Tamkang Review 46.1 (December 2015): 117-139.
DOI: 10.6184/TKR201512-6

The Virtual We: The Survivors, the Cities, and the Cosmos in Doris Lessing's *Shikasta*

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Abstract

In juxtaposing the ancient geometric cities, of old, static, colonial design, and the future post-catastrophic utopian cities, of new, intuitive, evolutionary design, Lessing highlights the transition from one to the other. The post-catastrophic cities and the Survivors form an indiscernible relationship and connect with the cosmic force, SOWF. The transition vividly maps the divergences and mutations of the Survivors and their becoming-city, envisioning the cross-fertilization between the two parties. The dissolving of boundaries between the cities and the Survivors facilitates the formation of a new virtual "we" that encompasses different beings such as stones, plants, apes, Giants, Shikastans, and even Canopeans and triggers the emergence of a virtual cosmos of multiplicity. Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of percept and affect promote understanding of how the Survivors, in the "virtual" act of rebuilding, evolve and "become the city" instead of monitoring the rebuilding via conscious implementation of an "actual" rigid cosmic Master Plan, highlight the divergences of the evolving cities, and reveal the formation of a new virtual "we," a key element of the virtual cosmos of symbiotic evolution.

Keywords: Lessing, Deleuze, Guattari, percept, affect, cities, Survivors

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(Received: 2 April 2015; Accepted: 23 December 2015)

In Lessing's novels, there is always conflict between the individual and his or her milieu, between the microcosm and the macrocosm. One of the key ways for the individual to solve this conflict is to imagine ideal spatial images that always parallel his or her psychological developments. This explains why the motif of the imagined or ideal city recurs in Lessing's works. As Claire Sprague posits in *Rereading Doris Lessing*, "[A]lthough all artists are architects in the larger metaphoric sense, few have been builders of imagined cities. . . . Doris Lessing . . . has, 'among other things,' been building houses and cities throughout her long career" (154-155). According to Betsy Draine, Lessing creates three kinds of spatial images so as to reflect and reconcile the conflict between the individual and his or her milieu: geometric cities, mud huts, and "the Acropolis." Extrapolating from the three prototypes of cities, I propose that, in *Shikasta,* Lessing develops a new type of city, the evolving city, which delineates her developing idea of a new symbiotic relationship among the survivors, the cities, and the galaxy. Deleuze's[1] idea of "percept" points to an idea of space that has its own life and can help us understand the relationship between the Survivor and the evolving utopian city.

Now I will map Lessing's trajectory of city creation so as to see how she comes up with the new concept of an evolving city in *Shikasta*. First, many of the imagined or ideal cities in Lessing's novels are geometric. Betsy Draine observes, in *Substance Under Pressure: Artistic Coherence and Evolving Form in the Novels of Doris Lessing*, "The geometric town, with a fountain and circular plaza at its center, is Lessing's architectural ideal (present also in the utopian fantasies of *The Four-Gated City, The Memoir of a Survivor,* and *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*)" (153). For example, in *The Four-Gated City*, Martha Quest designs an ideal four-gated city that aims to incorporate human differences but ironically expels persons whom she detests, such as her parents. The spatial images reveal her psychological cartography. In *Doris Lessing and Sufi Equilibrium*, Shadia S. Fahim considers the carpet episode in *Briefing*, the four-walled garden, and the iron egg as mandalas that activate "[t]he process of contemplation by inducing certain mental states which encourage the achievement of equilibrium between the levels of perception" (108). The various spatial images turn out to reflect the individual's psychological cartography.

Second, in addition to the spatial image of the geometric city, Lessing portrays another spatial image, that of mud huts, which originates from her childhood memory in Rhodesia. Lessing feels homeless after she leaves the first "house

[1] I am really grateful to the reviewers' insightful suggestion. They help me make my paper more readable.

on the kopje" (34, Lessing, 1957). She is never at home because that first house preoccupies her mind and unfortunately collapses. "It crumbled long ago, returned to the soil, was swallowed by the bush" (35, Lessing, 1957). It is made of the soil and grass and returns to them again. Sprague points out that "[t]heir qualities of spontaneity and naturalness make these mud huts the antipodes of Lessing's magical cities—the four-gated city, the inner city of *Briefing*, and the geometrical city of *Shikasta*" (159); mud huts look "like natural growths from the ground, rather than man-made dwellings" (163). The harmonious relationship of the mud huts, the natural environment, and the individual pervades Lessing's imagination.

There is also a third kind of city image in Lessing's works, which, according to Sprague, is "the Acropolis": "Its existence destroys the binary opposition between the mud house and the geometrical city" (164). The Acropolis is neither totally organic nor over-ordered. Unlike the natural mud house, the Acropolis is still framed by structures and thus can resist the wear of weather but is not as ordered as the geometrical cities. Sprague provides a snapshot:

> The Acropolis seems to follow the contour of the land rather than the imposed order of geometrical shapes. Deliberately irregular, deliberately planned to accommodate to the curve of the land rather than to the mathematician's instruments, these structures seem to be at once "natural" and mathematical. (164)

The geometrical shapes are modified by the curvatures of the land so that the Acropolis is both "natural" and mathematical. If the Acropolis metamorphoses owing to the curvature of the land, the evolving cities on Shikasta deviate from their original shapes for multiple reasons, including curvature of the land, stellar alignment, and the Survivors' mutation. The cities on Shikasta are evolving and expanding rather than following scrupulously the patterns of over-ordered shapes. Via the image of the evolving cities, Lessing re-imagines and reconfigures the relationship of the individuals, the cities, and the cosmic force.

In my reading, the reflective relationship between the psyche and space in Lessing's earlier works presupposes the importance of the protagonist's evolution of consciousness and the framework of psycho-spatial correspondence. However, the spatial images in *Shikasta* are different. They are not subjective but are trans-individual and have their own lives as living entities realized in the symbiosis of the Survivors, the cities, and SOWF. This new vision triggers an important question: Is the framework of psycho-spatial correspondence in Lessing's earlier works an appropriate one for investigating the relationship between the Survivors and the cities in *Shikasta*? There, the boundary between the psychological and the spatial is eradicated as the Survivors meld into the cities without conscious implementation of any pre-established plans, and the city develops

as a living organism. Here, the humans become inhuman and vice versa. The reconfigured relationship of the Survivors and the city is far from psycho-spatial in correspondence since the psyche no longer controls the spatial cartography and human consciousness is downplayed.

To reconfigure a new relationship between the individual and his or her milieu, Lessing creates a galactic messenger, Johor, who guides the Survivors, the new species, in establishing a new relationship with the cities, the cosmic Master Plan, and the cosmic force SOWF. To decode the relationship between the Survivors and the cities in *Shikasta*, we first have to figure out who the Survivors are. The Survivors[2] are actually "elected" by Johor-George as the saviors of the city after the catastrophe. They are a new species who inherit Johor-George and the Link-Persons, spread among the Shikastans, and help Johor to return Shikasta to its state of harmony. The Survivors withstand the nuclear catastrophe because of their remarkable powers of intuition and ESP. Although they are labeled mad persons because of their special Capacities, especially mental telepathy and precognition, and deviate from normal people, their special Capacities enable them to survive World War III. The Survivors spark transformation of Shikastans by "form[ing] a strong enough yeast to raise the whole mass to standards of decent and wholesome living in conformity with the general needs of Canopus" (*Shikasta* 73).

In *Shikasta,* there are three stages of development regarding the city-human relationship. In the first stage, ancient times, the cosmic force is sufficient, enabling the relationship of the inhabitants (Giants and Natives), architectural arrangements, and galactic alignments to become harmonious so that the Lock,[3] a cosmic bond, is established and incorporates the minds of the Giants into the Canopean system. There is strict correspondence between the cities and the Shikastans (The Giants and the Natives).

The Shikastans' activities in their daily lives, which include such things as building and breeding, are regulated by pre-established rules, which are executed

[2] The first elected one among the Survivors is George's brother, Benjamin Sherban. Johor-George assigns Benjamin Sherban the task of caring for the abandoned children in the Youth Camp, who will become the Survivors after the catastrophe. The second elected Survivor is Lynda Coldridge. Johor-George keeps in touch with her by means of telepathy, telling her and her psychiatrist, Dr. Herbert, to lead a group of Survivors, mad persons and medical staff included, to the rescue camp founded by Benjamin Sherban.

[3] Lock, exactly, is the cosmic bond between Canopus and Shikasta. The access to the Lock, the cosmic bond, initiates Johor into impersonal, cosmic duration or memory in which all things will flow. The Lock not only enables the storage and accumulation of memory but also links different life forms together through the vibrations that transcend the physical boundaries of different beings. Canopus, the Giants, the Link-persons, the extraterrestrial spies, the Canopean galactic messenger, the stones, the cities, the water system, the animals, and the plants form a dynamic choreography of fluxes.

strictly according to the need of the Lock and the cosmic Master Plan, which limits the free flow of the energy of love because Canopus is not yet aware of the value of divergent elements in the cosmos and considers everything from an authoritative, hegemonic viewpoint. It is not until the galactic messenger, Johor, enlightens Canopeans about the value of divergent elements that they realize that Canopus is not the center of the cosmos and deviations should be incorporated into the cosmic Master Plan.

However, in the second stage, when the catastrophe strikes Canopus, stellar misalignment sabotages the functions of SOWF and the Lock and seriously affects the reciprocal interaction of the transcendental cosmic plan and immanent cosmic forces, the Lock and SOWF. The disconnection of the cosmic plan from cosmic forces results in the Century of Destruction. In this period, the individuals are infected with the Disease of Individualism, disconnected from the cosmic forces, and isolated in their cacoons. In the third stage of the relationship between the Shikastans and the cities, the Survivors' act of rebuilding the cities, guided by Johor, realigns the cities and the Survivors with the cosmos and reconnects them with the cosmic force SOWF. Because the population has been reduced to 1%, SOWF is sufficient to bathe all Survivors in the energy of love. The cosmic force SOWF redeems the Survivors from their errors and fall and modifies the cosmic plan so that the relationship of the Survivors, the city, the cosmic plan, and SOWF can be reconfigured. In the Survivors' relationship with the cities, divergent elements and the centrifugal forces of the previous age are incorporated again into the cosmic Master Plan, and again SOWF[4] blossoms. The cosmic plan is expanded and transformed so that it no longer controls the cosmic force SOWF and is instead modified by it. The static, mechanical, authoritative, colonizing cosmic plan allows itself to be at one with the fecund energies of symbiosis and love.

Johor and the Survivors' transgressions represent divergences from the Empire's cosmic plan and a view of co-evolution through the concept of SOWF: the cosmic force Substance-of-We-Feeling. In my reading, the Survivors, unlike the ancient Giants in the first stage, do not interact with the cities as architects

[4] Lynda and Dr. Herbert are not the only Link-Persons who exist on Shikasta; in the ancient times, there are Link-Persons who can respond to and help recover the Lock between Shikasta and Canopus. However, as time goes by, the growing population in Shikasta results in the loss of SOWF, and the Shammat's parasitic acts distort SOWF to the extent that fewer and fewer people are able to make contact with Canopus via the conduit SOWF. Destruction of the connection between Canopus and Shikasta via SOWF is aggravated still by wars, famine, and slaughter in the Century of Destruction. It is not until the aftermath of the catastrophe that SOWF is again abundant enough for the Link-Persons to be able to develop their Capacities and survive.

who design and supervise construction. On the contrary, the Survivors in the third stage pass into the city as if there is no boundary between the two.

I focus on portraying the development of the spatial image from the geometric cities in the first stage to the evolving cities in the third stage that finds its realization in *Shikasta*'s ancient geometric cities and the future expanding cities. Lessing creates two contradictory images of the city so as to reconfigure the relationship between individuals and the cities. On the one hand, building the ancient geometric cities involves the relationship between the Shikastans (the Giants and Natives) and the cities, a relationship dictated by the cosmic plan of the Canopeans. On the other hand, building the post-catastrophic cities involves the symbiotic relationship of the Survivors and the evolving cities infused with the dynamic cosmic force. Human consciousness does not condition the evolving cities. Lessing's leap to outer space frees her from the confinement of psycho-spatial correspondence. Her leap expands our horizon beyond earthly confinement, reconfigures concepts of the individual and the cities, reconnects the Survivors with SOWF, and forms a new assemblage that transcends the boundary between human and nonhuman, explores a visionary relationship among the individual, space, and the cosmic force, and generates cosmic evolution.

This paper is triggered by one question: Why does Lessing create two contradictory images of the city: the ancient geometric cities and the post-catastrophic evolving cities? My discussion of how the relationship between the Survivors and the cities points to the virtual force of cosmic evolution distinguishes my interpretation of the relationship between the ancient cities and the Survivor's cities from Claire Sprague's, who alleges that "the ordered, hierarchical, mathematical cities [of the ancient past] represent the perfection human life cannot achieve [at present]" and "in *Shikasta* in the near future" the cities will replicate the architectural ideals of the ancient cities (*Rereading Doris Lessing* 171). Contrarily, I argue that the ancient cities and the near-future cities are far from identical. First, the ancient cities are not the perfect environments helping inhabitants move toward "beatitude," as Sprague argues. Rather, the Shikastans decline, corrupted by the Degenerative Disease of Individualism. Second, the future cities are not replicas of the ancient cities, for the future cities evolve and expand rather than follow pre-established geometrical patterns.

I propose that the ancient geometric cities symbolize the colonizer's view of Shikasta's place in the cosmos, epitomizing the achievement of the colonial cosmic Master Plan, which determines city spatial alignments in accordance with stellar alignment. On the other hand, following the catastrophe on Shikasta, the Survivors' building of cities occurs intuitively, organically, divergently from the colonial Master Plan and engenders cosmic evolution. The ancient geo-

metric cities are comparatively "actual," whereas the post-catastrophic cities are "virtual" or dynamic. While the ancient cities are conditioned and actualized by the cosmic colonial Master Plan, the post-catastrophic cities are virtualized by their becoming relationship with the Survivors and the dynamic cosmic force, SOWF. By juxtaposing the ancient cities, of old, static, colonial design, and the future post-catastrophic cities, of new, intuitive, evolutionary design, Lessing emphasizes the transition from the ancient cities to post-catastrophic, promising utopian cities. The transition vividly maps the divergences and mutations of the Survivors and their becoming-city, envisioning the cross-fertilization between the two parties. The Survivors' becoming-city reconnects them to the cosmic force SOWF, gives birth to a "We"[5] that involves coexistence of various beings, and thereby triggers cosmic evolution.

The relationship of individuals (the Survivors) and the city enables this new, evolving relationship from which is born the virtual cosmic evolution beyond earthly confinement and the correspondent psycho-spatial model. Both the Survivors and the city evolve with the virtual cosmic force. The Survivors lose their individualities in the act of rebuilding the cities, and human consciousness is downplayed, which, according to Colebrook, problematizes "the phenomenological idea of consciousness as the genesis of space" (*Deleuze and Space* 190). Instead of serving as subjects representing homogeneous space, the Survivors, driven by SOWF and the virtual force of cosmic evolution, become evolving participants in cosmic evolution itself. The replacement of human consciousness with intuition, in the Survivors' determining the design of the city, and the choreography of the individuals, the cities, and the Substance-of-We-Feeling, in an interpenetrating dance, embody a change of focus from the individuals' psychological cartography to a new assemblage of "We" in this new virtual cosmic evolution. The dissolving of boundaries between the cities and the Survivors facilitates the formation of a new virtual "we" that encompasses different beings such as stones, plants, apes, Giants, Shikastans, and even Canopeans.

After delineating the characteristics of the cities and the Survivors and how they pass into each other on a textual basis, I turn to Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of percept and affect to enable exploration of both the entwined, complex relationship between individuals and the cities and how that relationship reveals hidden cosmic forces.[6] Their concept of space helps explain how the

[5] The new assemblage refers to the "We" of SOWF (Substance-of-We-Feeling). "We" signifies the choreography between the stellar alignment, the architectural arrangements, the individual temperaments and other beings. It is not the "we" of utopian I-We dialectic.

[6] Susan Watkins's book on Lessing (Manchester University Press, 2010) deals with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor literature in relation to her later writing. I am grateful to the reviewer's

individuals are freed from the confinement of psycho-spatial correspondence and how Lessing reconfigures concepts of the individual and the cities, reconnects the Survivors with SOWF, and forms a new assemblage that transcends the boundary between human and nonhuman so as to explore a visionary relationship among the individual, space, and the cosmic force.

Deleuze and Guattari's Concepts of Percept and Affect

Deleuze and Guattari develop an interrogation of space by revising the priority of "a uniform space of points," which, according to Colebrook, is "a space that may be measured or striated precisely because any point in space is equivalent to and interchangeable with any other" (*The Sense of Space* 194). She says that space is not envisioned as an "absolute location" but is constituted through the encounters, relations, and cross-fertilization among different elements. Hence, it is the multiplicity of space rather than homogeneity of space. Such points to Deleuze and Guattari's idea, in *What is Philosophy*? of the danger of the "normalization of space in the figure of a unified humanity" and their reconfiguration of the relationship between the individual and space (*Deleuze and Space* 194).

Deleuze and Guattari propose an ambivalent image: the absence of man within the landscape. "This is Cezanne's enigma . . . 'Man absent from but entirely within the landscape.' Characters can only exist, and the author can only create them, because they do not perceive but have passed into the landscape and are themselves part of the compound of sensations" (*What is Philosophy*? 169). This proposition helps explain the dissolving of the boundaries between the individual and his or her milieu. The implementation of the conscious act upon space is replaced by an act of symbiotic co-creation, and the characters created by the artists enter a zone of indiscernibility, within which the landscape and the characters form an indiscernible relationship and become part of a compound of sensations, of the percept and the affect.

What is a "percept"? According to Deleuze and Guattari, "Percepts—including the town—are nonhuman landscapes of nature" (*What is Philosophy*? 169). The absence of men reveals that the space is not a *tabula rasa* surface upon which human subjects create their histories. Deleuze and Guattari consider the landscapes, such as the moor in Hardy and the ocean in *Moby Dick*,

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reminding me of Susan Watkins's book; nevertheless, since I focus on the concept of becoming-house instead of that of minor literature, I will add that as background knowledge here.

as percepts rather than subjective or objective perceptions. They allege, "The novel has often risen to the percept—not perception—of the moor in Hardy but the moor as percept; oceanic percepts in Melville" (*What is Philosophy*? 168). Does it imply the total absence of men in the landscape? Deleuze and Guattari are not unaware of the existence of men in the landscape. For instance, they are aware of the fact that "Ahab really does have perceptions of the sea, but only because he has entered into a relationship with Moby Dick that makes him a becoming-whale and forms a compound of sensations that no longer needs anyone: ocean" (*What is Philosophy*? 169). Captain Ahab enters a zone of indiscernibility with Moby Dick and thus forms a compound of sensations in an act of becoming-whale. The whale is not the outside milieu that reflects the inner psyche of Ahab; instead, it is "nonhuman landscapes of nature," from which men are absent because they "become with the world" rather than represent the world (*What is Philosophy*? 159). Ahab becomes with the whale rather than represents it. The whale is not an object and Ahab is not the perceiving subject because their subjective and objective perceptions are wrenched away from them in the act of becoming. Ahab does not exist as a subjective perception but passes into the whale. Deleuze's idea of "percept" can point to an idea of space which has its own life and can help us understand the relationship between the Survivor and the evolving utopian city in *Shikasta*.

Another idea of Deleuze's that can help us understand the "indiscernibility" between space (the city) and the individual is the idea of "affect." Deleuze and Guattari define "affect" as nonhuman becomings of men. They employ the example of Mrs. Dalloway to illustrate how the individual passes into the landscape and becomes imperceptible: "It is Mrs. Dalloway who perceives the town—but because she has passed into the town like 'a knife through everything' and becomes imperceptible herself. Affects are precisely these nonhuman becomings of man" (*What is Philosophy*? 169). When Mrs. Dalloway dissolves her identity as a hostess and immerses herself in the town, she loses herself in the tumult and vibrations of the landscape and at this moment becomes nonhuman. She no longer feels the town through her "human" perceptions but dances with the atoms and molecules of the town. This act frees her from the conditioning of subjective perceptions. When one is no longer experiencing the landscape through subjective perceptions but through nonhuman becoming, one enters into the domain of affect, which is a zone of indiscernibility. It is only when one reaches the point that precedes the natural differentiation of all beings that one is able to encounter affect. According to Deleuze and Guattari,

> This something can be specified only as sensation. It is a zone of indetermination, of indiscernibility, as if things, beasts, and persons (Ahab and Moby Dick, Penthesilea

> and the bitch) endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation. This is what is called an affect." (*What is Philosophy*? 173)

Affect passes through different beings and connects them in a zone of indiscernibility, in which plants, animals, and individuals encounter, embrace, or fight. The different interactions among the various beings constitute a dynamic cosmos.

In *What is Philosophy*?, Deleuze and Guattari propose architectural examples to reveal how the individual passes into the landscape (percept) and how both constitute a zone of indiscernibility (affect). They consider the house as the filter or selective membrane that makes possible the interactions between the inside and outside. "Not only does the open house communicate with the landscape, through a window or a mirror, but the most shut-up house opens onto a universe" (*What is Philosophy*? 180). The interrelationship of the inhabitants, the buildings, and the cosmos is described in detail by Ronald Bogue:

> The house "frames" the world, each side of the paradigmatic cube-house serving as a picture frame or cinematic frame that carves out a chunk of space, but the house also has windows and doors, frames that allow a communication between inside and outside. The house in this sense is a filter that affords a passage of forces into and out of the habitat. It is a porous, selective membrane through which the inhabitant and the cosmos interact. (167)

The house has two functions: it frames the external world by carving out a spatial configuration and enables communication between the habitants and the cosmos. For Deleuze and Guattari, the being of sensation is not the inhabitant "but the compound of nonhuman forces of the cosmos, of man's nonhuman becomings, and of the ambiguous house that exchanges and adjusts them, makes them whirl around like winds" (*What is Philosophy*? 183). This theory of sensation does not presuppose a conscious subject behind all phenomena; instead, the being of sensation is the trinity of nonhuman forces of the cosmos, of man's nonhuman becomings, and of the house. It explains how the individual can pass into the landscape and become one with it and how the link between the individual and the house can trigger the connection between the individual and the cosmos.

The individual is able to pass into the landscape (house) because the individual and the house are stripped of their subjective and objective perceptions. Like the ocean percept in the example of Ahab, the house is no longer the background but the symbiotic collaborator in this act of becoming-house. The individual is stripped of his or her subjective perceptions and dissolves into the landscape (house), forming a zone of indiscernibility. Since the cosmos is the extension of the landscape (house), the link between the individual and the house enables the individual to be in touch with the cosmos. To be more specific, the

individual can be connected to the cosmos because his or her identity is dissolved in the act of becoming-house. The individual and the cosmos are just like the folds of the house. When the house enfolds itself, the individual is manifested, and when it unfolds itself, the cosmos is shown in front of us. This interconnectedness between human and nonhuman space enables the disappearing of the individual, the becoming-imperceptible of him/her. Keith Ansell-Pearson says,

> I think the becoming-imperceptible is the point of fusion between the self and his/her habitat, the cosmos as a whole. It marks the point of evanescence of the self and its replacement by a living nexus of multiple interconnections that empower not the self, but the collective; not identity, but affirmative subjectivity; not consciousness, but affirmative interconnections. (*Deleuze and Philosophy* 154)

The entwined relationship of the individual, the architecture (house), and the cosmos opens us to a field where the individual does not represent the cosmos but delves into the process of becoming-imperceptible, or merging with our environment. In this cosmos, there is no hierarchy of the individual, the architecture, and the cosmos since they are composed of the same dancing atoms and become parts of the virtual cosmos, a field of infinite speed where all forms disappear. The contours of cities, individuals, and even the galaxy itself dissolve. We become by contemplating the components of the infinite beings that we encounter. In shedding our subjective perception, we are enabled to launch adventures of becoming.

Application of Deleuze's and Guattari's concepts of percept and affect illuminates the imperceptible relationship between the Survivors and the cities and highlights the divergences of the evolving cities. Now I apply Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of percept and affect in interpreting the Shikastan Survivors' Becoming-City.

The Survivors' Becoming-City

Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of percept and affect foster understanding of the interrelationship of the individual, architecture, and the cosmos. "Percept," denoting an idea of space that has its own life, prompts further insight into the post-catastrophic cities the Survivors rebuild in *Shikasta,* and the idea of "affect" illuminates how the Survivors become-imperceptible and enter "a zone of indiscernibility" with the cities. In this way, Deleuze and Guattari's theory of sensation (percept and affect) sheds light on how Johor's inheritors, the Survivors, open into and become the city.

In the act of rebuilding, the Survivors neither draw nor follow a blueprint; they intuitively forego individuality and develop a symbiotic relationship with the city. Given this dynamic relationship, the city, as a living entity, (re)builds itself, rendering visible and palpable the cosmic force Substance-of-We-Feeling (SOWF). The Survivors pass into the city and become indistinguishable from it, foregoing conscious implementation of the cosmic plan. Such organic inter-penetration of the Survivors, the city, and SOWF precludes our distinguishing any boundaries. The Survivors are propelled by intuition.

We see a profound transition in the relationship between the Survivors and the cities after the catastrophe. Kassim, a Survivor and Johor-George's adopted son, inherits Johor-George's mission as keeper of the galactic Archive, in which the spontaneous way of building the city is recorded. Betsy Draine argues that, when George and Rachel die, the Survivors are "in the consciousness of Kassim . . . from whose point of view we witness the rebuilding of the cities" (*Substance Under Pressure* 165). Kassim says, "Take a simple thing like the shape of this town. There were no plans. No architect" (*Shikasta* 237). After the catastrophe, the Survivors rebuild the city spontaneously, without discussing plans or materials or contours of the site. They proceed by intuition. They improvise. When Kassim observes the city from above, he detects a telling pattern:

> . . . it grew up symmetrical and on the shape of a six-pointed star. I didn't realize it was a star until I walked up out of the town very early one morning, and when I looked down, trying to see if I could notice anything different, I was able to see the star-shape. But no matter who I ask, no one seems able to say anything about plans or a master plan or anything like that. (*Shikasta* 237)

No one can explain to Kassim why or how the city develops in this star configuration. It just does, as a living organism. It is not the product of human action but is a living being co-creating its own life with the Survivors and SOWF. There is no more cosmic Master Plan or architect, just organic inter-relating parts of the virtual cosmos.

In *Shikasta*, the city is an object with its own life, which can grow organically and "dance" or "co-evolve" together with the individuals. The Survivors are not perceiving subjects, not architects that design rebuilding plans. The lack of blueprints for the cities distinguishes the Survivors from the Giants and Natives in the ancient times, who measure architectural features so their architectural structures can correspond with stellar alignments. To accomplish this, they establish the Lock, which is implemented by the cosmic Master Plan. But now, after the catastrophe, the Survivors establish a unique symbiotic relationship with the cities.

Only when Johor-George leads the Survivors, the mutant outsiders, to

rebuild the cities do we witness a whole new way of connecting individuals and space. The Survivors' act of rebuilding the cities is voluntary and intuitive, an act of becoming-city, during which the Survivors and the cities become "indiscernible." Kassim records the amazing act of rebuilding:

> There were about twenty of us doing this. Suddenly we all knew quite clearly where the city should be. We knew it all at once. Then we found a spring, in the middle of the place. That was how this city was begun. It is going to be a star city, five points. We found the right soil for bricks nearby and for adobe. There is everything we can need. We have already started the gardens and the fields. Some of us go into the decaying town every day to get bread and stuff, to keep us going. The first houses are already up, and the central circular place is paved, and the basin of the fountain is made. As we build, wonderful patterns appear as if our hands were being taught in a way we know nothing about. (*Shikasta* 239)

The relationship of the city to the Survivors is symbiotic because neither precedes the other. The Survivors "[s]uddenly all knew quite clearly where the city should be" and "become the city" in the artistic act of rebuilding it. In the process of becoming-city, they pass into the city. Claire Colebrook notes that "the striving to think space or life in general needs to be carried beyond its human territory" (205). The percept's relationship with the perceivers explains the evanescence of the subject (the Survivors) in the process of rebuilding the city. T. Hugh Crawford appropriates Francois Zourabichvili's explanation to explore the percept's relationship with the perceiver:

> [T]he relation to the landscape is no longer that of an autonomous and pre-existent inner life and an independent external reality supposed to reflect this life . . . it is somewhat ironic that the percept, which is at least provisionally linked to perception, marks the moment when the self becomes im*percept*ible. (74)

The elevation of the percept above human territory enables the self to pass into the landscape and thus become im*percept*ible. In *Shikasta*, the Survivors, like Ahab, metamorphose with the organic city in an act of becoming-city, which is not a subjective or an objective perception but a percept that connects both in "a zone of indiscernibility." As the Survivors build, they observe that "wonderful patterns appear as if our hands were being taught in a way we know nothing about." They are unaware of what contour the city will develop because they are not the dominating consciousness behind the act of rebuilding; instead, they pass into the city and evolve with it so that, not until the patterns of the city have materialized, are they able to observe them.

How significantly different, despite seeming similarities, is this organic interaction from the relatively static relationship of the Giants and the geometrical cities in ancient time? Back then, the Natives, the ancestors of human beings,

are under the guidance of the Giants. They know that there is a harmonious interconnection between mental and spatial configuration, and that this interconnection is their link to divinity. The Natives can form a corresponding relationship with the milieu and galactic alignment. While arrangements of stones in the cities are determined by galactic alignment, each individual Native who is compatible with the city can be received into the city and form a symbiotic relationship with it. A correspondent relationship of human beings, the earth, and the galaxy is considered paramount. It is called "Necessity." Shikastans, both Giants and Natives, do everything out of Necessity instead of desire and greed. The perfect proportion of giving and receiving between the Shikastans and their milieu comprises a kaleidoscopic matrix of Necessity. The Shikastans' building of the cities follows Necessity, which places emphasis on the benefits of the whole cosmos instead of personal desire. The spaces, contours, and structures of the cities are pre-determined in order to reinforce the correspondence between galactic alignment and the Natives' mental disposition, and are the foundation of communication between Canopus and Rohanda (Shikasta's name before degeneration):

> The cities were established where the patterns of stones had been set up according to the necessities of the plan, along the lines of force in the earth of that time. These patterns, lines, circles, arrangements were no different from those familiar to us on other planets, and were the basis and foundation of the transmitting systems of the Lock between Canopus and Rohanda . . . now poor Shikasta. (*Shikasta* 39)

The transmitting systems can be maintained only when the galactic arrangement, spatial patterns, and mental disposition are kept in balance. The Lock is established but is not complete because it needs "continuous care."

The strict correspondence between the stones and galactic alignments is first maintained by the ceaseless efforts of the Giants. "They were measuring, by means of a device I was unfamiliar with, of wood and a reddish metal, the vibrations of a column of polished black stone that stood where two avenues intersected," Johor observes (*Shikasta* 23). The maintenance of the Lock is strengthened by the creation of the new cities, and the Natives are taught to help the Giants to establish the cities and stone alignments as the transmitting system. The correspondence between the stones and galactic alignments is embodied by the cities' geometrical shapes.

Each individual on Rohanda/Shikasta seems to enclose and express infinite possibilities in accordance with the symbiosis of his or her inner rhythm and outer milieu. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, the actions caused by personal love or desire are not following the law of Necessity and should be expelled from the system. Individual differences that are not following the cosmic plan and

Necessity are not allowed to exist in the symbiotic relationship between the individuals and the ancient city. The degeneration of Shikasta provides the galactic messenger, Johor, with the chance to perceive the problematic nature of the cosmic plan. What appears to be a perfect symbiotic system is, in fact, a "transcendental" system based on the implementation of the cosmic Master Plan. The nature of the cosmic plan is exclusive because individual divergences are not incorporated into the system. If individual differences are not woven into the tapestry of the collective, the individual act will easily fall prey to the trap of individualism. More importantly, the psycho-spatial correspondence between the individuals and the city implies the separation of the two and impedes the crossing of boundaries between them. Separation of the individual from the environment lays bare the isolation of the individual. When the Degenerative Disease of Individualism takes sway, the "perfect" symbiosis of the individuals and the city dissolves.

After the catastrophe of World War III, which ends phase two, the cities become simultaneously mathematical and organic without being entirely conditioned by the cosmic plan and serve as the nexus between the inside and the outside, the Survivors and the cosmic force SOWF. Ronald Bogue denotes the work of art as a material artifact and a being of sensation:

> This suggests that although the artwork as material artifact ("house" in the first sense of the term) is in relation with other material bodies and the physical world and hence not isolated and self-contained, the artwork as "being of sensation" is distinct from the material artifact, just as percepts and affects are distinct from the perceptions and affections, experienced by human beings. (169)

The material city frames the territory and supports the inhabitants just as the artifact (the house) mentioned above. The incorporeal city enables communication between the inhabitants and the cosmos. The house as an artistic "being of sensation" is different from its material being just as percepts and affects are distinct from human perceptions and affections.

Deleuze and Guattari's architectural example is an apt frame for explaining the artistic relationship between the Survivors and the post-catastrophic evolving cities. Bogue explains that "the concept of the house emphasizes the non-human dimension of the aesthetic. But the figure of the house suggests as well something of the artwork's relation to human experience. In one sense, the house may be seen as the paradigmatic material artwork" (168). The house represents simultaneously the concept and the figure, the material and the immaterial. In *Shikasta*, the image of the city is seen as a concrete support when it frames the territory for its inhabitants (the Survivors) and becomes immaterial when it is perceived from the non-human dimension of the aesthetic. For

Deleuze and Guattari,

> Art in this regard is a functioning part of our inhabiting of the world, one of the ways whereby we build a territorial home for ourselves, structure and orient our bodies, frame and delimit space, but also a means whereby we communicate with the outside, the artwork serving as a filtering membrane that permits an interchange and circulation of forces across its surface. (*Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts* 168)

On the one hand, the territorial house (city) orients us in the spatial coordinate and delimits space; on the other hand, it also enables us to communicate with the outside by serving as a filtering membrane. In *Shikasta*, the evolving city functions as the selective membrane that permits interchange between the Survivors and the cosmic force SOWF.

When the city undergoes a process of becoming-immaterial, it no longer blocks communication between the Survivors and the cosmos but, instead, enables interaction. The evanescence of the material city and its becoming immaterial can be shown through the city's becoming light and airy after the catastrophe, as Kassim observes: "Again these buildings are strange considering what we are all used to, of bricks and adobe and dried grass screens and lacquered paper. Everything is very light and airy" (*Shikasta* 237). The cities undergo a process of becoming-transparent or becoming-light as their immaterial dimension is revealed via the Survivors' act of rebuilding. The airy atmosphere of the buildings enables the Survivors to surpass the boundary between human and nonhuman and link to the cosmic force. The link to the cosmic force can be felt but not described directly through the first city's spot: "It is high up here, very high, with marvelous tall sky over us, a pale clear crystalline blue, and the great birds circling in it" (*Shikasta* 239). The city is close to the "crystalline blue" that implies the crystalline spaceship, Canopus, Shikasta's galactic mother, and the cosmic force.

After being stripped of the "perceptions of objects and the states of a perceiving subject," the Survivors and the city are free from spatial limitation and dissolve into each other. The cities and the individuals lose their spatial contours in the act of becoming. There is no longer a human psyche that molds space; instead, the individual surrenders control of the patterns of the cities and evolves with the cities instinctively. The Survivors pass into "the landscape and are themselves part of the compound of sensations," as Deleuze and Guattari put it (*What is Philosophy*? 169). The landscape (the cities) subsists in an instant that is transformed into eternity. The Survivors, as artists, enter eternity along with the cities—in defiance of our normal concepts of space and time.

The city connects the Survivors, and us as readers, with the imperceptible cosmic force SOWF and propels organic, symbiotic evolution. Deleuze and

Guattari say that "cosmic forces themselves are what produce zones of indiscernibility in the broken tones of a face, slapping, scratching, and melting it in every way, and these zones of indiscernibility reveal the forces lurking in the area of plain, uniform color (Bacon)" (*What is Philosophy*? 182). Cosmic forces engender zones of indiscernibility, and we glimpse cosmic forces via these zones. Cosmic forces dissolve boundaries between elements and connect them in new ways. In *Shikasta*, the cosmic force SOWF enables delimitation of and connection between different beings such as the Survivors and the cities. The indiscernible relationship between the Survivors and the cities enables them to encounter SOWF and form a compound of sensation with it in an act of becoming-cosmos or becoming-SOWF, forming a trinity of the individual, the cities, and the cosmos. They are becoming-indiscernible because SOWF leads them to surpass natural differentiation and form a bloc of sensation, a zone of indiscernibility. The transition from subjective and objective perceptions to percept and affect is accomplished because the focus is transferred from the individual to the cosmos. The transition is "like a passage from the finite to the infinite, but also from territory to deterritorialization" (*What is Philosophy*? 180).

This transition is vividly illustrated by Deleuze and Guattari's example of the house in *What is Philosophy*?: they consider "the artwork a territorial house opening onto the cosmos, a monument erected on a plane that constitutes a 'universe'" (185; 196). Artists introduce their audience to the cosmos via the artwork, the house in this case, which opens onto the cosmos, and, as Bogue says, "when we become with the artwork, we, too, open to the cosmos and 'become' universe" (169). Right here, not only the characters but also the artists pass into the houses. In *Shikasta*, the artwork is the city, and the artists are the Survivors. There is neither blueprint nor architect, but the artist that escapes from the subjective frame and dissolves into the artistic work, which transcends objective perception. The Survivors, as artists, pass into the city (landscape) and become imperceptible. They are transferred into the percept and affect of the artwork. No longer does the subject (the Survivor) represent the external world. The Survivors are becoming-nonhuman and becoming-city.

After the catastrophe, when degenerate Shikasta is inhabited by Survivors who intuitively rebuild the cities in harmony with the cosmic force SOWF, their rehabilitation is not an innocent gesture of forgetting the past but a deliberate ceremonial practice of bearing in mind lessons from the past. Their reconstruction of the cities is not an act of imitating the original cities from the ancient times but a process in which the past and the future interact. Fahim observes,

> . . . we compare these cities to the early ones; however, we note a significant development. It is beautiful, a circle, but with scalloped edges. The wavy edges are gardens.

> It is made like the last one I wrote about. It has the same paved centre, a circle, and a very beautiful fountain, with a basin, round, in a local stone, a yellowish rose colour. The basin is shallow, a couple of inches, and the water trickles into it in patterns, and there are patterns in the stone shining up from under the water, and there are the same patterns in the roofing of the houses and the floor tiles and everywhere. (*Shikasta* 237)

Whereas the Round City in the fable "was a perfect circle, and could not expand," the later one is "a Circle but with scalloped edges, significant of expansion" (233). The fixity and enclosure of the ancient cities are now replaced by organic cities with potential for revision and expansion. As the cities "rebuild themselves" intuitively, patterns emerge, despite their being no pre-established blueprints. The new cities are rebuilt through co-evolution of the galaxy, architecture, and individuals. In Bergsonian terms, the survivors' "duration" enters the "duration" of the stones and architectural structures, forming a significant event that envisions the virtual whole of cosmic evolution. On the one hand, the stone cities are actualized in specific spatial coordinates and exist in chronological time; on the other hand, the durations of the stone cities, the Survivors, and the galaxy are crisscrossing in indefinite Aion time.

The delineation of SOWF reveals Lessing's visionary creation of a new cosmos and species. With the virtual traversing power of SOWF (affect), she depicts a cosmos where individuals are no longer trapped in the dichotomy of collectivism and individualism, of the cosmic Master Plan and the Degenerative Disease. The new species and organic relationships on Lessing's planet give birth to a new assemblage. It rises above the long-standing dilemma of I-We in utopian thought. It transcends the boundaries between human and nonhuman. It embodies cosmic symbiosis of all beings and forces in perpetual evolution of interaction and mutual benefit. To advance understanding of this cosmic assemblage, I now address the connotation of "We" in Substance-of-We-Feeling.

What Are "We"?

The Survivors establish new differential relations with the galaxy and the cities, and the three constitute a dynamic, virtual assemblage, transcending the spatio-temporal coordinate. The new assemblage is Lessing's creation: "We." Lessing first expresses her idea of "We" via Charles Watkins in *Briefing*. Watkins laments, "Some sort of a divorce there has been somewhere along the path of this race of man between the 'I' and the 'We,' some sort of a terrible falling-away"—that has driven them "off centre, and away from the sweet sanity of We"

(109). The individual's separation from the "We" drives him crazy. He is possessed by the concept of "I," individualism. Does Lessing's delineation of "We" reveal her betrayal of the Left? Does Lessing, as Josna E. Rege claims, fall into "a reactionary betrayal of the Left in her dotage" and "endorse the notion of the colonizing mission in the benign and superior Canopus' benevolent colonization of Shikasta" ("Considering the Stars" 127)? Does "We" refer to the collective power of the empire? Tracing Lessing's transition from inner-space fiction to outer-space fiction reveals her intention to link "I" and "We" dynamically in order to surpass the I-We dichotomy. It is significant for us to read Lessing's 'Canopus in Argos' quintet since it relates to her wider career and the point in history when it was written. It deals not only with outer space but, most importantly, with the I-We dilemma. By experimenting with and modifying the concepts of "I" and "We" in *Shikasta*, Lessing discovers the functions and dangers of Individualism and creates the cosmic plan of a benign empire so as to showcase an improved way of living. Individuals (the Survivors) are no longer trapped in individualism, and the collective, "We," links not only to the empire but also to a cosmic force that incorporates all beings.

It is this new "We" that reconfigures the relationship of the Survivors, the cities, and SOWF. When the Survivors pass into the cities, the landscape, they form an indiscernible relationship with the landscape. The zone of indiscernibility links them with the cosmic force. The Survivors are no longer their obedient ancestors, the Natives; the evolving cities are no longer the geometrical cities that adhere strictly to stony alignments. The cosmic force, SOWF, transforms itself by incorporating divergences. The mutative power of the Survivors and the divergent power of the Giants are incorporated into SOWF, which, in turn, creates a "We" that allows the cities to expand and the Survivors to mutate. The mad persons' (the Survivors') rebuilding of the cities represents reconciliation of individual divergences and the new "We," which now embraces divergences and heterogeneities, helping expand the horizon of the cosmos. This is a new assemblage, epitomized by Kassim's final line: "And here we all are together, here we are . . ." (364). Claire Sprague notes that this final line is echoed by Martha's last line in *The Four-Gated City*: "Here, where else, you fool, you poor fool, where else has it been, ever . . ." (*Shikasta* 591; *Rereading Doris Lessing* 175). Following Sprague's idea, I argue that both lines place emphasis on the interlocking relationship of all species. In Lessing's world, "We" no longer refers to the governing human beings in the utopian I-We dialectic; instead, "We" traverses the bounds of various species. In *Shikasta*, what "We" signifies in Substance-of-We-Feeling is not the colonizing Canopean Empire or colonizing Shikastan leaders but the virtual "We" that precedes natural differentiations and

includes the galaxy, human beings, animals, plants, and stones. The way this "We" works is analogous to Spinozan-Deleuzian affect; it traverses various beings rather than being captured in specific bodies. Tasmin Lorraine's description illustrates the properties of traversing affect: "Pure relations of speed and slowness between particles imply movements of deterritorialisation, just as pure affects imply an enterprise of desubjectification. . ." (166). Impersonal affects are not captured by specific bodies since they entail a process of deterritorialisation and desubjectification:

> Pure affects are intensities—capacities to affect and be affected—not yet subjected to the homogenizing dictates of conscious awareness. Once an affect is experienced as a feeling or thought, it has already undergone a process of selection where some of its capacities have been emphasized at the expense of others. (Lorraine 166)

Affect functions as the capacities to affect and be affected without being conditioned by the unifying consciousness that captures and expresses affect as a feeling or thought. "We" no longer indicate the static collections of specific parts but the fluid, contingent, heterogeneous choreography of multiple beings in the act of forming a new assemblage. The reconnection provides the Shikastans with the possibility of transcending the self-made prison and helps them evolve into awareness of the new assemblage. In *Shikasta*, the mad persons tune into higher frequencies and enter the durations[7] of other beings. The interval between life and death is revealed in the cosmic catastrophe. Those who survive the catastrophe form a new assemblage, "We," sharing a new symbiosis by entering the durations of other species. They share a state of singular life that is free from the confinement of subjectivity and objectivity, of normal and abnormal, of human and inhuman.

I am aware that Deleuze's theory of becoming is never about becoming-molar. If it were, becoming-we would be an oxymoron. The non-skeptic in me is convinced that Lessing's new assemblage—"We"—is not a molar or transcendent concept referring to the empire as a discernible entity but, rather, is an evolutionary choreography of indiscernible, "non-existent beings" comprised of dancing atoms. I hope to have shown that Deleuze's theory of percept and affect illuminates the imperceptible relationship between the Survivors and the cities, highlights the divergences of the evolving cities, and showcases Lessing's dual vision, with its oscillation between the colonial ancient cities and the new evolving cities. Deleuze's theory and Lessing's cosmos may not match exactly. Nonetheless, in reading *Shikasta*, my employment of Deleuzian/Guattarian concepts

[7] Deleuze equates memory with duration and life in *Bergsonism*.

of percept and affect affords significant insight into Lessing's new assemblage involving an organic, evolutionary process by which the new species, the Survivors, transcend the I-We dilemma of utopian dialectic and discover a new life of cosmic wellbeing via the brilliant but paradoxical delineation of cosmic evolution. They rise above the mires of individualism and of collective hegemony, anarchy, and entropy. They enter a zone of indiscernibility, where the dichotomy of subject and object literally dissolves. From Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* to *Shikasta*, the subject encounters limiting conditions: colonial, psychological, social. By employing Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of percept and affect, I put in new light her various attempts to reach beyond the rigid relationship between the individual and space (environment) grounded in the dichotomy of subject and object. In her flight to rise above the petty fates of individuals and planets, Lessing creates a virtual cosmos where encounters among entities are embodied by living forces with zero domination of one over another. She depicts a virtual cosmos, where pre-personal differentiation enables universal cross-fertilization and symbiosis of the Survivors, the cities, and the cosmic force SOWF replaces the dichotomous cosmic Master Plan.

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潛態眾我：多麗絲・萊辛《希卡斯塔》中的城市、倖存者與宇宙

摘　要

在本論文中，我試著探索萊辛小說中並置古老城市與浩劫後未來城市的意圖。一個是遵循古老而僵化的殖民系統，另一個是對應直覺演化式的新設計，遠古幾何城市因含納異質元素而轉化成潛態化的浩劫後城市，而此城市又與希卡斯塔（地球）上的倖存者形成一種無法區辨的關係，這樣的關係使得兩者能進而與宇宙力量產生連結。事實上，城市與倖存者之間界線的消融有助於形成一種海納岩石、植物、猩猩、巨人、希卡斯塔人、加諾波人等概念的新的「眾我」。我將引用德勒茲與瓜特里對於知感與情感的看法去理解倖存者與城市之間的微妙關係，並且藉著城市演化的觀念，闡明萊辛的潛態宇宙觀，最終揭示啓動潛態宇宙進化的關鍵元素：全新的「眾我」。

關鍵字：萊辛，德勒茲，瓜特里，知感，情感，城市，倖存者