids we used to play Breach. It was never a game I much enjoyed, but I would take my turn creeping over chalked lines" (38). From early in his life Borlú actively practices willful blindness—albeit with a peculiar uneasiness—whereby all lives not of his city are rendered null and void, and it is not until he emerges within the unified framework of the Breach that he is able to observe all lives equally and systematically challenge the dominant interurban frames.

Miéville's novel presents a critique of the ideological framework by which borders function—specifically, the exclusionary framework which structures nationality (albeit on a smaller, urban scale). While not all nationalist frameworks exclude neighbouring nations (with some even facilitating cooperation between separate societies) the world of *The City & The City* is nonetheless a hyperbolized one in which citizens of the two neighbouring cities actively unsee their neighbours, and this practice is observable in real-life. Indeed, as Heidegger suggests, quite simply "[m]an's relation to locations, and through locations to spaces, inheres in his dwelling. The relationship between man and

space is none other than dwelling, strictly thought and spoken" (155). At its core space is determined by dwelling which is to suggest that it is determined through a privileging of the space—one's capacity to own land and *call it his or her own*. In owning property—identifying a space as belonging to oneself— or perhaps identifying oneself according to one's nationality/urban citizenship, the privileged space of the dwelling necessarily dominates the owner's attention by effacing all spaces which lay outside the perimeter of the dwelling. The presence of the owned space not only begins at its outermost border and flows inward, but also occupies the majority (if not all) of the owner's imaginative capacities; the owner is likely to affix importance to, or associate with, his or her own property rather than an external landscape. Therefore, when a geographical landscape in question where one's property is situated is harmed or threatened—be it through natural or manmade disaster—one is more likely to privilege his or her *own property* in lieu of the topography as a whole. When, during the climax of the novel, tragedy strikes the total topography on which Besźel and Ul Qoma are situated in the form of interurban revolution, citizens of each city are only privileging/worrying about his or her own dwelling: the city where they live and not the neighbouring metropolis. Borlú, however, is able to imagine both spaces because he exists beyond the confines of the interurban borders and is able to view the city as a unified whole where he is effectively able to frame the dominant, nationalist ideology of unseeing. By framing the epistemological framework[4] which distinguishes lives as imaginable, it is then possible to expose the framework for what it is: an ideological apparatus installed by a ruling power which interpellates its subjects *as* subjects. Framing a framework, therefore, allows critique of the framework itself—not just the operations resultant from the epistemology—thereby inviting an unbiased reflection on the part of the privileged subject. By framing the nationalist schema as a mere framework (and not adhering to the epistemological narrative within it) a subject is able to recognize the system within which he or she is privileged while simultaneously diagnosing this privilege—the privilege of being recognized within the nationalist (or urbanist) framework—as that which is arbitrarily

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[4] This idea is inspired by and adapted from Judith Butler's postulations in her text *Frames of War* (8-9).

determined by the systems of domination. Upon breaching the boundaries between Besźel and Ul Qoma, Borlú is freed from his epistemological situation and thus allowed to observe the framework which governs his life from an external vantage point as an avatar (officer) of Breach, and he is able to save both cities from catastrophe at the same time.

1.2   Forsaken History, Slow Violence, and the Desire for Change

Détournement is key to successfully uniting the urban environment and establishing a milieu which is not dysfunctional. In his novel *The City & The City* China Miéville explores the effects of slow violence and unification, and presents an image of the urban environment which is psychogeographically fractured. The city in Miéville's text is, quite literally, two distinct cities interwoven across a single geographical location. These two cities, named Besźel and Ul Qoma, ultimately function as caricatures of notable urban districts (namely: ghettos and financially stable zones respectively), and it is through the juxtaposition and interaction between these two caricatures that Miéville offers his commentary on the contemporary urban situation of epistemological privilege. Beginning his narrative in Besźel, Miéville explains that this city (or this half of the city) is comprised of "[f]ew antique Besź stylings, few steep roofs or many-paned windows: these were hobbled factories and warehouses. A handful of decades old, often broken-glassed, at half capacity if open. Boarded facades. Grocery stores fronted with wire. Some houses colonized and made chapels and drug houses: some burnt out and left as crude carbon renditions of themselves" (17). Miéville's focus within the Besźel cityscape is primarily on the architectural decay resultant from evident financial fallout. Warehouses and factories operate at half capacity if they are operational at all, store fronts remain forever static with wooden boards now prohibiting entry, and glass from countless broken windows saturates the environment with tangible decay—this is not a city currently experiencing prosperity, growth, and stability. Miéville continues his illustration of Besźel, outlining that "[t]he Besźel ghetto was only architecture now, not formal political boundary, tumbledown old houses with newly gentrified chic, clustered between very foreign alter spaces. Still, that was just the city; it wasn't an allegory" (22). Besźel is entirely a static milieu of architecture—intermingled structures and sensibilities

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deadlocked in their own poverty and decay—abandoned by economic stability and investment which have fallen into disrepair as a result. Evidence of a resistance against the stagnation is present; however, the attempt to revitalise the city—to unify it under a new, aesthetical variety—paradoxically divides the space, transforming Besźel into a collection of incompatibilities which do not successfully harmonize under a single milieu. Besźel is a disjointed environment comprised of run-down houses, foreign spaces, and failed attempts at revitalization which systematically reduce and eliminate the urban environment's identity as a *city*, and turn the space into merely a conglomeration of buildings populated by people struggling to ascend the class hierarchy and attain financial stability.

Besźel is, quite simply, an example of an urban space left behind in the shadow of neoliberalism as this movement transforms Besźel into a non-privileged space—it is a city attempting to operate according to the rules of the neoliberalist ethos (the dominant urbanist framework of the twenty-first century) which failed it, despite now existing outside of this dominant system's borders. Working alongside Bowden is Mikhel Buric, a member of the Oversight Committee who, during the climax of the narrative, exclaims to Borlú (now working with Breach) that "I've been getting *business for Besźel,* I've been taking their damned gewgaws out from *under Ul Qoman noses,* and what do you do? You gutless Breach? You protect Ul Qoma […] There's only one city, and if it weren't for the superstition and cowardice of the populace, kept in place by you goddamned *Breach,* we'd all know there was only one city. And *that city is called Besźel*" (284). Buric extends his nationalist, state power of unseeing beyond his position on the Oversight Committee to such an extreme that he attempts to render Besźel solely imaginable through the complete erasure of Ul Qoma—his failing city is the one true city and should therefore be given presence. Buric believes Breach to be the true power behind the prosperity of Ul Qoma and the subsequent failure of Besźel, and by manipulating the unificationists of either city (those who advocate for the physical unity between the cities), he attempts to dissolve the boundaries between the cites thereby soliciting Ul Qoma to effectively imagine/privilege Besźel. What results from Buric's plan, however, is mass hysteria and fear as the majority of citizens in each city refuse to invalidate the

framework which governs them—they refuse to see their neighbours despite the rampant breaching occurring on their periphery. Buric unwaveringly believes Breach and urban paranoia/unwillingness to void borders and boundaries to be the determining factor in his city's failure, however, Besźel's haphazard urban situation is not generated from lack of entitlement, merely exacerbated; the true origin of Besźel's fractured urban identity ultimately emerges out of a negligence of history in favour solely of economic improvement which—in success or failure (with the latter being the outcome for Besźel)—solicits a singular, monotonous milieu through the elimination of foundational historical aesthetics.

Throughout his investigation Borlú learns of Besźel's attempts to build itself anew by selling its history instead of reintegrating antiquated aesthetics and creating the space anew according to a purely consumerist framework it strives to abide by. While investigating the murder of Mahalia Geary, Miéville's protagonist journeys to Ul Qoma and questions David Bowden, an archeology professor (and primary antagonist) who explains that unlike the neighbouring Ul Qoma, Besźel possesses an "idiotic willingness to sell what little heritage it could dig up to whoever wanted it" (168). According to Bowden, Besźel sells any archeological discoveries—any evidence of its heritage—to anyone who wishes to purchase them. Evidently, Besźel is not preoccupied with its own history and is therefore fundamentally unbound as a city. History, like the geographical boundaries surrounding the metropolis, functions as the temporal origin of presence; the city begins with an historical moment in time as well as a primary location in space. Besźel dispenses with any links to a past which systematically eliminates its origin and negates all attempts at a future—Besźel is ultimately not imaginable in the same way as Ul Qoma because Besźel exists without any initial identity established through a temporal origin. Besźel effectively possesses no temporal urban center, and the geographical borders from which the psychogeographical vortex begins its flow direct the space's presence toward a central identity which ultimately does not exist because it is incomplete. The capacity of a specific space to be identified as a *city* is dependent on the presence of an historical origin and narrative progression; Besźel is merely a conglomeration of buildings and locations—as theorized by Heidegger—without any

historical narrative grounding its progression and identifying it as a *city*.

Besźel is an unprivileged metropolis because it lacks a temporal moment in which it is given a definitive identity—the privileged urban environment is one of intricacy which relies as much on its past as it does on the present and future. In direct contrast to Besźel, Miéville presents the neighbouring city (or other half of the city) Ul Qoma, and the Old Town of Ul Qoma is described as "at least half transmuted these days into a financial district, curlicued wooden rooflines next to mirrored steel. The local street hawkers wore gowns and patched-up shirts and trousers, sold rice and skewers of meat to smart men and a few women" (135). The Old Town of Ul Qoma is an urban space made up of old aesthetics juxtaposed with the new, which facilitates the emergence of a third, unified milieu; certain characteristics of the old city, such as the classic wooden rooflines, survive the urban détournement and influence the emerging aesthetic—the stable, aesthetically pleasing elements are carried into the new and varied urban sensibility. The reuse of pre-existing elements is present within even the most basic units of urban civilization, namely: the urbanite's clothing, which has been recycled and allowed to survive amidst a patchwork style. Unlike Besźel, Ul Qoma does not so easily dispense with its history and culture, but rather, reinterprets it, allowing the most basic, stable, and, perhaps, artistic elements to exist alongside the new economic framework; instead of selling its history in an attempt to economically bolster the space, Ul Qoma integrates history in new combinations thereby establishing variance in its urban situation. The Old Town in Ul Qoma, as Borlú notes, is now, *partially* a financial district (135), however, it is a financial district which is still fundamentally Ul Qoman. Instead of forsaking the city's historical foundations in favour of a wholly original urban creation, Ul Qoma détourns its history and reuses it in conjunction with the new, aesthetical forms attained through détournement; the city's historical identity is refined through urban projects which incorporate historical discoveries and aesthetics, and is not systematically erased as is the case in Besźel.

Buric's attempt to attract attention to the plight in Besźel is ultimately an effort to illustrate the shapeless violence against his city through spectacle—thereby making the

unseen assault against his city seen. In *Slow Violence* Nixon consistently advocates the need for means of representation which express the effects of what he labels 'slow violence'. Nixon posits that:

> [t]o confront slow violence requires […] that we plot and give figurative shape to formless threats whose fatal repercussions are dispersed across space and time. The representational challenges are acute, requiring creative ways of drawing public attention to catastrophic acts that are low in instant spectacle but high in long-term effects. To intervene representationally entails devising iconic symbols that embody amorphous calamities as well as narrative forms that infuse those symbols with dramatic urgency. (10)

Instances of slow violence against people—and spaces—lack any instantaneous spectacle against which a potential danger is measureable, and thus require an external medium or catalyst of sorts, to ensure that a formless threat is given a form. Through use of symbolism and narrative, which can take shape as spectacles, issues of slow violence are carried to extreme conclusions in which the frames of domination very evidently facilitate environmental degradation and further violence. In Miéville's *The City & The City* this is precisely what happens during the riots staged by breaching unificationists when two buses—one in each city—crash into each other (274). As a result of the crash Borlú can imagine the inevitable "panic of bystanders and passersby, let alone those innocent motorists of Besźel and Ul Qoma, having swerved desperately out of the path of careening vehicles, of necessity in and out of the topolganger city, trying hard to regain control" (275). Buric renders the slow violence against Besźel—its systematic un-imagining—as a violent interurban reality and attempts to reverse the imagined privileging of the space by inspiring mass breaching, however, the result is hysteria and ultimately fails because the Avatars of Breach do not—as Buric believes—privilege one city over the other, but imagine both equally. When thinking about the interurban calamity Borlú—who is native to Besźel—refers to motorists both of his home and Ul Qoma as "innocent" (275) thereby signalling his transcendence of the epistemological framework which establishes and maintains the borders between the two cities. Buric ultimately attempts to shock citizens into a unification of the spaces, but unification can only be truly achieved if the given subject, like Borlú, is ready and willing to challenge

the nationalist biases of privilege emerging from the dominant frames in place.

1.3   The Trouble of Unitary Urbanism

During his initial journey through the financially transmuted Old Town of Ul Qoma—and before his transcendence into the Breach—Borlú remarks that "these streets shared the dimensions and shapes of those I knew, they felt in the sharp turns we took more intricate. It was as strange as I had expected it would be, seeing and unseeing, being in Ul Qoma. We went by narrow byways less frequented in Besźel (deserted there though bustling in Ul Qoma)" (135). This particular geographical topography, shared between both Besźel and Ul Qoma is characteristically empty in the former while heavily trafficked in the latter; nonetheless, Borlú still recognizes the space as a shared entity—one city reflects the other. This respective absence and presence of citizens is fundamentally due to the effects of historical integration, with the urban forms of the stable Ul Qoma influencing the movement of aesthetic variance and evolution. Besźel and its forsaken history figuratively paves the way for the increased segregation of its own people; Ul Qoma's expansion and revitalization in this particular zone consequently ostracizes the neighbouring city's population. Even the shared street space with its recognizable turns is altered in this partisan zone—feeling simultaneously refined and, perhaps, somewhat foreign. While Miéville presents Besźel and Ul Qoma as two, distinct cites—which might as well be worlds apart—theories on a precursor city to both Besźel and Ul Qoma persist throughout his novel, with the central debate centering around the idea of cleavage (87). Whether the two cities are remnant halves of an original metropolis, or are, in fact, uniting to form a singular, third city is consistently questioned in the novel, but never officially answered. Regardless, Besźel and Ul Qoma are uniformly accepted as two intertwined halves of a mysterious, imagined whole, be it already past or to be determined, and are only kept separate through the mutual act of unseeing which effectively establishes the existence of a liminal space within the recognizable confines of the divided cityscape. It is this liminal space which Borlú psychologically inhabits from the early moments of the novel as a man who obliviously forgets to unsee a woman in the other city (12), and which he comes to physically inhabit later after consciously and illegally breaching

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between the two cities.

The liminal space is one of transition between states, be they physical or psychical. In "Inbetweenness and Ambivalence" Bernhard Giesen focusses on a characteristic of space which transcends its divisibility into merely dichotomized zones, by expressing these zones as zones which invite liminality, or in-between-ness (61). In his investigation of this notion Giesen theorizes that:

> this inbetweenness [sic] is essential for the construction of culture. Reality
> itself provides no firm ground for neat classification. Therefore, in applying
> classifications to raw reality there will always be an unclassifiable remainder,
> and in specifying meaning there is no way to achieve absolute clarity and
> avoid a rest of fuzziness. Understanding can always fail, interpretation can be
> disrupted by surprises and resistance […] boundaries between inside and
> outside crossed by nomads and strangers. (61-62)

Giesen postulates that the division of a topography into classified zones necessitates the emergence of a liminal, in-between space. This space—a remainder territory belonging to none of the dichotomized zones—eludes classification and allegedly denies spatial unity. The cause of liminal space's emergence, for Giesen, arises from attempts to apply classifications to what he labels as "raw reality" (61), which is effectively the true, historically-determined state of the space as it actually exists. The way in which classifications are applied to this reality emerges out of the subjective privileging of urban environments—the labelling of a space as privileged or imagined—and the ways it alienates particular populations. In privileging a particular cityscape according to the forms and aesthetics of a single epistemological framework, those who dwell outside of the frame are subsequently segregated and left struggling for survival within a space which does not recognize them as imagined (does not privilege them) and results in the emergence of a liminal, *repressive*, in-between space which ultimately denies unitary urbanism using boundaries established through the segregation of certain groups. In this repressive model previously imagined communities and aesthetics are shifted out of their privilege into a non-privileged, unimagined state. Giesen views liminality of this repressive nature as a generative construct which gives structure to culture itself, in much

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the same way that borders give presence to spaces. Giesen argues that "[w]ithout fuzziness there would be neither need nor motive to understand and interpret. Without deviances and breaches there would be no awareness of rules. What was treated as a crisis of social order before […] emerges as the indispensable key to the communicative reproduction of cultural order" (62). For Giesen the existence of liminal territories in-between the classified portions of a space are precisely those which give these zones structure thereby establishing them as distinct locales. The imagined city operates according a ruleset established by the privileged class which, when broken, reifies itself by deterring future breaches through the promise of punishment—like Breach detaining those who cross illegally. This control and reification establishes a static aesthetical standard which resists the forms of the isolated, urban framework, thereby soliciting the members of the unimagined populace to breach into the privileged sphere by reinventing themselves according to their (perceived) oppressors' standards. This is precisely what Buric attempts in *The City & The City* by allegedly stealing business from Ul Qoma on Besźel's behalf (284)—he attempts to adopt the lifestyle of the more stable Ul Qoma in order to establish epistemological entitlement within his own city. This is extremely difficult, however, because attempting to reinvent oneself according to another's standard—attempting to reverse the repressive liminal process—comes at the cost of one's personal identity, and forsaking one's identity, or history—as is the case in Besźel—eliminates the temporal origin from which presence begins. Effectively, the dichotomy between spaces is reinforced through attempts to breach the divisive boundaries in place according to the standards of the imagined class, and such attempts by the unimagined to breach into this dominant sphere are met with resistance from those who are privileged according to the dominant frames in place.

The reformation of a non-privileged urban identity according to the dominant frame's standards—as Buric attempts to establish—ultimately fails, and unimagined lives remain static on the urban periphery because their epistemological situation lacks any spectacle by which the slow violence against them is measurable. Because acts of slow violence occur without any significant spectacular display the need arises for a new form of representation by which issues of this sort can be recognized. Nixon explores this need

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within his epilogue and suggests that the solution lays within writing. He explains that "[i]n volume and velocity, the new media have made available testimony on a previously unimaginable scale, testimony that can fortify the environmentalism of the poor and push back against the perpetrators of slow violence" (278). For Nixon, the onus of responsibility—the advocacy for the preservation of the liveable environment and the systematic normalization of entitlement—lies on the shoulders of writers; those passionate few who effect new worlds or solutions to their own real-world issues in effort to present a unified defence against overlooked injustices. In *The City & The City* Miéville presents an urban environment fractured along lines of history and nationality, where each of the two factions periodically unsee the other thereby rejecting their neighbours as unimagined subjects. The world presented by Miéville is ultimately a caricature of the urban environment (quite possibly London, his own home) where various communities are alienated from their homes according to boundaries established through various frames, but specifically those of national/urban identity. Without any spectacle signalling this alienation, Miéville—the writer—is responsible for presenting the general public with heart-felt pleas for action; "drawing to the surface—and infusing with emotional force—submerged stories of injustice and resource rebellions" (Nixon 280). Miéville's narrative ultimately unfolds according to the antagonist, Buric's emotional motivation to save his city which he perceives to be suffering in comparison to the more stable Ul Qoma. To save Besźel, Buric relies purely on shock value—on representing his own pain in the face of the rampant urban decay on the populations of both cities through widespread breaching. Buric's methodology ultimately proves to be flawed as the citizens refuse to consciously void the epistemological framework in place, however, this is precisely Miéville's point: urbanites adhere to the dominant ideological dogma to such a degree that they are effectively blinded by their very conviction. In writing *The City & The City* Miéville illustrates the complexity inherent in framing the dominant urban frameworks, namely: that not every attempt to do so will prove successful. Through writing about a particular ideological schematic and investigating the contours and idiosyncrasies of epistemological biases, narratives of slow violence shift issues of alienation away from the urban periphery toward a more central and active presence as various accounts of slow violence (various psychogeographic novels of this

sort) are compounded.

Through his writing Miéville illustrates that not all attempts at overthrowing a dominant ideological framework prove successful. Buric ultimately fails in his attempt because he does not attempt to ease his fellow citizens through a gradual transition toward a post-ideological framework—there is no in-between state through which subjects gradually transition. Miéville explores the idea of in-between-ness in a variety of ways, but the idea which is advanced beyond the others is his idea of Breach, which is described as by Yorj Syedr—an Ul Qoman member of the Oversight Committee—as an "*alien power* […] a shadow over which we have no control" (64). Breach, in Miéville's novel, refers to both an action and an institution, with the former referring to the failure to unsee one's neighbouring city, resulting in a breach between the socio-spatial boundaries. The latter iteration of the term refers to the shadowy organization tasked with maintaining these boundaries by detaining those who rupture them, and it is this latter form of Breach which Syedr refers to that ultimately embodies the tension between Besźel and Ul Qoma. Community tension between the two cities is exacerbated through the ideology of unseeing which privileges only the side doing the unseeing, as Besźel privileges Besź citizens only, and Ul Qoma its Ul Qoman's. Through each city's respective establishment of privilege and subsequent alienation of its neighbour, a dichotomy is necessarily formed wherein each city becomes, paradoxically, measurable only against the other and there can be no way to determine one city's existence without the other, non-privileged city: the boundary between dichotomized districts maintains a balance which is characteristically intractable—it simply *is*. Breach embodies this innate idiosyncrasy by literally policing the boundaries between Besźel and Ul Qoma, and apprehending those guilty of crossing them—the ones threatening the stability of the oppositional foundation, who are then never seen or heard from again in either of the two cities. Borlú himself, toward the later portions of the narrative, breaches the boundaries between the cities and is taken by an avatar of Breach *to* Breach: the mysterious void where all breachers are seemingly imprisoned. Upon arriving Borlú notes that "[t]he Breach was nothing. It is nothing. This is commonplace; this is simple stuff. The breach has no embassies, no army, no sights to see. The Breach has no currency. *If you commit it it will envelop you*" [emphasis mine]

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(248). Breach is not only an action and an organization, but also a place which exists solely as a result of the action: Borlú finds himself within the *space* of Breach because he commits the *act* of Breach. The space of Breach is present not as an inherent location, but as a locale solicited through the rules which enforce the socio-spatial boundaries in place; it is only because citizens consciously unsee breaches and breachers that the space of Breach is conjured into existence.

When walking within Breach for the first time under the guidance of an Avatar named Ashil, Borlú explains that "I lifted my foot in Ul Qoma, put it down again in Besźel, where breakfast was. Behind us was an Ul Qoman woman […] She glanced in surprise then consternation; then I saw her quickly unsee us as Ashil ordered food in Besźel" (253). Borlú and Ashil move through Besźel and Ul Qoma with no regard for the topographical borders in place, as if the two cities are a unified space. Crossing boundaries with disregard for the ideological systems in place liberates one from their hold by transcending the urbanist frames and using them to structure a new space. Indeed, as Ashil informs Borlú, "[i]n Breach. No one knows if they're seeing you or unseeing you. Don't creep. You're not in neither: you're in both" (254). Ashil, Borlú and the other denizens of Breach create a new space through the détournement of the socio-spatial boundaries in place; these boundaries are the point at which Ul Qoma and Besźel differentiate from one another, but they are also the point at which Breach negates the governing ideological framework—*being* unseen instead of unsee-*ing*—using it, instead, to unify the two cities by using the inter-urban practice of unseeing as a tool to establish a unified, trans-border milieu. By détourning the isolationist practice of unseeing—using it, instead, to unify rather than divide the space—Breach effectively transcends its liminal, in-between status on the urban periphery, and affixes itself as a standard of unitary urbanism as the borders between Besźel and Ul Qoma are systematically subverted, and the flow of presence is reversed, outward, toward and even beyond these borders. For the unseeing urbanites, the metropolitan presence begins at the borders and flows inward, literally following their own gaze, away from the neighbouring city, toward an idealized center. Breach, conversely, forgoes the inter-urban boundaries separating the adjoining urban architecture and aesthetics, allowing the cities to juxtapose in a unity of varied

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presence where every minute idiosyncrasy is awarded the capacity to shape the overall identity of the cityscape. Through this method of subversion, Breach relegates the borders themselves to the (literal) urban periphery surrounding the entire city proper, where the outward and unified flow of presence then terminates against the non-urban territories found beyond.

The Avatars of Breach and Mikel Buric, however, are not the only ones who attempt to unify the city, as David Bowden attempts his own unitary project. By the end of the narrative Bowden's involvement in Mahalia Geary's murder is revealed and he attempts to flee both cities simultaneously in a personal act of unitary urbanism which renders him effectively invisible. Upon spotting Bowden during his meandering escape, Borlú describes his gait as "[s]trange, impossible. Not properly describable, but to anyone used to the physical vernaculars of Besźel and Ul Qoma, it was rootless and untethered, purposeful and without a country. He did not drift but strode with pathological neutrality away from the cities' centres" (296). To precipitate his escape Bowden uses his knowledge of the cultural idiosyncrasies of both cities to his advantage, deploying a neutral style of movement which is neither Besź nor Ul Qoman, and when asked which city he is in, he loosely echoes Ashil's words and simply responds: "[e]ither" (303). In much the same way that Ashil, Borlú, and Breach inhabit a liminal urban space, so too does Bowden. Bowden's method fundamentally differs from that of Breach, however, according to respective approaches to historical metropolitan origins. Even though Breach exists in a unified, third space seemingly removed from both Besźel and Ul Qoma, the separation remains contingent on the intractability of the core urban framework; Breach relies on the continued unseeing of each city's populace in order to establish their unified milieu, détourning each city's cultural structures and juxtaposing their unique elements, resulting in a new framework which is then used against the original frames. An example of this is found in the very names of the Avatars and, upon entering Breach, Borlú is renamed Tye—a name which "like Ashil, was not traditional Besź nor Ul Qoman, could just plausibly be either" (253). Breach effectively maintains the borders between the cities by implementing an aesthetic that echoes both urban climates, which it then uses to establish its own space—Breach is a space still definitely within the psychogeographical

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limits of the urban environment. Conversely, Bowden forgoes all historical data and instead projects a wholly original, creative atmosphere which expels him from *all* epistemological systems. Bowden dispenses with all urban heritage, both Besź and Ul Qoman, and generates a new space for himself which denies unitary urbanism because it denies the presence of both cities with him existing, instead, within a realm which is external to the Besźel/Ul Qoma dichotomy, and not located between the cities at all.

What Bowden attempts is ultimately extreme isolation where not only select facets inherent of the non-privileged city are disposed of, but where all elements of the city are discarded in favour of a singular form in which he is the sole occupant. This new form is represented by Miéville in the name of the fabled city called Orciny, theorized by one character, Pall Drodin, as "the third city. It's between the other two. It's in the […] places that Besźel thinks are Ul Qoma's and Ul Qoma Besźel's. When the old commune split, it didn't split into two, it split into three. Orciny's the secret city. It runs things" (50). Evidently Drodin subscribes to a divergence-based model of cleavage, however, regardless of theoretical framework, the cites (now three in total) are uniformly accepted as mere segments of a larger entity with, according to Drodin—and indeed, Bowman— Orciny at its center. Orciny is regarded by most urban studies characters within Miéville's text, including Drodin himself, as a folk tale—a mere myth—with no substantial evidence to support its existence. Bowman, the author of lengthy text examining Orciny titled *Between the City and the City*, suffers from a tainted reputation: despite his in-depth research, there is no evidence of Orciny's existence which negatively impacts his validity as an academic (171). Seeking to repair his reputation, Bowman, with the help of Buric, his co-conspirator, hatches a plot to create Orciny, which results in the murder of Mahalia Geary—an act which violently embodies Bowden's desire to render the other cities and their citizens as unimagined. In *creating* Orciny, however, Bowman prohibits the long-theorized centrality of this mythic space; by rejecting the cultural idiosyncrasies of Orciny's neighbouring cities, Bowman establishes a space which emerges, literally, on the urban periphery, as opposed to the figurative center space it supposedly inhabits. Bowden's movement along the spaces disputed by both cities, when coupled with his unique, culture-denying movement style, creates psychic ambiguity as neither citizens of

Beśźel nor Ul Qoma know if they should be seeing him or not. Indeed, when confronting Bowden, Borlú's Besź partner, Lizbyet Corwi "drew her weapon, but […] would not look *directly* at Bowden, just in case he was not in Besźel" [emphasis mine] (296). During the narrative's climax Corwi, an officer not inside Breach, watches the mysterious Bowden intently, but not directly, in a moment which simultaneously denies unification and segregation. Due to the ambiguity of Bowden's presence, and the lack of evidence signalling an urban legacy, Bowden exists as an anomaly relegated to the periphery of the urbanite's vision where he remains never to been fully seen nor unseen. Ultimately, there is no attempt at détournement, nor any attempt at a subsequent synthesis of base elements—there is only complete negation and subsequent self-relegation to a strange, external realm which exists outside of the shared urban system, through the denial of urban tradition resulting in the denial of unitary urbanism.

Breach is a liminal space, but it is a liminal space, unlike Bowden's crafted Orciny, in which unitary urbanism—albeit in a slightly altered form—is achieved. By the close of the novel, Ashil informs Borlú that once one finds himself within Breach, he can never return to his normal, monotonous urban experience (310). Borlú then acknowledges this inescapable fact in a short reverie, stating "I imagined myself in Besźel now, unseeing Ul Qoma of the crosshatched terrain. Living in half of the space. Unseeing all the people and the architecture and vehicles and the everything in and among which I had lived. I could pretend, perhaps, at best" (310). After living within both spaces as a unified singularity—within Breach—Borlú finds himself incapable of returning to his previous life, living amidst two cities, but always unseeing one of them. Evidently, Borlú has been introduced to a new urban milieu from which there is no return—these particular, consolidated sights can never be unseen. By the close of Miéville's novel, despite being a unified space, Breach continues to exist within a liminal territory, and the boundaries between Besźel and Ul Qoma persist. These particular circumstances facilitate the singular conclusion that the unity of a space is contingent upon the tenacity of the boundaries dividing districts, and that the space is only unified for the individual or a select few, for without the prevalence of the unseeing Besź and Ul Qomans, there can be no united Breach. The reverse, consequently, is also true as "the two cities need the Breach. And without the

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cities' integrity, what is Breach?" (68). Evidently, the existence of both the twin cities and Breach is contingent on the functions of the other: Breach requires the urbanites to unsee them and the cities rely on Breach to police their boundaries. The co-existence of these two spaces—the liminal and the real—is volatile, and when one side of this dichotomy inevitably disappears, so too, will the other. For unitary urbanism to be achieved ultimately requires that Breach emerge as the dominant urban frame to properly ensure that the unification process is properly completed through methods of détournement and gradual progression. Only Breach in Miéville's novel is reusing elements of each city within their own, unique, cultural forms, and it is this practice which provides Breach and Borlú with psychogeographic variety and an escape from monotony. Through analysing Miéville's novel, it is apparent that the unification of the urban environment is a multistep process with a required detour through a liminal space. Buric's violent attempt at privileging Besźel fails because violence ultimately begets fear which reinforces the nationalist boundaries; attempting to assert geographical presence by effectively terrorizing the imagined environment does not promote the unimagined space's privilege, but rather hinders it. Similarly, attempting to establish privilege by forsaking all frames in favour of a wholly new ideological system—as Bowden does—fails because without any historical origin there can be no presence. Liminal progression is the key to psychogeographic harmony and despite the original failure of the Situationist project, unitary urbanism finds partial success in the twenty-first century through these liminal zones. Of course, the city is not recreated as a series of predetermined emotional districts as outlined by Debord and his comrades, but the space instead emerges as one in which individual citizens are stimulated in a variety of ways and are allowed to fully harmonize with the complete environment thereby undergoing unique psychogeographic transformations and finally seeing the space as a whole. This process, however, comes with the caveat that the dominant systems will remain in place in order for Breach to have its own space at all, meaning that unity between the urbanite and the metropolis is, evidently, not possible across the city as a whole, but small communities at most.

Chapter 2: Collecting a Better City in *Neverwhere*

Unitary urbanism achieves strength and success upon an individual's conscious entry (their willing acceptance) into a liminal zone—one which is definitively in-between two separate states—but what happens when there is no conscious decision involved in the passage between states? What happens when one is *forced* from his or her sociological situation and into the urban periphery? This is precisely what is explored within Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* through protagonist Richard Mayhew. At the outset of the novel Richard inhabits the privileged class—entitled to a particular lifestyle according to the dominant (and specifically exclusionary) ideological schematics of modernity and progress in place—and by the end of the narrative, he finds himself living among aesthetics, sensibilities, and people cast aside by the very framework he used to abide by.

Richard is not a typical member of the imagined community, possessing an uncharacteristic amount of whimsy and discomfort in his position, but nonetheless, his transition from a privileged to a non-privileged states is not without struggle. Richard consistently resists his integration into the unified milieu of London Below: the city of forgotten elements. Richard develops a liminal psychology as he is ejected from his entitled status, and rejects his new life on the urban periphery—he is neither of London Above nor London Below, but is also of them both. Despite his resistance, Richard eventually accepts his newfound position within London Below as, like Borlú in *The City & The City*, he is introduced to a unified image of the city which he cannot unsee—one which is ultimately free from the implicit anxieties which plague his privileged existence. London Below is a collection of forgotten aesthetics, sensibilities, spaces, and people all removed from their original contexts and timeframes and therefore allowed to reconfigure themselves according to a new ambience. This collection of materials is unconsciously created by the ruling epistemological frame of modernism which systematically ejects more and more elements and communities from the urban space in favour of a refined environment which benefits a specific lifestyle. The modern/contemporary biases eliminate aesthetics and sensibilities from the environment and consequently creates a new space whereby all disposed aesthetics reassemble and necessarily exclude their

unconscious collector from the newly formed milieu. The resulting space in London Above is thus a monotonous metropolis which lacks any and all variety in lifestyle as the surviving urbanites are trapped within the staleness—and anxiety—of their own feedback loop. Through persistent defeat at the hand of the governing frame, however, the inhabitants of the urban periphery are able to solicit a rebellion of sorts by exposing citizens of the privileged class, like Richard, to the unity inherent to London Below's construction. As Richard grows increasingly familiar with the atypical operations of the lower city, he transitions out of his liminal state-of-mind and resolves himself to his new life in the unified urban sphere of London Below. It is only by passing through the liminal realm that Richard is able to undergo a metamorphosis of sorts, and is then allowed to experience the playful ambience of the urban environment where his initial discomfort in his privileged position is finally alleviated.

2.1   Toward Unity Through Exclusionary Collecting

In his text *The Arcades Project* Walter Benjamin ruminates on the concept of the collection and the act of collecting; he explains that:

> [w]hat is decisive in collecting is that the object is detached from all its original functions in order to enter into the closest conceivable relation to things of the same kind. This relation is the diametric opposite of any utility, and falls into the peculiar category of completeness. What is this "completeness"? It is a grand attempt to overcome the wholly irrational character of the object's mere presence at hand through its integration into a new, expressly devised historical system: the collection. (204-205)

Benjamin explains that collecting is a method of constructing a particular milieu through the free association of objects not bound to a particular system of reference. By collecting, an object is ultimately removed from its original context—stripped of all prior meanings and functions—and aligned within a new framework. Collecting, at its core, is analogous to the Situationist's détournement, with the recycling of a particular aesthetic or element (or object) following from a negation which necessarily precedes the reuse ("Détournement as Negation and Prelude" 67). By extracting a particular object from its

original, historical context it can be juxtaposed with other, similarly reduced objects, to form a new system functioning under a unified aesthetic. This new system, the collection, does not possess any intrinsic use value outside of the system itself; it cannot be measured against another framework because the value of the collection is only beheld by the collector. The collection itself only holds value for that which it binds and for the collector, and is not influenced by anyone or anything left outside of the newly constructed system. Collection is a means of unity whereby the collected objects establish the nearest conceivable milieu through dissociation and reuse, however, as a conscious means of unitary urbanism, this process ultimately fails. Unitary urbanism relies on the acknowledgment of "no boundaries; it aims to form an integrated milieu in which separations such as work/leisure or public/private will finally be dissolved" (Debord 69). In order for the cityscape to become properly united, certain boundaries—specifically the boundaries between work and leisure, and the privileged and non-privileged communities—must be effaced. While the collection does allow boundaries between previously opposed objects or aesthetics to dissolve, the resulting compilation effects a new, unavoidable boundary: the boundary between collector and the collection itself.

Benjamin remarks, quite simply, that "the most deeply hidden motive of the person who collects can be described this way: he takes up the struggle against dispersion. Right from the start, the great collector is struck by the confusion, by the scatter, in which the things of the world are found" (211). Benjamin explains that the collector is ultimately motivated by the desire to order the world around him according to some logical principle he himself devises—the collection is ordered according to the collector's understanding of the scattered objects and aesthetics. Because the collection is organized according to the logic of the collector, it is the collector alone who possesses power over the compilation, and it is only he who attains true knowledge over the collection's idiosyncrasies. Like an omniscient author of a narrative, the collector is the only one who effects the power of the collection and can subsequently learn from this power; it is he who gives the collection presence and continually shapes this presence. As the author of the collection, the collector necessarily exists outside of his compilation, and it is here wherein lies the paradox: as long as the enforcer of the framework (the collector)

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manipulates the city (the collection), the city will never achieve unity because the collector will always remain outside of the collection—one piece of the unified city will always be contingently excluded. There can be no collection without the collector and the collector cannot be part of his own collection because to shift into the realm of the collected is to renounce authority over the collection, and to renounce authority over the collection, assuming it is not sustained by another, is to dissolve the collection itself—unity cannot be all-inclusive. There can seemingly be no collection without an external collector establishing and maintaining the compilation's aesthetical milieu—its presence. This reliance on the collector, however, is challenged by Gaiman through his use of *unconscious* collection which names no titular collector; the collection of London *Below* emerges contingently rather than directly.

London Below in Gaiman's *Neverwhere* is a city based upon the juxtaposition of forgotten spaces—it is a collection of abolished architectures, aesthetics, and sensibilities. In a dream sequence of a young girl named Door (one of the protagonists) she recalls her childhood home:

> *[t]he swimming pool was an indoor Victorian structure, constructed of marble and cast iron. Her father had found it when he was younger, abandoned and about to be demolished, and he had woven it into the fabric of the House Without Doors. Perhaps in the world outside, in London Above, the room had long been destroyed and forgotten. Door had no idea where any of the rooms of her house were, physically. Her grandfather had constructed the house, taking a room from here, a room from there, all through London, discrete and doorless; her father had added to it.* (87-88)

Door's recollection of her childhood home illustrates the irregular composition of London Below—it borrows pieces from various architectural and aesthetic forms and unites them within a new spatio-temporal framework. Indeed, the entirety of London Below functions according to this atemporality with, for example, some Roman soldiers still camped out by the Kilburn River (97). The pieces which constitute the home, and London Below, originate from a multitude of different eras, and are woven into the very fabric of the space which is unfixed in time. All the sensibilities which are either occluded by

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contemporary aesthetics or outright forgotten by London Above become detached from that urban climate and disappear into the forgotten sphere of London Below where it propagates and consequently fuses into a new, unified milieu. This collection, unlike London Above which is assimilated according to the ideologically entitled bloc, is created without a singular entity inhabiting the role of collector—the architecture, aesthetics, and dwellers of the space are allowed to unify according to a shared (un)consciousness. Because the various physical and psychical characteristics of London Below are ostracised from London Above, they are removed from their original functions and allowed to unify within a new framework. This new framework, however, is uniquely authorless as it does not necessarily depend on the conscious selection and reinterpretation of objects that traditionally characterizes the collection. London Below is a collection which emerges from imaginative negligence toward certain sensibilities—the collector (the entitled bloc) ignores and forgets certain historical articles of the urban environment which consequently removes them from their foundations and allows them to enter into a new relation with other, similarly neglected elements. This new relation is precisely that which untethers these particular urban aesthetics: the act of being forgotten. By being forgotten, the numerous antiquated characteristics of the cityscape—be they physical or psychical—become entwined within a varied framework which invites new and fantastic combinations and interactions. All forgotten properties of the metropolis are allowed to freely associate with each other as there are no isolationist epistemologies present within the newly founded territory; the denial of entitlement by those privileged by the state results in the *consequential* creation of this unimagined space on the urban periphery, but it is not present *within* it.

Through isolationist ideologies which privilege certain groups over others as imagined, cities such as Gaiman's London Above neglect certain psychogeographical ambiences which then slip through the cracks, both spatial and psychic, winding up in the urban periphery alongside the non-privileged citizens, where they remain forgotten by the privileged. After interacting with—and saving—a girl named Door, and a few other inhabitants of London Below, the ideologically privileged Richard soon finds himself in the city of the forgotten and discovers, through his interaction with co-worker Garry, that

it is as if he no longer exists to the dwellers of London Above (66-65) and, when asking a young girl named Anaesthesia about this, she simply replies "'[t]hat's 'cos you don't'" (93). Richard, like the historical aesthetics, urban structures, and unimagined communities before him, slips through the cracks of London Above and winds up within the urban periphery, where he is stripped entirely of his capacity to effect his presence. Because Richard can no longer present himself in London Above—because his identity is revoked—he is effectively denied his own existence; all origins which tether him to existence within the urban sphere, both spatial and temporal, are voided during his descent. While his identity is effectively expunged and he is ejected from London Above Richard, and the inhabitants of London Below, are free to associate with the similarly expelled urban detritus and form a new, unified milieu of variety in the spaces beneath and often in-between London proper.

Upon entering London Below, Richard develops a liminal mindset as he is erased from the collective consciousness of the privileged class and resists his integration into a new urban system—Richard is ejected from one state and refuses to accept the other, thereby re-imagining himself within the paradoxical neither/both middle space. After his initial exposure to the lower London, Richard returns to his office to find that it is completely empty and, when asking his co-worker, Garry, for an explanation, Garry simply "looked around, as if he had heard something. He flicked the keyboard, activating a screensaver of dancing hippopotami, then he shook his head as if to clear it, picked up the telephone, and began to dial" (65-66). Garry, like Richard before his transition, represents the ideologically privileged class and he is unable to perceive the occupants of the lower, unimagined London because the existence of this space depends on Garry's inattention. Richard's existence is completely erased in London Above—both physically and psychically—through the mutual forgetting practiced by the privileged class, to the point that he is unrecognized even when he is physically obstructive. Richard resists his expulsion from his former society and responds to Garry's obliviousness by forcefully ending his phone-call and shouting at him, which barely gets his attention, eliciting an unknowing "[c]an I help you?" (66). Garry's ability to perceive his former colleague, only after inexcusable interruption, but his inability to realize his former friend's true identity,

illustrates both his function in creating, and his fixity outside of the contingent space of London Below. Garry and the privileged urbanites facilitate the emergence of the lower city through obliviousness to certain objects, aesthetics, and communities which are allowed to dissociate from their original contexts and create a unified, albeit unprecedented milieu which cannot be accurately perceived by the ruling bloc because, like the urbanites of Besźel and Ul Qoma, the privileged communities unsee their unimaginable rivals. While the privileged milieu of London Above (like the two cities in *The City & The City*) is only observable because it *is not* the ostracised environment of London Below, due to the dissociative nature of forgetting, Garry and his compatriots are unable to recognize London Below—even when contact between the worlds is established. Garry is eventually able to perceive Richard, but he cannot grasp his friend's true identity because it has been expunged from collective memory. Richard, unfixed, is allowed to evolve by freely juxtaposing with fellow unimagined urbanites and forms within a realm which Garry is contingently unable to inhabit as an unconscious collector of the secondary environment—as the one who facilitates London Below's emergence.

2.2   Inviting Variety and the Cost of Privilege

Passage into to the city of London Below occurs only through the development of a liminal state of mind in which one is solicited to reflect on society itself and re-imagine it. As Turner explains in *The Forest of Symbols*:

> [d]uring the liminal period, neophytes are alternately forced and encouraged
> to think about their society, their cosmos, and the powers that generate and
> sustain them. Liminality may partly be described as a stage of reflection. In it
> those ideas, sentiments, and facts that had been hitherto for the neophytes
> bound up in conflagrations and accepted unthinkingly are, as it were, resolved
> into their constituents. (105)

While exposed to the moments of liminality in-between two states subjects are solicited to reflect on their own sociological situation and the powers that control them. By reflecting on these matters one is able to reconcile certain characteristics of society while rejecting others—the subject is allowed to act autonomously, no longer bound by the dominant

control of the state. During one's rejection from the entitled London Above, the exiled urbanite is removed from his or her socio-spatial situation and relegated to the urban periphery alongside similarly rejected aesthetics, sensibilities, and even other citizens, which are then used to form a new milieu which is informed by the isolationist society— London Below is constructed as a commentary against the ordering of London Above. By passing through a liminal space of reflection the inhabitants of London Below—and, eventually, Richard himself—are able to détourn the forgotten elements of the forgetful city above and effect a new, unified space which differs in operation as well as in appearance. With reflection within and transition through an unfixed liminal framework, London Below is able achieve an unconscious unity through the consistent passage through the same liminal field—a process which is unconscious because its collector, those benefitting from the dominant epistemology, remains forever fixed within the real realm of London Above. Passing through the same liminal space allows the forgotten aesthetics and sensibilities of London Above to find a new home within the similarly forgotten topography of the city proper located literally below the metropolis—a home which is discovered by those forced to occupy the space or by those who are looking for it.

Despite existing within the privileged sphere, Richard is curiously and characteristically distinct from his fellow co-workers and indeed, from his fiancée. Richard's distinction is primarily evident in his use of troll dolls as office decorations—the first of which he had found "on the street outside the office and, in a vague and pretty vain attempt at injecting a little personality into his working world, he had placed it on his computer monitor" (Gaiman 13). Evidently, Richard's distinction resides in his capacity toward détournement and collecting as he negates the worthless, junk-aspect of the doll and then reuses it as a decoration, thereby injecting his static office milieu with an element of ambient variety. Gaiman's protagonist is predisposed against monotony—choosing, instead, to infuse a degree of whimsical variety into his environment—thus allowing him to more readily perceive London Below because he is, essentially, looking for it. Richard's first exposure to London Below is his introduction to Door, his soon-to-be-companion, who collapses on the street in front of him and Jessica (25). Upon reaching Door "Jessica stepped over the

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crumpled form. Richard hesitated […] He could not believe she was simply *ignoring the figure at their feet*" [emphasis mine] (25). While both Richard and Jessica interact with Door, it is only the former who notices her presence with the latter stepping over her as if she were not there. London Below and all its unimagined residents exist as a result of collective forgetting by the entitled class in favour of a stable foundation upon which an entitled leviathan may be formed. Jessica embodies the dominant epistemology's willful segregation of the unimagined communities as she literally steps over Door, continuing her journey to meet with her wealthy boss, Mister Stockton, for a dinner reservation (25). Jessica is preoccupied with upholding the ideologically sponsored order of her city while Richard, conversely, notices Door immediately because he is, to reiterate, looking for her, or rather, what she represents: an alternative to the monotonous milieu of London Above. It is during the interaction with Door that Jessica's and Richard's paths diverge, with the former continuing her day-in, day-out cycle of epistemologically-sanctioned functions, while the latter realizes his adventurous potential in the world Below.

Richard's penchant against monotony is present from the very beginning of his story where he describes his home as:

> a city in which the very old and the awkwardly new jostled each other, not uncomfortably, but without respect; a city of shops and offices and restaurants and homes, of parks and churches, of ignored monuments and remarkably unpalatial [sic] palaces; a city of hundreds of districts with […] oddly distinct identities; a noisy, dirty, cheerful, troubled city. (9)

Richard picks out the divisive results of the dominant epistemology, remarking on how the overall landscape—the shops, restaurants, galleries, and the like—mingle with the fixed aesthetics of the environment. Richard describes this interaction as one which is not necessarily bad, but which lacks respect, hinting toward the dubious blatancy present within certain contemporary methods of urbanism which privilege a certain lifestyle over other, historically located forms. The London described by Richard is one which eludes unity through its attempt at a standard combining of aesthetics—there is no negation present in the process. The language used by Richard during his description of London— the commentaries on spatial ignorance and distinction between districts—suggests that

those entitled in the London of *Neverwhere* are not preoccupied with an urban fusion of any kind, be it sociological or historical, and are not preoccupied with accommodating those deemed non-privileged by the ruling framework. In order for a life to be privileged it must be imagined by, and subsequently sustained through, the ideological frameworks in place. Because certain lives and communities are regarded as non-privileged they are ignored during urban development. Evidently, the dominant modernist frames do not promote the normalization of entitlement through unity within the urban environment, but instead remain rigid against the lives it alienates. The London of *Neverwhere* is a city which is contingently constructed through the persistent isolation of urban forms and communities which do not adhere to the modern frames; the city is developed through persistent measurement against the groups which it systematically alienates. Privilege, therefore, becomes a balance by which the city is measured, with those possessing ideologically-affixed entitlement attaining stability—be it political, racial, or otherwise— thereby establishing a narrow urban milieu which lacks variety. Within this newly mutated city, however, the rejected citizens and urban sensibilities continue their trajectory of displacement, and are further relegated to the urban periphery.

Richard continues to ruminate on London's evolution as a city, explaining that over the course of a couple thousand years the city had expanded and absorbed much of the surrounding territories, turning them all into extensions of itself, leaving nothing but their names behind as evidence of their previous existence (10-11). Richard notes that as it expanded, "London grew into something huge and contradictory. It was a good place, and a fine city, but there is a price to be paid for all good places, *and a price that all good places have to pay*" [emphasis mine] (11). London's widespread expansion, and its transformation into a 'good place,' results in the simultaneous, increased, division between those who benefit from the modern epistemology and those who do not, as well as decreased cultural resonance with the historical city. There is a price to pay and a price which gets paid in this new urban paradigm, and the former is paid by the entitled urbanites while the latter is paid by the city itself. London is transformed into a 'good place' as a result of mutated epistemological dogma—an isolationist system which privileges only those who fall on the beneficial side of various subjective boundaries like

class, race, and gender. Richard himself illustrates this during a trip to one of the various museums, while on a date with his then-fiancée, Jessica; Richard jokingly tells her "'[h]ere's your tea, and your éclair […] It would have cost less to buy you one of those Tintorettos" (11). Richard represents the privileged class in London Above—he is a man who can afford, not only to attend high-art exhibits, but a man who can afford expensive products (albeit, unhappily). This is further suggested a few pages later where it is revealed that Richard works with a firm, dealing with corporate accounts (13). Evidently, Richard is financially stable and able to afford the costs of living a particular lifestyle within a playground-city for the economically privileged which systematically alienates its own population, aesthetics, and, indeed, its own history in order to promote itself as a space for privileged citizens. While urbanites like Richard are privileged enough to be able to pay the price and live in a 'good place,' the place itself pays for its economic prosperity with its own history. Indeed, emerging as a restrictive metropolis according to dominant schematics is contingent upon an urban environment's capacity to create itself anew—exchanging historically arranged ensembles, aesthetics, and communities in favour of a stable system, with the ensembles fading into the urban periphery and out of the consciousness of imagined London.

2.3   Anxiety and the Impasse

The collective forgetting of history and the unimagined forms by the entitled class promotes an urban milieu which, according to Constant, deepens the problem of urbanism by denying passage between aesthetics. He explains that:

> [t]he crisis of urbanism is worsening. The layout of neighborhoods, old and
> new, conflicts with established patterns of behaviour and even more with the
> new ways of life that we are seeking. The result is a dismal and sterile
> ambience in our surroundings. In the older neighborhoods, the streets have
> degenerated into freeways and leisure activities are becoming commercialized
> and corrupted by tourism. Social relations become impossible. The newly-
> built neighborhoods have only two all-pervasive themes: automobile traffic
> and household comfort—an impoverished expression of bourgeois

contentment, lacking any sense of play. (71)

Constant argues that the layout of the urban environment conflicts with the established milieu resulting in a sterility of the space; a preoccupation with a single ambience (in his example: capitalism and commercialization) creates an environment which exists merely to privilege one particular urban experience over all others. This single, stable milieu is established and continually re-established through increasing negligence to historical forms—people like Richard who potentially threaten the security of the city above are banished from the collective consciousness of the ideological schematic (become unimagined in the process) in order to eliminate the danger of a breach between the Above and the Below. Modelling the urban environment according to frameworks of modernity and progress which only benefit select communities solicits the emergence and reinforcement of the isolationist city as if it were a neurological pathway within the collective consciousness of the gentrifying bloc. Indeed, as Pascal J. Thomas suggests in "Avenues of Power: Cities as the Mindscapes of Politics," "[c]ities, like thought, are antientropic [sic], getting more and more complex, through the feedback loop between their populations and their structures. The challenge for them (and for those who dream them) is to steer away from stultification, to preserve their complexity in space and their unpredictability in time" (182). Cities, according to Thomas's model, are not random in their construction and evolve in complexity with each new iteration. These iterations emerge from the continual slow violence against ideologically excluded communities and forms which affects the epistemologically entitled milieu through measurable difference—the stable, attractive isolationist city *is* characteristically stable and attractive because it *is not* the non-privileged city of the urban periphery. The challenge present within the isolationist city, by Thomas's diagnosis, is to effect its complexity as well as unpredictability. Because the metropolis evolves according to the systematic elimination of antiquated forms, complexity and unpredictability approaches nonexistence as the pattern of segregation, differentiation, and further segregation becomes more apparent. Complexity and unpredictability elude the isolationist city's evolutionary cycle, and the space is instead required to rely on the use of anxiety *as a means of reinforcement*—like the anxiety implicit in Miéville's text which promises punishment for those who resist the state-sponsored dogma.

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Gaiman's London Above is an isolationist space which only satisfies the specific needs of those privileged according to the epistemological frames in place—such as the business class which Richard initially inhabits. Despite benefitting him, Richard—like Borlú in the opening moments of Miéille's *The City & The City*—is uniquely attuned to the boundaries established through the epistemological biases as represented through his use of the discarded troll dolls as office decoration (13). Richard experiences unconscious anxiety within his urban situation and attempts to détourn certain forms and aesthetics which are rejected by the ideologies in place in favour of a varied ambience. Ultimately, the situation in which Richard finds himself is theorized by Lauren Berlant in *Cruel Optimism* as an impasse—she defines this term as:

> a holding station that doesn't hold securely but opens out into anxiety, that dogpaddling around a space whose contours remain obscure. An impasse is decompositional—in the unbound temporality of the stretch of time, it marks delay that demands activity. The activity can produce impacts and events, but one does not know where they are leading. That delay enables us to develop gestures of composure, of mannerly transaction, of being-with in the world as well as of rejection, refusal, detachment, psychosis, and all kinds of radical negation. (199)

The impasse represents an anxious in-between state in which the static citizen—one who is subjected to the monotonous (albeit preferable) status as an imagined subject—experiences disquiet within his or her space. Through their anxiety, subjects like Richard are solicited to act, which he does when he decorates his office with troll dolls (13), and effect a degree of variety into their urban situation which is otherwise nonexistent. By injecting a static environment with varied ambiences in this way and resisting the ideological schematics in place, urbanites like Richard enter into a liminal sphere in which their psychology is disrupted thereby facilitating further and more readily available experiences with aesthetics that are excluded by the progressive framework in place. Berlant explains that such action can result in unexpected consequences, and in Richard's case, his desire to extract himself from the monotony of his daily life subsequently allows him to enter London Below: the unimagined realm which is relegated to the urban

periphery by the modern city. Richard's anxiety results in his resistance of the slow violence forms in place which necessarily divide and exclude various realms of existence from one another (like the exclusion of troll dolls in a professional setting), and allows him to explore further varied ambiences in London Below because the action of resisting the frames which dominate his life opens his mind to alternative ambiences which are excluded by his environment—something which cannot occur without acting *against* the dominant, modern framework.

Richard's liberating reaction to his anxiety, however, is not the only possibility—anxiety does not necessarily lead to resistance and escape from the dominant epistemology. London (Above) maintains stability by propagating a staleness of the urban ambience in a process which, while benefiting the privileged class, invites anxiety and the impasse. This is evidenced in *Neverwhere* first through Richard who extracts himself from his urban situation, but also through Jessica—now Richard's *former* fiancée—who later experiences great anxiety during an exhibition at a museum. Jessica differs from Richard, however, as she maintains her position within the ruling framework by reacting *within* its boundaries. Gaiman's narrator explains that:

> Jessica was under a little pressure. She was worried, and nervous, and jittery. She had catalogued the collection, arranged with the British Museum to host the exhibition, organized the Restoration of the Prime Exhibit, assisted in hanging and exhibiting the collection, and had put together the list of invitees to the Fabulous Launch […] Even now, at the last minute, there were so many things that could go wrong […] Jessica was wearing a green silk dress, an off-the-shoulder general marshalling her troops, stoically pretending that Mr. Stockton was not half an hour late. (193-194)

Jessica is in charge of the organization and success of museum events and this one in particular is careening toward disaster, but she maintains a stable personage—that of someone not pervaded by anxiety. While Jessica's job presents her with an impasse, she chooses not to react in the same way as Richard, but rather, to endure the anxiety and maintain her position within her epistemologically-determined position. Jessica denies herself access to any varied ambiences or sensibilities, refusing to shift out of the

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monotonous milieu of the city above, and is unable to expand her own psychological ability through the construction of new and exciting situations. Jessica's job and her actions within it ultimately stifle her enjoyment of the environment she is in; she is in a museum, surrounded by historical and cultural artifacts—an agglomeration of varied aesthetics, histories, and sensibilities—and yet, her mind is solely focussed on the perfection of her duties and maintaining the modern framework which conditions her lifestyle. Jessica's reluctance to resist her urban situation ultimately results in the reinforcement of the privileged city and subsequent relegation of non-privileged forms to the urban periphery—the same anxiety which ultimately liberates Richard from his monotonous situation also tethers Jessica to her own as she withstands the stresses of her job, because not doing so could result in her termination as an employee and a member of the privileged community. Constant suggests that "[t]o meet the need to rapidly construct entire cities, cemeteries of reinforced concrete are being built in which masses of the population are condemned to die of boredom […] We demand adventure" (71). Cities, by Constant's diagnosis, are constructed much too quickly, to the point that they more resemble the final resting place of liveliness rather than the rebellion against monotony they can and should be. By relegating certain communities and aesthetical forms to the urban periphery London transforms into a labyrinthine crypt where the dweller of the space is unable to escape from the lull and anxieties of the repetitive workday. Richard detects this monotony and, for this reason, is susceptible to the lure of London Below and therefore capable of that which the dominant framework of London Above aims to eliminate: breaching between the ideologically-determined and freed environments.

In *Cruel Optimism* Berlant examines the dichotomy between these spaces through examinations of the films of Laurent Cantet—specifically *Human Resources* (1999) and *Time Out* (2001). In her analysis of the former, Berlant isolates a moment in which the father character informs the protagonist of the differences between social life and having a career—suggesting that there is a specific expectation of the employee in the workplace situation who must satisfy their employer (206). Berlant suggests that "[t]he bottom line here is that labor is not a casual space, and that to be a good worker is to be an anxious one" (206). Operating within a professional environment, as opposed to a more fluid

private sphere, by Berlant's diagnosis, requires a certain level of anxiety which improves the quality of labour. Jessica, therefore, is considered a model employee according to this ideology and uses her anxiety to perfect her labour while resisting any temptation presented through her exposure to the impasse. Richard, conversely, is rejected from his employment (as well as his position of privilege) as he is evidently not properly motivated by the anxiety imposed on him by the ideological framework of his workplace. Indeed, while still employed, "there was the Wandsworth Report, which was overdue and taking up most of his head. Richard checked another row of figures; then he noticed that page 17 had vanished and he set it up to print again" (14). Aside from his tendency to introduce atypical aesthetical forms into his workspace Richard is simply not a motivated employee, allowing assignments to extend beyond their due dates and even misplacing pertinent documents. This situates Richard outside of the corporate ethos in which employees are expected to behave according to pre-determined principles and isolates him from the lifestyle established by the dominant, workplace framework. As Berlant explains, "the twentieth century witnessed the expansion of corporate demands that workers line up emotionally with workplace norms along with producing value adequately: responsibility and reciprocity came to require the performance of emotional compliance" (217-218). Berlant identifies the narrowing variety in ambience of the workplace with the increasingly restrictive frameworks imposed by employers, suggesting that employees influenced by these schematics are solicited to remake themselves according to workplace norms. Aligning oneself within such a dominant ideological situation ultimately results in conditioning through fear where the employees dare not diverge from the performative and emotional functions expected of one in their position. Jessica illustrates this unconscious worry through her refusal to succumb to the anxiety of her job, and ultimately refuses to enter into the liminal space known as the impasse. Conversely, Richard is not so simply manipulated, instead desiring that which can only be found through nullifying his status as a static, albeit entitled subject: the diametric opposite of monotony and utility, and the ability to enter a new, complete collective.

2.4   Toward Collective Harmony and Freedom from Anxiety

In *The Arcades Project* Benjamin expresses the collection in terms of a completeness which is the opposite of any utility and states that "for the true collector, every single thing in this system becomes an encyclopedia of all knowledge of the epoch, the landscape, the industry, and the owner from which it comes" (204-205). In the collection each object or aesthetic functions to reinforce the overall milieu of the system; each piece of the puzzle equally shares the same burden and juxtaposes to form a comprehensive image. Furthermore, the collection reflects the collector, thereby effecting his power—his purpose—by granting him knowledge over the space of the collection itself. For a collector the collected objects culminate as an historical narrative of urban life which invariably reflects the space itself, thereby granting the collector knowledge over the environment. The issue with the isolationist city of the privileged and imagined forms is that it is essentially the inversion of a collection—effecting itself through exclusions and eliminations of various elements until all that remains is a monotonous city: a shell of the total and variable urban experience which is preoccupied only with specific epistemological biases. The monotonous city is ultimately barren and lifeless without any nuance in aesthetics, however, rather than détourning the existing historical, physical, and psychical properties of the city—reducing these properties to their basest elements and reusing the most stable to effect a new, playful ambience—the isolationist framework of modernity in place, instead, promotes the restriction of ambient variety in benefit to the privileged class. This privileging of one aesthetical form over all others, unlike the collection which is the "diametric opposite of any utility" (Benjamin 204), grants dominance of the space to the entitled class through the creation of an ideological feedback loop: forms which are determined as privileged are maintained and establish certain communities as imagined, who further refine the entitled core, and the cycle repeats. The monotonous city, evidently, differs from the collection in its function, with the latter granting power and knowledge through juxtaposition to the possessive master while the former allows a master (the epistemological frame) to maintain dominance over a demographic—the flow of power is inverted.

As a result of the reversal in power the monotonous city begins its presence through borders which are ultimately established and maintained by the modern dogma and privileged classes respectively, and the inferior unimagined class and banished aesthetics of the old city are relegated to the bordering space of the urban periphery where they collectively ferment in anticipation of an urban revolution. Indeed, by Berlant's account, "to be a good subject of neoliberal labour, one has to emit desire and identification with the affective ties of collegiality to make networks of shared obligation seem more grounded and permanent than the corporation will support structurally" (218). Vindication of the dominant ideological structure in the workplace depends on the shared experience of the workforce—on, effectively, the mutual anxiety which creates a shared tension between all employees as a singularity, and the employer. The shared anxiety of the employees results in collegiality in which interpersonal ties are created based on common, ideologically-determined goals; essentially, a united milieu from which there is no escape as a privileged subject is established through domination and the resulting anxiety. The Situationists contest this notion that the only way out of a prevailing epistemology is through, and instead, insist that a revolution of sorts against alienation is inevitable. The privileged civilization dominates urban geography, however, as Debord notes in "Perspectives for Conscious Changes in Everyday Life":

> it continues to produce its own enemies everywhere. The next rise of the revolutionary movement, *radicalized by the lessons of past defeats* and with a program enriched in proportion to the practical potentials of modern society
> [...] this next attempt at a total contestation of capitalism will know how to invent and propose a different use of everyday life, and will immediately base itself on new everyday practices and on new types of human relationships.
> [emphasis mine] (97-98)

Debord suggests that communities of subjective entitlement (in this example, capitalists) produce their own enemies and that the unavoidable revolution will be built upon a foundation of lessons learned through previous defeats such as the millennia-long expansion of the physical city into the adjacent territories (Gaiman 10-11). This urban revolution will understand the intricacies of everyday city-life as it should be—effecting a newly, unified milieu—and will therefore be able to effect a psychogeography in which

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the ruling ideology's dominance of the socio-spatial landscape is alleviated. The monotonous city of the entitled exists in direct opposition to the unconscious collection of the unimagined urban periphery, and it is the latter of these two systems which holds the key to unitary urbanism. Through the persistent forgetting of old urban values, forms, and aesthetics, these elements are removed from their original contexts and allowed to juxtapose in new ways, effecting a "completeness" (Benjamin 204). Each collected object ceases to be merely a presence effected through relation to other things and transforms into an equal part of a single entity: a unified space. By being forgotten and disposed of by the ruling epistemology, the inhabitants of London Below are able to experience the urban environment as a collective singularity in which everything and indeed, every time, are present all at once. This is possible only after passing through a liminal, in-between realm as Richard does, and facilitates a wider urban experience and breadth of knowledge than that of the monotonous city above.

The variety in urban ambience present in London Below provides the urbanite with an intimate knowledge of his or her space, and no one in Gaiman's text illustrates this more clearly than the Earl of Earl's Court. Much like a museum curator, the Earl in Earl's Court collects and displays various refuse and objects that are representative of the forgotten city he inhabits. Richard and his companions interact with this man inside of a library containing multiple shelves, featuring countless objects such as tennis rackets, umbrellas, various CDs, toy cars, assorted dentures of different sizes, and even garden gnomes: "[t]he room was a tiny empire of lost property" (171). The Earl in Earl's Court is a man tasked (seemingly by himself) with collecting and organizing the refuse of London Above and housing it in London Below. Whether this task is the Earl's primary function, or not, remains a mystery, however, one of Richard's companions—a warrior named Hunter— remarks that "'[t]his is his real domain […] Things lost. Things forgotten'" (171). The Earl presides over this collection like a librarian over a library, controlling the organization of objects and material into patterns of knowledge. Richard and his company seek the Angel Islington—a literal angel with unparalleled knowledge (and, as it turns out, the ultimate antagonist of the entire narrative)—for answers regarding the murder of Door's family, and it is to the Earl that they go for information regarding the angel's

location. The Earl's collecting facilitates knowledge—knowledge which gives its owner a purpose. According to Benjamin, "[c]ollecting is a primal phenomenon of study: the student collects knowledge" (210). Collection is an act of learning and possession of the collection grants one power over specific knowledge and the ability to deploy it. Like David Bowden in *The City & The City*, the Earl is able to interpret the intricacies of the urban environment (London Below) through the study of urban paraphernalia. When Borlú asks Ashil how it is possible for Bowden to walk between the cities, Ashil explains that "'[h]e's been a student of the cities […] Maybe it took an outsider to really see how citizens mark themselves, so as to walk between it" (Miéville 308). Bowden, who is native to neither Besźel nor Ul Qoma, is a student of the two cities and is able to deploy his knowledge in order to subvert the visible distinctions between the two cities, thereby effecting his invisibility through the establishment of a new milieu. The Earl in Earl's Court is not an outsider, but it is because he possesses knowledge of London Below's minutiae, power over his collection and harmony with his environment, that he is able to find a purpose—something which the entitled, imagined urbanites like Jessica, a member of the privileged class, are unable to do. Because the space of London Above is crafted by a dominant frame, the subjects which it privileges will never fully harmonize psychologically with the space because they continually cope with the anxiety of their situation—the space of London Above is not unified, but rather, reduced in order to control and manipulate it.

The unified nature of London Below, conversely, is illustrated clearly toward the end of *Neverwhere* when Richard and his companions must navigate an underground labyrinth between them and the villainous Angel Islington. The labyrinth is described by Gaiman's narrator as "a place of pure madness. It was built of lost fragments of London Above: alleys and roads and corridors and sewers that had fallen through the cracks over the millennia, and entered the world of the lost and forgotten" (326). As the various passageways and aesthetical elements of the city above become increasingly displaced from their surroundings as isolationist urbanism occurs, the spaces enter into London Below where they freely juxtapose with other lost spaces. These spaces exist outside of time, inhabiting what Nora Pleßke refers to as "the materialization of time-space

compression, encompassing all temporalities and spatialities. The chronotopic character of the novel is already obvious in the title: *Neverwhere*, being a non-place and a non-time, at least according to traditional categories of space and time" (171). In its construction, London Below escapes the traditional boundaries of space and time imposed by the urban ambiences of London Above—effecting itself, instead, as a unified canvas of historical sensibilities upon which its citizens live and wander unopposed by any vortexes or epistemologically-crafted currents. The space's presence flows outward, toward its borders, allowing all elements, both spatial and temporal, to equally influence the character of the environment. Because the space is comprised of everything forgotten and lost to the entitled, monotonous city above, London Below incorporates all elements excluded from the opposing city and transforms into a stable, unified zone capable of revitalizing life in the city proper by eliminating monotony and facilitating variety. London Below, as a collection, establishes an urban narrative which functions as the antithesis to the ideology-controlled, imagined metropolis and, by radicalizing this narrative—this knowledge of forgotten ambiences—it holds the potential to oppose the isolationist regime by demonstrating a new, inventive, and adventurous, way of life.

After completing his own adventure and being returned to his life in London Above, Richard rapidly feels the effects of his time in the territory below, remarking "'I thought I wanted this [to return to London Above] […] I thought I wanted a nice normal life. I mean, maybe I am crazy. I mean, maybe. But if this is all there is, then I don't want to be sane" (394). Because Richard experiences the unified socio-spatial (and even temporal) milieu of London Below he is unable to find satisfaction within the monotonous city above which systematically effects itself and its subjects as entitled through exclusion of antiquated forms and aesthetics—he desires a more varied ambience. London Below exists as a contingently structured urban utopia which is effected through the persistent forgetting by the dominant, imagined, realm above. Richard returns to this lower realm by the end of the novel, choosing to live a life of adventure and variety free from monotony in a personal act of rebellion against the isolationist regime. Despite existing within a liminal psychology during his initial time in London Below—being rejected by London Above while resisting London Below—Richard's experience of the rampant segregation

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of the unimagined forms, people, and historical aesthetics provides him with a playful alternative to the monotony of life in the monotonous city and, like Breach in Miéville's *The City & The City*, provides a gradual solution to the urban crisis provoked by the dominant epistemology and rampant urbanism. In the aptly named Situationist publication "The Bad Days Will End" it is stated quite simply that "[a]s the world of the spectacle extends its reign it approaches the climax of its offensive, provoking new resistances everywhere. These resistances are very little known precisely because the reigning spectacle is designed to present an omnipresent hypnotic image of unanimous submission. But they do exist and are spreading" (107). The Situationist International proclaims that as the realm of the spectacle—the superficial, monotonous city with its constrictive framework—extends, resistance to these spaces and their aesthetic orderings inevitably ferments until a psychogeographical event horizon is passed. Passing the critical point at which the balance is tipped in favour of the united space requires that the proper urbanites, like Richard of the monotonous, privileged class, undergo a period of liminality so that they may be gradually introduced to the collective milieu of London Below and the prospect of a better way of life, allowing them to understand the slow violence perpetrated as a result of dominant epistemologies and effect change. Like Besź and Ul Qoman citizens moving through Breach and uniting with the complete cityscape, so too must the entitled urbanite of London Above move through the liminal territory into London Below so that he or she might find themself within a unified, playful milieu, and the bad days of monotony and anxiety may truly end.

Chapter 3: Domination and Passionate Revival in *Concrete Island*

Spaces which constitute the urban periphery are rendered borderline invisible by the much more prominent and ever-expanding core of the privileged class, but they are not without power. Psychogeographically, peripheral spaces feature unique contours and combinations of idiosyncrasies capable of directing urban wanders in ways that the dominant, capitalist cityscape is unable to achieve. By presenting a unified milieu which is axiomatically atypical in comparison to the privileged visions of the urban environment, peripheral zones are ultimately able to challenge the core epistemologies which influence many forms of contemporary urbanism. In J.G. Ballard's *Concrete Island* protagonist Robert Maitland is a financially stable, privileged architect who crashes his car into a traffic island with no hope of escape. Injured and suffering from delirium, Maitland's narcissistic attitude formed through years of economic entitlement and psychological configuration by the capitalist ideologies in place gradually dissolve, and he systematically unites with the liminal space of the island itself. The traffic island consistently resists Maitland's sense of entitlement—presenting him with a peculiar psychological harmony—and effectively effaces the mental boundaries separating his idealized, entitled self from the destitute man he truly is. Maitland attempts to resist the revelation of his true place in life (attempts to deny his identity as a metaphorical island), but ultimately fails as the space increasingly resonates with his true character. Eventually, despite his resistance, Maitland is fully integrated into the unified milieu of the traffic island as the psychogeography of the space finally frees him from the monotony of his privileged lifestyle, thereby allowing him to become something much more grand than a catalyst for urban domination—he emerges as an urbanite, finally free to experience the varied psychogeographical situations of the cityscape.

3.1   The Tension Between the Epistemological Frame and Liminal Space

J.G. Ballard's *Concrete Island* is a simple narrative of a protagonist—an architect named Robert Maitland—who is marooned on a traffic island between two motorways after breaching the crash barrier and plunging into the mysterious and forgotten landscape

below. During his time as an urban castaway, Maitland slips increasingly further into delirium brought on by his injury-induced fever, and the limited space of the enclosed environment gradually occupies more and more of his psychology. According to Reinhart Lutz in his investigation of Ballard's novel, "the narrative gives us a final shock when we are forced to realize not only that the hero, architect Robert Maitland, perceives his environment in a way we can only call 'psychotic,' but also that his perspective *succeeds* in making sense of his world—a world which, of course, we all share, our world" (186). Lutz is reductive in his analysis of Maitland's situation, claiming that he is a psychotic who succumbs to a psychosis that colours his interpretation of the world which, apparently, Maitland shares with the rest of London. While Lutz's reading of *Concrete Island* provides a particular entry-point for thinking about Maitland's experiences, it does not engage with his character—with his privileged status pre-crash. Maitland does not simply succumb to some hysteria brought on by the trauma of the crash because, despite his delirium, he is able to clearly reflect on his own life; he recalls memories as far back as his childhood and reinterprets them through a new contextual framework emergent from the space itself. The space Maitland inhabits, contrary to Lutz's assertion, is *not* the world which his fellow urbanites inhabit, but rather, the space *between* these spaces, old, decrepit, and long-forgotten by the imagined regime. Despite the island's antiquated urban aesthetics and sensibilities, it is by no means representative of an archaic psychogeography. Laura Colombino argues that:

> the hero's permanence on the concrete island is by no means a return to a
> prior, mythic physicality, but to a new corporality inscribed in and subdued to
> "the possibilities of urban architecture" […] it is not wide of the mark to see
> Ballard's solution in this novel as foreshadowing the late nineties'
> architectural theory of "urban interstices": no-where sites lying off the beaten
> track; deserted and, hence, unknown spaces which can transform themselves
> into places of *experience* and *event*. (619)

The psychogeographical ambience of the secluded and forgotten traffic island is one which solicits urban possibility and invites reflection, rather than one which influences its inhabitants through previously determined forms. The traffic island represents a cross-section between the old and the new urban forms in which the old, historical forms of

London collide with the newly formed spectacles of the privileged class—it is a liminal, contested zone which Maitland finds himself within. In its liminality the traffic island facilitates new and unique experiences or events which shape its inhabitants in ways which the exclusionary city cannot; by effecting itself in a way which eludes traditional legibility, the island solicits Maitland to assign meaning onto the space which reciprocally informs his understanding of his own psychology.

Throughout the narrative Maitland identifies himself closely with the space he inhabits suggesting a tendency toward self-exile. This personalized exodus is unique as it is not away from one space and toward another (away from London and toward another city or state), but rather, to a liminal environment which is both part of, and isolated from, the urban environment: the traffic island. A similar action is suggested by Miéville in *The City & The City*, with the implication that certain citizens inhabit the spaces in-between the two neighbouring cities which are paradoxically located within the urban environment and yet, separate from it. These spaces—known to the inhabitants of each city as *dissensi*—achieve invisibility like Breach because they are "places that everyone in Ul Qoma thinks are in Besźel, and everyone in Besźel thinks are in Ul Qoma" (176). Borlú ruminates on the existence of insiles (internal exiles), recalling the "folktales of renegades who breach and avoid Breach to live between the cities, not exiles but insiles, evading justice and retribution by consummate ignorability" (134). Within Miéville's complex urban framework of unseeing there exist several contested zones of overlap which each city believes to belong to the other. This tension of ownership facilitates the creation of a liminal zone outside of, yet contingently located within, the urban structure which allows citizens an escape from the apparatus of control—an escape from the monotony induced on the metropolis. By entering into these zones (these *dissensi*) urbanites from either city are invited to escape not only from their limited urban experiences, but from the very forces which police their gaze, thereby soliciting an unhindered, united experience of the city. Theoretically, entrance into such a space—bordered on all sides by a restrictive urban framework—*restricts* unity through segregation and relegation to a small, contested space between spaces; in practice however, this is not the case as *dissensi* is, in fact, the home of Breach: "[a]s the two cities grew together, places, spaces had opened between

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them, or failed to be claimed, or been those controversial *dissensi.* Breach lived there"
(257). The two cities coming together (or fracturing as the case may be) facilitates the
emergence of several contested zones in which Breach subsequently materializes through
the paradoxical overlap and ignorance of the two spaces—being both seen and unseen at
once. Those who find themselves within *dissensi,* be it by their own free will or
otherwise, are necessarily within Breach by virtue of the space's creation (Miéville 257)
and are, therefore, solicited to view the city as a unified entity. The traffic island in
Concrete Island is effectively the same as Besźel and Ul Qoma's *dissensi* as it emerges
out of urbanist overlap—the building of new metropolitan forms, literally, on top of old
London—which is analogous to two distinct cities coming together, thereby facilitating a
unified urban milieu through the opening up of the space.

The unified milieu of the non-privileged metropolis presents itself within the liminal sites
of urban overlap—sites where the antiquated environment is effaced by contemporary
forms. In a discussion on urbanism Simon Sadler argues that in *unitary* urbanism:

> architecture would merge seamlessly with all other arts, assailing the *senses*
> not with a single aesthetic but with a panoply of changing ambience […] If
> this mass assault upon the senses was to completely revolutionize the life of
> the city, unitary urbanism would have to orchestrate the city's constituent
> parts, its unities of ambience. The unities of ambience already discovered by
> drifting situationists were regarded as ruins of a mislaid and superior social
> space, urban fragments seemingly bypassed by spectacular urbanism and
> awaiting reunification. [emphasis mine] (119)

By Sadler's diagnosis unitary urbanism is detected by the Situationists at sites of ruin
within the urbanized space: zones of old urban aesthetics and architecture which is
literally buried by new, spectacular constructs. These ruins represent a superior
sociological situation in which the urban wanderer's senses are perpetually enticed by a
variety of stimuli which are not fixed. As the core of the entitled city expands to
encompass and systematically exclude the historical forms of neighbouring zones
(thereby effecting the monotonous city) the previous, perhaps classical, urban forms are
hidden from the entitled gaze in favour of the spectacle of the city itself. Through the

constriction by the dominant framework and the subsequent relegation of antiquated urban forms to the urban periphery, the city environment is reduced to a series of spectacles—pinnacles of humankind's architectural innovation—which reinforce a privileged situation; the monotonous city (as outlined in the previous chapter) relies on the exclusion of subjectively antiquated forms and sensibilities to reinforce the dominant ideological schematics in place. The cityscape reinforces the domination of the privileged classes through transformation into a spectacular environment which solicits a certain lifestyle of all its citizens such as the very motorway which Maitland careens off of at the outset of Ballard's novel; this is reinforced when Maitland attempts to walk along the motorway seeking help and is instead, severely injured (22). According to Debord in "Situationist Theses on Traffic," "[a] mistake made by all the city planners is to consider the private automobile [...] as essentially a means of transportation. In reality, it is the most notable material symbol of the notion of happiness that developed capitalism tends to spread throughout the society" (69). Automobiles—as well as the motorways developed for their expedient use—are representative of the capitalist/modernity ethos whereby the urbanite is solicited to travel in a manner which seemingly bolsters his or her lifestyle. Maitland embodies this ethos in his choice of career as an architect and he wields the dominant, modern epistemology like a tool or a pen, influencing the city's creation in exchange for validation (in this case, capital gains) which subsequently sustains his privileged lifestyle (as represented by his possession of a Jaguar—a particularly expensive vehicle (7)). Upon crashing into the traffic island and meeting its inhabitants, Maitland continuously attempts to indoctrinate them into the spectacular city but fails because the space of the island facilitates a certain unity, solid in construction, which resists the dominant means of identification introduced through the ruling epistemological framework—the unity of the ruin, evidently, cannot be undone despite Maitland's conditioning.

At his core Maitland is an architect—a member of the privileged class who effects the capitalist/modernist urban schematic in order to maintain his entitled lifestyle and increase the constrictive and exclusionary stability of the metropolis—as more forms are removed from imaginative frames of domination, those which remain become necessarily

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stronger. One's presence as an imagined subject is necessarily contingent upon the presence (or non-presence as the case may be) of the unimagined subject—a community is privileged only in comparison to its antithetical non-privileged, unimagined population which it itself is not. To remove one group is to annihilate all, and as further communities enter a non-privileged realm, those who remain establish further entitlement. Indeed, as one ascends a particular hierarchy, be it political, economic, or otherwise, his or her privilege is measured against those both beneath and above them within the dominant frame. In the capitalist frame, for example, those with more capital (such as Maitland with his high-performance vehicle) are fundamentally more entitled than those without. Such a contingently dependant system necessarily elevates the privileged to a position of urban dominance whereby the epistemologically validated are removed from the street-level experience of the environment in order to undergo a metamorphosis from urbanite to urban-creator.

Such elevation to a position of extra-urban power consequently facilitates dissociation from the psychogeography of the environment; according to Michel de Certeau, who examines the specific example of New York City in *The Practice of Everyday Life*:

> [t]o be lifted to the summit of the World Trade Center is to be lifted out of the city's grasp. One's body is no longer clasped by the streets that turn and return it according to an anonymous law; nor is it possessed, whether as player or played, by the rumble of so many differences and by the nervousness of New York traffic. When one goes up there, he leaves behind the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors and spectators. (92)

To be physically lifted out of the bustling street-space is to be removed from the intricacies and idiosyncrasies of the urban environment, as well as the collaborative interpretation of the space by all urbanites. As an architect Maitland spends his days not only renovating the metropolis according to the ruling schematic, but also literally looking down at the space. During the initial hours of his stay on the island, Maitland notices that "[t]he *towers* of distant office-blocks rose into the afternoon air. Searching the warm haze over Marylebone, Maitland could almost identify *his own building*" [emphasis

mine] (16). The office of the stranded architect is located within a towering structure which overlooks the streets and even the very traffic island he now inhabits—Maitland is removed from the psychogeography of the environment in his office. It is not until he finds himself trapped within the confines of the traffic island—literally boxed in by the urbanism created by Maitland and his fellow imagined subjects—that he is able to experience an aesthetical unity capable of soliciting and transmuting his psychology through the stimulation and alignment of his senses, personality, and desires—the alignment of his various passions.

In *The Spectacle of Disintegration* McKenzie Wark expresses the influence of social life on what he refers to as passions rather than reason (66) Wark develops his term, explaining that "[f]ive of the passions are derived from the senses: sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. Then there are four spiritual passions: ambition, friendship, love and family. The penultimate passions are social ones: the composite, the cabalist, and the butterfly" (66). Wark argues that all social life centers around sensory input as well as one's specific personality traits and the rules governing society itself such as material needs like food (composite), political intervention (cabalist), and variety (butterfly) (66-67). In the monotony (albeit stability) of his entitled lifestyle Maitland is effectively deprived of the last of these passions. The absence of variety necessarily stagnates his other senses. Because Maitland's life above the cityscape as an entitled architect lacks any variety, many of his other passions suffer monotony as a result: his senses endure the same day-to-day stimulation, his ambitions dissipate as a result of his epistemological entitlement, and his relationships suffer as he retreats into himself. This all changes for Maitland, however, upon finding himself stranded on the traffic island where he consistently notices new and unique stimuli within the limited compound, persistently intends to escape, and often longs for his wife and son. After the crash Maitland's passions are solicited in new ways according to the psychogeographical forms of the liminal environment, and his passions are allowed to unite according to a new psychological framework. This unity, "or harmony, is not so much a thirteenth passion as the sum totality of them all" (Wark 67). On the island all of Maitland's passions combine to effect a unity of space and character through relation to the space itself: his senses are

stimulated by the space, as are his ambitions, his memories, and his desires. The unity of all of Maitland's passions as outlined by Wark effectively reverses the psychogeographical flow, with the space influencing its occupant instead of the other way around. In an essay examining the effects of geography on the mind, Howard F. Stein argues that "[p]sychogeography begins with the vicissitudes of selfhood in a human body within a family context, and proceeds outward to encompass the world" (*Maps from the Mind* 182), but the traffic island inverts this directionality. Maitland's entitled sensibility in which he is the center is negated through dissonance with this liminal environment; the tension between his idealized self which he creates out of altered memories and the reality of the environmental mimicry effaces the boundaries in his mind and allows the space to influence his passions thereby effecting psychological unity.

3.2   The Power of the Liminal Space and Maitland's Contested Desires

The liminal environment, according to Turner, "breaks, as it were, the cake of custom and enfranchises speculation […] Liminality is the realm of primitive hypothesis, where there is a certain freedom to juggle with the factors of existence" (106). While in the liminal space, inhabitants enter a state of simplistic association where they are free to experiment and create new combinations with the various components that constitute their lives—potentially effecting new lifestyle forms in the process. By establishing these new forms urbanities are at once able to observe both the non-privileged and privileged forms (the bordering states of the liminal progression) and become aware of the underlying tension between the imagined city and the unimagined subject—what Benjamin refers to as trace and aura. Benjamin explains that "[t]he trace is appearance of a nearness, however far removed the thing that left it behind may be. The aura is appearance of a distance, however close the thing that calls if forth. In the trace, we gain possession of the thing; in the aura, it takes possession of us" (447). For Benjamin, possession over a thing is granted in the presence of the trace—when the thing in question presents an illusion of similarity (bears traces) to something that arrives chronologically before that which is possessed, despite the objective developmental distance between the past and present objects. In an urban context this is analogous to the way in which the capitalism-influenced, imagined

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city presents itself as the superior evolution of the metropolis despite being, in reality, one mutation of it—an epistemologically-manipulated transformation. Through the establishment of neoliberal feedback loops the privileged capitalists are able to effect the monotonous city which re-imagines the space as a utopia at the cost of non-privileged urban forms and classes—a utopia which is only beneficial for those privileged according to the capitalism-sponsored biases. Because the capitalist ethos and the entitled urbanites control the urban narrative they are able to represent urbanism to the masses as a universal good and reduce the perceived distance between the historical and the newly established city through manipulative projects such as architectural design. Despite this spectacular reduction of distance between urban forms, the reality of this distance remains in the collective unconscious of the entitled citizens who consistently repress this truth with every subsequent modern, capitalist project. When Maitland (a perpetrator of urbanism) enters the traffic island his unconscious awareness of the real distance between the two temporal spaces emerges through the aura of the island itself—the untouched psychogeographical contours—which illuminate the vast aesthetical distances present between the forgotten environment and the mutated city, despite the former's physical proximity to the latter. This inversion necessarily brings with it a reversal of possession where, instead of Maitland asserting his ownership over the environment, the environment asserts its possession over him, signalling the reversal of psychogeographical flow whereby the space is able to influence the very core of Maitland's character.

While on the traffic island Maitland continuously interrupts his desire to escape with ruminations on his personal life—on his marriage to his wife Catherine and the son they have together, his ongoing affair with a woman named Helen Fairfax, and even his childhood. By his own admission, Maitland's perception of his memories is skewed from their respective realities as he chooses, instead, to remember himself according to his own personal ideals of happiness: "[f]or years now he had remythologized his own childhood. The image in his mind was of a small boy playing endlessly by himself in a long suburban garden surrounded by a high fence seemed strangely comforting" (27). Maitland remembers his past not as it was but as he believes it should have been, with himself at

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the center of a nurturing space; there is no one else in this idealized reality—no one, parent or otherwise, who can disappoint or otherwise upset the equilibrium of the static environment. Stein illuminates the psychological side of psychogeography and states that citizens "fashion the world out of the substance of their psyches from experiences of their bodies, *childhoods, and families*; they project psychic contents outward onto the social and physical world, and act as though what is projected is in fact an attribute of the other or outer" [emphasis mine] (182). Stein suggests that the psychogeographical experience begins with the self or, more specifically, one's memories which constitute their construction of selfhood. Memories of childhood and family (as well as experiences of the body) manifest themselves as content which is, in turn, projected onto the urban environment. Indeed, as Maitland lingers on the image of his childhood self, sitting in an empty garden he ponders the implications of this idealized image of himself, suggesting that "[p]erhaps even his marriage to Catherine, a failure by anyone else's standards, had succeeded precisely because it recreated for him this imaginary empty garden" (27). Maitland finds solace in his failure of a marriage because it mirrors his psychology—his wife knows about his affair with Helen Fairfax (38) but presents no threat or interruption to his static and selfish lifestyle. Upon entering the traffic island, however, Maitland's idealization of selfhood is challenged through an emergent tension between his psychology and the psychogeographical contours of the space itself, which effects a reversal in the flow of influence—the space influences him rather than being influenced *by* him.

Maitland's existence within the traffic island—on the surface—bears a striking resemblance to the child in the nurturing garden of his skewed memory. Isolated between three converging motorway routes (11) the island is exceedingly grassy with nettles hiding the various ruins from the gaze of any motorists looking down from the roads above (9-10). Maitland, like the child of his memory, is located alone in the middle of this forgotten and static wasteland with no one threatening the equilibrium of the environment: "neither [Catherine nor Helen] would try to telephone him, each assuming that Maitland had spent the night with the other [...] no one at his office would be particularly alarmed by his absence, taking for granted that he was ill or away on some

urgent business" (38). No one in Maitland's life is looking for him or poses a risk to the stability of his current situation, but herein lies the tension: Maitland *needs* to escape from the island. Maitland's presence in the traffic island is, initially, cause for frustration and anxiety as it disrupts his entitled lifestyle, but as his time on the island progresses, so too does Maitland's tendency toward freedom and away from the monotony of his selfish lifestyle, and his desire for escape gradually dissipates. The island represents a reversal of Maitland's idealized childhood: instead of a boy sitting in the middle of a tranquil and nurturing garden which forever comforts its sole occupant, Maitland is an adult struggling against monotony who finds himself trapped in a lush wasteland hoping for some kind of assistance—Maitland now *desires* external intervention rather than opposing it. The dissonance between Maitland's idealization of self and his current situation results in the emergence of his true memories through the reversal of the psychogeographical flow— the space challenges Maitland's psychology by uniting his twelve passions instead of being reformed by his memory content. After a few days on the island, Maitland's memory of himself sitting in a garden transforms into the true memory where he, "as a child, […] had once bellowed unwearyingly for his mother while she nursed his younger sister in the next room. For some reason, which he had always resented, she had never come to pacify him, but had let him climb from the empty bath himself, hoarse with anger and surprise" (70). The space's power over Maitland is made apparent in this act of recollection as the tranquil garden is replaced with an empty bathtub and a child shouting endlessly for a mother who never comes. Frustrated and alone the child is forced to act for himself, resentfully climbing out of the tub in a moment which definitively illustrates his sense of entitlement; Maitland's refusal to remember his childhood as it actually was leads to the formation of a false idealization of his life which he then projects onto the urban environment, remaking it according to his ideals as an architect. The traffic island, being the forgotten space that it is—where new and old forms collide—necessarily resists Maitland's will and instead shows him the reality of his life in a moment of harmony between memory and environment.

The unified psychogeography of old and new London—the traffic island where new urban forms are built literally on top of older ones—is a liminal space which solicits

comparisons between the physical boundaries prohibiting Maitland's escape from the island, and his own mental restrictions which inhibit his relationships. According to Lutz:

> once in the grip of fever, Maitland suddenly comes to realize that the only way in which he can truly understand and come to terms with the new landscape evolving in his mind is to pursue a course of identification or mental merger with the inanimate environment, a project which requires abandoning his previous identity […] we already have noted the significant fact that he never refers to himself in the first person singular—a telltale psychological sign of a weak sense of self. (189)

Lutz postulates that Maitland is only able to resign himself to his new habitat after first reconciling his monotonous, entitled psychology with the peripheral landscape of the traffic island—a landscape which is on the periphery, precisely, as a result of Maitland's involvement in the city's development. As an architect, Maitland is partially responsible for the contemporary urban situation and the relegation of antiquated districts and areas to the urban periphery. Maitland's arrival in and subsequent self-identification with this forgotten space is indicative of a desire to escape the standard capitalism-controlled forms of his urban situation. Lutz further suggests that Maitland never once refers to himself in the first person, however, this is partially incorrect as he does so multiple times during his interactions with Jane and Proctor: the island's two inhabitants. Before Maitland is introduced to either of the island's co-inhabitants he speaks to himself on occasion, and during *these* moments of reflection he solely refers to himself in the third-person—using his name instead of "I". This tendency toward dissociation eventually terminates, however, once Maitland's reconciliation between his privileged psychology and the peripheral environment of the traffic island reaches its climax in a moment of unconscious realization that is only contextualized through specific interactions with Jane. During his initial moments on the island Maitland refers to himself distantly in the third-person as he attempts to escape, but this definitively changes to first-person as Maitland gradually becomes preoccupied with dominating the space—a desire which perhaps precipitates and even leads to his accident.

Alongside Maitland's rampant ruminations on his family is an obsession with dominating

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the traffic island, to the point that it eclipses his desire for escape; "it was this will to survive, to dominate the island and harness its limited resources, that now seemed a more important goal than escaping" (65). Maitland (here, still in his capitalist mindset during the initial days following his accident) desires domination over the relatively natural environment of the traffic island—his goal is to exert his capitalism-sanctioned power over the space to mutate it into an exclusionary environment like the monotonous city which will reinforce his entitled lifestyle. The Situationists outline this desire to dominate the natural landscape as fundamental not only to privilege-based urban growth, but to all urban growth. They explain that:

> [t]he human appropriation of nature is the *real adventure we have embarked on*. It is the central, indisputable project, the issue that encompasses all other issues. What is always fundamentally in question in modern thought and action is the possible use of the dominated sector of nature. A society's basic perspective on this question determines the choices among the alternative directions presented at each moment of the process, as well as the rhythm and duration of productive expansion in each sector. ("Ideologies, Classes, and the Domination of Nature" 131)

The Situationists argue that urbanism is, at its core, the representation of humankind's domination over nature, and that it is this environmental project—indisputable in its very nature—which includes within it all other discourses be they sociological, psychological, or otherwise. The question which is always at the forefront of urbanism is one of possibility—one which explores the multitude of architectural, aesthetic, and psychogeographic forms in the constructed milieus labeled "cities". In cities society is founded upon a basic ideological framework which influences the overall development of the urban environment; in the case of the monotonous city where Maitland lives, this ruling ideology is rooted in capitalist entitlement and modernization. As an architect, Maitland is necessarily preoccupied with the domination of the natural space—he assists in the growth and development of the cityscape—and it is this engagement which ultimately facilitates his transformation from monotonous (albeit stable) privilege into a free associating urbanite who is influenced by a unique, non-sponsored, urban situation through which he is allowed to grow psychologically.

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3.3   From Capitalist Dominator to Psychogeographical Subject

Toward the end of the novel Jane suggests to Maitland that he crashed on the traffic island on purpose, which makes Maitland wonder to himself: "[h]ad he, in fact, deliberately marooned himself on the island? He remembered his refusal to walk through the overpass tunnel to the emergency telephone, his childish insistence that a rush-hour driver stop for him, the anger that had poured out" (117). After spending so much time on the traffic island, plagued by pain and fever, and occasionally assaulted and then mended by Proctor and Jane respectively, Maitland finally considers his own role in his predicament—that he, perhaps, intentionally drove into the median between the highways. This is supported by another accusation of Jane's which retroactively informs an early moment of Maitland's initial delirium. After the well-to-do Maitland suggests to Jane that she get away from the island to straighten her life out and start a family with someone, she responds harshly with "[o]h, come on… why don't you straighten your life out? You've got a hundred times more hang-ups. Your wife, this woman doctor—*you were an island long before you crashed here*" [emphasis mine] (141). Having experienced Maitland's entitled idiosyncrasies for an extended period of time, Jane comments on his tendency to avoid addressing his problems—such as cheating on his wife with Helen Fairfax rather than discussing their marital issues. Additionally, this tendency is illustrated through Maitland's repeated attempts to bribe Proctor and Jane with the money in his wallet, despite the fact that the former, according to Jane, "never leaves this place and as far as I know there's nowhere here to spend it" (113). Proctor (and Jane to a lesser extent) is not beholden to consumerist culture of the privileged classes like Maitland is; as a surviving and thriving member of the exclusionary monotonous city, Maitland relies heavily on the exchange of capital for his survival, and does very few playful acts for himself—he uses his money as a crutch, buying things like wine for his wife to temporarily sooth any marital issues between them (14). Maitland's refusal to accept responsibility for his life's situations isolates him from all those around him, rendering him analogous to the very island he inhabits—a comparison which he himself makes during his initial delirium where he labels the various sections of the small island according to the battered parts of

his own body (70) and exclaims to himself "'I am the island'" (71).

Following his proclamation as the island Maitland is mended by Jane, but his fever inevitably returns and he becomes delirious once more. During this subsequent delirium, Maitland's injuries heal and he recalls his initial synthesis with the liminal environment of the traffic island—his initial "attempts to shuck off portions of his own flesh, leaving those wounds at the places where they had been inflicted" (156). It is after imparting pieces of his own body onto the topography of the space that Maitland declares himself *as* the island (71) and invites speculation of his own conscious involvement in his accident and subsequent arrival on the traffic island (an investigation which is compounded alongside his obsession with dominating the space). It is during this latter moment of delirium, however, where Maitland finally releases his psychological hang-ups, thereby allowing him to undergo metamorphosis within the peripheral environment from the monotonous entitled subject into a true inhabitant of the urban periphery. Indeed, "at last he was beginning to shed sections of his mind, shucking off those memories of pain, hunger and humiliation—of the embankment where he had stood screaming like a child for his wife, of the rear seat of the Jaguar, where he had inundated himself with self-pity… All these he would bequeath to the island" (156). During his second bout of delirium Maitland expels his former character—his tendencies toward narcissism—in exchange for a psychology which is rooted in the psychogeographical influence of the island itself. According to Lutz this emotional purge, as well as the physical purge earlier in the novel, constitute a "point of no return; he [Maitland] now bases his actions entirely on principles rooted in the structures of his private world" (193). Lutz expresses this point of Maitland's situation as the moment in which he fully accepts the rules of the island and abides by them entirely; however, the transition from the epistemologically capitalist and modern mindset into one which privileges the psychogeographical direction of the environment is not without brief moments of struggle. Maitland is not able to flawlessly transition through his own liminal psychology and must endure the failure of his own ideals before emerging within the urban periphery.

Following the imparting of mind and body on the space of the island, Maitland attempts

to bribe Proctor with the money in his briefcase which was left by him along the street during a previous escape attempt (158). Of course, it is not Maitland's intention to pay Proctor any amount of money, but rather, his hope that Proctor will be hit by a passing vehicle which will attract emergency services and subsequently alert them to Maitland's presence (159). Proctor's home is the traffic island and Maitland attempts to appeal to him as a consumerist, explaining that, of all the money in the briefcase, he "can have half. Ten thousand pounds. You'll be able to *buy* this island" (158). Maitland continues to embody the privileged, capitalist ethos and appeals to Proctor as a consumerist preoccupied with affecting his existence through the exchange of capital—with the necessary funds at his disposal, Proctor will be able to assert economic dominance over the landscape like a functioning member of capitalist society by paying for ownership. Maitland's gamble fails, however, as Proctor is not interested in the ways of the entitled, imagined society or the prospect of great wealth and, after sitting momentarily at the street's edge whilst still in cover, "Proctor had turned back. Ducking his head, he slid crab-wise down the earth slope, his scarred hands reaching for the welcoming grass" (159). Much like his earlier endeavors, Maitland's attempt at bribery fails because Proctor has no use for money—his life exists outside of the dominant system of capitalist exchange. According to the Situationists in "Ideologies, Classes, and the Domination of Nature":

> [e]very day alienated people are shown or informed about new successes they
> have obtained, successes for which they have no use. This does not mean that
> these advances in material development are bad or uninteresting. They could
> be turned to good use in real life—but *only along with everything else.* The
> victories of our day belong to star-specialists. (134)

The Situationists claim that those who are alienated are often exposed to systems or frameworks which they themselves cannot use without risking the stability of their current lifestyles. Indeed, an external system—like capital and exchange—can be integrated into a system void of such ideas, however, the introduction of a new formal arrangement necessarily alters the previous schematic. When a capitalist system of exchange is introduced into an environment which lacks economic organization (indeed, when any system is introduced to a space which lacks exposure to it), the space must transform to

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accommodate the new framework and suddenly everything in the environment is assigned a new value by which it is arbitrarily valued—such as a cost. Maitland's promise of wealth, therefore, does not appeal to Proctor because he does not obey capitalism's arrangement of the environment—living, instead, according to his own system of organization.

After Maitland's bribe fails, Proctor returns to him from the street's edge and lifts him onto his back, taking him into a crypt where, Maitland notices:

> [o]n one of the dim empty coffin shelves was a collection of metal objects stripped from his car, a wing mirror and manufacturer's medallion, strips of chromium trim, laid out like an elaborate altarpiece on which would one day repose the bones of a revered saint. Around them were cuff-links and overshoes that he had given to Proctor, a bottle of after-shave lotion and aerosol of shaving cream. (160)

Everything which Proctor has collected from Maitland and his vehicle is located within this crypt—a final resting place of the refuse of high-society. Maitland reductively accuses Proctor of waiting for him to die (160) and identifies the objects in the crypt as "the trinkets with which Proctor would dress the corpse" (160). It is not that Proctor is waiting for Maitland to die, but rather, that he recognizes Maitland as being already dead—in the sense that he is as forgotten and subsequently ejected from the capitalist realm as Proctor is himself. According to Benjamin, "[t]he physiological side of collecting is important. In the analysis of this behaviour, it should not be overlooked that, with the nest-building of birds, collecting acquires a clear biological function" (210). By this point in the narrative it is already known to Maitland that Proctor never leaves the island (as explained by Jane (113)) and therefore must construct his own reality—his own home—based on the elements at his disposal. Like a bird creating a nest Proctor gathers objects in his environment according to a biological function, but unlike a bird gathering according to a biological imperative (namely, survival), Proctor gathers in order to effect his understanding of the space as well as his role within it. In the same way that the Earl of Earl's Court acquires power over the forgotten environment of London Below in Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* through collecting, so too does Proctor gain power over his own

environment—collecting and organizing the various elements of the space according to a tactile instinct. Proctor physically possesses the various elements of his collection which, by Benjamin's definition, diametrically opposes the optical-based spectacle (206) of the privileged realm which functions by improving urban entitlement through the exhibition, rather than the integration, of antiquated and eclectic elements. Proctor's understanding of his environment relies on integration which is ultimately why Maitland's attempt at bribery fails: Proctor is merely *shown* the money but ultimately has no *use* for it—money is not integrated into the ideological framework of the traffic island. Proctor's domination of the landscape is effected through collection and it is only after being integrated into this collection himself that Maitland's own preoccupation with dominating the island is finally realized.

Domination lies at the core of urbanism be it unitary or otherwise, and the Situationists explain that "[t]he lack of such a comprehensive, long-term perspective—or rather the monopoly of a single untheorized perspective automatically produced by the present power structure's blind economic growth—is at the root of the emptiness of contemporary thought" ("Domination" 131). Inevitably, Maitland attempts to apply his conditioned perspective to the forgotten realm of the traffic island which fails because for as long as Maitland and other privileged urbanites have been indoctrinated by the ruling schematic, the traffic island, and other spaces like it, have grown on the urban periphery, developing their own comprehensive frameworks by which they function. Maitland's attempts to dominate the island through harnessing its various elements and imparting entitled and consumerist values onto them fails because the space is ultimately an isolated collective— a collective which Maitland eventually becomes a part of through Proctor. After becoming one with the collective environment Maitland finally relinquishes his foremost wish to escape, planning instead to stay awhile (161), and eventually feels "no real need to leave the island, and this alone confirmed that he had established his dominion over it" (176). The narrative concludes with Maitland finally feeling content on the island, feeling that he has successfully dominated the space, but this is a misnomer—Maitland does not dominate the space, but is instead dominated *by the space*. Maitland's traumatic experiences with delirium and the strange interactions with his co-inhabitants

systematically draws forth the very essence of his character and transmutes it according to the aesthetics and sensibilities of the island environment, thereby reversing the psychogeographical flow and allowing the space to fully influence the urbanite. Upon being remade according to the contours of the liminal environment Maitland is solicited to join the collective functionality through active participation in the unique urban situation present therein.

Conclusion: On Violence and Genre…

Ballard's *Concrete Island*, Gaiman's *Neverwhere*, and Miéville's *The City & The City* all demonstrate the value of the liminal urban transition as a means of uniting the urbanite with his or her psychogeographical environment. Through freedom from governing epistemological frameworks, urbanites and architectural aesthetics are allowed to forgo the monotony of their static milieu and are solicited to juxtapose with other similarly freed elements in the formation of new ambiences. This is evidenced in the psychogeographic works of Miéville, Gaiman, and Ballard through their respective protagonists who invariably transition from a monotonous, albeit stable position of privilege, toward a new, non-privileged identity within an unimagined space. These spaces of free juxtaposition emerge in a variety of different forms—as they should—with Miéville's Inspector Borlú emerging within a synthesis between two, imagined spaces, Gaiman's Richard Mayhew finding himself with a collection of forgotten citizens and aesthetics which themselves constitute a new, varied community below London proper, and Ballard's Robert Maitland undergoing psychological metamorphosis in a space literally overshadowed by his architectural innovations. Transition into the non-privileged community is initially resisted by all three protagonists despite each man's inherent unconscious desire to escape his monotonous routine, and complete acceptance into the newfound milieu only unfolds through gradual progression. Miéville illustrates the requisite for gradual progression most strongly through his presentation of Breach in comparison with the actions of Mikhel Buric and David Bowden who attempt to unify the space and its citizens through violent spectacle and extreme isolation respectively. Unlike Breach's gradual progression, neither Buric's nor Bowden's methodology succeeds in uniting the two cities because violence and isolation both alienate the communities they attempt to synthesize—with violence reinforcing the habitual unseeing of all citizens through fear of seeing the breaches, and isolation outright resisting anyone who does not meet Bowden's urbanist standard (namely: everyone). Gradual progression through the unimagined space and subsequent variety in ambience is a requirement of complete integration and without this progression—and indeed, without the urbanite's conscious or unconscious desire for escape from monotony—there can be no integration into the varied

milieu of the urban periphery.

The urban periphery houses various communities, aesthetics, and sensibilities which are ostracised from ruling epistemological frameworks, such as nationalism, modernity, and capitalism among others. While Miéville, Gaiman, and Ballard explore the urban periphery as a space of revolution where the dominant frames are subverted on the level of the individual or within small communities, the question of whether or not they should be subverted remains ambiguous as it ultimately depends on how this question is framed. For the respective protagonists subverting the ruling frames allows each man to transition into environments uniquely suited to his own desires: Borlú ends his narrative in Breach which mirrors his waning willfulness to unsee his Ul Qoman neighbours, Richard chooses to remain in London Below where his penchant for whimsy is satiated, and Maitland declines assistance as well as the promise of rescue, desiring instead to remain in the traffic island which has recalibrated his very character—leaving only when he so chooses. For these protagonists, inhabiting the liminal, unimagined community is of personal benefit because each man is exposed to the respective variety in ambience which he unconsciously desires, thus facilitating a psychogeographical unity between urbanite and the urban space. The protagonists, however, have something in common more with each other than with the citizens of the communities they come to inhabit, namely: their choice in transitioning from a space of privilege into one without entitlement. The protagonists actively choose to enter into the realm of the unimagined in an act of epistemological subversion—rejecting the frames and détourning them in order to establish themselves anew (unseen by the imagined communities) within their desired new environments. Indeed, for many inhabitants of the non-privileged spaces, the act of being unimagined is unwilling and can even be accompanied with standard, non-slow violence. Nixon illustrates this point in *Slow Violence* with the trouble of building dams in developing nations, explaining that the "violent conversion of inhabitant into uninhabitant has been a recurrent trauma amidst the spread of gargantuan dams across the developing world. People viewed as irrational impediments to 'progress' have been statistically—and sometimes fatally—disappeared" (153). Shaping an environment according a dominant epistemological ideal can result in the violent relegation of unimagined communities to

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the periphery of a particular space, with the example used by Nixon being the historical development of Guatemala's Chixoy Dam in the 1980s where 378 Maya Achi Indians were massacred in an attempt to accelerate the clearing of the submergence zone (153-154). While such spectacular violent aggression against unimagined communities is unlikely to occur within a metropolis (certainly within the western, London-inspired cityscapes of Miéville, Gaiman, and Ballard's novels) Nixon's point is nonetheless profound within an urban context—upon being forcefully unimagined one's life is essentially taken and those not privileged by the dominant frames in place are forced to adapt for survival.

Conversely, for those without the requisite desire for variety—those privileged few still benefiting from the ruling epistemology—transition into the realm of the unimagined and the nullification of certain borders and boundaries therein is met with heavy resistance. Those privileged by the dominant frames operate on the side contributing to epistemological violence and, in his text *The New Urban Frontier,* Neil Smith illustrates certain urban groups' violent resistance of the inclusive agenda proposed by city planners; he outlines that:

> [r]evenge against minorities, the working class, women, environmental legislation, gays and lesbians, immigrants became the increasingly common denominator of public discourse. Attacks on affirmative action and immigration policy, street violence against gays and homeless people, feminist bashing and public campaigns against political correctness and multiculturalism were the most visible vehicles of this reaction. In short, the 1990s have witnessed the emergence of what we can think of as the *revanchist city.* (44-45)

Evidently violence is not present on the same level as the massacres in Guatemala as explored by Nixon, but violence soliciting the de-privileging of certain communities and sensibilities is clearly present within the urban setting. Smith details numerous ways in which ideologically privileged communities reinforce their imagined space through resistance and intolerance which denies the unimagined their presence. While such denial is not necessarily spectacularly violent, it is violent nonetheless—it is a slow violence

expressed through exclusion and negligence, and a violence which is evidenced in the works of Miéville, Gaiman, and Ballard. In *The City & The City* Mikhel Buric believes Breach and Ul Qoma to be conspiring against his beloved Besźel (284) and, while this assumption is incorrect (with Breach operating in isolation between both cities) Buric is correct in diagnosing Ul Qoma's slow violence toward Besźel—even though it is reciprocated with Besźel likewise de-privileging its neighbour. Ul Qoma, while not an image of urban perfection itself, is inarguably more stable than the neighbouring Besźel with its history still intact and soliciting varied ambiences. Ul Qoma consistently unsees Besźel, however; and any promise that Ul Qoma's stability will drift into Besźel vanishes alongside the neighbouring space itself. Gaiman's narrative differs slightly from Miéville's in that he presents a violence which manifests itself as a nightmarish fantasy-scape resultant from negligence rather than conscious exclusion; and Ballard's novel differs further still in that the unimagined environment of the traffic island fosters *reactive* violence in certain inhabitants—namely, Proctor—who spectacularly resists the influence of the privileged oppressors.

After inhabiting the island for a few days a wounded Maitland stumbles upon Proctor's collection of forgotten, dead aesthetics and is violently attacked by the then unknown man: "[p]owerful hands seized him by the arms and hurled him backwards through the door. During the next few seconds, as he was flung to the ground, Maitland was only aware of the panting, bull-like figure dragging him up the slope into the last light of day […] slapping Maitland with fists, his attacker rolled him backwards and forwards across the damp ground" (76-77). Proctor responds to Maitland's exploration—to the intrusion of a privileged man within his personal realm—with animalistic brutality in an act which ultimately mirrors the privileged class's segregation of him. Proctor, and his fellow islander Jane, are relegated to the unimagined urban periphery in favour of a stable modern and capitalist milieu which is built literally on top of their environment and, as such, Proctor is forced to effect his understanding of his space, as well as his role within it, by collecting the space and interpreting the various aesthetical relationships present therein. Maitland arrives in the traffic island from a place of privilege as a man who literally shapes the architectural sensibilities of the metropolis, and it is this capitalist

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ethos which Proctor violently defends against. Resistance to unimagined communities by the privileged class solicits those not privileged to reinvent themselves according to the dominant ideological frames in place, but Proctor resists Maitland's potential interference in his collection by throwing the wounded protagonist out of his space. Because Proctor has been effectively ostracised from civilization he has regressed to an almost animalistic state where his actions are heavily influenced by primal instincts. Indeed, very soon after the violent incident, upon "[h]earing Maitland move behind the pay-box, Proctor turned suspiciously. Before Maitland could reach the staircase he had disappeared from sight, vanishing like a startled animal into the deep grass" (94). Ever vigilant against threats from the privileged realm above, Proctor patrols his island, reacting instinctually against those who segregated him, and it is only after Maitland begins his metamorphosis into non-privilege that Proctor gradually accepts him into his collection of dead aesthetics.

Both Ballard and Gaiman present the unimagined, liminal environment as a space populated with traumatic expressions of the privileged class's negligence, but only Ballard extends this presentation to spectacular, observable, physical violence. Of the three authors explored, Ballard is the only one who represents violence in direct relation to the tension between privilege and non-privilege. While both Miéville and Gaiman feature violence within their narratives, the violence expressed by them is, notably, more a symptom of genre and less indicative of inherent aggression between and within imagined and unimagined spaces—their violence fuels their respective plots rather than offering a discrete commentary on spatial relations. Indeed, in *The View from the Cheap Seats*, Gaiman postulates that:

> [i]f the plot is a machine that allows you to get from set piece to set piece, and the set pieces are things without which the reader or viewer would feel cheated, then, whatever it is, it's genre. If the plot exists to get you from lone cowboy riding into town to the first gunfight to the cattle rustling to the showdown, then it's a Western. If those are simply things that happen on the way, and the plot encompasses them, can do without them, doesn't actually care if they are in there or not, then it's a novel set in the old West. (44)

In the genre novel certain narrative beats are expected of the story and without these

recognizable tropes the particular genre-label is scrutinized by the reader who feels denied that which he or she expects from the novel. What is established between the author and reader of the genre novel is essentially a type of literary privilege whereby an imagined community is presupposed by the author and maintained by the readers who prefer certain genres over others. Neil Gaiman, known for such works as *American Gods* and *Norse Mythology* is an established author in the Fantasy genre and has collated a following who know what to expect from his work. Similarly, Miéville's *The City & The City* begins at a crime scene where the protagonist—an investigator—is introduced, establishing the narrative firmly within the Crime/Thriller genre, signalling the exciting milestones to come, and privileging one set of readers over others who may not enjoy detective stories. While these two authors effectively imagine a community for their commentaries on space and privilege, it is important to note that they differ from the epistemological frames which they critique because they *do not* exclude the communities not privileged by their works—there is nothing stopping a reader of Westerns from picking up and enjoying either Gaiman or Miéville, it is simply less likely. Regardless, the not-imagined communities of genre (not to be confused with unimagined communities as explored thus far) remain external to any particular genre and are therefore analogous to unimagined communities because they remain uninitiated by their forms—with only the curious few venturing into these literary spaces.

If the genre novels of Gaiman and Miéville presuppose imagined communities than the unfixed *Concrete Island* constitutes a narrative that imagines none—there is no genre which Ballard adheres to and therefore no specific audience (or, at the very least, there is no *obvious* schematic acting as a foundation). Without genre privileging one community of readers over another Ballard allows his novel to be read equally among all potential readers, but herein lies the same problem afflicting the genre novel: readers of a certain genre are less likely to engage with Ballard's work. *Concrete Island* is a novel which functions without a presupposed template—featuring events and milestones which occur without the plot necessarily caring about them, as Gaiman suggests—and, as such, is not defined according to the helpful labels which readers know as genre. Genre potentially restricts a novel's readership, but lack of genre effectively does the same thing because

while the reader of Westerns mentioned earlier is less likely to venture into the realm of Fantasy or Crime Drama, he is also less likely to pick up and peruse a novel without a genre because, like the other novels with genre, it is not a Western. Ballard's novel—in the sense that it does not presume any particular body of readers—is essentially an unimagined narrative as it lies outside of the privilege of genre; but like the genre novel, Ballard's work is not rigidly exclusionary as any reader can freely access *Concrete Island.* Ballard creates a novel which does not privilege a particular body of readers and, while neither the genre-focussed nor genre-denying novels wholly exclude readers from engaging with their content, it is only Ballard who provides a non-obfuscated view of the tension manifest between imagined and unimagined communities and the violence present therein. Physical acts of violence are present within all three texts but it is only Proctor in *Concrete Island* whose violence is indicative of the segregation occurring to the non-privileged detritus of the privileged class, which establishes an interesting meta-commentary within Nixon's writer-activist movement despite Ballard's novel existing without genre and without an imagined community of readers.

In *Slow Violence* Nixon introduces the idea of witness validity. He states that:

> [t]o address violence discounted by dominant structures of apprehension is necessarily to engage that culturally variable issue of *who counts as a witness.* Contests over what counts as violence are intimately entangled with conflicts over who bears the social authority of witness, which entails much more than simply seeing or not seeing […] if it's bloodless, slow-motion violence, the story is more likely to be buried, particularly if it's relayed by people whose witnessing authority is culturally discounted. (16)

Nixon outlines that the tension between privilege and non-privilege extends to the issue of who constitutes a witness which is unsurprising considering how dominant epistemological frames maintain power through relegating non-conformist communities to the urban periphery. Once ostracised from the privileged class, the unimagined urbanite is effectively effaced from the cultural consciousness of the imagined city—like any one of the protagonists examined thus far—and their ability to report violence, be it slow or otherwise, is subsequently resisted because their social authority is unwaveringly

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discounted. In literature, this privilege of one witness over another is analogous to the ways in which genre privileges certain readers over others, with Miéville's novel privileging mystery enthusiasts, and Gaiman's work imagining a community of fantasy readers. Ballard's novel—according to this logic of witness authority—is without an obvious genre-label and any presupposed readership, and should therefore be discounted as valid commentary on the spatial tension between the imagined and unimagined city— but it is not, and is, if anything, *more* noteworthy than the other two novels. Ballard's *Concrete Island* is without any genre functioning below the surface as a template for the plot as there are no assumed tropes or story elements which direct the narrative. Without genre—without borders and boundaries giving the novel a monotonous, predictable structure seen in countless other works—Ballard effectively illustrates the violence against the non-privileged environment through the brutal defensiveness of Proctor who refuses to allow Maitland, the capitalist, into his privatized world; it is only as Maitland gradually transitions into acceptance of his new environment that Proctor likewise accepts Maitland into his collection. None of this is to suggest that the works of Miéville and Gaiman are inferior to Ballard's—on the contrary, they are valuable pieces of criticism in their own right and, in juxtaposition with *Concrete Island*, facilitate an ideal of unitary urbanism in a way which Ballard alone cannot illustrate.

In "Geopolitics of Hibernation" the Situationists suggest that "[t]he 'balance of terror' between two rival groups of states—the most visible aspect of global politics at the present moment—is also a balance of resignation: the resignation of each antagonist to the permanence of the other" (100). Indeed, imagined and unimagined communities remain statically situated in an eternal conflict whereby each refuses to recreate itself according to the forms of the other—the unimagined city refuses to embody the monotonous, though stable ethos of its privileged oppressor, and the imagined city refuses to void its dominant ideological frameworks in invitation to those not privileged. While the Situationists diagnose this tension as key to spatio-political presencing, the juxtaposition of the genre-works of Miéville and Gaiman with the genre-less *Concrete Island* reveals the fallacy of this logic because together the three novels—the two imagined and one unimagined—constitute an analysis of the cityscape which cannot be

achieved by any of these novels in isolation. Miéville and Gaiman, through the lens of their respective genres, provide a subliminal account of the processes involved in physically and psychologically transitioning from the realm of privilege to that of non-privilege and the hint toward metamorphosis—their spatial preoccupations are present, but are occluded by their dominant genre-structured arcs. Conversely, Ballard spends little time focussing on the actual physical transition and instead offers an unclouded examination of his protagonist's psyche, his inevitable psychogeographical transcendence, and the violence inherent in the segregation and subsequent resistance of the unimagined city's inhabitants. Each account, individually, is worthy of merit, but when brought together are able to unite as two sides of a metaphorical coin: the actual segregation observed within the imagined genre-novel, and the resulting violence of this action as observed within the unimagined, genre-less novel. Collectively, the three novels do precisely that which they illustrate by effectively détourning the entire reading process—negating themselves and reusing their most stable and basic parts, namely: the subliminal process of isolation of the genre novel and the unobstructed, though unimagined engagement with the non-privileged space of the genre-less text. The imagined and unimagined novels, together, constitute a more complete image of the cityscape which is unavailable without both sides, and this revelation extends to the city they represent.

Certainly, Gaiman and Ballard are writing about London, but even Miéville's fictional cities are quite probably caricatures of his own home, and, as such, should not be discounted. Unitary urbanism, Sadler concludes, was introduced by the Situationists as "a vision of the unification of space and architecture with the social body, and with the individual body as well" (118), which is to say that the movement is preoccupied with uniting spaces, aesthetics, and urban social discourse under a single milieu. While each novel demonstrates unity between the former two elements, it is only through the juxtaposition of multiple texts from both privileged and non-privileged frames that the latter social component is observed, with each novel adding its own angle to one over-

arching argument[5]. The way the novels operate together to form a larger, critical movement is analogous to the way an ideal city would operate, with each community— both the imagined and the unimagined—offering its unique elements to a united whole. It is only by allowing the unimagined community presence that any complete commentary on the non-privileged situation can be established. Nixon outlines how discounted communities remain as such because the dominant frames do not allow these populations to speak for themselves and because the privileged classes are not speaking on their behalf (16). Evidently, the tension between privileged and non-privileged spaces is one which is highly volatile—met with consistent resistance—and uniting the city on the whole involves a fundamental re-thinking of the epistemological frames in place, as imagining the unimagined metropolis relies equally on the involvement of the privileged city as well as the very spaces and urbanites they necessarily ostracise. The only way to fully unite the metropolis beyond the individual or the few is, evidently, through a unity between communities, but such a unity is impossible as long as the imagined and unimagined cities remain at odds with each other—deadlocked in a battle between epistemology and free association.

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[5] The novels and the over-arching argument are then read by a reader which introduces the individual body into the mix that Sadler mentions.

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