Calvino's Desiring Machines:
Literature and the Non-Human in Deleuze and Calvino

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RESUME

Cette thèse monte une rencontre entre l'oeuvre du
philosophe francais, Gilles Deleuze et les nouvelles de
l'écrivain italien, Italo Calvino. Cette rencontre a, comme
sujet, la question de l'humaine et le non-humaine. Quelles
forces constituent l'humaine? Quelles agencements d'elements
constituent la langue, la littérature, la subjectivite? Et
qu'est ce qu'il signifie que ses forces viennent du dehors
de l'humaine en même temps qu'elles créent l'humaine?
Calvino est fréquemment accusé de manquer de chaleur
humaine. Je suis complètement en accord. Calvino manque de
chaleur humaine parce qu'il permet les forces non-humaines
de pénétrer ses écrits, envoyant-les au dela de l'emotion
conventionelle, banale et prefabriquée en une dimension de
nouvelles intensités. Deleuze nous donnera une vocabulaire
de concepts pour discuter ces forces non-humaines et leurs
potentialités pour prendre l'humaine hors du soi et vers un
nouveau agencement de pensées, passions et actions.

ABSTRACT

This thesis stages a meeting between the work of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and the short fiction of Italian writer Italo Calvino. This meeting has as its subject the question of the human and the non-human. What forces make up the human? What assemblages of elements make up language, literature, subjectivity? And what does it mean that these forces come from outside the human at the same time as they create the human? Calvino is often accused of being an unemotional writer, lacking in human warmth. With this I agree completely. Calvino does lack human warmth because he allows non-human forces to penetrate his writing, taking it beyond conventionalized and banal prefabricated emotion into a dimension of new intensities. Deleuze will provide us with a vocabulary of concepts with which to discuss these non-human forces and their potential for moving the human out of itself and into a new assemblage of thoughts, passions and actions.

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Le principe général de Foucault est:
toute forme est un composé de rapports
de forces. Des forces étant données, on
se demandera donc d'abord avec quelles
forces du dehors elles entrent en
rapport, ensuite quelle forme en
découle. Soit des forces dans l'homme:
forces d'imaginer, de se souvenir, de
concevoir, de vouloir... On objectera
que de telles forces supposent déjà
l'homme; mais ce n'est pas vrai, comme
forme.
     Deleuze **Foucault**

Foucault's general priniciple is that
every form is a compound of relations
between forces. Given these forces our
first question is with what forces from
the outside they enter into a relation,
and then what form is created as a
result. These may be forces within man:
the force to imagine, remember,
conceive, wish, and so on. One might
object tha such forces already
presuppose man, but in terms of form
this is not true.
     Deleuze **Foucault**

Forma non ne avevo, cioè non sapevo
d'averne, ossia non sapevo che si
potesse averne una. Crescevo un po' da
tutte le parti, come vien viene; se è
questo che chiamate simmetria raggiata,
vuol dire che avevo simmetria raggiata,
ma per la verità non ci ho mai fatto
attenzione...dato che non avevo forma mi
sentivo dentro tutte le forme possibili,
e tutti i gesti e le smorfie e le
possibilità di far rumori, anche
sconvenienti. Insomma, non avevo limiti
ai miei pensieri, che poi non erano
pensieri perché non avevo un cervello in
cui pensarli, e ogni cellula pensava per
conto suo tutto il pensabile tutto in
una volta, non attraverso immagini, che
non ne avevamo a disposizione di nessun
genere, ma semplicemente in quel modo di
sentirsi lì che non escludeva nessun
modo di sentirsi lì in un altro modo.
          Calvino Le cosmicomiche

Form? I didn't have any; that is, I
didn't know I had one, or rather, I
didn't know you could have one. I grew
more or less on all sides at random; if
this is what you call radial symmetry, I
suppose I had radial symmetry, but to
tell you the truth I never paid any
attention to it...since I had no form I
could feel all possible forms in myself,
and all actions and expressions and
possibilities of making noises, even
rude ones. In short, there were no
limitations to my thoughts, which
weren't thoughts, after all, because I
had no brain to think them; every cell
on its own thought every thinkable thing
all at once, not through images, since
we had no images of any kind at our
disposal, but simply in that
indeterminate way of feeling oneself
there, which did not prevent us from
feeling ourselves equally there in some
other way
          Italo Calvino Cosmicomics

Introduction

There is a feeling that mixes vertiginous fear with a
kind of limitless freedom, the feeling that can be either
falling or flying, when one begins to see the inhuman forces
that combine to create what is most human in us:
subjectivity, language, writing.

The term "inhuman" itself provides us with a clue as
to how pervasive and entrenched the notion of personhood or
humanity is. "Inhuman", "animalistic", "machinelike":
whatever challenges the dominance of the human is relegated
to this dark region beyond the pale of safety and
comprehension. Indeed, when the majority of human beings are
fighting for the right to be recognized as full subjects in
the classical tradition, with legal recognition and an
authoritative voice in public discourse, it would seem to be
the worst possible strategy to undermine this goal. This is
the first paradox in what will be a series: the human and
the inhuman do not exclude each other, though they are in a
relationship where, at different times, one is always
dominant (but never finally wins) and the other is dominated
(though never ultimately loses).

The place where the human and the inhuman meet most
intensely is the body: "The body". This is the body that has
become a political term, a site of resistance and

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appropriation, a locus of change. There is no social issue that does not in some way - usually directly - bring in the body: poverty, violence, sexism, racism. Social control, even knowledge itself as Foucault has shown, begins with the manipulation of bodies. By ignoring the complexities of the physical, we allow the creation of a series of transcendent forces - language, law, medicine, morality - that act upon the body from above, as if it were a passive receptacle and as if these forces did not constitute bodies themselves. But this is a complex term, "the body".

> Toute force est en rapport avec
> d'autres, soit pour obéir, soit pour
> commander. Ce qui definit un corps est
> ce rapport entre des forces dominates et
> des forces dominees. Tout rapport de
> forces constitue un corps: chimique,
> biologique, social, politique. Deux
> forces quelconques, etant inegales,
> constituent un corps des qu'elles
> entrent en rapport... (<u>Nietzsche</u> 45).

> Every force is related to others and it
> either obeys or commands. What defines a
> body is this relationship between
> dominant and dominated forces. Every
> relationship of forces constitutes a
> body -- whether it is chemical,
> biological, social, or political. Any
> two forces, being unequal, constitute a
> body as soon as they enter into a
> relationship (<u>Nietzsche</u> 40)

It is with this complex view of the body that we can begin our project. Our first goal is to ask how the body enters into writing. In order to do this we must decompose

the body into the forces that make it up, then see how these forces enter into the text, or create the text. Our second goal, once we have at least in part identified the complex of forces that cross from the body to writing or writing to the body, is to begin to examine some of the ways these forces interact with each other, according to what strategies, with what affinities, what translations, what results.

Gille Deleuze, alone and with Felix Guattari, has provided a wealth of concepts for posing these questions. Our approach to Deleuze will be a pragmatic one, taking what we need without concern for the "totality" of Deleuzian thought. Deleuze's writings have always proceeded by discontinuity. The Deleuzian concept is defined by its range of possibility rather than a sharply defined meaning. We have ranged over the works of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari to find what can help us speak of the body and its forces, and its interaction with literature. A Thousand Plateaus, The Logic of Sense, Le Pli, Foucault, Nietzsche and Philosophy, Kafka Toward a Minor Literature, and Dialogues have provided a wealth of concepts from which to assemble a working theory of bodies and forces.

Though I may be accused of pandering to the kind of unified subjectivity I am trying to undermine, I have chosen to focus on the work -- or rather the short works -- of one writer: Italo Calvino. Many of Calvino's best known short

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works have experimented with character, subjectivity and perception (Cosmicomics, Invisible Cities, T-Zero, Under the Jaguar Sun) while others have, at least seemingly, concentrated on more traditional characterizations and situations (Difficult Loves, Marcovaldo, Mr Palomar). The same forces, however, run through all of Calvino's short work. His experiments with perception, affect, the body in writing, can be seen as much in his "realistic" work, as in his more "cosmic" tales. In fact, read together, his works suggest not only the profoundly non-human nature of consciousness, but also the way in which the closed circuit of human consciousness can open itself up to the outside. We are doing this, opening Calvino to Deleuze, Deleuze to Calvino, to see what will come of the encounter.

The Body is not a Character

What is more human than character? In life it defines a person's uniqueness; in literature it is the convention by which we recognize ourselves. Even the body can be subsumed by character. A man does not simply have a face, he has a craggy face, a slightly jowly look that suggests a sensuous nature, hard, tormented eyes. The body becomes a way of signifying (indeed embodying) character traits. And character -- in life as in literature -- is always difficult to develop. It relies on the interaction of several levels of affect. Characters are "complex", three dimensional. They have memories. They have difficult, ambivalent relationships with their memories. They have relationships, motivations, fears, desires, all in delicate balance. The best way to ruin a character (and ruining a character, significantly, means making her two dimensional) is to upset this balance, tie the character to one affect, one purpose. Yet this is precisely what Calvino does with a number of his characters, especially Mr. Palomar and Qfwfq of Cosmicomics.

> Although he does possess certain
> attributes, Palomar, as is usual with
> Calvino's protagonists, is not a fully
> developed character. He is a generic
> figure, not an individual. In this way,

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the author ensures that he remains a
mobile observer, whose point(s) of view
is not limited or determined by the
parameters of his personality (Van Der
Linde 76).

Qfwfq is a narrative actant who ideally
embodies the function of "perspective on
the world": [He] ...is not even a
character, Qfwfq, is a voice, a point of
view, a human eye (or a wink) projected
upon the reality of a world which is
ever more refractory towards words and
images (Cannon 54).

When a character is absolved of the responsibility of

representing a human being, when the reader does not insist

on seeing himself in the character, the virtualities

contained in that character can be set free. Both Palomar

and Qfwfq are bodies in the universe who look (and, contrary

to Cannon's description, the act of looking is not

necessarily human). It is their vision that defines them,

thought what they observe often seems strange and

incomprehensible.

Mi guardai intorno: non riconosceva
niente. Alberi, cristalli, bestie, erbe,
tutto era diverso. Non solo uccelli
popolavano i rami, ma pesci (dico per
dire) con gambe di ragno o (diciamo)
vermi con le penne. ("L'Origine degli
uccelli" Ti con zero 25)

I looked around. I didn't recognize
anything. Trees, crystals, animals,
grasses -- everything was different. Not
only did birds inhabit the branches, but
so did fish (after a manner of speaking)
with spiders' legs or (you might say)
worms with feathers. ("The Origin of the
Birds" Time and the Hunter 19)

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La scelta tra televisione e geco non
avviene sempre senze incertezze; i due
spettacoli hanno ognuno delle
informazioni da dare che l'altro non dà:
la televisione si muove per i continenti
raccogliendo impulsi luminosi che
descrivono la faccia visibile delle
cose; il geco invece rappresenta la
concentrazione immobile e l'aspetto
nascosto, il rovescio di cio che si
mostra alla vista ("La pancia del geco"
Palomar   58-59).

The choice between television and Gecko
is not always made without some
hesitation; each of the two spectatcles
has some information to offer that the
other does not provide. The television
ranges over continents, gathering
luminous impulses that describe the
visible face of things; the gecko, on
the other hand, represents immobile
concentration and the hidden side, the
obverse of what is displayed to the eye
(The Gecko's Belly Mr. Palomar 56-7)

An objection hovers on the tip of the tongue. These
observations, this vision, is by no means pure. It is part
of a very human project, to observe the universe in order to
understand it. This objection is based on two notions that
will be dealt with in section two. First that there is a
correspondance between seeing and speaking. We can speak of
what we see, and therefore seeing as a bodily function is
subsumed by the scientific project of understanding. As we
will see, the connection between vision and discourse is a
problematic one. The second questionable notion implied by
the objection is that understanding itself is an

unproblematically human project, whereas, in fact,

understanding is a complex of events, phantasms, and forces

that comes from the outside of the human sphere. Again, we

will have to wait to examine this question in more detail.

What remains then is the body as affect, the body in

the process of actualizing its potential. As we will see,

the body is best seen as a process rather than an object, a

verb rather than a noun.

> Qu'est-ce que le corps? Nous ne le
> definissons pas en disant qu'il est un
> champ de forces, un milieu nourricier
> que se dispute une pluralite de forces.
> Car, en fait, il n'y a pas de "milieu",
> pas de champ de forces ou de bataille.
> Il n'y a pas de quantite de realite,
> toute realite est deja quantite de
> force. Rien que des quantites de force
> "en relation de tension" les unes avec
> les autres (<u>Nietzsche</u> 45).

> What is the body? We do not define it by
> saying it is a field of forces, a
> nutrient medium fought over by a
> plurality of forces. For in fact there
> is no medium, no field of forces or
> battle. There is no quantity of reality,
> all reality is already quantity of
> force. There are nothing but quantities
> of force in mutual "relations of
> tension" (Deleuze, <u>Nietzsche</u> 39-40)

This is the body. A battle with no battle field, or

rather a space that only comes into existence when forces

encounter each other. The body of Qfwfq and of Palomar are

characterized (in the two stories above) by vision. It is

easier to see these two figures as non-characters simply

because they are so alien to our image of ourselves. Qfwfq
is a constantly evolving being who retains images of his
previous existences. Palomar is almost solely an analytic
consciousness and a gaze. But what of Calvino's other
stories, his more conventional characters? Here too we see
bodies caught unawares, out of their usual habitats, or in
situations where the ache that gives the story its poignancy
is physical.

Like Palomar and Qfwfq, some of the figures in
Difficult Loves are embodied gazes: Amilcare in "The
Adventure of the Nearsighted Man" and Antonino in "The
Adventure of a Photographer". The former finds his world
changed when he gets eyeglasses. Vision, for Amilcare,
becomes a life-defining act. For Antonino, vision is a more
aggressive act (not because, in the conventional sense it
hides a deeper more complex set of motivations, but simply
by being so insistently and relentlessly itself.) His desire
to capture his reality, his relationship with his
model/lover Bice, and his breakdown after her departure are
all experienced in terms of vision. So much so, that it
would be far more accurate to say that his emotional states
are only meaningful in how they shape his gaze. Amilcare
becomes his vision. There is nothing more to know of him.

The body, however, is not only vision. In two other
adventures - "The Adventure of a Soldier" and "The Adventure
of a Bather" - we see the bodies tranformed almost entirely

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into flesh. Private Tomagra, in "The Adventure of a Soldier"
tries to seduce an attractive widow not through words but by
surreptitiously touching her more and more boldly. Only the
pretext of pure physicality, divorced from intention can
sustain Tomagra's aggression.

> Bisogna dire che Tomagra s'era messo a
> capo riverso contro il sostegno, cosí
> che si sarebbe anche potuto dire che
> dormisse: era questo, piú che un alibi
> per sé, un offrire alla signora, nel
> caso che le sue insistenze non la
> indisponessero, il modo di non
> sentirsene in disagio, sapendoli gesti
> separati dalla coscienza, affioranti
> appena da uno stagno di sonno (7).

> It must be said that Tomagra had thrown
> his head back against the seat, so one
> might also had thought that he was
> sleeping: this was not so much an alibi
> for himself as it was a way of offering
> the lady, in the event that his
> insistence didn't irritate her, a reason
> to feel at ease, knowing that his
> actions were divorced from his
> consciousness, surfacing barely from the
> depths of sleep (6).

Ironically, what is meant as a ploy in fact reveals the
workings of the encounter far more effectively than any
study of character or motivation. There are two bodies
together, their affects are fear and desire (which are much
better described as forces of the body than complex emotions
to be analysed). Their encounter is never other than an
encounter of flesh against flesh.

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In "The Adventure of a Bather" the realization that she is her body comes as a terrifying shock to Signora Isotta Barbarino. Having lost the bottom half of her bathing suit while swimming, she is suddenly suffused in her own flesh.

> la pelle del nitido ventre biancheggiava
> rivelatrice, tra il bruno del petto e
> delle cosce, e né il muovere d'un'onda
> né il navigare a mezz'acqua d'alghe
> semisommerse confondevano lo scuro e il
> chiaro del suo grembo. La signora
> riprese a nuotare in quella sua ibrida
> maniera, tenendo il corpo piú basso che
> poteva, ma, pur senza fermarsi, si
> voltava a guardare con la coda
> dell'occhio dietro le spalle: e a ogni
> bracciata tutta la bianca ampiezza della
> sua persona ecco appariva al giorno nei
> contorni piú riconoscibili e segreti. E
> lei ad affannarsi, a cambiare modo e
> senso del nuoto, e si girava nell'acqua,
> s'osservava in ogni inclinazione e in
> ogni luce, si contorceva su se stessa; e
> sempre quest'offensivo nudo corpo le
> veniva dietro. Era una fuga dal suo
> corpo, che lei stava tentando...(21).

> the skin of the pale revealing belly
> gleamed, between the tan of the bosom
> and the thighs, and neither the motion
> of a wave, nor the half-sunken drift of
> seaweed could merge the darkness and the
> pallor of her abdomen. The Signora
> resumed swimming in that mongrel way of
> hers, keeping her body as low as she
> could, but never stopping, she would
> turn to look out of the corner of her
> eye over her shoulder: at every stroke
> all the white breadth of her person
> appeared in the light of day, in its
> most identifiable and secret forms. And
> she did everything to change the style
> and direction of her swimming, she
> turned in the water, she observed
> herself at every angle and in every
> light, she writhed upon herself; and

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> always this offensive naked body pursued
> her. It was a flight from her own body
> that she was attempting...(22-23).

Far from being monotonous or trivial, a concentration on the body allows for a new set of feelings, a new relation of affects. Two of Calvino's most poignant stories make almost no use of emotional terms, but somehow still manage to create a powerful effect by showing bodies interacting with each other and with their surroundings. In "The Adventure of a Traveller" Calvino describes in minute detail a night Federico V spends sleeping on a train on his way to Rome to see his lover Cinzia U. Though it might be argued that the train ride itself pales in significance compared to the absent loved one, this would not take into account the value, the positive and creative desire, embodied in the train ride, the feeling of falling asleep, the drift in and out of consciousness. Federico experiences not exactly Cinzia herself, but something that is presnt when Cinzia is present, while going beyond the need for her presence. Federico experiences his own body.

> Lo stato di costrizione in cui ora sentiva il suo
> corpo, gli richiamava pensieri di libertà fisica,
> di mare, di nudità, di nuoto, di corse, e tutto
> questo culminava nell'abbraccio di Cinzia, somma
> di tutto il bene dell'esistere. E lì, nel
> dormiveglia, non distingueva neanche più i disagi
> presenti dal bene vagheggiato, aveva tutto a un
> tempo, si crogiolava in un malessere che
> presupponeva e quasi conteneva in sé ogni
> possibile benessere (54).

> The constricted condition of his body that he now
> felt evoked thoughts of physical freedom, the sea,
> nakedness, swimming, running, and all this
> culminated in the embracing of Cinzia, the sum of
> the good existence. And there, half-sleeping, he
> could no longer distinguish present discomforts
> from the yearned for good; he had everything at
> once; he writhed in an uneasiness that presupposed
> and virtually contained every possible well being
> (61).

At the end of the tale, when Federico arrives in Rome
and is about to phone Cinzia he realizes "che non sarebbe
riuscito a dirle nulla di quel che era stata per lui quella
notte, che gia sentiva svanire, come ogni perfetta notte
d'amore, al dirompere crudele dei giorni"(58) ["he would
never manage to tell her anything of the significance of
that night, which he now sensed was fading, like every
perfect night of love, at the cruel explosion of day" (66)].
Again, to counter the inevitable objections, Federico's
pleasure is not simply the mental pleasure of anticipation.
It is tied to his body, its absorption in detail, its states
of consciousness and unconsciousness, and the minute
sensations that cross his skin.

In "The Adventure of a Married Couple" we see the same
attention to small details in the cataloguing of the morning
and evening activities of a couple who work two different
shifts and rarely see each other. On film one could almost
imagine the entire story taking place without words, only
the language of bodies. The story culminates with a physical
gesture that needs no deeper explanation.

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Elide andava a letto, spegneva la luce.
Dalla propria parte, corticata,
strisciava un piede verso il posto di
suo marito, per cercare il calore di
lui, ma ogni volta s'accorgeva che dove
dormiva lei era più caldo, segno che
anche Arturo aveva dormito lí, e ne
provava una grande tenerezza (90).

Elide went to bed, turned off the light.
From her own half, lying there, she
would slide one foot towards her
husband's place, looking for his warmth,
but each time she realized it was warmer
where she slept, a sign that Arturo had
slept there too, and she would feel a
great tenderness (102).

In another collection, <u>Marcovaldo</u>, Calvino demonstrates

how even a more detailed character can be a body. Detail,

complexity and close observation do not always and

necessarily make for a traditional three dimensional

character. The three dimensionality of a "well drawn"

character is much more a matter of specific organization of

affects rather than a more detailed or complete one.

Marcovaldo, in the picaresque tradition, is a character

whose depths we never need to explore. His needs, desires,

motivations are almost aimed at satisfying physical

appetites. We know nothing of his history, relatively little

of his family life. His adventures are often difficult to

read in terms of personal or psychological motivation. He

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read in terms of personal or psychological motivation. He
lives in his milieu and adapts himself to it. He is more a
surface that connects to the outside than a depth that can
be explored.

What do these bodies have in common? If they are not
characters does it mark a failure of authorial skill? Or
does a focus on the body allow for new affects in writing?
We have seen that bodies, as such, are never seen in
isolation (unlike the isolated consciousness of the self-
contained character). What bodies do is connect, either to
other bodies (Tomagra and the widow), animals (Mr. Palomar
and the Gecko), machines (the photographer's camera and
Federico's train). Perhaps this should be rephrased. The
body, as a thing, does not connect to other things. Rather
the principle of the body, what brings it into being, is the
very act of connecting. These connections do not distinguish
between organic and no-organic, concrete and abstract. The
body, as we have seen, is where forces meet. The tendency to
connect, the affinity of one force for another, is desire.
It is desire that makes the body complex, that makes it
break the bounds of character and move towards the non-human
of the world, and the non-human within the human.

Desiring Production

Desiring production is the first force which will begin to expand the body beyond its limits. It is what connects the forces of the body with the forces outside of it.

> Desire is production, or "desiring production", claim Deleuze and Guattari, not acquisition or lack. Desire is coextensive with natural and social activity, an unbound, free floating energy which Freud called Libido and Nietzsche called will to power. Desire is essentially unconscious, and hence unrelated to negation (there is no "no" in the unconscious), indifferent to personal identities or body images (central to Lacan's imaginary order) and independent of linguistic expression or interpretation...Pure multiplicity, "irreducible to any sort of unity", pre-personal, pre-individual, desire is "not internal to a subject, any more than it tends toward an object: it is strictly immanent to a plane which it does not preexist, to a plane that must be constructed, in which particles are emitted, fluxes are conjoined" (Bogue, 89).

> Desire is the production of singular states of intensity by the repulsion-attraction of limitative bodies without organs (governed by deterministic whole attractors) and nonlimiative bodies without organs (governed by chance-ridden fractal attractors)...On the human level, it is never a strictly personal affair, but a tension betwen sub and superpersonal tendencies that intersect in the person as empty category (Massumi 82).

Desire is a term easily misunderstood. Jacques Lacan, by basing desire in lack, created a model in which even the most productive and heterogeneous process of desiring production is tied back to absence, a lost object, a primal repression.

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Calvino's collection of short fiction (or prose poetry)
Invisible Cities, brings the issue of desire into sharp
focus; it also reveals some of the fundamental
misunderstandings that can come about when desired is
conceived on a negative model. Two Calvino critics, Flavia
Ravzzoli and Francesco de Martini, negativize desire by
tying it to the mother figure and divorcing it from reality.

> Queste città del desiderio sono belle donne
> irragiungibili, proietzioni cartografiche al
> femminile di enigmi irrisolti e fantasie di
> seduzione (Ravazzoli 193).

> Cosi le "città" calviniane stimolano un
> ricchissimo, coloratissimo zodiaco di fantasmi
> solo perché, invisibili, non sono le città della
> realtà ma quelle del sogno, del desiderio, della
> memoria (De Martini 172).

To keep desire from reality, in fact to oppose it to
reality, is a way of keeping it from fulfilling its own
particular way of being. Far from being opposed to reality,
"desire...produces reality, both in the economic sense of
labor-power shaping the material world and in the cognitive
sense of psychic drives shaping the phenomenal world"
(Holland 20). There is an "Essential tie between
storytelling and desire. In Calvino's work repeatedly we see
desire played out thematically as the motive drive of the
continual unfolding and regenerating of the narrative"
(Harris 75). This is not a desire that is essentially a
search for a lost object. It is not represented by

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Ravazzoli's "belle donne irragiungibili" (beautiful,
unattainable women). In fact, the kind of desire described
by Deleuze is better exemplified in Calvino's story
"Mitosis" from Time and The Hunter. "Mitosis" describes the
splitting of a cell, and the moment of discontinuity that
leads from one life to two. Here, too, it is desire that
creates the transformation, but a desire far different from
the Lacanian model of desire based in lack. As in
Cosmicomics, it is Qfwfq who speaks:

> Su questo stato di desiderio è meglio essere più
> precisi: si verifica uno stato di desiderio quando
> da uno stato di soddisfazione si passa a uno stato
> di crescente soddisfazione e quindi, subito dopo,
> a uno stato di insoddifacente soddisfazione cioe
> di desiderio. Non è vero che lo stato di desiderio
> si verifichi quando manca qualcosa; se qualcosa
> manca, pazienza, se ne fa a meno, e se è una cosa
> indispensabile facendo a meno si fa a meno
> d'esercitare una qualche funzione vitale, e quindi
> si procede rapidamente verso una sicura
> estinzione. Voglio dire che su di uno stato di
> mancanza puro e semplice non può nascere nulla,
> nulla di buono e neanche nulla di cattivo,
> soltanto altre mancanze fino alla mancanza della
> vita, condizione notoriamente né buona né cattiva.
> Ma uno stato di mancanza puro e semplice non
> esiste, che io sappia, in natura: lo stato di
> mancanza si sperimenta sempre in contrasto con un
> precedente stato di soddisfazione, ed è sullo
> stato di soddisfazione che cresce tuttoche può
> crescere. E non è vero che uno stato di desiderio
> presupponga necessariamente un qualcosa
> desiderato; il qualcosa desiderato comincia a
> esserci solo una volta che c'è lo stato di
> desiderio (73-74).

> I had better be more precise about this state of
> desire business: a state of desire takes place
> when, from a state of satisfaction, one passes to

a state of mounting satisfaction and then, immediately thereafter, to a state of dissatisfying satisfaction, namely, of desire. It isn't true that the state of desire takes place when something is missing; if something is missing, too bad, you do without it, and if something is indispensible, in doing without it you do without some vital function, and therefore you proceed rapidly toward certain extinction. I mean that from a simple state of lack nothing can be born, nothing good and nothing bad, only other lacks including finally the lack of life, a condition notoriously neither good nor bad. But a state of lack pure and simple doesn't exist, as far as I know, in nature: the state of lack is always experienced in contrast with a previous state of satisfaction, and it is from this state of satisfaction that everything which can grow, grows. And it isn't true that a state of desire presupposes necessarily a desired something; the desired something only begins to exist when there is a state of desire (66).

Qfwfq -- in this incarnation a single cellular organism -- is speaking of the moments that will precede his own death, the discontinuitiy of his being as it splits into two new beings. In fact, desire's connections, its affinity for conjugation, often leads to a kind of destruction of the body, the crossing of a threshold that can be called death.

In Calvino's story "Under the Jaguar Sun" from the collection of the same name, this desire takes the form of cannibalism. A couple travel to Mexico where the experience of Spanish and Indian cuisine is transformed into a sensual interplay that culminates not only in a mutual consumption, but in the crossing of lines between human being and food.

Sotto la pergola di paglia d'un ristorante in riva
a un fiume, dove Olivia m'aveva atteso, i nostri
denti presero a muoversi lentamente con pari ritmo
e i nostri sguardi si fissarono l'uno nell'altro
con un'intensità di serpenti. Serpenti
immedesimati nello spasimo d'inghiottirci a
vicenda, coscienti d'essere a nostra volta
inghiottirci dal serpente che tutti ci digerisce e
assimila incessantemente nel processo d'indestione
e digestione del cannibalismo universale che
impronta di sé ogni rapporto amoroso e annulla i
confini tra nostri corpi e la sopa de frijoles, lo
huacinango a la veracruzana, le enchiladas
(56-57).

Under the thatched arbor of a restaurant on a
riverbank, where Olivia had waited for me, our
teeth began to move slowly, with equal rhythm, and
our eyes stared into each other's with the
intentsity of serpents' -- serpents concentrated
in the ecstasy of swallowing each other in turn,
as we were aware, in our turn, of being swallowed
by the universal cannibalism that leaves its
imprint on every amorous relationship and erases
the line between our bodies and sopa de frijoles,
huachinango a la vera crusana, and enchiladas
(29).

It is only from the point of view of the human that
cannibalism is an outrage. It effectively breaches the
dividing line between the human and the non-human.

This discontinuity characteristic of desire is not a
nihilistic destruction, but always the crossing of a
threshold from one temporary form to another. It is always,
therefore, in service of a positive project.

In Invisible Cities Calvino reminds us that "Le città
come i sogni sono construite di desideri e di paure, anche
se il filo del loro discorso è segreto, le loro regole
assurde, le prospettive ingannevoli, e ogni cosa ne nasconde

un'altra" (50) ["Cities, like dreams, are made of desires
and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret,
their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and
everything conceals something else."(36)]. This is the
desire that builds, that unfolds a field of objects, fluxes,
relationships and affects -- constructive desire. When
desire is negative, founded on a lost object, it can only
create a city like Zobeide, a city built by men who had
shared the same dream of chasing a beautiful naked woman
through the streets of an unknown city until she finally
eluded them. The city they built when they came together was
designed to block off each route of escape should the chase
ever occur again. As a result, Zobeide is turned into a
giant trap. Negative desire, because it cannot go beyong its
obsessive lost object, always turns into such a trap, ugly
and impossible to escape.

But in what way can this desire be said to be inhuman?
We began with a body that opposed itself to the three
dimensionality of character by decomposing into forces. The
desire of this body, or the desire in which this body finds
itself immersed, is composed of forces.

> ...la force n'est jamais au singulier, il lui
> appartient essentiellement d'être en rapport avec
> d'autres forces, si bien que toute force est déjà
> en rapport avec d'autres forces, si bien que toute
> force est deja rapport, c'est-à-dire pouvoir: la
> force n'a pas d'autre objet ni sujet que la force
> (Foucault 77).

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> ...force is never singular but essentially exists
> in relation with other forces, such that any force
> is already a relation, that is to say power: force
> has no other subject or object than force
> (Foucault 70).

Forces, then, are by definition non-human-- except for
one. That is the particular amalgam of medical, scientific,
political and linguistic forces we have come to designate
the human. This particular combination, in spite of all the
mechanisms in place to maintain it, is unstable, temporary,
and on the verge of decomposing. When it decomposes its
forces will again be freed to enter new combinations (with
machines, with drugs, with other affects and perceptions
that will subvert the whole idea of human motivation).

In Calvino, these forces act on the microscopic levels,
in the inescapable codings of genetics ("Meiosis" in Time
and the Hunter), and on levels far above the scale of the
individual consciousness, as in Invisible Cities where even
the "man made" structure of Kubla Khan's empire resists a
unifying "human" interpretation.

Language Exists on the Same Plane as Objects

The astute reader remains unconvinced. Yes, there is a
world of the non-human surrounding the human. Yes, there are
non-human forces that penetrate the human. But no,
literature is not one of these non-human forces. In fact,

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the opposite argument can easily be made: literature is the
human activity par excellence, and the fiction of Italo
Calvino only reinforces this idea. Calvino uses writing to
impose order on the disordered non-human universe. Language
and literature appropriate the non-human, take it to a
higher plane. Humanity is distinguished by its use of signs.

This is a convincing argument, but one that is based on
a shaky axiom: that language is a transcendent plane that
can speak of the world while being, at some level, removed
from it: the world is caught up in the higher reality of the
sign; the physical can be represented by language which is
somehow of a different nature. Language is accorded a
special privilege by being placed above the physicality of
the world.

This is the common sense, familiar view of language and
writing; the view that says, reasonably, that it doesn't
matter what language speaks of -- history, physics, love,
bodies, stocks and bonds, games -- it is still always
language, always the same thing.

It flies in the face of common sense to say that
language is something else, that there is some more
important connection between language and what it speaks of.
And yet, in Austin's theory of the performative and
illocutionary aspects of language, we see a model of
language not based on speaking of things, but in effecting
changes in the states of things. Language becomes doing and

not simply saying. Apart from the more obvious examples of performative and illocutionary acts (a judge transforming a person into a convict by pronouncing him guilty, or a person swearing an oath by speaking a prescribed set of words) we can see that signs always and necessarily act. A sign acts by being a physical body (a sonorous body or a written one) that connects to another body.

> ...les signes travaillent les choses elles-mêmes, en même temps que les choses s'étendent ou se déploient à travers les signes. Un agencement d'énonciation ne parle pas "des" choses, mais parle à même les états de choses ou les états de contenu. Si bien qu'un même x, une meme particule, fonctionnera comme corps qui agit et subit, ou bien comme signe qui fait acte, qui fait mot d'ordre, suivant la forme où il est pris (Milles Plateaux 110).

> ...signs are at work in things themselves just as things extend into or are deployed through signs. An assemblage of enunciation does not speak "of" things; it speaks on the same level as states of things and states of content. So that the same x, the same particle, may function either as a body that acts and undergoes actions or as a sign constituting an act or order word, depending on which form it is taken up by (Plateaus 87).

The verbal sign also has the power, according to Deleuze, to call up a fundamentally non-discursive order: the order of the visible. This is the role of description. To describe is to draw the connection between what is said and what is seen.

> ...les descriptions dessinent autant de tableaux
> qui font surgir les reflets, les éclats, les
> scintillements, visibilités variables suivant les
> heures et les saisons, et qui les distribuent dans
> un être-lumière, un rassemblement de toute la
> lumière dont Faulkner a le secret (Faulkner, le
> plus grande "luministe" de la littérature)
> (Foucault 87-88).

> ...the descriptions conjure up a host of scenes
> which create reflections, flashes, shimmerings,
> visibilities varying according to the time and the
> season, which distribute the descriptions in a
> light-being, a reunion of all the light to which
> Faulkner holds the secret (Faulkner, literature's
> great 'luminist') (Foucault 81).

The word "conjures up" the visible, hooks into a

property of the visible in order to allow it to enter into

the verbal order. A work where decription is paramount

connects to a potential of the visible that is not itself

visible (this is the source of the strange experience of

reading a well-described story and "seeing" the scene).

In his story "A Sign in Space" from Cosmicomics there

is little distinction between the world and the signs that

constitute it. For the perennial Qfwfq "oggetto della

speculazione è la conquista del mondo dei segni, del mondo

come segno e agglutinazione di segni, o, meglio ancora, la

progressiva acquisizione dei segni a dei loro codici

interpretativi" (Di Felice 128). Searching for the first

sign, the sign he himself made in order to establish a point

of reference in an indeterminate galaxy, Qfwfq finds himself

eventually unable to distinguish his original sign from all the others that have cropped up in the universe:

una concrezione calcarea sul basalto, una cresta
sollevata dal vento sulla sabbia rappresa del
deserto, la disposizione degli occhi nelle piume
del pavone (pian piano il vivere tra i segni aveva
portato a vedere come segni le innumerevoli cose
che prima stavano lì senza segnare altro che la
propria presenza, le aveva trasformate nel segno
di se stesse e sommate alla serie dei segni fatti
apposta da chi voleva fare un segno), le striature
del fuoco contro una parete di roccia scistosa, la
quattrocentoventisettesima scanalatura -- un po'
di sbieco -- della cornice del frontone d'un
mausoleo, una sequenza di striature su un video
durante una tempesta magnetica (la serie di segni
si moltiplicava nella serie dei segni di segni, di
segni ripetuti innumerevoli volte sempre uguali e
sempre in qualche modo differenti perché al segno
fatto apposta si sommava il segno capitato lì per
caso), la gamba male inchiostrata della lettera R
che in una copia d'un giornale della sera
s'incontrava con una scoria filamentosa della
carta, una tra le ottocentomila scrostature di un
muro incatramato in un'intercapedine dei docks di
Melbourne, la curva d'una statistica, un frenata
sull'asfalto, un cromosoma (50).

A calcerous concretion on basalt, a crest raised
by the wind on the clotted sand of the desert, the
arrangement of the eyes in a peacock's tail
(gradually, living among signs had led us to see
signs in countless things that, before, were
there, marking nothing but their own presence;
they had been transformed into the signs of
themselves and had been added to the series of
signs made on purpose by those who meant to make
signs), the fire-streaks against a wall of
schistose rock, the four-hundred-and-twenty-
seventh groove, slightly crooked -- of the cornice
of a tomb's pediment, a sequence of streaks on a
video during a thunderstorm (the series of signs
was multiplied in the series of signs of signs, of
signs repeated countless times always the same and
always somehow different because to the purposely

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made sign you had to add the sign that had
happened there by chance), the badly inked tail of
the letter R in an evening newspaper joined to a
thready imperfection in the paper, one among the
eight hundred thousand flakings of a tarred wall
in the Melbourne docks, the curve of a graph, a
skid mark on asphalt, a chromosome...(38-39)

The heterogeneity of this list, the lack of distinction
between natural and artificial signs, gives an important
insight into the physical nature of the sign. Language is,
of course, completely caught up in the process of signing,
but language does not come close to exhausting the potential
of the sign.

A woodworker who sets out to make a table does not
pick just any piece of wood. She chooses the right
piece for the application. When she works it she
does not indiscriminately plow into it with the
plane. She is conscious of the grain and is
directed by it. She reads it and interprets it.
What she reads are signs. Signs are qualities
(colour, texture, durability and so on). And
qualities are much more that simply logical
properties or sense perceptions. They envelop a
potential -- the capacity to be affected or to
submit to a force... and the capacity to affect,
or to release a force (Massumi 10).

There is little sense in insisting on a distinction
between the linguistic sign (which we decompose into the
more familiar terms 'sinifier'and 'signified') and a sign
that can be read in a grain of wood, a flight of crows, or a
patch of dirt. The only difference is the way in which they
are used. The sign must always have some sort of body, a
physical being, and must be tied to something else. A

certain insect's affinity for a specific flower ties the insect and the flower together, making each one a sign of the other's potential. To use one of Deleuze's more popular examples, we cannot speak of the orchid without speaking of the wasp which is part of its reproductive system. When we speak of language, we do not use the word 'potential', but the word 'meaning': "A thing has as many meanings as there are forces capable of seizing it" (Massumi 10). To interpret, then, is to release potentials enveloped in a word (Massumi 11).

This implies what is commonly believed to be a crackpot notion: that there is some direct connection between the word and what it speaks of. This is a direct affront to the transcendentalist view. If the sign is a physical body (which, like all bodies, is an envelopment of forces) that relates to other physical bodies, then language is no longer possessed of the power of God, the power to affect the world without being affected by it. The transcendent position, after all, bases itself on a tenuous assumption, the incarnation of a non-physical force (language) in a physical body (the world). It is a very ancient dilemma with the terms only slightly changed ie. How does the spiritual affect the physical?

But there are many examples of language used not as a spiritual (transcendent) force, but as a physical body interacting on the same plane as other bodies. Certainly in

the case of pornography, there is an attempt to turn the sign (whether a visual image, a voice on the telephone, or a word in a book) into a body that directly affects the body of the viewer/listener/reader. The sign that contains sexual content in some sense contains some of the force and power of sexuality. Humour is another example. The comedian does not convey information. He or she attempts to make an immediate link between the word and the physical reaction (laughter). In the case of comedy there is almost no distinction between the word which the comic uses and the force of humour which it embodies. This is also true, though not quite as clearly, in every other form of writing. Legal writing contains the force of legality, scientific writing is an embodiment of the passion of empiricism or theoretical speculation, medical writing is attached to the potentials and forces of physical bodies. The book contains what it speaks of. Who would argue that a book of poetry has any real connection to a book on accounting just because they both use language?

> Il n'y a pas de différence entre ce dont un livre
> parle et la manière dont il est fait. Un livre n'a
> donc pas davantage d'objet. En tant qu'agencement,
> il est seulement lui-même en connexion avec
> d'autres agencements, par rapport a d'autres corps
> sans organes. On ne demandera jamais ce que veut
> dire un livre, signifié ou signifiant, on ne
> cherchera rien à comprendre dans un livre, on se
> demandera avec quoi il fonctionne, en connexion de
> quoi il fait ou non passer des intensités, dans

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> quelles multiplicités il introduit et métamorphose
> la sienne...(Mille Plateaux 10).

> There is no difference between what a book talks
> about and how it is made. Therefore a book also
> has no object. As an assemblage, a book has only
> itself, in connection with other assemblages and
> in relation to other bodies without organs. We
> will never ask what a book means, as signified or
> signifier; we will not ask for anything to
> understand in it. We will ask what it functions
> with, in connection with what other things it does
> or does not transmit intensities, in which other
> multiplicities its own are inserted and
> metamorphosed... (Plateaus 4).

Signs, then, (as collections of force and potential)
combine with other signs. As Calvino shows, these signs do
not combine according to fixed predetermined laws. The only
thing guiding the combination of signs is their affinity for
one another (it is always more difficult to maintain the
connection between two signs that have low affinity for each
other). The combination of signs is guided largely by
chance and experimentation, as in the city of Hypatia in
Invisible Cities. When Polo arrives in Hypatia he is
confused by the aleatory mixture of signs: suicides in the
pool where he expected to see bathing women, the central
hall of the palace filled with convicts in chains. In order
to find a philosopher to explain this puzzle he must go to a
children's garden.

> Il filosofo sedeva sul prato. Disse: - I segni
> formano una lingua, ma non quella che credi di
> conoscere -. Capii che dovevo liberarmi dalle

immagini che fin qui m'avevano annunciato le cose
che cercavo: solo allora sarei riuscito a
intendere il linguaggio di Ipazia.
Ora basta che senta nitrire i cavalli e schioccare
le fruste e già mi prende una trepidazione
amorosa: a Ipazia devi entrare nelle scuderie e
nei maneggi per vedere le belle donne che montano
in sella con le cosce nude e i gambali sui
polpacci, e appena s'avvicina un giovane straniero
lo rovesciano su mucchi di fieno o di segatura a
lo premono con i saldi capezzoli.
E quando il mio animo non chiede altro alimento e
stimolo che la musica, so che va cercata nei
cimiteri: i suonatori si nascondono nelle tombe;
da una fossa all'altra si rispondono trilli di
flauti, accordi d'arpe (53-54).

The philosopher was seated on the lawn. He said
"signs form a language, but not the one you think
you know." I had realized I had to free myself
from the images which in the past had announced to
me the things I sought: only then would I succeed
in understanding the language of Hypatia. Now I
have only to hear the neighing of horses and I am
seized with amorous trepidation: in Hypatia you
would have to go to the stables and riding rings
to see the beautiful women who mount the saddle,
thighs naked, greaves on their calves, and as soon
as a young foreigner approaches, they fling him on
the piles of hay or sawdust and press their firm
nipples against him. And when my spirit wants no
stimulus or nourishment save music, I know it is
to be sought in the cemetaries: the musicians hide
in the tombs: from grave to grave flute trills,
harp chords answer one another (40-41).

This recombination of signs, the juxtaposition of signs

that seem to have little affinity for each other (horses and

sexuality, graveyards and musicians) demonstrates how

meaning is the connection between signs enveloping a

potential. The particular combinations that make up any

specific historical formation always seem natural,

inevitable and unchangeable to those living within that formation. There is always the possibility for breakdown and recombination if the force of abstraction is not too strong. If signs are seen as abstract, if they do not interact with the physical, political world, they remain static. It is just this universal abstraction that Calvino subverts in his story of love, language, and cannibalism "Under the Jaguar Sun". It is a cannibalism that avoids abstraction by turning the word itself into a body.

Quand elle est presignifiante, l'anthropophagie a precisement ce sens: manger le nom...On evitera de penser que c'est par ignorance, par refoulement ou forclusion du signifiant qu'une telle semiotique fonctionne. Elle est au contraire animee du lourd pressentiment de ce qui va venir...elle est tout entiere destinee par sa segmentarite meme et sa polyvocie a empecher ce qui menace deja: l'abstraction universalisante, l'erection du signifiant, l'uniformisation formelle et substantielle de l'enonciation, la circularite des enonces, avec leurs correlats, appareil d'Etat, installation du despote, caste de pretres, bouc emissaire..., etc. Et chaque fois qu'on mange un mort, on peut dire: encore un que l'Etat n'aura pas (Mille Plateaux 148).

The meaning of cannibalism in a presignifying regime is precisely this: eating the name...It should not be thought that a semiotic of this kind functions by ignorance, repression, or foreclosure of the signifier. On the contrary, it is animated by a keen presentiment of what is to come...It is wholly destined by its very segmentarity and polyvocality to avert the already-present threat: universalizing abstraction, erection of the signifier, circularity of statements, and their correlates, the state apparatus, the instatement of the despot, the priestly caste, the scapegoat,

> etc. Every time they eat a dead man, they can say:
> one more the state won't get (<u>Plateaus</u> 118).

> Il piatto che ci avevano servito si chiamava
> gorditas pellizcadas con manteca, letteralmente
> "paffutelle pizzicate al burro". Io m'immedesimavo
> a divorare in ogni polpetta tutta la fragranza
> d'Olivia attraverso una masticazione voluttuosa,
> una vampiresca estrazione di succhi vitali, ma
> m'accorgevo che in quello che doveva essere un
> rapporto tra tre termini, io-polpetta-Olivia,
> s'inseriva un quarto termine che assumeva un ruolo
> dominante: il nome delle polpette. Era il nome
> "gorditas pellizcadas con manteca" che io gustavo
> sopratutto e assimilavo et possedevo (<u>Giaguaro</u>
> 54).

> The dish was called gorditas pellizcadas con
> manteca -- literally, "plump girls pinched with
> butter". I concentrated on devouring, with every
> meatball, the whole fragrance of Olivia -- through
> voluptuous mastication, a vampire extraction of
> vital juices. But I realized that in a
> relationship that should have been among three
> terms -- me, meatball, Olivia -- a fourth term had
> intruded, assuming a dominant role; the name of
> the meatballs. It was the name "gorditas
> pellizcadas con manteca" that I was especially
> savouring and assimilating and possessing (26-27).

To eat the name, then, is a way of confirming the
physicality of signs, and a way of turning the human into
the non-human (the human body becomes food and the sign
becomes a physical body to be consumed). It is not that the
narrator's "atrophied sense of taste forces him to fall back
on words (Cannon 96)" it is that he has turned the word into
something that can be experienced through the sense of
taste.

Far from being exclusively human, signs are exactly
what go beyond the human, working both on scales far below
(chromosomes, genes) and far above (empires, ecosystems,
galaxies) the human scale. Signs are combined, tied
together, and when they reach a stable formation they seem
not only to have always existed, but to have an infinite
future ahead of them. If signs are potentials, then nothing
attests more to their non-humanity than the difficulty human
consciousness has in interpreting them. Not only the
difficult potential enveloped in astrophysical bodies and
subatomic particles, but even (or especially) the signs and
potentials enveloped in the most human formations:
literature, history, social institutions. As our history
progresses there are more and more potentials being
realized, more and more bodies combining at the level of
affect with others and a more and more inhuman world that
can be either threatening or liberating to the human form
that now inhabits it.

The Phantasm and Incorporeal Materiality

Meaning is still a difficult proposition. If it has to
do with the way that bodies interact (human bodies and signs
as bodies) where does the meaning reside? We are used to
locating meaning in the realm of abstraction, the plane of
transcendence that we have discussed. This transcendent

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plane has several characteristics apart from its separation
from bodies: it is a plane of organization (organs are one
way of topologizing a body, but not the only way), it is
always seen as having some greater stability than the bodies
it organizes (the "laws of the universe" seen naively as
legalistic edicts of God), and it is proclaimed to be of a
higher, deeper, or more authentic reality than the physical
world.

The phantasm, described in Deleuze's The Logic of Sense
shares only one characteristic with this transcendent plane:
it is not corporeal.

> It is this expanding domain of intangible objects
> that must be integrated into our thought: we must
> articulate a philosophy of the phantasm that
> cannot be reduced to a primordial fact through the
> intermediary of perception or an image, but that
> arises between surfaces, where it assumes meaning,
> and in the reversal that causes every interior to
> pass to the outside and every exterior to the
> inside...in short, in what Deleuze would perhaps
> not allow us to call its "incorporeal
> materiality"....Phantasms must be allowed to
> function at the limits of bodies; against bodies,
> because they stick to bodies and protrude from
> them, but also because they touch them, cut them,
> break them into sections, regionalize them, and
> multiply their surfaces; and equally outside of
> bodies, because they function between bodies
> according to laws of proximity, torsion, and
> variable distance...Phantasms do not extend
> organisms into an imaginary domain; they
> topologize the materiality of the body. They
> should be consequently freed from the
> restrictions we impose upon them, freed from the
> dilemmas of truth and falsehood and of being and
> non-being...they must be allowed to conduct their
> dance, to act out their mime, as "extra-beings"
> ("Theatrum" 169-70).

> Ce qui est au-delà de l'actif et du passif, ce
> n'est pas le pronominal, mais le résultat --
> résultat d'actions et de passions, l'effet de
> surface ou l'événement. Ce qui apparaît dans le
> phantasme, c'est le mouvement par lequel le moi
> s'ouvre à la surface et libère les singularités
> acosmiques, impersonnelles et pré-individuelles
> qu'il emprisonnait. A la lettre, il les lâche
> comme des spores, et éclate dans ce délestage
> (_Logique_ 249).

> That which is beyond the active a 1 the passive is
> not the pronominal, but the result -- the result
> of actions and passions, the surface effect or the
> event. What appears in the phantasm is the
> movement by which the ego opens itself to the
> surface and liberates the a-cosmic, impersonal,
> and pre-individual singularities which it had
> imprisoned. It literally releases them like spores
> and bursts as it gets unburdened (_Logic_ 213).

The phantasm and the event -- which is equally the

result of actions and passions, of bodies "colliding,

mingling or separating" ("Theatrum" 173) -- allow us to

speak of meanings that are somehow not just bodies

interacting, but the result of these interactions. The

phantasm extends the body, reorganizes it (or rather gives

it a topography that subverts the idea of organization).

> To summarize: at the limit of dense bodies, an
> event is incorporeal (a metaphysical surface); on
> the surface of words and things, an incorporeal
> event is the _meaning_ of a proposition (its
> logical dimension); in the thread of discourse, an
> incorporeal meaning-event is fastened to the verb
> (the infinitive point of the present) ("Theatrum"
> 175).

There is, between the event and the phantasm, less of a

difference than might be imagined. The relationship between

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the two forces us to reconsider the divisions between
reality and illusion, and also leads us to understand a
causality that is not that of the cause and effect chains we
observe in the physical world.

> Logique du sens causes us to reflect on matters
> that philosophy has neglected for many centuries:
> the event (assimilated in a concept, from which we
> vainly attempted to extract it in the form of a
> fact, verifying a proposition, of actual
> experience, a modality of the subject, of
> concreteness, the empirical content of history);
> and the phantasm (reduced in the name of reality
> and situated at the extremity, the pathological
> pole, of a normative sequence: perception-image-
> memory-illusion.) ("Theatrum 130).

> Let us imagine a stitched causality: as bodies
> collide, mingle, and suffer, they create events on
> their surfaces, events that are without thickness,
> mixture or passion; for this reason, they can no
> longer be causes. They form, among themselves,
> another kind of succession whose links derive from
> a quasi-physics of incorporeals -- in short, from
> metaphysics ("Theatrum" 173).

A moment to get our bearings: When bodies collide and
interact, they form events. Events are the results of these
interactions. The phantasm shares the characteristics of the
event, except that it is associated with falsity or illusion
whereas events are seen as speaking of facts, truths. The
phantasm does have an effect on the body, it extends it and
changes the way it is topologized, so that the difference

between the real and the illusion is not clear. Phantasms
open up the ego to the impersonal forces contained within
it. Events can be expressed best by an action (as opposed
to a state of being) and linguistically are best expressed
by the infinitive (the event of death, for example is
expressed by the infinitive "to die" -- death is not a state
of being or non-being, but an effect that is produced by
bodies). In describing phantasms, Foucault speaks of
"extremely thin membranes, which detach themselves from the
surfaces of objects and proceed to impose colors and
contours deep within our eyes (floating epiderm, visual
idols); phantasms created by fear or desire (cloud gods, the
adorable face of the beloved, 'miserable hope transported by
the wind')" (169). As we see, then, the phantasm is
expressed better by nouns and adjectives. The infinitive
that repeats itself in countless forms is the nature of the
event. The coming together of these events in a seemingly
stable form is more the nature of the phantasm. This implies
not only a tie between the event and the phantasm, but a
mutual interdependence (especially when we recall Foucault's
injunction not to consider the phantasm simply the unreal).

This also allows us to speak of the interaction of many
different kinds of bodies (if we remember that a body is
produced by a meeting of forces). Human bodies and word
bodies, for example, form events and phantasms as they meet.

And this meeting releases the potential contained in the human.

Calvino is the great technician of the phantasm. In Invisible Cities we see the interaction between two phantasms, Polo's and Khan's (and because phantasms and events form their own system, we can speak of an interaction, a succession between them). Phantasms, as Foucault has said, are made of desires and fears. Polo says the same of cities (36). In fact Polo and Khan are under the sway of two different phantasms both connected to the cities of the empire. For Khan the crucial element of the empire is is cohesiveness, its ability to hold together. He searches for the secret law or rule that will show "Un disegno così sottile da sfuggire al morso delle termiti" (14) [" a pattern so subtle it could escape the termite's gnawing" (10)]. For Polo, on the other hand, the arrangement of the cities into a coherent pattern is less important than the collection of narratable elements that reveal desire. It is the difference between what Laurence Breiner calls Empire and Emporium (568). Invisible Cities embodies two different phantasms. One is formed of the set of all the cities plus Marco Polo who finds himself always in the middle of them surrounded by their details and immersed in the desire that characterizes and sustains each city. The other is formed of the set of all the cities plus Khan who imagines them from a distance and searches for the law that will allow him to

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understand their relation, or for the system that will allow
him to generate cities by an act of thought. The changing of
one term -- Polo or Khan -- changes the event, makes it
different in each case. For Khan the infinitive that most
conveys his experience is "to find"; for Polo it is "to
lose", one's memories, one's desires, oneself. The phantasm,
as we have seen is better expressed through a noun (nouns
are all illusions, of course, decomposing as they do into
relations between forces, verbs). Khan imagines his empire
as a perfect crystalline entity. The desire that Khan denies
surfaces in this phantasm. In fact, "the crystal" is the
name of a phantasm that is seen more than once in Calvino's
work.

In the story "Crystals" from <u>Time</u> <u>and</u> <u>the</u> <u>Hunter</u> Qfwfq
is present when the first crystals begin to emerge from the
molten fiery planet in its early form. For him, the
formation of the crystal is a moment of true creation in
which his desire is fully invested.

> Adesso avete capito: se io amo l'ordine, non è
> come per tanti altri il segno d'un carattere
> sottomesso a una disciplina interiore, a una
> repressione degli istinti. In me l'idea d'un mondo
> assolutamente regolare, simmetrico, metodico,
> s'associa a questo primo impeto e rigoglio della
> natura, alla tensione amorosa, a quello che voi
> dite l'eros, mentre tutte le altre vostre
> immagini, quelle che secondo voi associano la
> passione e il disordine, l'amore e il traboccare
> smodato -- fiume fuoco vortice vulcano --, per me
> sono i ricordi del nulla e dell'inappetenza e
> della noia (39-40).

> Now you can understand me: if I love order, it's
> not -- as with so many others -- the mark of a
> character subjected to inner discipline, a
> repression of the instincts. In me the idea of an
> absolutely regular world, symmetrical and
> methodical, is associated with that first impulse
> and burgeoning of nature, that amorous tension --
> what you call eros -- while all the rest of your
> images, those that according to you associate
> passion with disorder, love with intemperate
> overflow -- river fire whirlpool volcano -- for me
> are memories of nothing and listlessness and
> boredom (31).

Qfwfq, like Khan, dreams of a perfectly symmetrical crystal that will encompass not only the empire, but the entire Earth.

Deleuze has said that the phantasm frees up the apersonal forces contained in the ego. The Crystal is a perfect example of this. It demonstrates the extent to which what is thought of as a distinctly human trait, the desire to find order, is, in fact, an embodiment of a force that preexists the human.

In Marcovaldo, too, we see the formation of an event and a series of phantasms. The city, for Calvino, is often saturated with desires and fears that produce phantasms. The subtitle of Marcovaldo is Seasons in the City. Again the event is characterized by the particular arrangement of bodies, actions and passions. Unlike Invisible Cities, the infinitive is not "to find' or "to lose", but "to escape". Marcovaldo invests desire in the uncharacteristic details of city life, thus creating a series of phantasms that interact with each other forming his life (seen as pure event).

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Aveva questo Marcovaldo un occhio poco adatto alla
vita di città: cartelli, semafori, vetrine,
insegne luminose, manifesti, per studiati che
fossero a colpire l'attenzione, mai fermavano il
suo sguardo che pareva scorrere sulle sabbie del
deserto. Invece, una foglia che ingiallisse su un
ramo, una piuma che si impigliasse ad una tegola,
non gli sfuggivano mai: non c'era tafano sul dorso
d'un cavallo, pertugio di tarlo in una tavola,
buccia di fico spiaccicata sul marciapiede che
Marcovaldo non notasse, e non facesse oggetto di
ragionamento, scoprendo i mutamenti della
stagione, i desideri del suo animo, e le miserie
della sua esistenza (7).

This Marcovaldo possessed an eye ill suited to
city life: billboards, traffic-lights, shop
windows, neon signs, posters, no matter how
carefully devised to catch the attention, never ,
arrested his gaze, which might have been running
over the desert sands. Instead, he would never
miss a leaf yellowing on a branch, a feather
trapped by a roof-tile; there was no horsefly on a
horse's back, no worm-hole in a plank, or fig-peel
squashed on the sidewalk that Marcovaldo did not
remark and ponder over, discovering the changes of
season, the yearnings of his heart, and the woes
of his existence (1).

Always, Marcovaldo is escaping: by trying to sleep on a

park bench instead of in his crowded room, by trying to make

a new city by digging tunnels through a snowstorm that has

covered the streets, by getting lost and finding himself on

an intercontinental flight, or by devoting himself to the

care of a potted plant. His life is a series of phantasms

built around the term "to escape" (It should not be assumed

that there is a great difference between the event-verb and

phantasm-noun, since, as mentioned above, the noun is only

the temporary concentration of a number of verbs).

Even Mr. Palomar, whose life consists in trying to find an elusive, rational order in the universe, is struggling with the phantasm. Under the sway of his empiricist philosophy, he believes that he can, for example, observe a wave as it comes in to shore. This wave is a phantasm -- the result of an intense desire (and empiricism is as intense a desire as the most passionate love) coupled with the interaction of bodies (human body and body of water).

The phantasm and the event tend to release the human from its humanity. Because they "topologize the body" they allow it to move beyond itself. As we see in Calvino's work, these phantasms/events span the real (the formation of crystals), the unreal (building a new city out of snow) and phenomenon that are in between (Palomar's wave that exists, yet does not exist), and, indeed, subvert the very distinction between real and unreal. The inhuman forces released by these phantasms/events are of several different sorts: escape, crystallization, search, lostness, seeing. Though these have all to some extent contributed to the creation of the human form, their potentials go far beyond the human. They embody a relationship between forces that can be human, but can also easily be geological, zoological, chemical or mechanical.

We have seen a number of ways in which what we believed was the most human about writing. We have seen how the body

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enters into the process of language, signs and meaning. We
have also seen how this body that we imagined to be an
entity, a subject/object is, in fact, a temporary nexus of
forces that are themselves not of the body. Even meaning,
writing, the acts we consider most human, are tied to
physical bodies interacting in ways that defy the human,
that break it up, move it beyond itself. This is the point
that many postmodern analyses of the body and meaning come
to: the affirmation that there is a host of elements that
goes into making up the human. We see a great deal of
writing on "construction", the construction of race, the
construction of gender, the construction of history. The
next step, the one that is taken by only a handful of
theoreticians, is the description or discovery of the
tendencies, affinities and characteristics of the forces
that construct the familiar entities of the subject, the
book, the body. These forces are not simply chaotic, not
simply the flip side of rational order. It is only from the
point of view of the embattled human form that the forces of
the outside seem like madness, darkness, and death. In fact
the human owes its entire existence to them. Their laws can
be human laws, their way of combining, confronting,
changing, mark a potential for the human form to move beyond
itself, to become in a continuous process, to join other
forces to itself and let others go. The forces that make up

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the human also make up writing, and we will continue to look

at Calvino and the nonhuman movements of his writing.

Chapter Two: The Body's Forces

A clarification of the term "law" which I will use
extensively. The relationships between forces have certain
tendencies, certain ways of acting or potentials that we see
realized. These are not laws in the sense of predetermined
rules that must be followed. They are laws similar to the
laws of physics: it is not that bodies obey rules, but
rather that they tend to behave consistently. This
consistency is what defines law in the physical sense and in
the sense in which I will use it.

Forces follow a set of laws. These laws are what make
up the human, but the laws themselves are far from what we
consider "human" laws. There are several examples of this
contrast between laws of force and laws of the human. The
human succeeds to a greater or lesser extent in
incorporating the laws of force into its own laws. The laws
by which particles interact, according to quantum physics,
for example, subvert traditional notions of time, of
causality, of structure. Yet, at the human level, these
concepts still hold sway. We still search for causes and
effects. Other non-human laws -- that living beings must
live by consuming, that life lives on death -- is
incorporated into the human, but with a great deal of
repression, justification, and guilt. If we are to say that

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the human is made up of forces, we must look more closely at
these forces with the help of a number of key concepts from
Deleuze and Guattari: body without organs, diagrams, the
clinamen, becoming-molecular, assemblages and multiplicity.

Zero Degree: The Body Without Organs

The body without organs is the state of virtuality of
forces, forces before they have found a determinate state.

> Imagine the body in suspended animation: intensity
> = 0. Call that the "body without organs" (or BwO,
> as D & G like to write it). Think of the body
> without organs as the body outside any determinate
> state, poised for any action in its repertory;
> this is the body from the point of view of its
> potential, or virtuality. Now freeze it as it
> passes through a threshold state on the way from
> one determinate state to another. That is a degree
> of intensity of the body without organs. It is
> still the body as virtuality, but at a lower level
> of virtuality, because only the potential states
> involved in the bifurcation from the preceding
> state to the next are effectively superposed in
> the threshold state (Massumi 70).

On this body without organs are desiring machines which
connect to each other, which constitute the desire that
connects, creates and produces.

> The body is made up of various desiring-machines
> ... parts unrelated to any whole, which are
> connected to other desiring machines, some within
> the body, some in the natural world, some in the
> social world. 'Everything is a machine', a part
> coupled to a second part, coupled to a third part,
> and so on...Desiring-machines and the body without
> organs... are two states of the same 'things', a
> functioning multiplicity one moment, a pure,

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unextended zero-intensity substance the next, in a
constant oscillation such that the two states
coexist as separate entities (Bogue 91-93).

These desiring machines can be made up of combinations

of natural and artificial elements, passions, concepts,

relationships. The BwO and the desiring machines do not

distinguish between heterogeneous forces. They are concerned

with connection, not with reality, truth or authenticity.

Un CsO est fait de telle manière qu'il ne peut
être occupé, peuplé que par des intensités. Seules
les intensités passent et circulent. Encore le CsO
n'est-il pas une scène, un lieu, ni même un
support ou se passerait quelque chose. Rien à voir
avec un fantasme, rien à interpréter. Le CsO fait
passer des intensités, il les produit et les
distribue dans un spatium lui meme intensif,
inétendu. Il n'est pas espace ni dans l'espace, il
est matière qui occupera l'espace à tel ou tel
degré -- au degré qui correspond aux intensités
produites. Il est la matière intense et non
formée, non stratifiée, la matrice intensive,
l'intensité = 0, mais il n'y a rien de négatif
dans ce zéro-là, il n'y a pas d'intensités
négatives ni contraires (Mille Plateaux 189).

A BwO is made in such a way that it can be
occupied, populated only by intensities. Only
intensities can pass and circulate. Still, the BwO
is not a scene, a place, or even a support upon
which something comes to pass. It has nothing to
do with phantasy, there is nothing to interpret.
The BwO causes intensities to pass; it produces
and distributed them in a spatium that is itself
intensive, lacking extension. It is not space, nor
is it in space; it is matter that occupies space
to a given degree -- to the degree corresponding
to the intensity produced. It is nonstratified,
unformed, intense matter, the matrix of intensity,
intensity = 0; but there is nothing negative about
that zero, there are no negative or opposite
intensities (Plateaus 153).

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Strangely, the BwO can be of many types. According to
Deleuze:

> Pour chaque type de CsO nous devons demander: 1)
> quel est ce type, comment est-il fabrique, par
> quels procedes et moyens qui prejugent deja de ce
> qui va se passer; 2) et quels sont ses modes,
> qu'est-ce qui se passe, avec qu'elles variantes,
> qu'elles surprises, quels inattendus par rapport a
> l'attente? (<u>Mille Plateaux</u> 188)

> For each type of BwO, we must ask: (1) What type
> is it, how is it fabricated, by what procedures
> and means (predetermining what will come to pass)?
> (2) What are its modes, what comes to pass, and
> with what variants and what surprises, what is
> unexpended and what expected ? (<u>Plateaus</u> 152).

Body as BwO, book as Bwo, universe as BwO, all
involving states of virtuality. According to Alessandro
Zinna, the word, too, can function as a state of virtuality.

> la parola e un racconto potenziale, e tavolta il
> racconto non e che l'esplorazione delle
> possibilita racchiuse in un'unica parola... Se
> prendiamo il lessema "contrabandiere" abbiamo gia
> il soggetto di un'azione potenziale. Ma,
> implicatamente, anche una serie di oggetti
> virtuali su cui orientera l'azione del
> contrabbandare... Il lessema "contrabbandiere"
> evoca un campo semantico gia articolato che si
> constituisce come una sequenza virtuale, di cui
> non sappiamo ancora quali possibilita verranno
> realmente attualizzate. Raccontare e, in tal
> senso, percorrere alcune delle virtualita che
> preesistono nella parola (175-76).

The BwO, of course, can never be reached in its pure
form. It is always actualized to some degree. It is
difficult, therefore, to discuss the BwO since one is
tempted to say everything about it.

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What we can say about the BwO is what it is not. It is not a model, not a transcendent plane that creates a world of lesser reality from its greater reality. The BwO is implicated in the world, in its forms, passions, events and contradictions. The difference between the BwO and the Model is the difference between Kubla Khan and Marco Polo in Invisible Cities.

-D'ora in avanti sarò io a descrivere le città, -aveva detto il Kan.- Tu nei tuoi viaggi verificherai se esistono.
     Ma le città visitate da Marco Polo erano sempre diverse da quelle pensate dall'imperatore.
     -Eppure io ho costruito nella mia mente un modello de città da cui dedurre tutte le città possibili,- disse Kublai. - Esso racchiude tutto quello che risponde alla norma. Siccome le città che esistono s'allontanano in vario grado dalla norma, mi basta prevedere le eccezioni alla norma e calcolarne le combinazioni più probabili.
     -Anch'io ho pensato un modello di città da cui deduco tutte le altre, - rispose Marco. - È una città fatto solo d'eccezioni, preclusioni, contraddizioni, incongruenze, controsensi. Se una città così è quanto c'è di più improbabile, diminuendo il numero degli elementi abnormi si accrescono le probabilità che la città ci sia veramente. Dunque basta che io sottragga eccezioni al mio modello, e in qualsiasi ordine proceda arriverò a trovarmi davanti una delle città che, pur sempre in via d'eccezione, esistono. Ma non posso spingere la mia operazione oltre un certo limite: otterrei delle città troppo verosimili per essere vere (75).

"From now on, I'll describe the cities to you," the Khan had said, "in your journeys you will see if they exist."
But the cities visited by Marco Polo were always different from those thought of by the emperor. "And yet I have constructed in my mind a model city from which all possible cities can be deduced," Kublai said. "It contains everything

corresponding to the norm. Since the cities that
exist diverge in varying degree from the norm, I
need only foresee the exceptions to the norm and
calculate the most probable combinations."
"I have also thought of a model city from which I
deduce all the others," Marco answered. "It is a
city made only of exceptions, exclusions,
incongruities, contradictions. If such a city is
the most improbable, by reducing the number of
elements we increase the probability that the real
city exists. So I have only to subtract exceptions
from my model, and in whatever direction I
proceed, I will arrive at one of the cities which
always, as an exception, exist. But I cannot force
my operation beyond a certain limit: I would
achieve cities too probable to be real" (56)

The BwO of the empire does not contain perfect forms

from which the real is generated by subtracting perfections

(Khan's model), but contains, in a virtual state,

contradictions, confrontations, incongruities, which can be

actualized in physical beings, cities, bodies and words.

Two of Calvino's other collections Cosmicomics and

Difficult Loves, each taken as a collection (but not as a

"whole"), show how the BwO can actualize itself, giving us

either a cosmic BwO or a passionate BwO. The advantage of

taking into acount the BwO of a formation (apart from the

fun it is to describe what a body without organs is at a

party) is that it allows us to see the potentials enveloped

in certain formations (potential is a much more manageable

word than virtuality. Potential is virtuality in a more

realized state).

In Cosmicomics Qvfwq both sees the unfolding of the

universe and is himself part of the process of change.

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Implicit in the universe of <u>Cosmicomics</u> are physical beings, actions, passions and relationships. In two stories "All at One Point" and "The Spiral" we see this process of unfolding from a state of virtuality. In "All at One Point" the story begins with all of creation condensed into one infinitesimal point before the big bang. The beings populating this point are rancorous and petty (for Calvino even the most mundane human emotions are present at the beginning of the universe, leading us to believe that Calvino might agree that what is most human was functioning before the human form ever came along), until one of them, Mrs. Ph(i)Nko, in a generous impulse, describes how she would love to make noodles for the others. This generous impulse is indeed the impulsion that begins the universe.

> E in quel momento tutti pensammo allo spazio che
> avrebbero occupato le tonde braccia di lei
> muovendosi avanti e indietro con il mattarello
> sulla sfoglia di pasta, il petto di lei calando
> sul gran mucchio di farina e uova che ingombrava
> il largo tagliere mentre le sue braccia
> impastavano impastavano, bianche e unte d'olio fin
> sopra al gomito; pensammo allo spazio che
> avrebbero occupato la farina, e il grano per fare
> la farina, e i campi per coltivare il grano, e le
> montagne da cui scendeva l'acqua per irrigare i
> campi, e i pascoli per le mandrie di vitelli che
> avrebbero dato la carne per il sugo; allo spazio
> che ci sarebbe voluto perché il Sole arrivasse con
> i suoi raggi a maturare il grano; allo spazio
> perché dalle nubi di gas stellari il Sole si
> condensasse e bruciasse; alle quantità di stelle e
> galassie e ammassi galattici in fuga nello spazio
> che ci sarebbero volute per tener sospesa ogni
> galassia ogni nebula ogni sole ogni pianeta...
> (59).

And in that moment we all thought of the space
that her round arms would occupy, moving backward
and forward with the rolling pin over the dough,
her bosom leaning over the great mound of flour
and eggs which cluttered the wide board while her
arms kneaded and kneaded, white and shiny with oil
up to the elbows; we thought of the space that the
flour would occupy, and the wheat for the flour,
and the fields to raise the wheat, and the
mountains from which the water would flow to
irrigate the fields, and the grazing lands for the
herds of calves that would give their meat for the
sauce; of the space it would take for the Sun to
arrive with its rays, to ripen the wheat; of the
space for the Sun to condense from the clouds of
stellar gases and burn; of the quantities of stars
and galaxies and galactic masses in flight through
space which would be needed to hold suspended
every galaxy, every nebula, every sun, every
planet...(47).

One could imagine the universe being created from a

different impulse (as Flann O'Brien said "The meanest bloody

thing in hell made this world"), in which case it would have

been the embodiment of a different BwO.

Sometimes the unfolding of a potential does not proceed

as foreseen. The connections on the BwO are often

unpredictable. In "The Spiral", Qfwfq is a mollusk who forms

a shell to express his love for another mollusk who he is

not capable of seeing, having no eyes. He sets himself the

task of making a coloured shell, however, in order to begin

the process that leads to vision.

La conchiglia così era in grado di produrre
immagini visuali di conchiglie, che sono cose
molto simili - per quel che se ne sa - alla
conchiglia stessa, solo che mentre la conchiglia è
qui, loro si formano da un'altra parte,
possibilmente su una rètina...Cioè io producendo
la conchiglia ne producevo anche l'immagine - anzi

non una ma moltissime perché con una conchiglia
sola si può fare quante immagini di conchiglia si
vuole - ma solo immagine potenziali perché per
formare un'immagine ci vuole tutto il necessario
...però mi ero fatto una mia idea e cioè che
l'importante era costituire delle immagini
visuali, e poi gli occhi sarebbero venuti di
conseguenza (180-81).

The shell in this way was able to create visual
images of shells, which are things very similar --
as far as we know -- to the shell itself, except
that the shell is here, whereas the images of it
are formed elsewhere, possibly on a retina...So in
producing a shell I had also produced its image --
not one, of course, but many, because with one
shell you can make as many shell images as you
want -- but only potential images because to form
an image you need all the requisites...I had
conceived an idea of my own, namely that the
important thing was to form some visual images,
and the eyes would come later in consequence
(150).

Qwfwq the mollusk is surprised to discover that the

formation of images does indeed lead to vision, but not for

him. From the point of view of a separate entity, there has

been some mistake, some injustice. It is by returning to the

BwO, by affirming the connection between his actions and the

realization of a new potential in the universe, that he

understands his connection to the outside; "Tutti questi

occhi erano i miei. Li avevo resi possibili io; io avevo

avuto la parte attiva; io gli fornivo la materia prima,

l'immagine" (183) ["All these eyes were mine. I had made

them possible; I had had the active part; I furnished them

the raw material, the image" (153)]. When thinking of the

virtual and its realizations, then, we are just as likely to think of all the things that have not been realized. Carlo Ossola says "...un universo inclusivo di tutte le possibilita e appunto impensabile (224)".

In another story, this time from Time and the Hunter, Calvino speaks of this "unthinkable" universe, the universe of everything that could have been created and wasn't. In "The Origin of the Birds" Qfwfq finds himself confronted with a new life form, a bird, at a time in evolutionary history when those who existed believed that all possibilities had already been manifested.

> Erano giorni in cui non ci aspettavamo piú sorprese,- raccontò Qfwfq, - come sarebbero andate le cose ormai era chiaro. Chi c'era c'era, dovevamo vedercela tra noi: chi sarebbe arrivato piú lontano, chi sarebbe rimasto lí dov'era, chi non ce l'avrebbe fatta a sopravvivere. La scelta era tra un numero di possibilità limitate (Ti con zero 21)

> In those days we weren't expecting any more surprises, -- Qfwfq narrated, -- by then it was clear how things were going to proced. Those who existed, existed; we had to work things out for ourselves: some would go farther, some would remain where they were, and some wouldn't manage to survive. The choice had to be made from a limited number of possibilities (Time 15).

The world described by Qwfwq is one in which possibility has been tamed. The BwO has reached a state of realization at which the possibilities have been strictly limited. But, of course, the complexity of the move from virtual to potential to actual is more complex that was

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first imagined. A new form appears, evolved from the dinosaurs: a bird:

> Quello dei volatili era considerato un capitolo
> chiuso, ormai. Non s'era detto e ripetuto che dai
> Rettili tutto quel che poteva nascere era
> nato?...Ci aveva tormentato a lungo il dubbio su
> chi era un mostro e chi non lo era, ma da un pezzo
> poteva dirsi risolto: non-mostri siamo tutti noi
> che siamo e mostri invece sono tutti quelli che
> potevano esserci e invece non ci sono, perché la
> successione delle cause e degli effetti ha
> favorito chiaramente noi, i non-mostri, anziche
> loro...se insomma una creatura impossibile per
> definizione come un uccello era invece
> possibile...allora la barriera tra mostri e
> non-mostri saltava in aria e tutto ritornava
> possibile (24).

> The question of winged creatures was considered
> closed by now. Hadn't we been told over and over
> that everything capable of being born from the
> Reptiles had been born?...For some time we had
> been tormented by doubts as to who was a monster
> and who wasn't, but that too could be considered
> long settled: all of us who existed were
> nonmonsters, while monsters were all those who
> could exist and didn't, because the succession of
> causes and effects had clearly favored us, the
> nonmonsters, rather than them... If a creature
> impossible by definition such as a bird was
> instead possible...then the barrier between
> monsters and nonmonsters was exploded and
> everything was possible again (17-18).

At the conclusion of the story, having travelled to the

land of origin of all the strange forms, the monsters who

did not seem possible but existed nonetheless, Qwfwq, in a

moment of understanding, "riuscii ad abbracciare in un solo

pensiero il mondo delle cose com'erano e quello delle cose

come avrebbero potuto essere, e m'accorsi che un solo

sistema comprendeva tutto (31) ["managed to embrace in a

single thought the world of things as they were as of things as they could have been, and I realized that a single system included all" (26)].

This system can return to its zero-degree state, prepared to launch into other realizations, because there is, as in Spinoza, a single substance. This substance realizes itself in diverse forms all through Cosmicomics : "Ripetendo uno temi centrali de Le Cosmicomiche... Qfwfwq commenta subito che 'si sa che gli universi si fanno e si disfanno ma è sempre lo stesso materiale che gira'" (Capozzi 163).

But the BwO is, of course, not limited to creating physical bodies, but forces, concepts, events, connections. In Difficult Loves we see the creation of a love BwO. Calvino's particular accomplishment in this book is to allow the BwO of love to realize its potentials in ways usually disassociated with the traditional view of love. He makes the potential "to love" decompose into a number of actions and passions that seem to have more to do with other considerations.

In "The Adventure of a Photographer" Antonino Paraggi, in the beginning a non-photographer admonishes his friends for the absurdity of photography.

> -...Perché una volta che avete cominciato, -predicava, - non c'è nessuna ragione che vi fermiate. Il passo tra la realtà che viene fotografata in quanto ci appare bella e la realtà

che ci appare bella in quanto e stata fotografata,
è brevissimo...Basta che cominciate a dire di
qualcosa: "Ah che bello, bisognerebbe proprio
fotografarlo!" e già siete sul terreno di chi
pensa che tutto ciò che non è fotografato è
perduto, che è come se non fosse esistito, e che
quindi per vivere veramente bisogna fotografare
quanto piú si può, e per fotografare quanto piú si
può bisogna: o vivere in modo quanto piú
fotografabile possibile, oppure considerare
fotografabile ogni momento della propria vita. La
prima via porta alla stupidità, la seconda alla
pazzia (37).

"...Because once you've begun," he would preach,
"there is no reason why you should stop. The line
between the reality that is photographed because
it seems beautiful to us and the reality that
seems beautiful because it has been photographed
is very narrow... You only have to start saying of
something: "Ah, how beautiful! We must photograph
it!" and you are already close to the view of the
person who thinks that everything that is not
photographed is lost, as if it had never existed,
and that therefore, in order really to live you
must photograph as much as you can, and to
photograph as much as you can you must either live
in the most photographable way possible, or
consider photographable every moment of your life.
The first course leads to stupidity; the second to
madness (43).

It is this confrontation with madness and absurdity

that marks Paraggi.

Antonino Paraggi, un eroe positivo... in grado di
prendere in mano la "situation absurde" viverla
senza prudenza (ma con lucidita), e correre il
rischio dell'assurdo, appunto della follia, per
pur sete di conoscenza del negativo, al servicio
della chiara ragione ... Antonino mette già in
atto un metodo che Calvino chiamera "mimesi attiva
della negativa" (Papa 257-58).

Paraggi eventually embarks on a photographic project.

He meets a woman, Bice, who becomes his lover, and

photographs her in every possible situation: "Ma non diceva quello che sopratutto gli stava a cuore: cogliere Bice per la strada quando non sapeva d'essere vista da lui, tenerla sotto il tiro d'obiettivi nascosti, fotografarla non solo senza farsi vedere ma senza vederla" (43) ["But he didn't say what meant most to him: to catch Bice in the street when she didn't know he was watching her, to keep her within the range of hidden lenses, to photograph her not only without letting himself be seen but without seeing her" (50)]. She finally leaves him and he sinks into a depression. His positive project, an attempt to see his philosophy through to the end opens him to madness he had seen earlier in photographic passion.

> Antonino Paraggi, tormentato dall'ansia della fotografia totale, che dica tutto, che superi l'impasse della fotografia come illusione e che sia invece realtà concreta, risultato tangibile, approda alla conclusione che soltanto la fotografia di una fotografia può realizzare l'utopica sintesi (Papa 261).

Paraggi's love is the passion of the visible, what can be captured by the eye and saved. It has to do with an eye, a machine, a body to be captured, all of which combine to form the photographic passion.

In another tale, "The Adventure of a Wife", a young wife who has spent the night out while her husband is away. She returns home without her key, too early to be let in by the janitor. While she is waiting for her building to open

she goes to a nearby cafe where she shares conversation with some of the customers. Afterwards, she realizes that, "era successo qualcosa da cui non poteva piú tornare indietro. Questo suo nuovo modo di stare in mezzo agli uomini, il nottambulo, il cacciatore, l'operaio, la faceva diversa. Era stao questo il suo adulterio, questo stare sola in mezzo a loro, cosí, alla pari" (85)) ["something had happened from which she could not now turn back. This new way of hers of being among men, the night-owl, the hunter, the worker, made her different. This had been her adultery, this being alone among them, like this, their equals" (98)].

According to John Ahern, "At the end, precisely because she does not tell her secret, she discovers a new self-assurance" (7).

The visible and the secret, two aspects of love, two realizations of the BwO of Difficult Loves. We see how the infinitive "to love" can be realized, repeated in an almost infinite number of physical shapes: the escaping criminal and the prostitute who hides him ("The Adventure of a Crook"), the soldier and the widow he seduces ("The Adventure of a Soldier") and the Reader who must divide his attention between a book and a woman ("The Adventure of a Reader"). It is this aspect of the body without organs that is the most interesting. It deals with unformed matters that combine according to certain diagrams that take the form of

infinitives. This is our next concern: unformed matter and the diagram according to which it shapes itself.

The Diagram and the Strata

The virtual would remain only virtual if it were not actualized. The process whereby the virtual becomes actual is the diagram expressed as an infinitive. There is an infinitve diagram which communicates with reality as a series of strata. For Calvino these strata can take a number of forms.

> Calvino speaks of levels of reality rather than reality pure and simple. As he writes in an essay called "Levels of Reality," "literature know the reality of levels and perhaps offers a better understanding of that reality than does any other cognitive approach" (Cromphout 170).

Flavia Ravazzoli, in a discussion of cities and signs in Invisible Cities speaks of stratification of another kind.

> Le omologie interne tra città e segni della lingua riaffiorano anche nel tipo 'plurimo': come ad esempio i fonemi sono fasci di tratti distintivi, così molte città sono fasci di strati in diverso rapporto tra loro: Clarice è stratificata in senso archeologico, Teodora in senso zoologico (198).

Before we speak of the diagram itself, we must be clear on the relationship between the diagram and the strata.

> On dirait d'une certaine façon que les diagrammes communiquent, par-dessus, par-dessous ou entre les

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strates respectives...Et c'est bien en ce sens que
le diagramme se distingue des strates: seule la
formation stratifiée lui donne une stabilitié
qu'il n'a pas par lui-même, en lui même il est
instable, agité, brassé...Sans doute le diagramme
communique-t-il avec la formation stratifiée qui
le stabilise ou le fixe, mais suivant un autre
axe, il communique aussi avec l'autre diagramme,
les autres états instables de diagramme (Foucault
91-92).

...we could say that the diagrams communicate,
above, below or between the respective
strata...and it is indeed in this sense that the
diagram differs from strata: only the stratified
formation gives it a stability that it does not
itself possess, for in itself it is unstable,
agitated and shuffled around... No doubt the
diagram communicates with the stratified formation
stabilizing or fixing it, but following another
axis it also communicates with the other diagram,
the other unstable diagrammatic states (Foucault
85).

But what is this diagram, exactly (the word "exactly"

is carefully chosen, since the diagram is not exact, but

"anexact", expressing a range of possibility not yet

embodied in a stratum)? An example of an anexact diagram is

that embodied in the infinitive "to marry". One of the most

famous examples is Michel Foucault's Panopticon function.

Surveiller et punir definit le Panoptique par la
pure fonction d'imposer une tâche ou une conduite
quelconques à une multiplicité d'individus
quelconque, sous la seule condition que la
multiplicité soit peu nombreuse, et l'espace
limité, peu étendu...Foucault le nommera donc
diagramme, fonction qu'on "doit détacher de tout
usage spécifique", comme de toute substance
specifiée (Foucault 79).

Discipline and Punish defines the Panopticon in
this way: it is the pure function of imposing a

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particular taste or conduct on a multiplicity of particular individuals, provided simply that the multiplicity is small in number and the space limited and confined...Foucault will therefore name this the diagram, a function that must be "detached from any specific use", as from any specified substance (Foucault 72).

It is possible for every "I do" to be unique, yet actualize "roughly" the same interrelation of relations, because "I do," if properly understood, expresses the realm of possibility of marriage. Every variation falling between the two relative thresholds of a meaning can be subsumed in a single diagram or statement. Such a diagram is not exact since it does not explicitly account for each possible actualization. But, if carefully used, neither is it inexact, because it does not overstep the limits beyond which an essentially different event transpires. It is calculated to be anexact, to precisely span a range of virtuality...The infinitive ("to marry") is the most economical way of expressing an essence because it connotes rigor but by its very name conveys limitlessness (Massumi 158).

For Deleuze, the diagram represents "le sommet de l'abstraction, mais aussi le moment où l'abstraction devient réelle; tout y passe en effet par des machines abstraites-réelles" (Mille Plateaux 181) ["the height of abstraction, but also the moment at which abstraction becomes real; everything operates through abstract-real machines" (Plateaus 145-146)]. We have seen that the diagram takes the form of the infinitive, but this is only the diagram form of language: "Visual graphs and charts are diagrams, but so are mathematical formulae, musical scores, and models in particle physics; and the more abstract the diagram is, the less it represents any particular thing, and

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the less it can be conceived of in terms of expression and
content" (Bogue 135) (See also Micheal J Palmore's
"Diagramming Calvino's Architecture"). These abstract
diagrams can be actualized in many different forms. A
musical score may be a diagram, but so may a piece of music
if it can release the emotions and states of being enveloped
in it.

This brings us back to our first principle: the
non-human. The human and its creations refer back to a
diagram, a force from the outside: "c'est chaque formation
historique stratifiée qui renvoie à un diagramme de forces
comme à son dehors" (Foucault 90) ["it is each stratified
historical formation which refers back to a diagram of
forces as though it were its outside" (Foucault 84)]. Even
in our most human moments, we are the actualization of a
diagram from the outside, or, more accurately, we are the
actualization of a countless number of diagrams (there is no
single diagram whose actualizations do not connect with
actualizations of other diagrams).

Calvino's Difficult Loves for example. Since the
diagram guides a relation between forces, we might ask what
some of these possible relationships are. According to
Deleuze, they include "inciter, induire, détourner, rendre
facile ou difficile, élargir ou limiter, rendre plus ou
moins probable" (Foucault 77) ["to incite, to induce, to
seduce, to make easy or difficult, to enlarge, to limit, to

make more or less probable, and so on" (Foucault 70)].
Difficult Loves, then, is the embodiment not only of the
diagram "to love", but also "to make difficult".

This diagram manifests in different forms. In "The
Adventure of a Bather" a woman loses her bathing suit top in
the water and is too ashamed to ask for help. As the
embodiment of a diagram, this adventure could be phrased "to
become isolated", "to become estranged". The bather, Signora
Isotta Barbarino, has strayed beyond the pale of human
society because of her nakedness. This has little to do with
human motivations, emotions or attitudes; this is a far more
harrowing experience, a sudden alienation from one's milieu,
like a seed blown from a patch of dirt to a paved sidewalk,
a flame encountering water, or an animal taken out of its
habitat (this also explains to some extent, why the Signora
risks death by hypothermia rather than simply facing
embarrassment; the estrangement she feels is not human).
When human motivation is a mystery to humans one can be
certain that there is something other than human operating.
When we read this story understanding the diagram of which
it is an actualization we do not need to understand the
Signora in terms of morality, personal weakness or prudery.
It is by seeing her as a body caught for a time in the
realized state of a diagram that we can truly begin to have
mercy for her.

Elsewhere, Calvino shows us people who are very aware
of being caught up in a diagram. In "The Chase" from Time
and the Hunter, an unnamed narrator finds himself caught in
a traffic jam with an unknown assailant somewhere behind him
trying to kill him. He cannot escape the traffic jam, so he
begins to search for the diagram of the situation.

> ...ogni macchina si trova al centro d'un sistema
> di relazioni che in pratica equivale a un altro,
> cioè le macchine sono intercambiabili tra loro,
> dico le macchine ognuna col suo guidatore dentro;
> ogni automobilista potrebbe benissimo scambiarsi
> di posto con un altro automobilista, anch'io con i
> miei vicini e il mio inseguitore con i suoi...e
> così la situazione che finora ho vissuto
> soggettivamente, inchiodato alla mia paura
> solitaria, viene proiettata fuori di me, estesa al
> sistema generale di cui facciamo tutti parte...Per
> esempio supponiamo che la macchina che m'insegue
> abbia dietro di sé una catena di macchine
> inseguitrici: esattamente un secono prima che il
> mio inseguitore spari, l'inseguitore del mio
> inseguitore lo potrebbe ragiungere e uccidere,
> salvandomi la vita. Ma se due secondi prima che
> ciò avvenga l'inseguitore del mio inseguitore
> venisse raggiunto e ucciso dal suo inseguitore, il
> mio inseguitore sarebbe salvo e libero di
> uccidermi. Un perfetto sistema d'inseguimenti
> dovrebbe essere basato su una semplice
> concatenazione di funzioni: ogni inseguitore ha il
> compito d'impedire all'inseguitore che lo precede
> di sparare alla propria vittima, e ha un solo
> mezzo per farlo, cioè sparargli (132-135).

> ...each car is in the center of a system of
> relationships which in practice is the equivalent
> of another, that is, the cars are interchangeable,
> I mean the cars each with its driver inside; each
> driver could perfectly well change places with
> another driver, I with my neighbour and my pursuer
> with his...thus the situation in which so far I
> have lived subjectively, nailed to my solitary
> fear, is projected outside me, extended to the

general system of which we are all parts...For
example, let's suppose the car pursuing me has
behind it a chain of pursuing cars: exactly one
second before my pursuer shoots, the pursuer of my
pursuer could overtake and kill him, saving my
life. But if two seconds before that happened the
pursuer of my pursuer were overtaken and killed by
his pursuer, my pursuer would then be saved and
free to kill me. A perfect system of pursuits
should be based on a simple concatenation of
functions: each pursuer has the job of preventing
the pursuer ahead of him from shooting his victim,
and he has one single means of doing this, namely,
by shooting him (123-25).

By discovering the diagram "to pursue while being
pursued", the narrator manages to find his victim and shoot
him before he is caught by his pursuer. This story, like
"The Adventure of a Bather", has little to do with human
emotion although the subject matter, murder, is emotionally
charged. This is the point at which literature becomes
pragmatic and offers advice: search out the diagram, find
the diagram of which you are a part if you wish to escape or
change it.

This is exactly the goal -- and the strategy -- of
Edmond Dantes in Calvino's "The Count of Monte Cristo".
Dantes finds himself imprisoned in the Chateau d'If.
He attempts to conjecture a perfect prison from which it is
impossible to escape. He constructs a mental diagram, while
the Abbe Faria, another prisoner in the Chateau, digs
tunnels through the Chateau trying to find its point of
escape. From Faria's mistakes, Dante hopes to construct a

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better and better diagram of the fortress. But the diagram
becomes more complicated as it becomes more abstract.

> Nei graffiti di cui l'Abate Faria ricopre i muri,
> s'alternano due mappe dai contorni frastagliati,
> costellate di frecce e contrassegni: una dovrebbe
> essere la pianta d'If, l'altra d'un'isola
> dell'arcipelago toscano dov'è nascosto un tesoro:
> Montecristo...Tra un'isola da cui non si può
> uscire e un'isola in cui non si può entrare ci
> dev'essere un rapporto: perciò nei geroglifici di
> Faria le due mappe si sovrappongono fino a
> identificarsi...Il tesoro di Montecristo e la fuga
> da If sono due fasi d'uno stesso processo, forse
> successive forse periodiche come in una pulsazione
> (159-160).

> In the graffiti with which Abbe Faria covers his
> walls, two maps with ragged outlines alternate,
> constellated with arrows and marks: one is meant
> to be the plan of If, the other an island of the
> Tuscan archipelago where a treasure is hidden:
> Monte Cristo...Between an island he cannot leave
> and an island he cannot escape there must be a
> relation: therefore in Faria'a hieroglyphics the
> two maps can be superimposed and are almost
> identical...The treasure of Monte Cristo and the
> escape from If are two phases of the same process,
> perhaps successive, perhaps periodical as in a
> pulsation (146).

By moving to a higher level of abstraction, by
approaching the diagram from which the entire situation
derives, the lines between the possible and the impossible
begin to blur. The imprisonment of Faria and Dantes has
"something to do with the Bonapartist cause", itself a kind
of diagram, or the slightly more realized state of the same
diagram. We are now in a realm where the connection between
possibilities is much more intense and immediate.

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Vi sono punti in cui la linea che uno di noi sta
seguendo si biforca, si ramifica, s'apre a
ventaglio; ogni ramo può incontrare rami che si
dipartono da altre linee. Su un traccio angoloso
passa Faria scavando; e per pochi secondi non
s'imbatte nei carriaggi e cannoni dell'Armata
imperiale che riconquista la Francia (161)

There are points where the line that one of us is
following bifurcates, ramifies, fans out; each
branch can encounter branches that set out from
other lines. Along one jagged line Faria goes by,
digging; and only a few seconds keep him from
bumping into the the baggage wagons and cannon of
the Imperial Army reconquering France (148).

The system becomes even more abstract when it includes

the system of the novel **The Count of Monte Cristo** itself.

I diagrammi che io e Faria tracciamo sulle pareti
della prigione assomigliano a quelli che Dumas
verga sulle sue cartelle per fissare l'ordine
delle varianti prescelte...Dumas sta ancora
mettendo a punto i capitoli della prigionia al
castello d'If; Faria e io dibattiamo là dentro,
lordi d'inchiostro, tra aggrovigliate
correzioni...Sui margini della scrivania si
ammucchiano le proposte di continuazione della
vicenda che i due aiutanti vanno metodicamente
compilando. In una d'esse, Dantès fugge dal
carcere, trova il tesoro di Faria, si trasforma
nel conte di Montecristo...(162).

The diagrams Faria and I draw on the walls of the
prison resemble those Dumas pens on his papers to
establish the order of the chosen variants ...
Dumas is still revising the chapters of the
imprisonment in the Chateau d'If; Faria and I are
struggling inside there, ink-stained, in a tangle
of revisions ... At the edges of the desk there
are piles of paper, the suggestions for the
story's continuation which the two assistants are
methodically compiling. In one of them, Dantes
escapes from prison, finds Faria's treasure,
transforms himself into the Count of Monte
Cristo... (149-50).

Again, the Abbe and Dantes have two different methods.
The Abbe bursts into Dumas' study (again we are at the point
in the story where a character moves easily from one level
of reality to another) and tries to construct from all the
sheets on the desk the storyline which will lead to his
escape. Dantes, on the other hand, is much more concerned
with the possibilities that are rejected, saying, "Per
progettare un libro - o un'evasione - la prima cosa e sapere
cosa escludere" (164) ["To plan a book -- or an escape --
the first thing to know is what to exclude" (150)]. He
concludes:

> Se riuscirò col pensiero a costruire una fortezza
> da cui è impossibile fuggire, questa fortezza
> pensata o sara uguale alla vera - è in questo caso
> e certo che di qui non fuggiremo...o sarà una
> fortezza dalla quale la fuga è ancora piú
> impossibile che di qui - e allora è segno che qui
> una possibilita di fuga esiste: basterà
> individuare il punto in cui la fortezza pensata
> non coincide con quella vera per trovarla (164).

> If I succeed in mentally constructing a fortress
> from which it is impossible to escape, this
> conceived fortress either will be the same as the
> real one -- and in this case it is certain we
> shall never escape from here... or it will be a
> fortress from which escape is even more impossible
> than from here -- and this, then, is a sign that
> here an opportunity of escape exists: we have only
> to identify the point where the imagined fortress
> does not coincide with the real one and then find
> it (151-52).

Up and up the levels of abstraction, from the
individual in the cell, to the historical setting, to the
novel that encompasses them, then finally to the perfect

fortress, the diagram of all fortresses. Dantes, of course,
escapes the prison. Why? Because the virtual fortress from
which it is impossible to escape (since the diagram of the
fortress is "to imprison") never exists in reality. The
actual fortress only realizes some of the virtual fortress's
potential. It is, therefore, by getting to the fortress
diagram that Dantes can understand the entire system of
which he is a part, and escape from it. An interesting
actualization of the diagram "to understand" we see in both
"The Count of Monte Cristo" and "The Chase": "to understand"
is "to escape", "to find a way out".

Finally, in dealing with, the diagram we must ask what
accounts for specific forms. If the diagram is a kind of
code that can be actualized in a number of different
materials and settings, what keeps the code from repeating
itself endlessly, what keeps it from ensuring the return of
the same? This is the role of the clinamen. Defined by
Lucretius as a "swerve" in the fall of the atom which allows
it to form new connections with other atoms it is, at the
same time defined provisionally as "chance" (Logic 270) and
as an element inherent in the fall of the atom itself.

> For Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, the
> clinamen is the physical analogue for a disruption
> of cultural power formations and represents the
> possibility to shift from a deterministic set of
> rules and ideology to a mobile, "nomadic" one...
> Foregrounding the productive role of disorder in
> linguistic, physical and political systems
> introduces a whole new set of problems, however,

> because disorder has (by definition) a
> recalcitrant complexity, an irreducible ambiguity
> that exceeds the very theories and thought systems
> which would contain it or incorporate it into
> their workings...The clinamen is the trope
> for...disorder where what is perturbation or
> chaotic in a given system (or a given observer),
> generates a qualitatively new order in the system
> as it reorganizes itself...The clinamen is a
> particularly powerful figure in...an
> epistomological configuration because it
> constitutes a fluid passage or interface among
> different levels of order, disorder, and
> complexity (Harris 76-77).

Every code contains the elements that will allow it to change, to pass into other codes, to display more possibility of connection. As in the clinamen of the atom, the code contains within it this "chance" element which allows it to surpass itself. In writing this is the role of the detail. The detail provides the clinamen that allows any system to display a greater complexity that is apparent (this is the reason so many literary theories -- marxist, structuralist, psychoanalytic -- bracket, or ignore, the details of what they are dealing with. An observation of detail would lead to a creative breakdown of the system.) In **Invisible Cities** The Emperor believes he has been able to reduce the complexity of his empire to the simplicity of the chessboard. The moves of the chessboard, its mathematical structure, form a diagram of his empire.

> In the context of the example of chess as a code,
> Khan's chessboard is in a sense the empire raised
> to the second power, the empire rendered
> geometrically and immaterialized into an empty
> Platonic Form...The code, abstracted on itself...

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becomes ungrounded: it no longer continues to
generate iterations of the same simulation. And
precisely at this site, another passage opens out
when this Platonized Form is enfolded on itself
... After Khan has raised the chess model to the
second power and arrived at "the square of planed
wood," the square root of the wood asserts itself:
"Then Marco Polo spoke: 'Your chessboard,
sire, is inlaid with two woods: ebony and maple.
The square on which your enlightened gaze is fixed
was cut from the ring of a trunk that grew in the
year of a drought: you see how its fibres are
arranged? Here a barely hinted knot can be made
out: a bud tried to burgeon on a premature spring
day, but the night's frost forced it to desist'"
(Harris 80-81).

"La quantità di cose che si potevano leggere in un

pezzetto di legno liscio e vuoto sommergeva Kublai; già Polo

era venuto a parlare dei boschi d'ebano, delle zattere di

tronchi che discendono i fiumi, degli approdi, delle donne

alle finestre...(140) ["The quantity of things that could

be read in a little piece of smooth and empty wood

overwhelmed Kublai; Polo was already talking about the

ebony forests, about rafts laden with logs that come down

the rivers, of docks, of women at the windows..." (104)].

The detail contains an explosive energy. Always too

many to take into account they combine in ways utterly

unpredictable. As a result, even when we can speak of a

diagram in the most complex circumstances, this diagram will

have as many possible ways of actualizing itself as there

are details that it takes hold of and that take hold of it.

Unlike the Platonic Form (which, in spite of Harris, it is

not) the diagram is generative, it constructs from its own

virtuality and it is always implicated in the messy,
chaotic, complex world it creates.

But perhaps we are still working at too high a level of
abstraction. We have gone from the body without organs, a
state of pure virtuality, to the diagram, an anexact range
of possibility that contains potentials realized in various
milieus. Our next step must be down to the next level of
abstraction, remembering, of course, that even at the most
"concrete" levels we are still dealing with forces and
relations of forces.

The human form is the actualization of a virtuality. It
finds itself also actualizing the potentials of a diagram.
The next level we must explore is that of the desiring
assemblages, which have a different relationship to the
body. No longer are we concerned with unformed matters, but
with how relatively formed singularities connect to each
other. In relation to the human body these desiring
assemblages are both superhuman (including the human
individual in a larger machine) and subhuman (connecting to
part of the human being without concerning itself with the
whole being).

Assemblages: Sub and Super Human

Desire, as we have seen, is heterogeneous, it makes little distinction between words and objects, abstract and concrete, concept and body.

> On peut en tirer des conclusions générales sur la nature des Agencements. D'après un premier axe, horizontal, un agencement comporte deux segments, l'un de contenu, l'autre d'expression. D'une part il est agencement machinique de corps, d'actions et de passions, mélange de corps réagissant les uns sur les autres; d'autre part, agencement collectif d'énonciation, d'actes et d'énoncés, transformations incorporelles s'attribuant aux corps. Mais, d'après un axe verticale orienté, l'agencement a d'une part des côtés territoriaux ou reterritorialisés, qui le stabilisent, d'autre part des points de déterritorialisation qui l'emportent (Mille Plateaux 112).

> We may draw some general conclusions on the nature of Assemblages... On a first, horizontal, axis, an assemblage comprises two segments, one of content, the other of expression. On the one hand it is a machinic assemblage of bodies, actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another; on the other hand it is a collective assemblage of enunciation, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies. Then on a vertical axis, the assemblage has both territorial sides, or reterritorialized sides, which stabilize it, and cutting edges of deterritorialization, which carry it away (Plateaus 88).

An important example of an historical assemblage would be feudalism.

> Un exemple, l'agencement féodal. On considérera les mélanges de corps qui définissent la féodalité: le corps de la terre et le corps social, les corps du suzerain, du vassal et du serf, le corps de chevalier et celui du cheval, le nouveau rapport dans lequel ils entrent avec

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l'étrier, les armes et les outils qui assurent les
symbioses de corps -- c'est tout un agencement
machinique. Mais aussi les énoncés, les
expressions, le régime juridique des armoiries,
l'ensemble des transformations incorporelles,
notamment les serments avec leurs variables, le
serment d'obédience, mais aussi le serment
amoureux, etc. : c'est l'agencement collectif
d'énonciation. Et suivant l'autre axe, les
territorialités et reterritorialisations féodales,
en même temps que la ligne de déterritorialisation
qui emport le chevalier et sa monture, les énoncés
et les actes. Comment tout cela se combine dans
les Croisades (Mille Plateaux 112-113).

Taking the feudal assemblage as an example, we
would have to consider the intermingling of bodies
defining feudalism: the body of earth and the
social body; the body of the overlord, vassal, and
serf; the body of the knight and the horse and
their new relation to the stirrup; the weapons and
tools assuring a symbiosis of bodies -- a whole
machinic assemblage. We would also have to
consider statements, expressions, the juridical
regime of heraldry, all of the incorporeal
transformations, in particular oaths and their
variables (the oath of obedience, but also the
oath of love, etc.): the collective assemblage of
enunciation. On the other axis, we would have to
consider the feudal territorialities and
reterritorializations, and at the same time the
line of deterritorialization that carries away
both the knight and his mount, statements and
acts. We would have to consider how all this
combines in the crusades (Plateaus 89).

How can bodies, words, actions and passion go together?

That is the question to be asked. How can they combine? What

new formations can come about as a result? And what do these

new formations make possible?

Calvino fits into this because his stories so often

form assemblages or are themselves taken up in assemblages,

unforeseen connections.

One of the most commented on connections in Calvino (especially in Cosmicomics) is that between science and myth. Cosmicomics has been called "un sogno fatto in presenza della ragione scientifica" (Ghidetti 120). As we have seen in Cosmicomics Calvino envisions a universe where consciousness is present even before the beginning: "Cosmos and consciousness are thus an indissoluble union, with one mirroring the other in ways so complex that they are inextricable ... By projecting living beings back into the primal point, Calvino transforms the mystery of cosmic space into myth" (Thiem 70). Kathryn Hume demonstrates how Calvino "puts science through hoops, and demonstrates its ability to serve any number of functions" (50). She goes so far as to question the essential difference between love and gravitation.

> A variety of early philosophers, including Neoplatonists and Christians, imagined the universe to be physically held together, the elements bound in place, by love... Dante ends Paradiso with his vision of the love that moves the sun and all the stars. Such early cosmologists pictured love as a literal force, a preposterous notion to today's scientist, until one translates "love" as "attraction". Suddenly we recognize our own universe, ruled indeed by mysterious forces of attraction and repulsion (51).

In fact, Deleuze and Guattari give little privilege to science, saying, "Nous ne connaissons pas plus de scientificité que d'idéologie, mais seulement des agencements" (Mille Plateaux 33) ["We are no more familiar

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with scientificity than we are with ideology; all we know
are assemblages" (Plateaus 22)]. Science and Mythology join
each other in an assemblage, each helping the other to go
beyond its boundaries. Science provides myth with new
concepts and language, myth provides science with a new way
of conceiving the universe, relations, and change (in fact
it is almost a cliche today to say that the field of
particle physics is dominated not by empiricists but by
dreamers and mystics).

Assemblages, then, allow diverse elements to work
together, producing an action, or series of actions or a
state. In Marcovaldo we see a constant attempt to form
assemblages, to create a desiring machine out of the
elements at hand. In "The City Lost in the Snow" Marcovaldo
finds himself shovelling snow after a storm has covered the
city completely. His job is to clear the snow away, to
reveal the city, but he passes into another assemblage and
decides to use the snow as an ally.

> Marcovaldo imparò ad ammucchiare la neve in un
> muretto compatto. Se continuava a fare dei muretti
> così, poteva costruirsi delle vie per lui solo,
> vie che avrebbero portato dove sapeva solo lui, e
> in cui tuti gli altri si sarebbero persi. Rifare
> la città, ammucchiare montagne alte come case, che
> nessuno avrebbe potuto distinguere dalle case
> vere. O forse ormai tutte le case erano diventate
> di neve, dentro e fuori; tutta una città di neve
> con i monumenti e i campanili e gli alberi, una
> città che si poteva disfare a colpi di pala e
> rifarla in un altro modo (24).

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Marcovaldo learned to pile the snow into a compact
little wall. If he went on making little walls
like that, he could build some streets for himself
alone; only he would know where those streets led,
and everybody else would be lost there. He could
remake the city, pile up mountains high as houses,
which no one would be able to tell from real
houses. But perhaps by now all the houses has
turned to snow, inside and out; a whole city of
snow with monuments and spires and trees, a city
that could be unmade by shovel and remade in a
different way (18).

Unfortunately for Marcovaldo, his attempts to pull

himself into a new assemblage or create a new arrangement of

elements always brings about the same result. At the end of

this story Marcovaldo sneezes and clears away the snow (if

there are any illusions about Marcovaldo being a realistic

character this should clear them up). With the snow gone, he

looks on his surroundings and sees "le cose di tutti giorni

spigolose e ostili" (26) ["the things of every day, sharp

and hostile" (20)].

In "The Wasp Treatment" Marcovaldo tries to usurp some

of the power of the medical profession. After reading an

article about bee venom being used to cure rheumatism. He

takes to collecting wasps in jars and inciting them to sting

his "patients". At first things proceed well until a swarm

of wasps invades his house and puts him and his customers in

the hospital. This story is notable for the way Marcovaldo

tries to become part of a medical assemblage. The key to

this transformation is the formula "wasp = syringe".

Marcovaldo, as always, makes due with what he has, but does

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not take into account the real nature of his assemblage's
elements (ie. he forgets that syringes don't have wills of
their own and wasps do). As a result his attempts to create
a new assemblage end in failure.

When luck is on Marcovaldo's side it is the result of
becoming part of another assemblage (this could be called
the art of camouflage). In "The Forest on the Superhighway"
Marcovaldo and his children go out in the winter to cut down
billboards for firewood. He is almost caught when a
nearsighted policeman spots him sitting on top of a
billboard for headache pills. The billboard shows the face
of a man in pain. As the policeman spots Marcovaldo he is
cutting into the forehead of the face with his saw. The
policeman says "-Ah, sí: compresse Stappa! Un cartellone
efficace! Ben trovato! Quell'omino lassú con quella sega
significa l'emicrania che taglia in due la testa! L'ho
subito capito!" (45) ["'Oh, yes. Stappa tablets! Very
effective ad! Smart idea! That little man up there with the
saw represents the migraine that is cutting the head in two.
I got it right away!'" (39)]. Marcovaldo escapes punishment
in this instance by instantly transforming himself into one
of the elements of an advertising assemblage. Though
Marcovaldo is not an overtly political book, this kind of
deceit, misdirection, camouflage, is an effective weapon in
the confrontation with repression, power and coersion.

It is this characteristic of desire that sets Marco
Polo apart from the emperor Kublai Khan. To Khan's empire-
building mania, Polo opposes desiring assemblages. Desire is
itself almost always a revolutionary force because it is
always seeking to connect forces, to construct new forms, to
reach new levels of intensity. It is true, as well, that
empire building is itself a form of desire, as are even the
most repressive social formations. But desire always wants
more assemblages, more deterritorializations that social
forms allow for. In fact, in Invisible Cities Khan is always
frustrated by Polo's stories; he finds it impossible to fit
these assemblages into a unified, central (what Deleuze
would call molar) empire. Each city is a particular
assemblage of desire. We have already seen the city of
Hypatia, where the particular assemblage of signs, actions
and passions was at first impossible for Polo to decipher
(philosophers in the playground, prisoners in the central
hall of the palace, musicians in the graveyards). Each city
in Invisible Cities has its own particular assemblage:
Ersilia, where the inhabitants stretch string between each
point in the city to show relationships and abandon the city
when it becomes entangled; Valdrada, the city that lives to
watch its life reflected in the lake although it hates its
reflection; Octavia, the city suspended like a spider web
over an abyss, whose inhabitants have an immediate sense of

their own impermanence. Tracing each assemblage would be a project in itself.

Finally, in <u>Difficult</u> <u>Loves</u> we see how elements, in this case sexuality and love, are only meaningful as part of an assemblage. <u>Difficult</u> <u>Loves</u> is not a book about love, but about the connections that can be made, the passions that can be experienced in certain assemblages.

> La question de la sexualité, c'est: avec quoi d'autre entre-t-elle en voisinage pour former telle ou telle heccéité, tels rapports de mouvement et de repos? Elle restera d'autant plus sexualité, pure et simple sexualité, loin de toute sublimation idéalisante (<u>Dialogues</u> 121)

> The question about sexuality is: into the vicinity of what else does it enter to form such and such a hecceity, particular relations of movement and rest. The more it is articulated with other fluxes, the more it will remain sexuality, pure and simple sexuality, far from all idealizing sublimation (<u>Dialogues</u> 102).

Sexuality has nothing to do with negativity, with a lost object, or with absence. It is a simplistic reductionism to insist on a negative model of desire, as Franco Ricci does in a number of articles and a book on Calvino. We have seen how, in "The Adventure of a Traveller" a kind of desire unfolds during the trip. It is a complex process that involves certain kinds of perceptions and sensations. For Ricci, however, this tale is more adequately defined by a negative model.

The physical presence of the train fills the void
created by the absence of Cinzia. Indeed, it
summons up an immediate, subjective, and, above
all, private response which reinforces the lover's
recognition of himself as a traveller... Federico
guarantees his precarious existence (it stands to
reason that in his circumscribed world he exists
only as a "viaggiatore) by internalizing reality.
He achieves this by staging an elaborate and
extraneous game of pretense ... the real world of
Cinzia U now become mutually exclusive ... the
structured manoeuvring which accompanies his
identification with the train precludes the
desired communication with Cinzia ... To survive
as a "viaggiatore", it would seem, presupposes the
capacity to retain an autistic, non-communicative
identity (Ricci, "Silence" 57-58).

Compare this to Deleuze's definition of desire as

immanent, and as joy:

C'est qu'il y a une joie immanente au désir, comme
s'il se remplissait de soi-même et de ses
contemplations, et qui n'implique aucun manque,
aucune impossibilité, qui ne se mesure pas
davantage au plaisir, puisque c'est cette joie qui
distribuera les intensités de plaisir et les
empechêra d'être pénétrées d'angoisse, de honte,
de culpabilité...'joi' dans l'amour courtoise,
l'échange des coeurs, l'épreuve ou l'"assay": tout
est permis qui ne soit pas extérieur au désir ni
transcendant à son plan, mais qui ne soit pas non
plus intérieur aux personnes...ce qui compte
seulement, c'est que le plaisir soit le flux du
désir, lui-même, Immanence...(Mille Plateaux
192-94)

There is, in fact a joy that is immanent to desire
as though desire were filled by itself and its
contemplations; a joy that implies no lack or
impossibility and is not measured by pleasure
since it is what distributes intensities of
pleasure and prevents them from being suffused by
anxiety, shame, and guilt..."Joy" in courtly love,
the exchange of hearts, the test or "assay":
everything is allowed, as long as it is not
external to desire or transcendent to its plane,
or else internal to persons ... all that counts is

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for pleasure to be the flow of desire itself,
                    Immanence... (<u>Plateaus</u> 155-56).

It is always the same deadening struggle man against

negativity in Ricci (see his <u>Difficult Games</u>). The

multiplicity and potential of assemblages is always brought

down to the same laws: lack, negativity, defeat. Ricci

ignores connection, creation, assemblages of new forms of

desire -- in Deleuze and in Calvino it is not always the

"same" desire played out in a number of unreal forms. Desire

itself changes according to the assemblage it constructs.

Assemblages function according to certain laws:

multiplicity, molecularity and becoming.

<u>Multiplicity</u>: <u>The</u> <u>Law</u> <u>of</u> <u>the</u> <u>Pack</u>

Assemblages are multiple; they are composed of elements

which are composed of a multiplicity of forces. These forces

themselves are composed of multiplicities. It is difficult

to think in terms of multiplicity since our thinking is tied

up in binary oppositions, dialectics, the search for the

master signifier. Multiplicity opposes itself to dialectics,

which can only understand phenomena by reducing them to

crude oppositions.

                    La dialectique se nourrit d'oppositions parce
                    qu'elle ignore les mécanismes différentiels
                    autrement subtils et souterrains: les déplacements
                    topologiques, les variations typologiques...De
                    trois manieres l'oeuvre de Nietzsche est dirigée
                    contre la dialectique: celle-ci méconnaît le sens,

parce qu'elle ignore la nature des forces qui
s'approprient concrètement les phénomènes; elle
méconnaît l'essence, parce qu'elle ignore
l'élément réel dont dérivent les forces, leurs
qualités et leur rapports; elle méconnaît le
changement et la transformation, parce qu'elle se
contente d'opérer des permutations entre termes
abstraits et irréels (Nietzsche 181-82).

Dialectic thrives on oppositions because it is
unaware of far more subtle and subterranean
differential mechanisms: topological
displacements, typological variations...
Nietzsche's work is directed against the dialectic
for three reasons: it misinterprets sense because
it does not know the nature of the forces which
concretely appropriate phenomena; it misinterprets
essence because it does not know the real element
from which forces, their qualities and their
relations derive; it misinterprets change and
transformation because it is content to work with
permutations of abstract and unreal terms
(Nietzsche 158).

Multiplicities function in a way completely different

from dialectics and binary oppositions. The multiplicity

cannot be reduced to the binary or to the unity. It

functions according to its own laws.

...c'est seulement quand le multiple est
effectivement traité comme substantif,
multiplicité, qu'il n'a plus aucun rapport avec
l'Un comme sujet ou comme objet, comme réalité
naturelle ou spirituelle, comme image et
monde...Une multiplicité n'a ni sujet ni objet,
mais seulement les déterminations, des grandeurs,
des dimensions qui ne peuvent croître sans qu'elle
change de nature...Un agencement est précisément
cette croissance des dimensions dans dans une
multiplicité qui change nécessairement de nature à
mesure qu'elle augmente ses connexions (Mille
Plateaux 14-15)

...it is only when the multipicity is effectively
treated as a substantive, "multiplicity," that it

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> ceases to have any relation to the One as subject
> or object, natural or spiritual reality, image and
> world...A multiplicity has neither subject nor
> object, only determinations, magnitudes, and
> dimensions that cannot increase in number without
> the multiplicity changing in nature ... An
> assemblage is precisely this increase in the
> dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily
> changes in nature as it expands its connections
> (Plateaus 8).

Calvino's work is a potential battleground for a

struggle between dialectics and multiplicity. It is

possible, according to Albert Carter, to read Calvino's work

in terms of its dialectical oppositions. His examples raise

questions as to the efficacy of dialectics in dealing with

literature.

> Readers of Calvino will not need any in-depth
> reminders of the range of the polarities he used
> in his creative work...Here are some of
> them:...scientific knowledge as opposed to fantasy
> in Le Cosmicomiche, the ratiocinating characters
> as polarized from reality in Ti con zero ... the
> polarized frame characters of Marco Polo and the
> Khan in further opposition to the prose poems of
> Le citta invisibili...and the Cartesian mind of
> Palomar as he contemplates reality in Palomar
> (116).

What is most intersting about this list is that it

perfectly coincides with Deleuze's criticism of dialectics:

that it settles for binary opposition when there are more

subtle distinctions to be made. Two examples. First, as we

have seen, science and fantasy (or science and myth) do not

constitute opposites. They are both form assemblages of

elements that can enter into communication with each other.

there is no negation between these two terms, just a mutual

capture in which each helps the other to break out of its
self-imposed boundaries. Second, in Invisible Cities Polo is
not opposed to Khan. They both are arranging the
multiplicity of the invisible cities in different ways,
according to different desiring assemblages. Khan's
assemblage is no less an assemblage because it tries to
centralize and arrange its elements in an orderly fashion.
This is as much a desiring assemblage (we recall Calvino's
story of the formation of crystals) as the assemblage that
wishes to break and remake connections continuously.

In fact, in both Cosmicomics and Invisible Cities,
there are more interesting distinctions to be made between
forces than simple opposition. Qfwfq, as often finds himself
faced with new multiplicities of elements he finds difficult
to control. In "How Much Shall We Bet?" Qwfwq tries to
predict the unfolding of the universe according to complex
calculations which eventually prove incapable of foreseeing
the multiplicity of events and their possible combinations.

> Il tema dell'informazione "subita" e soffocante
> compare anche in "Quanto scommettiamo?" dove Qwfwq
> giunge a scoprire che i fenomeni, gli eventi, non
> sono piu leggibili come in passato, perche si
> moltiplicano in maniera vertiginosa... (Di Felice
> 130).

In "Without Colors", the world passes from a state of
uniform greyness because of lack of atmosphere, to a
multiplicity of colors when volcanoes and geological
disturbances send gases into the air around the planet.

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Qwfwq anxiously awaits the change, but his companion, Ayl,
prefers the world of uniform grey. At the beginning of their
relationship they can only speak in terms of dialectical
negations: "Sabbia. Non sabbia...Roccia. Non roccia...Io. Tu
non io" (65-66). ["Sand. Not-sand...Rock. Not-rock...I.
You-not-I" (53)]. Later, as colours are formed, this
uniformity explodes into a multiplicity: "Le compagne di Ayl
saltavano ancora sui prati, lanciandosi la palla
iridescente: ma com'erano cambiate! Una era bionda con la
pelle bianca, una bruna con la pelle olivastra, una castana
con la pelle rosa, una rossina tutta picchiettata
d'innumerevoli incantevoli lentiggini" (71) ["Ayl's friends
were still leaping over the lawn, tossing the iridescent
ball: but how changed they were! One was blonde with white
skin, one brunette with olive skin, one brown haired with
pink skin, one had red hair and was dotted with countless,
enchanting freckles" (58)]. Ayl's final reaction to this new
world, however, is to run and hide herself forever in the
Earth, avoiding light and colour completely. This is the
attitude of the dialectician when faced with a multiplicity.
There is a desire to turn away, to deny. There is a kind of
comfort in a system that allows one to work on heterogeneous
elements and make them familiar and unified. Multiplicities
tend to function in a far more radical, out-of-control
manner. Deleuze recounts a "schizo-dream" about packs:

Ce qui est important dans le devenir-loup, c'est
la position de masse, et d'abord la position du
sujet lui-même par rapport à la meute, par rapport
à la multiplicité-loup, la façon dont il y entre
ou n'y entre pas, la distance à laquelle il se
tient, la manière dont il tient et ne tient pas à
la multiplicité..."Il y a le désert. Là encore ça
n'aurait aucune sens de dire que je suis dans le
désert. C'est une vision panoramique du désert, ce
désert n'est ni tragique, ni inhabité, il n'est
désert que par sa couleur, ocre, et sa lumière,
chaude et sans ombre. Là-dedans une foule
grouillante, essaim d'abeilles, mêlée de
footballeurs ou group de touaregs. Je suis en
bordure de cette foule, à la périphérie; mais j'y
appartiens, j'y suis attachée par une extrémité de
mon corps, une main ou un pied. Je sais que cette
périphérie est mon seul lieu possible, je mourrais
si je me laissais entraîner au centre de la mêlée,
mais tout aussi sûrement si je lâchais cette
foule. Ma position n'est pas facile à conserver,
elle est même très difficile à tenir, car ces
êtres remuent sans arrêt, leurs mouvements sont
imprévisibles et ne répondent à aucune rythme.
Tantôt ils touroient, tantôt ils vont vers le nord
puis brusquement vers l'est, aucun des individus
composant la foule ne reste à la même place par
rapport aux autres. Je suis donc moi aussi
perpétuellement mobile; tout cela exige une grande
tension, mais me donne un sentiment de bonheur
violent presque vertigineux (Mille Plateaux 41-42)

In becoming-wolf, the important thing is the
position of the mass, and above all the position
of the subject itself in relation to the pack or
wolf-multiplicity: how the subject joins or does
not join the pack, how far away it stays, how it
does or does not hold to the multiplicity
..."There is a desert. Again, it wouldn't make any
sense to say I am in the desert. It's a panoramic
vision of the desert, and it's not a tragic or
uninhabited desert. It's only a desert because of
its ochre color and its blazing, shadowless sun.
There is a teeming crowd in it, a swarm of bees, a
rumble of soccer players, or a group of Tuareg. I
am on the edge of the crowd, at the periphery; but
I belong to it, I am attached to it by one of my
extremities, a hand or foot. I know that the
periphery is the only place I can be, that I would
die if I let myself be drawn into the center of

the fray, but just as certainly if I let go of the
crowd. This is not an easy position to stay in, it
is even very difficult to hold, for these beings
are in constant motion and their movements are
unpredictable and follow no rhythm. They swirl, go
north, then suddenly east; none of the individuals
in the crowd remains in the same place in relation
to the others. So I too am in perpetual motion;
all this demands a high level of tension, but it
gives me a feeling of violent, almost vertiginous,
happiness" (29).

Se si sofferma per qualche minuto a osservare la
disposizione degli uccelli uno in rapporto
all'altro, il signor Palomar si sente preso in una
trama la cui continuità si estende uniforme e
senza brecce, come se anche lui facesse parte di
questo corpo in movimento composto di centinaia e
centinaia di corpi staccati ma il cui insieme
costituisce un oggetto unitario, come un nuvola o
una colonna di fumo o uno zampillo...Ma basta che
egli si metta a seguire con lo sguardo un singolo
pennuto perché la dissociazione degli elementi
riprenda il sopravvento ed ecco che la corrente da
cui si sentiva trasportato, la rete da cui si
sentiva trasportato, la rete da cui sentiva
sostenuto si dissolvono e l'effetto è quello d'una
vertigine che lo prende alla bocca dello stomaco.
     Questo avviene per esempio quando il signor
Palomar, dopo essersi persuaso che lo stormo nel
suo insieme sta volando verso di lui, porta lo
sguardo su un uccello che invece si sta
allontanando, e da questo su un'altro che
s'allontana anch'esso ma in una direzione diversa,
e in breve s'accorge che tutti i volatili che gli
sembrava s'avvicinassero in realtà stanno fuggendo
via in tutte le direzioni, come se lui si trovasse
al centro d'un'esplosione (Palomar 65-66)

If he lingers for a few moments to observe the
arrangement of the birds, one in relation to the
another, Mr. Palomar feels caught in a weft whose
continuity extends, uniform and without rents, as
if he, too, were part of this moving body compoed
of hundreds and hundreds of bodies, detached, but
together forming a single object, like a cloud or
a column of smoke or a jet of water ... But he has
only to start following a single bird with his
gaze and the disassociation of the elments

> returns; and the current that he felt transporting
> him, the network that he felt sustaining him,
> dissolve; the effect is that of a vertigo that
> grips him at the pit of the stomach.
>   This happens, for example, when Mr Palomar,
> after having convinced himself that the flock as a
> whole is flying toward him, directs his gaze to a
> bird that is, on the contrary, moving away, and
> from this one to another, also moving away but in
> a different direction; and he soon notices that
> all the birds that seemed to him to be approaching
> are in reality flying off in all directions, as if
> he were in the center of an explosion (Mr. Palomar
> 63-64).

Swirling, teeming, swarming: this is the law by which

the assemblage functions. This is why we can speak only of

degrees, intensities, states. The cities of Invisible Cities

swirl and connect, to memory, to desire, to each other. It

would be worth very little to perform an exhaustive analysis

of each city, showing its connections and mirroring in other

cities because such an analysis could only deal with two

cities at a time (the fatal flaw of comparison), and the

cities, to be understood, must be held together at once.

Multiplicity: the art of juggling elements.

The term "multiplicity", however, should not be

misunderstood. It does not simply refer to an assemblage

with many parts. The multiple is multiple not because of the

large number of elements, but because the connections

between those elements happens on a molecular level where

much more is possible. We do not simply have bodies (as

whole entities) interacting with bodies. We have part-

objects, potentials, passions, memories (on the sub-body
level) and teams, packs, tribes (on the super-body level).

The Molecular: Connection, Change, Composition

The molecular is to be distinguished from the molar,
but not as a binary opposition. The molar is only a
particular arrangement of forces which can enter into
molecular relationships (bodies, for example, are made up of
atoms, a molar structure, but can enter into molecular
relations with machines, animals, language, and other
bodies).

> Molecular and molar do not correspond to "small"
> and "large," "part" and "whole," "organ" and
> "organism," "individual" and "society." There are
> molarities of every magnitude (the smallest being
> the nucleus of the atom). The distinction is not
> one of scale but of mode of composition: it is
> qualitative, not quantitative. In a molecular
> population (m ss) there are only local connections
> between discrete particles. In the case of a molar
> population (superindividual or person) locally
> connected discrete particles have become
> correlated at a distance. Our granules of muck
> were an oozing molecular mass, but as their
> connections rigidified into rock, they became
> stabilized and homogenized, increasing the
> organizational consistency of of different regions
> in the deposit (correlation). Molarity implies the
> creation or prior existence of a well-defined
> boundary enabling the population of particles to
> be grasped as a whole. We skipped something: the
> muck as such. A supple individual lies between the
> molecular and the molar, in time and in mode of
> composition. Its particles are correlated, but not
> rigidly so. It has boundaries, but fluctuating
> ones. It is the threshold leading from one state
> to another (Massumi 55).

If this supermolecular muck could speak, could tell its
story, it could be the story Qwfwq tells in "The Aquatic
Uncle". In this tale, which takes place at the beginning of
the carboniferous period, when the first vertebrates began
leaving the water for life on land, Qwfwq, an amphibious
creature somewhere between fish and land animal, speaks of
an Uncle who is still a fish. In spite of his family's
pleas, the old fish, Uncle N'ba N'ga, prefers life in the
oceans and ridicules his family for leaving the sea. Qwfwq,
one day brings his friend Lll, a more evolved land animal.
Eventually the uncle convinces her to return to the sea.
Qwfwq realizes that he is "a meta strada, uno che non era
nel suo ne in un mondo ne nell'altro" (97) ["at a halfway
stage, a creature not at home in one world or in the other
"(80)].

> Fu una batosta dura per me. Ma poi, che farci?
> Continuai la mia strada, in mezzo alle
> trasformazioni del mondo, anch'io trasformandomi.
> Ogni tanto, tra le tante forme degli esseri
> viventi, incontravo qualcuno che "era uno" piú di
> quanto io non lo fossi: uno che annunciava il
> futuro, ornitorinco che allatta il piccolo uscito
> dall'uovo, giraffa allampanata in mezzo alla
> vegetazione ancora bassa; o uno che testimoniava
> un passato senza ritorno, dinosauro superstite
> dopo ch'era cominciato in Cenozoico, oppure --
> coccodrillo -- un passato che aveva trovato il
> modo di conservarsi immobile nei secoli. Tutti
> costoro avevano qualcosa, lo so, che li rendeva in
> qualche modo superiori a me, sublimi, e che
> rendeva me, in confronto, mediocre. Eppure non mi
> sarei cambiato con nessuno di loro (98-99).

It was a hard blow for me. But, after all, what
could I do about it? I went on my way, in the
midst of the world's transformations, being
transformed myself. Every now and then, among the
many forms of living beings, I encountered one
who "was somebody" more than I was, one who
announced the future, the duck-billed platypus who
nurses its young, just hatched from the egg; or I
might encounter another who bore witness to a past
beyond all return, a dinosaur who had survived
into the beginning of the Cenozoic, or else -- a
crocodile -- part of the past that had discovered
a way to remain immobile through the centuries.
They all had something, I know, that made them
somehow superior to me, sublime, something that
made me compared to them, mediocre. And yet I
wouldn't have traded places with any of them
(81-82).

The supermolecular being is poised between two states,

either going from one state to the other, or holding itself

apart from molarization. This is the struggle each

individual faces every moment of existence. The molar tries

always to impose a certain composition on the molecular: the

public persona and the private passions. Deleuze speaks of

the molar and the molecular as lines, the line of rigid

segmentarity -- which gives us our identity from one stage

of life to the next (infant, toddler, child, teenager,

young adult adult, middle aged, senior citizen) and from one

part of life to the next (office, home, recreation, love,

hobby) and the line of supple segmentarity, the molecular

line with supple segments which are "molecular fluxes with

thresholds or quanta" (Dialogues 124).

Il se passe beaucoup de choses sur cette seconde
sorte de lignes, des devenirs, des micro-devenirs,
qui n'ont pas le meme rythme que notre "histoire".

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C'est pourquoi, si pénibles, les histoires de
famille, les repérages, les remémorations, tandis
que tous nos vrais changements passent ailleurs,
une autre politique, un autre temps, une autre
individuation. Un métier, c'est un segment dur,
mais aussi qu'est-ce qui passe là-dessous, quelles
connexions, quelles attirances et répulsions qui
ne coïncident pas avec les segments, quelles
folies secrètes et pourtant en rapport avec les
puissances publiques (Dialogues 151-52).

Many things happen on this second kind of line --
becomings, micro becomings, which don't even have
the same rhythm as our "history". This is why
family histories, registrations, commemorations,
are so unpleasant, whilst out true changes take
place elsewhere -- another politics, another time,
another individuation. A profession is a rigid
segment, but also what happens beneath it, the
connections, the attractions and repulsions, which
do not coincide with the segments, the forms of
madness which are secret but which nevertheless
relate to the public authorities (Dialogues
124-25).

This is not really an unusual way to arrange a life:
novelists do it all the time. There is the public character
which is only a persona, and the molecular character
composed of a mass of passions and perceptions (this is the
great accomplishment of modernism, to get to the supple
molecular line -- modernism, however, did not dismantle the
line of rigid segmentarity, the power of molarity).
Calvino's particular accomplishment is doing away with the
line of rigid segmentarity, the line that defines us not
only as human, but as a particular social being in a
particular historical setting. Calvino's "characters", as we
have seen, are not characters at all. The rigid line has no
reality; Calvino's figures live a step closer to the

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molecular line: actions, repulsions, attractions, that enter
into the human world but come from somewhere else. It is for
this reason that Calvino's characters are sometimes accused
of being flat, cold, inhuman. It is because they are closer
to the molecular forces that make them up. Deleuze, in Le
Pli has used the term micro-perceptions to describe the
molecular forces that make up the experience of the
assemblage.

> ...ce sont ces petites perceptions obscures,
> confuses, qui composent nos macroperceptions, nos
> aperceptions conscientes, claires et distinctes:
> jamais une perception consciente n'arriverait si
> elle n'intégrait un ensemble infini de petits
> perceptions qui déséquilibrent la macroperception
> précédente et préparent la suivante. Comment une
> douleur succederait-elle à un plaisir si mille
> petites douleurs ou plutôt demi-douleurs n'était
> déjà dispersées dans le plaisir, qui vont se
> réunir dans la douleur consciente ... Toute la
> question est de savoir comment l'on passe des
> petites perceptions aux perceptions conscientes,
> des perceptions moléculaires aux perceptions
> molaires (Le Pli 115-16).

This is how perception functions in the molecular
realm. Small perceptions, micro-perceptions, combine to
create a conscious perception (this is not an additive
effect, but more along the lines of the way the colour blue
and the colour yellow combine to make green (Le Pli 117)).
Calvino has said, in Difficult Loves, "ogni silenzio
consiste della rete di rumori minuti che l'avvolge" (91)
["every silence consists of the network of miniscule sounds
that enfolds it" (103)]. We have also seen in "The Adventure

of a Traveller"   how Federico V's experience of travelling

on a train is made up of a host of small perceptions: bodily

perceptions -- heat, cold, itching, constriction -- memory

traces, anticipations, annoyances, fantasies, revelries,

plans, familiarities. This is the manner in which

assemblages hold together. Their most visible components

(bodies, objects) are possessed of a kind of microdimension

that makes them obey a different law. Bodies, objects,

institutions, concepts, emotional states, all populate the

molecular realm as "singularities", arrangements of forces.

> Ce sont des points de rebroussement, d'inflexion,
> etc.; des cols, des noeuds, des foyers, des
> centres; des points de fusion, de condensation,
> d'ébullition, etc.; des points de pleurs et de
> joie, de maladie et de santé, d'espoir et
> d'angoisse, points dits sensibles...La singularité
> fait partie d'une autre dimension que celles de la
> désignation, de la manifestation ou de la
> signification. La singularité est essentiellement
> pré-individuelle, non personnelle, a-conceptuelle
> (Logique 67).

> Singularities are turning points and points of
> inflection; bottlenecks, knots, foyers, and
> centers; points of fusion, condensation, and
> boiling; points of tears nd joy, sickness and
> health, hope and anxiety, "sensitive" points ...
> The singularity belongs to another dimension than
> that of denotation, manifestation, or
> signification. It is essentially pre-individual,
> non-personal, and a-conceptual (Logic 52).

The human, then, as well as objects, concepts and

passions are singularities, individuations that rely on a

particular contraction of forces. What we consider stable,

concrete and centralized phenomena are often transition

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points, the crossing of a threshold from one thing to another. In fact, this is another essential characteristic of forces: they work by proximity. One force comes into the vicinity of another with which it has some affinity (the wasp and orchid example) and there is a mutual capture, a becoming that involves at least two terms. Becomings are the locus of change, transformation, breaking of boundaries. Being molecular, of course, they are always more complex than simple imitations. They combine heterogeneous elements in a way that allows them to realize their molecular potential.

Becoming: Molecules, Affect, and Mutual Capture

Forces interact. There is change, transformation from one assemblage to another. Affects, molecules, leave one arrangement and become part of another. An assemblage adds or loses a dimension and becomes a different assemblage. There are strange attractions, loves, hates, obsessions that cannot be accounted for at the level of the individual. There are molecular fluxes that undermine molar structures, armies that can be laid low by a virus, political movements that are destroyed by the microfascisms that occupy them. The molecular realm is anything but static. In order to understand the workings of forces that make up the human, then, we must understand how these forces combine with each

other, are transformed into each other. In becoming,
transformation happens at the level of affect, the molecular
level.

> A man complains of being hungry. All the time.
> Dogs, it seems, are never hungry. So the man
> decides to become a dog. To be a dog one must walk
> on all fours. The hero decides to wear shoes on
> his hands only to discover that there is no hand
> left to tie the laces on the fourth shoe. What
> does the shoe-shod dog tie laces with? Its mouth.
> Organ by organ, the man becomes a dog.
> He is not imitating a dog; he is "diagramming." He
> analyses step by step the qualities of the two
> molar species, resolving them into constellations
> of abstract relations of movement and rest. In
> other words, he gradually extracts from each body
> a set of affects: ways in which the body can
> connect with itself and with the world (Massumi
> 93).

What is important about a body, then, human body,

animal body, plant body, word body, is not what it is but

what it can do. There is a story told about the founder of a

Chinese martial arts system, white crane kung fu, who

developed his system after watching a crane fight a gorilla.

Observing the graceful movements of the crane, its strategy

of sidestepping the larger animal's rush and striking from

long range with its beak, he drew a similar diagram of the

crane's affects -- to sidestep an incoming force, to strike

from long range, to rely on sharpness rather than brute

strength -- and then mapped these affects onto his own body.

As a result, the white crane stylist relies on graceful

footwork to move out of the way of attacks, and long range

techniques, extended punches and kick, to counterattack.

Like the mouth tying shoelaces, the hand of foot that delivers the blow has tapped into the potential of the crane's beak: hand = beak, but only at the level of affect. The hand does not imitate a beak, rather at the extremes of its potential (i.e. in a dangerous situation) it behaves in the same way as a beak.

But becomings animal are not the only becomings available. Anything that can be broken down into affects can enter into the process of becoming, with the ultimate becoming being the becoming-imperceptible.

> Etre à l'heure du monde. Voilà le lien entre imperceptible, indiscernable, impersonnel, les trois vertus. Se réduire à une ligne abstraite, un trait, pour trouver la zone d'indiscernabilité avec d'autres traits, et entrer ainsi dans l'heccéité comme dans l'impersonnalité du créateur. Alors on est comme l'herbe: on a fait du monde, de tout le monde un devenir, parce qu'on a fait un monde nécessairement communicant, parce qu'on a supprimé de soi tout ce qui nous empêchait de nous glisser entre les choses, de pousser au milieu des choses (Mille Plateaux 343-44).

> To be present at the dawn of the world. Such is the link between imperceptibility, indiscernability, and impersonality -- the three virtues. To reduce oneself to an abstract line, a trait, in order to find one's zone of indiscernability with other traits, and in this way enter into the haecceity and impersonality of the creator. One is then like grass: one has made the world, everybody, everything into a becoming, because one has made a necessarily communicating world, because one has suppressed in oneself everything that prevents us from slipping between things and growing in the midst of things (Plateaus 280).

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Calvino's Mr. Palomar often finds himself in positions
where he must try to understand the mutual capture of forces
or where he himself moves into a relationship of becoming.
In "The Blackbird's Whistle" Mr. Palomar is contemplating
communication while in the garden with his wife. The
unspoken messages in their verbal exchanges prompts
Mr.Palomar to ask himself whether whistling might not be a
preferable mode of communication.

> Se l'uomo investisse nel fischio tutto ciò che
> normalmente affida alla parola, e se il merlo
> modulassa nel fischio tutto il non detto della sua
> condizione d'essere naturale, ecco che sarebbe
> compiuto il primo passo per colmare la separazione
> tra... tra che cosa e che cosa? Natura e cultura?
> Silenzio e parola? (29).

> If man were to invest in whistling everything he
> normally entrusts to words, and if the blackbird
> were to modulate into his whistling all the
> unspoken truth of his natural condition, then the
> first step would be taken toward bridging the gap
> between ... between what and what? Nature and
> culture? Silence and speech? (27).

Becoming is a double capture -- man by bird and bird by
man -- the man learns to whistle (to produce an sonic force)
and the bird learns to modulate its whistle (to arrange its
sonorous matter differently). But becomings are sometimes
deceptive. It is not when Mr. Palomar whistles that he is
becoming bird, but when his words to his wife take on an
added dimension, when they become sound that has as its
function to connect two bodies, husband and wife. Man
becomes bird when he adds this dimension to his language.

Elsewhere, too, Mr.Palomar discovers the double capture
of human and animal. In "Marble and Blood" Mr. Palomar
contemplates the relationship between humans and cattle
while in a butcher shop.

> Occorre dire che la simbiosi uomo-bue ha raggiunto
> nei secoli un suo equilibrio (permettendo alle due
> specie di continuare a moltiplicarsi) sia pur
> asimmetrico (è vero che l'uomo provvede a nutrire
> il bue, ma non è tenuto a darglisi in pasto) e ha
> garantito il fiorire della civiltà detta umana,
> che almeno per una sua porzione andrebbe detta
> umano-bovina (78-79).

> It must be said that the man-beef symbiosis has,
> over the centuries, achieved an equilibrium
> (allowing the two species to continue
> multiplying), though it is asymmetrical (it is
> true that man takes care of feeding cattle, but he
> is not required to give them himself to feed on),
> and has guaranteed the flourishing of what is
> called human civilization, which at least in part
> should be called human-bovine (78).

Becomings, can also happen between other elements,
human and plant, human and place. In Marcovaldo, for
example, we see the protagonist trying to begin this process
of becoming, trying to connect with something that will
allow him a way out of his circumscribed existence:
"Becoming is an escape, but it is not for that reason
negative or necessarily oppositional. The body-in-becoming
does not simply react to a set of constraints. Instead it
develops a new sensitivity to them, one subtle enough to
convert them into opportunities" (Massumi 102). In order to

begin this process of there can be a number of strategies. One is to "stop the world"

> Becoming is about movement, but it begins with an inhibition. At least some of the automatic circuits between regularized stimuli and habitual response must be disconnected, as if a crowbar had been inserted into the interlocking network of standardized actions and trajectories constituting the World As We Know It (Massumi 103).

Marcovaldo tries to throw this monkey wrench into the system whenever he can. Anything that will disrupt his routinized existence is a potential point of instability in the structure that holds him. A snowstorm, a chance sprouting of mushrooms, a plant needing care, all provide opportunities for Marcovaldo to escape. Indeed Marcovaldo is perhaps Calvino's most cruelly comedic book, dealing as it does with the failures of these becomings and the reterritorialization of Marcovaldo back into the world of work and family (the snow disappears, the mushrooms are poisonous, and the plant dies). It is these failures, however, that ultimately intensify the humour of Marcovaldo's struggles. We see that territorializations, limitations, do not take on Marcovaldo. He has the power of forgetting, the power that the man of ressentiment lacks, according to Nietzsche (Nietzsche and Philosophy 114-15). Marcovaldo is the master of another strategy of becoming: he understands and finds derelict spaces.

Cherish derelict spaces. They are holes in habit,
what cracks in the existing order appear to be
from the molar perspective. The site of a breach
in the World As We Know It is dysfunctional for
molar purposes, and is therefore perceived by
good/common sense as a simple negative: a lack of
functioning, a wasteland ... Autonomous zones of
this kind come in many guises. They may be
geographical: an "underdeveloped" area in the
capitalist economy, or a "Third World," which may
in fact occur within the borders of the "First
World" (the "ghetto") ... Or they may be entirely
deterritorialized. Daydreaming is an autonomous
zone for the "delinquent" in school (Massumi 105).

Marcovaldo finds these derelict spaces within his own

city. In "The City all to Himself" Marcovaldo wanders in the

city after the vacationing population has all but abandoned

it. He is able to see the city at a new scale, observing its

details.

Lo sguardo di Marcovaldo scrutava intorno cercando
l'affiorare d'una città diversa, una città di
cortecce e squame e grumi e nervature sotto la
città di vernice e catrame e vetro e intonaco. Ed
ecco che il caseggiato davanti al quale passava
tutti i giorni gli si rivelava essere in realtà
una pietraia di grigia arenaria porosa; la
staccionata d'un cantiere era d'assi di pino
ancora fresco con nodi che parevano gemme;
sull'insegna del grande negozio di tessuti
riposava una schiera di farfalline di tarme,
addormentate (102).

Marcovaldo's eyes peered around, seeking the
emergence of a different city, a city of bark and
scales and clots and nerve systems under the city
of paint and tar and glass and stucco. And there,
the building which he passed every day was
revealed to him, in its reality, as a quarry of
porous gray sandstone; the fence of a building
site was of pine-planks still fresh, with knots
that looked like buds; on the sign of the big
fabric shop rested a host of little moths, asleep
(98).

A usual, however, before Marcovaldo can tap into the potential of the new setting it is immediately reterritorialized, taken over by a film crew which sets him to work. Sometimes, however, Marcovaldo's exploration of derelict space leads him to a rare physical escape. In "The Wrong Stop" Marcovaldo leaves a theatre where he has been watching a movie about India only to discover that the city has been shrouded in fog. He soon relizes that he prefers the city of fog: "la nebbia, cancellando il mondo intorno, gli permetteva di conservare nei suoi occhi le visioni dello schermo panoramico. Anche il freddo era attutito, quasi che la città si fosse rincalzata addosso una nuvola come una coperta (64) ["the fog, erasing the world around him, allowed him to hold in his eyes the visions of the wide screen. Even the cold was muffled, as if the city had pulled a cloud over it" (61)]. He misses his tram stop and finds himself wandering in the fog guided only by touch. He finally reaches what he thinks is a bus and goes in only to find, too late, that he has gotten on to an intercontinetal flight to India. In this case, his attempts at escape have proven more successful than most times.

Marcovaldo is a protagonist who is in a continual process of becoming. He looks for the non-human -- plants, animals, jungles -- in a world entirely inhabited by the human. Though he is always pulled back, though his successes are miniscule at best, he has also succeeded in not being a

character, not remembering his failures, not allowing the accumulation of limitations to stop him from trying to enter into new assemblages, find new ways out. This does not make him a character. In fact it makes him the exact opposite of a character. Characters are made of memories and wounds. Marcovaldo has neither.

Becomings do not have a goal. One does not become in order to reach a final state, just as one does not dance in order to get to the end of the dance. Becomings, if they do not continue, are brought back to the same few cardinal points of our society: subjectivity, lack, humanity, and desire constrained to strictly limited boundaries. The human is a contraction of forces; and forces -- as well as humans -- cannot be kept from the continuing process of becoming that sustains them.

Conclusion

"Il s'agit de savoir avec quelles autres forces les
forces dans l'homme entrent en rapport, sur telle ou telle
formation historique, et quelle forme résulte de ce composé
de forces. On peut déjà prévoir que les forces dans l'homme
n'entrent pas nécessairement dans la composition d'une
forme-Homme, mais peuvent s'investir autrement, dans un
autre composé, dans un autre forme" (Foucault 131) ["One
needs to know with what other forces the forces within man
enter into a relation, in a given historical formation, and
what form is created as a result from this compound of
forces. We can already foresee that the forces within man do
not necessarily contribute to the composition of a Man-form,
but may be otherwise invested in another compound or form"
(Foucault 124)]. We are at a point today when the human can
become many things, enter into relations with many different
forces. In order to do this, however, there must first be a
process -- a continuing process -- of subverting the human,
of showing how everything that is most human for us comes
from forces of the outside, potentials that encompass a
wider range of possibilities than simply the human. Though
we fight against this understanding in the name of the
human, the loss of the human form may not be a reason for
mourning. We have visions of a future in which human beings
form compounds with machines, human intelligence is enhanced

genetically or in interface with   computer software, and
we always fear that such a world will be a grim, lifeless,
"inhuman" place as it may well be if it happens. But what
will contribute to this grimness, this lifelessness, will
not be the human entering into relation with other forces,
but the exploitation of the human form, the enslavement of
humans to a standard of normality (which could very well be
cybernetic in the future) and to the ever present profit
motive of a capitalist society. It will, in fact, be the
failure of the human form to dissipate that will lead to a
dystopic future.

Often what is most valuable in the human experience is
that which goes beyond the human: perceptions that cannot be
explained in the terms offered to the conventional human
form -- mystical experience, feelings of connection with the
world and other humans, intuitions into the workings of the
world, emotions that do not correspond to one's material
conditions (joy while in pain) -- assemblages that tie
people and objects together in multiplicities that unite the
human and non-human without distinction -- the
horse-rider-stirrup assemblage of the middle ages, the
virtual reality experience that is currently gaining
popularity.

It is for this reason, as we have seen, that Calvino
has so much to say. He does not force his protagonists to be
human. He allows them to live close to tnat state of

non-human desire where one can connect intimately with the
details of one's surroundings, where the unconscious is
allowed to play close to the surface, and where memory does
not function as a catalogue of injuries leading to
ressentiment. As a result, the protagonists in Calvino's
short fiction are clearly compounds of forces, singularities
composed of moments of contraction or dilation, comings
together of forces, thresholds from one state to the other.

And these forces, as we have seen, function according
to their own laws, which have little to do with human laws.
There is a state of pure virtuality, a zero degree, the body
without organs, which is poised to release possibilities in
actualized form. Paradoxically, although the body without
organs is this state of pure virtuality, it is also tied
into the actualizations that come out of it, so that we can
speak of many kinds of bodies without organs -- masochistic,
chivalrous, cancerous. The diagram is a kind of coding, a
more realized level of the body without organs. It is at the
same time virtually limitless (the infinitive "to marry",
for example, is limited in what it means but can express an
almost limitless number of operations) and rigorous:
anexact. The desiring assemblages that come from this
diagram are combinations of heterogeneous elements that make
no distinction between concrete and abstract, molar and
molecular, natural and artificial.

Because of this, we can speak of writing in a new way.
It no longer has to be about representation. Language is not
a transcendent plane hovering above the world and
transforming everything into its own neutral terms. Language
is caught up in what it speaks of; it is physical, a body
that enters into the world of events and phantasms just as
surely as a physical human body does. When language enters
the world it is taken up in a number of assemblages. Deleuze
speaks, for example, of the bureaucratic assemblage that
takes up Kafka's writing; the courtly love poem of the
Provencal minstrels of the high middle ages was taken up in
the chivalrous assemblage; and the psychiatric discourse of
the eighteenth and nineteenth century was taken up in a
whole structure of medical and political power over bodies.
Language, then, makes little distinction between the human
and the non-human. Signs can come from language (the letter,
the word) or from outside of the human (signs in nature, the
potentials contained in a field or a forest or a plant, or
within a sophisticated computer whose uses have not been
fully explored); language, in other words, becomes part of
things.

Because so much of the current theorizing on human
subjectivity falls back on the role of language in creating
the socialized human form, when we see language as a set of
potentials enveloped in nature, we can see it as a very
specific act, a subset of the larger set of meanings

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(potential encounters between forces) contained in the universe.

Deleuze and Calvino both understand the value of the non-human, the feeling of weariness with being one person, tied to a name and to a position within language, always estranged from the vast majority of processes happening around and within you. They both understand the value of opening the human form up to an encounter with whatever forces can be actualized from the body without organs. This opening up does not preclude ethics. We can still fight for the world we want, we can, as Foucault says, take delight in destroying whatever mutilates life. Only now, our allies will not simply be other humans, but all the forces that are transmitted to us from an outside we once believed was an enemy and an inside to which we once closed our eyes.

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