Remades and their Sociospace
in China Miéville's Bas-Lag Trilogy

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Abstract

The aim of the present paper is to consider Remades (posthuman figures who populate China Miéville's "Bas-Lag trilogy") as simulacra of their social milieu, highlighting the interconnection of power and economic systems which shapes the "remaking" process and ultimately the position of Remades in society. Two methodological approaches are applied to the analysis. The first draws from Halberstam, Livingston and Micali to account for the "posthumanity" of Remades, interpreting them as liminal figures who physically summarise various categories of inhabitants of the Bas-Lag. The second moves from Foucault's reflections on the relation between power and punishment and on the centrality of the body in this relation to determine how these categories – power and punishment – work in the context of the specifically posthuman bodies of Remades. Combining these perspectives produces interesting results. First, it can account for the "otherness" of Remades on the level of their physical transformation (from "whole" bodies to Remades) as well as on the level of their social position (from citizens, to prisoners, to outcasts). In addition to this, by providing some key examples, the paper foregrounds that, if the dialectical relationship between Remades and society is overtly inscribed on their bodies, different societies are likely to alter them in different ways. As a result, a totalitarian structure will inflict marks that are not superimposable with those produced by an egalitarian one.

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A cursory overview of China Miéville's *oeuvre* reveals it to be rife with simulacra. From the redoubled cities of *Un Lun Dun* (2007) or *The City and the City* (2009), to the uncanny revenants of *The Tain* (2002) or *The Last Days of New Paris* (2016) and the dystopian landscapes of *Railsea* (2011) and *Embassytown* (2012), his works of speculative fiction encompass an astounding variety of distorted, refracted and mutagenic reflections of – and on – contemporary reality. His Bas-Lag trilogy (*Perdido Street Station* [2000]; *The Scar* [2002]; *Iron Council* [2004])[1], named after its fictional universe, is perhaps the most conspicuous example of this, even when limiting the focus on the creatures that Miéville devises for it.

The city-state of New Crobuzon, the primary setting of *PSS* and *IC*, is inhabited by an almost infinite variety of beings: from humans to insect-like, frog-like, bird-like, or plant-like humanoids called «xenians», to Remades (creatures of all species who were physically altered through a mix of medicine and magic in punishment for a crime) and many, many more. With reference to Jean Baudrillard's terminology, these figures can be interpreted as second-order simulacra, images that mask and denature reality (Baudrillard 1994: 6). The aim of the present study is to analyse Remades as an embodiment of the systems which define the relationship between individuals and their sociospace: to read them, that is, as simulacra of their society. In particular, I propose to combine a "posthuman" perspective with a focus on the net of social, political and ideological forces which "create" Remades. In this way, I ultimately wish to evidence how Remades become the physical embodiment of discursive as well as material practices that define social living in different spaces within the Bas-Lag universe. Before delving into this analysis, however, I propose to contextualise the trilogy within the broader framework of Miéville's fiction and his

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[1] The following abbreviations will be used henceforth: *Perdido Street Station*: *PSS*; *The Scar*: *TS*; *Iron Council*: *IC*.

approach to the fantastic. I will then attempt to connect a working definition of posthumanism as a site of enquiry with a brief recognition of Michel Foucault's thought on the issue of discipline and power relations.

Reading "monsters" in Miéville's *oeuvre*

In his interviews and academic production, Miéville seems to assess the «simulacra overflow» in his body of work by claiming the right to create «monsters for monsters' sake». In a much-quoted interview, he defiantly claimed to be «in this […] business for the monsters […] unfortunately, you can't really sell books of monsters to publishers. They insist on stories linking them» (Anders 2005). Setting aside the obvious provocativeness of this statement, I wish to stress that a "monster", whatever its status within the narrative, holds the potential of being much more than a *divertissement* or a functional device. As shown by Haraway (1992), Halberstam (1995), Csicsery-Ronay (2002) or Kristeva (1980), among others, the monstrous, the abject, the grotesque can become a site of conflict on which the discursive practices of society are inscribed and transgressed at the same time. The monster, that is, can be interpreted as a liminal site, an "in-between" state that holds together in impossible unity a variety of different stances: it «arises in-between two or more categorical definitions, but its spatial (physical and/or conceptual) position implies both integration of and resistance to whatever is either side of or outside of the in-between» (Downey, Kinane and Parker 2016: 6).

Another possible way to interpret this proliferation of simulacra is to see it in the light of Miéville's sustained interest in using the fantastic to "rethink" reality. Indeed, scholars like Jameson (2002), Burling (2009), and Saunders (2016), have read his work through the lenses of "Radical Fantasy", a category that encompasses works which tend to engage with present socio-economic issues from a progressive (and often Marxist) standpoint. William J. Burling describes this category as thematically and formally distinct from fantasy, deploying «innovative strategies in respect to setting and characterization that serve to represent the totality of capitalism's opaque operations and the complex personal and social dynamics of consciousness generated by the rise of posthumanism» (Burling 2009: 330).

The quoted passage can be useful in highlighting key concepts that can be applied to Miéville's works and, more to the point, to reading the figure of the Remade in relation to the sociospatial setting that the author devises in the Bas-Lag trilogy. Pointing out that Miéville tends to draw

from different genres (mainly fantasy and science fiction, but not exclusively) and to combine their strategies, Burling argues that this hybridity is functional. In his opinion, it reflects and conveys the complexity of two intersecting issues, one concerning "posthumanism" and the other looking at the position of the individual within his/her socio-economic environment. The need to integrate these perspectives emerges clearly from a brief overview of the tryptic and its settings.

Perdido Street Station and *Iron Council*, respectively the first and third novel in the trilogy, are mainly set in the city-state of New Crobuzon. The city is ruled by a mayor equipped with almost absolute powers and an oppressive militia that operates almost undetectably, in an extremization of the surveillance state. With its capitalist and mercantile economy, New Crobuzon is frequently at war with neighbouring powers to assert its political and commercial dominion. This clear "imperial" structure, along with the map of the city and some of Miéville's own comments, have led scholars to interpret New Crobuzon as a sort of simulacrum of London (Jordan 2011; Gordon 2003a; Williams 2016; Veloso de Abreu 2018), a heterotopic version of the city which exasperates some of its defining socio-political traits (Gordon 2003b). Its diverse population can be interpreted along similar lines, although I would argue that, in this case, one could think of the citizens of New Crobuzon as simulacra-within-the-simulacrum. Xenians, in particular, exhibit biological, ontological and cultural differences that offer a multiplicity of alternative perceptions and perspectives on the city. At the same time, their interaction and social organisation closely mirror models which one may find recognisable: for instance, some of these species live in separate "ghettos", wherein they attempt to keep to their traditions and ways of life, while Remades, branded as criminals, occupy the last rung of the social ladder, and are shunned by other citizens. In this sense, these creatures are both fragmentary or distorted representations of a "primary-world" reality – the reality to which readers belong – and representations of *their own* "secondary-world" reality, as alternative products of a specific social, ideological and political background.

The Scar, the second novel in the trilogy, steps away from New Crobuzon to focus on the city of Armada, which, being composed entirely of ships, is effectively a moving fleet. Armada gathers people and vessels from all over the Bas-Lag, including New Crobuzon. Here, however, the social structure of the city-state is disrupted and re-formed according to a different logic. Armada works almost as a federation of semi-independent "quarters", and its people are all considered equal – Remade included – and equally called up to contribute to the city's wealth depending

on their inclination or strengths. If its social body remains prominently hybrid, therefore, the relations of power that Armada establishes are of a different and almost opposite nature with respect to those which rule New Crobuzon (Freedman 2015: 61). As I will shortly point out, this determines a transformation in its citizens (as opposed to those of New Crobuzon), who eventually become reflections of an *alternative* social, political, and ideological background.

It is evident that approaching New Crobuzon and Armada requires integrating a "posthuman" perspective, so as to reckon with the composition of its societies, and a socio-spatial one, in order to account for the alternative structures that shape these societies as well as individual subjects. Having recognised the centrality of these lines of enquiry to radical fantasy and to Miéville, I wish to illustrate how they can be helpful in interpreting the figure of the Remade in the Bas-Lag trilogy.

Interpreting Remades as posthuman "products" of their sociospace

Within the vast theoretical landscape concerning posthumanism, I wish to focus in particular on approaches that dovetail well with a socio-spatial perspective – that is, with considering the individual within the net of relations that each society establishes in its environment. This outlook is, in my opinion, almost necessary to consider Remades as a category of simulacra: as I have hinted above, they are created, or *made*, by political power. «Remaking» is a punishment which exists only in New Crobuzon, and which other political realities consider brutish and shocking: it consists in mutilating prisoners and/or altering them by adding human, xenian, animal or mechanical parts to their bodies, according to grotesque principles of analogy between crime and punishment. A woman suffering from post-partum depression and exhaustion who unwittingly killed her baby, for instance, is sentenced to have the child's arms grafted on her forehead (*PSS*: 115). In principle, humans and xenians alike can be subjected to remaking, which thus emerges as a transversal practice for the entire population. In practice, remaking seems to concern humans in the first place, perhaps because «bio-thaumaturges» (who perform these surgeries with the help of magic, or «thaumaturgy») are mostly human and do not know how to work on different species.

Remades, then, are the result of a combination of human, animal, and machine as well as an intersection of biology and discursive practice.

In this sense, I find it helpful to "read" them through posthumanist approaches which incorporate both of these levels of meaning, and especially Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston's framing of posthumanism as something that «participates in re-distributions of difference and identity» (1995: 10). In their view, the category of the "human" is predicated on categorising «difference within the human (whether according to race, class, gender)» and on reasserting clear boundaries between the "human" and the "non-human". On the contrary,

> [t]he posthuman does not reduce difference-from-others to difference-from-self, but rather emerges in the pattern of resonance and interference between the two. The additive other (who is subordinate in several systems at once) is not necessarily the geometrically other of the posthuman, who may well be "between between" in a single system (*ibid*.).

I find this interpretation especially useful in analysing the figure of the Remade, in that these creatures are precisely 'additive' in more than one sense. Their bodies emerge out of the combination of heterogeneous limbs (human, non-human, mechanical, male, female, non-gendered), through an uneasy negotiation between their previous biological form and the parts that are grafted onto them (and/or removed from them). Simultaneously, their social identity arises from the «resonance and interference» between New Crobuzon's system of power, its economy, and the social stratification of the city. As suggested by their name, "Re-mades" undergo a process of redefinition, of "re-creation" which is forced onto them. As such, both their physical traits and their position within the nexus of forces that defines social living in New Crobuzon outline a liminal space – again, liminal in the sense of bringing two or more "sides" into communication (Downey, Kinane and Parker 2016: 6). This space juxtaposes their previous status as citizens with their current condition as punished criminals, indentured servants (this being fate of almost all Remades), and social outcasts. In addition to this, it relates their former, cohesive bodies to their new disjointed and monstrous selves. Finally, it brings into communication two alternative narrative strategies, as Remades are as much a product of fantasy as one of science fiction.

The process of remaking is carried out through bio-thaumaturgy, a cross between a futuristic medical procedure and magic: «Bio-thaumaturgy […] was a polite way to describe an expertise one of whose uses was to tear and recreate flesh, to bond it in unintended ways, to manipulate it with-

in the limits dictated only by imagination» (*PSS*: 210). Bio-thaumaturges use both surgery and magic to give new shape to existing material: in this sense, their work is imaginative, as it recombines reality into hitherto impossible and unforeseeable shapes. The fantastic «never-possible» is used to carry the «not-yet-possible» (Miéville, 2002: 44-45) of these inter-species transplants to fruition: grafting mechanical or animal parts on human or xenian subjects in such a way as to make them operate as natural limbs is facilitated by magic, which strengthens the bond created by surgery.

Interestingly, remaking is therefore both an "artisanal process" and a massified one. No two Remades *can* be alike, because magic tends to be irrational and, as such, unconcerned with the laws of repeatability which characterise the scientific method. On top of this, the subjects of each remaking are unique (whether humans or xenians), which renders its results all the more unpredictable. Yet, there is an element of replication in Remades that is dictated by the economic needs of the city. If in theory each remaking should adapt to the crime committed by the prisoner, in practice, precisely because the future of Remades is that of indentured servants, bio-thaumaurges also purposefully create them to fulfil different roles. For instance, some Remades are re-created to act as cabs (*PSS*: 21), or to be weaponised by the militia (*PSS*: 317; *IC*: 338), or to enter the prostitution market (*PSS*: 415-416). Others are remade to work on New Crobuzon's new railway (*IC*: 182); others still, presumably, to withstand the hard labour required of them in Nova Esperium, New Crobuzon's colony (*TS*, *passim*).

This condition of being at once mass-produced and unique resonates with Micali's description of the posthuman simulacrum:

> as a simulacrum, an artificial being is always identifiable with an object, a product which has been built or assembled, so it is always possible reproduce it in another specimen or in series. At the same time though, the simulacrum presents itself as a singularity, a unique entity, somehow autonomous from the circumstances of its creation and/or its creator, and provided with some set features, specific functions and scopes, which are consistent through time (Micali 2019: 121)

To the system of power which created them, Remades are commodities as well as punished criminals; their new identity is reduced to their function, so that they become effectively objectified in spite of their "natural" origin. Remades, that is, are both uniquely "human" or "xenian" (depending on their species) and serialised tools, each similar to others who share the same purpose. It is worth pointing out that figures like the Re-

made are not exactly what Micali envisages for the category of simulacra, which she defines as «artefacts which in different ways artificially imitate or simulate man's appearance, behaviour or functions» (*ibid*.). If anything, remaking makes these subjects *less* human, rather than targeted at simulating humanity. In this light, Remades would be closer to Micali's definition of the «subhuman», transgressing or blurring «the borders between different species or incompatible categories» (*ibid*.: 35). Subhumans, specifically, would be «versions, reproductions, derivations or approximations of Man, with whom they share physical, psychological or behavioural aspects» (*ibid*.). Bringing together different species and even the organic and the mechanical in an impossible unity, human Remades are for all intents and purposes 'derivations' of Man.

However, approaching these categories – the simulacrum and the subhuman – as fluid classifications which can overlap might provide further insights into how Remades are characterised in the trilogy and into their position within the social structure of New Crobuzon. For one thing, they are not exclusively variations of Man, no matter how rare xenian Remades can be. In addition to this, their dual condition as singularities and massified objects is integral to their social standing. It is true that Remades can be thought of as outcasts because they are branded as criminals. Yet, free citizens of New Crobuzon also find Remades repulsive because of their indefinability: they are people, but also objects; neither fully human, nor entirely animal, xenian, or machine; they were once part of the social fabric, and are now deprived of any right. Their fundamental "otherness" is doubly uncanny: their original, "natural" bodies are still detectable underneath their remaking, and the massification of the remaking process makes them uneven, imperfect copies of a non-existent model.

In addition to this, if the posthuman subject exists «between between» a variety of *systems* (Halbertstam and Livingston 1995: 10), "decoding" Remades leads to considering at least those systems which are more overtly inscribed on their altered bodies. Placing Remades within the society of New Crobuzon, then, involves both considerations concerning the posthuman nature of this class of citizens and their relation to political power. In particular, their physical modification as an indelible sign of institutional power and, at the same time, as an expression of economic needs evokes Foucault's reflections on punishment and the relationship between the individual and the social body.

Remaking as *supplice*: inscribing the sociospace onto the criminal

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), Foucault remarks that punishment always involves the body and its forces, «their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission» (1995: 34). This would be true of all punishment, regardless of its kind: whether a *supplice*, a torture or material violence publicly inflicted to the criminal, or a more modern form of sentence, such as the prison. Remaking evidently seems to evoke the first kind of punishment, especially in that it fits the criteria of permanently marking its victim (*ibid*.). In this way, the *supplice* fulfils two functions: first, it provides an indelible reminder of the criminal's guilt, so that criminality becomes a permanent trait of the prisoners (irrespective of the length of their sentence). Secondly, it reaffirms and consolidates power by making it plainly visible as a physical sign on the prisoner's body. Moreover, according to Foucault, the *supplice* is also characterised by being public and ritualised, as well as a prerogative of institutional power.

Remaking, as previously hinted, partially fits this description: Remades do have their identity obliterated and reconfigured by their *supplice*, which makes them social outcasts, when not indentured servants. In New Crobuzon, however, remaking is carried out almost in secret, in factories devoted to this function. As a result, although the process is purposefully drawn out to maximise pain and its effects are publicly advertised by Remades, the torturing itself remains "out of sight". This is consistent with how power operates in New Crobuzon, i.e. through a constant and secretive surveillance of its citizens, resembling in a way Foucault's notion of the *panopticon*, the power which sees all and is not seen (*ibid*.: 208-209).

Another deviation from the category of the *supplice* is that remaking is not a prerogative of the state – although it lawfully should be. Criminal organisations produce their own Remades to answer their needs and the illicit requirements of New Crobuzon, from creating specialised guards to supplying the prostitution market (*PSS*: 46; 416; 597). Such an illicit remaking once again makes the link between the city's system of power and its economy explicit. Remades, that is, tend to fulfil a double function. First, they exist to demonstrate the strength of whichever power created them (whether institutional or unlawful): they are living symbols, made to reassert a certain "order". As a consequence, their social function shifts: they become outcasts, forever branded as "other than" – other than "innocent" citizens, other than "honest" ones. Secondly, they effectively become

goods to be traded and labour to be exploited, whether as convicts or as indentured servants. The boundary between these two identities, that of the criminal and of the commodified body, is as blurred as the one between the heterogeneous parts which physically mark Remades.

As Jonathan Newell suggests, «Remaking is not just a physical punishment for a wrongdoing but rather the social and discursive effect of a technology of power, an instrument of domination and civic control» (2013: 500). To this, however, I would add that it is the social and discursive effect of an economic system which is intimately and inextricably connected with a specific power structure. Indeed, Foucault begins his discussion of the systems of discipline and punishment by remarking that the political and economic circuits *both* invest the body with «relations of power and domination» (1995: 25). This, it is worth pointing out, is not strictly true of criminals or "punished" bodies, but rather of all bodies, of all individuals. Remades are an exceptional case because they make this link explicit, plainly visible via their additional parts or mutilations. For instance, many of the Remade prostitutes working in New Crobuzon's brothels were especially altered in the city's factories (and not by criminal gangs) to fulfil «strange carnal desires» (*PSS*: 416), thus exposing the close connection between discipline and economic interest.

Remades, then, appear to incarnate the interconnected systems of power shaping their sociospace. An additional line of reasoning, however, is raised by the rebellious Remades described in *PSS* and *IC*, in that while their "monstrous" bodies do not change, their "decoding" does.

Rebellious Remades and their sociospatial decodings: the case of Jack Half-a-Prayer

In *IC*, Remades exploited for their work in the construction of a new railway unionize and later rebel with human and xenian workers, escaping on a train that can never stop. In the democratic society that the rebels establish on the train (the titular Council), Remades have an equal standing. What is more, their physical abilities are vital to the progress of the train: mechanically altered Remades are able to assemble and disassemble its tracks *as the train goes*, making its route unpredictable. The same alterations that were inflicted to Remades by the city as a way to combine punishment and profit are now used to counter its power and to find refuge from it[2].

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2   For a thorough discussion of insurgent Remades and their socio-political

In *PSS*, rebellious Remades gather under the name of «fReemades»: a remade name itself, in which the addition of one consonant changes the significance of the entire word, just as the grafting of limbs alters the very essence of former citizens. Their leader, Jack Half-a-Prayer, was remade by having one arm substituted with the claw of a praying mantis – hence his moniker. Part of Jack's reaction against the system which oppressed him is to target spies and informers who work with the militia, summarily executing them with his claw (*PSS*: 250). The signs he leaves on his victims are unmistakable: «a woman died of massive puncture wounds to both sides of her neck, as if she had been caught between the blades of huge serrated scissors. […] The word went out. Jack-Half-a-Prayer had struck. In the gutters and the slums, his victim was not mourned» (*ibid.*).

Jack's executions represent more than a damage to New Crobuzon's militia, although, for every covert agent he eliminates, many more remain operative. Rather, their significance lies in how Jack weaponizes his remaking to ends that are directly opposed to those of the institutional power. First, Jack reveals what is supposed to remain hidden, namely the panoptical power concealed in unsuspected parts of the city. Second, by redetermining its function, Jack re-signifies his own posthuman body. No longer a living confirmation of the city's institutions and of their implacable "justice", his claw becomes *the* symbol of rebellion, one that everyone recognises. So much so that, at the moment of Jack's capture and public killing, his claw is removed: «they'd given it to him in the punishment factories, but he'd used it against them, so they took it away» (*IC*: 69-70). Ironically, then, the city's authority is questioned by the very sign which was supposed to uphold it.

However, on a closer inspection, this re-signification is undertaken by replicating the same structure deployed by institutional power. Jack's executions are carried out in secret, much like the militia's; the two models are juxtaposed in chapter 18 of *PSS*, in which Jack's assassination of a militia woman is made to follow a similar killing performed by the militia itself, in a clear parallel between them (*PSS*: 250). Moreover, much like the city's institutions, Jack reveals his activities to the world through the unmistakable marks left on the bodies of his victims. Immersed as he is in the sociospace of New Crobuzon, it is perhaps unsurprising that Jack would in some form mimic its structures, even in the attempt of breaking them down. As suggested by Lefebvre (1991), Soja (1989), or de Certeau (1988), the relationship between individuals and their sociospace can be

characterisation in *Iron Council*, see Newell (2013).

thought of as dialectical, because space can be interpreted as the product of a specific society (and its economic system), and, vice versa, individuals can be considered as at least partially the product of their environment. A fReemade of New Crobuzon, Jack turns against the city the same weapons that the city had once used on him and replicates the latter's disciplinary style, signalling that this reciprocal influence is very much active.

To test this theory further, I wish to ask an additional question, which is: would changing the setting, and therefore the sociospace in which Remades are immersed, alter them in different ways?

Changing the sociospace, changing the (posthuman) subject

Set in a different city-space, *The Scar* can perhaps offer some answers to this question. As previously mentioned, *TS* is mainly set in Armada, a pirate city made of ships. If New Crobuzon expands by waging war on neighbouring territories, Armada grows by annexing more ships to the hundreds which are already joined together to form the floating city. Perhaps by virtue of this process of gradual accretion, Armada functions as a federation of semi-independent quarters, each composed of several ships and under the authority of a "local" ruler who is in turn part of a council led by the Lovers, the *de facto* leaders of the city. When a new ship is boarded, its passengers are either executed or incorporated into the social body of Armada as full-fledged citizens. Moreover, they are given an occupation as consistent as possible with their training and inclinations, so that they might contribute to the prosperity of the city to the best of their abilities. This is true of every individual that becomes part of Armada, whether human, xenian, or Remade.

When changing their status, from citizens of New Crobuzon or a different state to citizens/sailors of the mostly egalitarian, nomadic Armada, newly co-opted Armadans necessarily have to redefine their own social identity. If, that is, «(social) space is a (social) product» (Lefebvre 1991: 26) in the sense that each society (including its system of power and economy) creates a certain kind of space and this space in turn shapes social living (*ibid. et passim*), the community of Armada, radically different from that of New Crobuzon, will demand a substantial adjustment of its new citizens. Each addition, moreover, will then contribute to further altering the city, making it culturally hybrid (as testified by the abundance of periodicals linked to a variety of traditions, from ornate obituaries to something akin

to comic strips up to news [*TS*: 306-307]).

In comparison to other new citizens, however, Remades have to perform a further negotiation. Once free (however free one can be in New Crobuzon) and whole, besides being inhabitants of the totalitarian New Crobuzon, they were remade by institutional power into heterogeneous, criminalised, and enslaved entities, and then objectified as goods to be traded. Their culture, the set of tools by which they engaged with the world around them (see Ekman 2013: 129-130), had already undergone a seismic shift, as did their sense of self and their social status. Entering Armada, therefore, first entails recovering at least a part of their previous identity, such as their former jobs or activities, with a view to joining the city's productive force. Secondly, they are to learn to live with their *supplice* – their bodily alterations – in different terms. In Armada, their torture can no longer be a symbol of institutional power and, as such, a confirmation of their "criminality", because that institution currently holds no power, being substituted by the systems that rule Armadan society. Given that torture is no longer a mark of social ostracism, Remades are openly welcomed as citizens of equal standing with the rest of Armadans. Therefore, the Remades' posthuman bodies end by signifying something different – something that needs to be discursively redetermined.

The case of Tanner Sack

This is precisely what happens to Tanner Sack, one of *TS*'s main characters, when the Terpsichoria, a vessel headed to Nova Esperium with a cargo of Remade slaves, is captured by Armada. Tanner was punished by having tentacles grafted onto his chest, for mysterious reasons – a «patronizing allegorical logic» (*TS*: 115) – that he does not understand. Shackled in the cargo hold, he is aware that the tentacles feel numb, hanging lifelessly off him and slowly rotting away; the future that awaits him, moreover, is one of hard labour and servitude.

Armada gives him a new chance: trained as an engineer, he is especially valuable to the city, which is in constant need of repairs, and it is easier to train an engineer to dive than to teach a diver the skills of an engineer (*TS*: 116). This "piece" of Tanner's former life, his job, is not simply as productive as it was in New Crobuzon, but more so: Armada's stability and its smooth sailing depend on these abilities. Tanner, therefore, is valued both socially, as his usefulness to the city is openly recognised, and economically, as he is corresponded a wage for his work, as opposed to the

servitude to which he had been condemned.

In parallel with his socio-economic identity, his remade body immediately responds to the change: as he immerses to perform his repairs and inspections, the sea brine begins healing his tentacles. At first, it cures their sores and infections; then, movement and sensation begin to animate them; finally, he starts to learn how to control them, how to move them *by choice* (*TS*: 115-116).

Yet, Tanner's tentacles are not particularly useful for the performance of his task: his remaking (which was carried out by a different social apparatus) is not aimed at fulfilling a need of Armada. Rather, it is his new work itself that presents him with a welcome change, a healing he would never have experienced on dry land. The specific sociospace of Armada, which is organised around life at sea, proves to be an environment in which Tanner can thrive both physically and socially. Focusing on how the individual materially experiences the world around him (what Lefebvre calls «perceived space», 1991: 40), Tanner's life in Armada changes his perception by healing the fracture between his human body and his non-human additions. This physical healing seems to be the symbol of a social one: just as he becomes able to control all his bodily parts – the "natural" and the remade ones – so does he regain agency as an individual, passing on from a "commodified criminal" to a full-fledged citizen who is appropriately compensated (and valued) for his work.

As he progressively adapts to Armada, however, this initial healing is no longer enough for Tanner, who feels torn between his life on the city's decks and the one he leads while working in the sea. While his tentacles have adapted and are «as strong and almost as prehensile as his arms and hands» (*TS*: 176), autonomy remains the crux of the matter. Tanner wishes to move as freely in the sea as he does on board of the city; he then decides to be further remade, this time voluntarily, into an amphibian creature, at home in seawater as well as in the open air. As his body becomes more "monstrous", less human, it increases rather than loses in cohesiveness. It becomes something fully "other", while connecting the two components which make up Tanner's identity, i.e. his desire to explore the sea and his life on the ground. No longer having to choose between one or the other, Tanner swims in-between, well-adapted to both.

In a way, Tanner's new form replicates the double nature of the amphibian Armada, in which the activities that take place beneath the surface level are integral to the movement of the city, just as those that take place above it contribute to its prosperity. In this sense, his (further) remade body can be decoded once again as a symbol of the sociospace he inhab-

its: just like the city, Tanner exists on two levels, above and beneath the surface. Additional considerations should of course be made concerning the relations that his re-fashioning establishes with the city's institutional power and its economic system.

Armada is, as previously remarked, a mostly egalitarian city-state, a federation of independent quarters which have come together to ensure the city's stability and security, in direct opposition to the autocratic surveillance state of New Crobuzon. Tanner's first remaking was intended as a punishment, it was a torture imposed to him by New Crobuzon, which then commodified him as a good to be sold. The second one is voluntary, carried out by an individual as a way to better fit his new sociospace. Accordingly, the conditions under which this remaking takes place are rather different: Tanner amasses savings to pay for it, although he is sure that the docks would have subsidized him, «gaining an infinitely more efficient worker to do their bidding» (*ibid*.: 177). His resolve is clear: he does this «not because he was ashamed that he would not ask for money, nor because he was proud, but only because the process and the decision were, completely and uniquely and without confusion, his own» (*ibid*.). To Tanner, the process of self-remaking is effectively one of self-determination, a way to claim ownership over himself not as a human, but as a Remade and as a citizen of Armada. The act of paying out of his own pocket – with his savings earned by working for the city – symbolically corroborates the autonomy of his decision.

Yet, this is also a representative choice of Armada's socio-economic system: although new citizens are generally conscripted, their contributions to the city's wealth are mostly voluntary. By remaking himself into an amphibian, Tanner exponentially increases his economic worth in the eyes of Armada – so much so that he is the first to notice that its authorities would have gladly subsidized him. Relations of power and economy, therefore, become inscribed on his body not as overt symbols of political power but in a more subtle way: they push him in the direction of adaptations which will serve his environment. Healing and enlivening his tentacles was a byproduct of Tanner's new job, but it did not *affect* his job; transforming himself into an amphibian, on the other hand, is something that greatly benefits the city.

On this topic, Carl Freedman remarks that «Remaking, which in New Crobuzon stands for cruelty, mutilation, degradation, and slavery, can in Armada stand for collectivist solidarity and free, dignified labor» (2015: 52). This seems indeed to be the case, because the process of Remaking appears to work as a "reflection" – or simulacrum – of the social system wherein it

takes place. In other words, Tanner's second remaking still answers a need expressed by his sociospace. Rather than being *made* to answer it, he chooses to do so, but this is also consistent with the alternative political systems in which the remaking takes place, namely the autocratic New Crobuzon vs. the egalitarian Armada. True, his new additions, no longer decoded as marks of torture, are presented as symbols of his Armadan identity. This identity, however, springs out of a negotiation involving multiple discursive practices, to the forefront of which remain the structure of his society and the individual's position within it, to say nothing of the economic forces (the demand for specialised work).

Conclusion

As previously argued, Remades, with their hybrid bodies, seem to clearly call for a "posthuman" reading. If, however, this interpretation is complemented with a focus on their relationship with the sociospace in which they are immersed, additional insights can be gained into their role within the complex structure of the Bas-Lag. What I tried to underscore through these examples, and especially through Tanner Sack, is that the Bas-Lag trilogy tends to present Remades as simulacra of their socio-spatial context as a whole. They remain liminal figures on multiple levels: as individuals, they connect humans and xenians, animals and machines, to the extent of objectifying a cohesive recombination of these elements that expresses something utterly new (in Tanner's case, for instance, an amphibian individual). As parts of a social body, Remades often bear the signs of the interconnection of forces that actively shapes this society: from the totalitarian and exploitative system of New Crobuzon to the rebellious groups that act at its outskirts, to the federal, democratic one of Armada.

In other words, the body of the "monster" is not simply the product of actions performed *on*, *to*, or *by* it, but it exists at the crossroads of the forces that shape society. In keeping with Foucault's suggestion, all bodies are, to a certain extent, an expression of «relations of power and domination» (1995: 25). If this is true, as far as Remades are concerned, the interconnected narrative modes of science fiction and fantasy help to make this nexus of forces plain to see and, therefore, open for discussion.

Remades offer a clear and tangible proof of how individuals are at least partially the product of a discursive negotiation, integrating power and economic structures in a continuous redefinition. As simulacra, fictional reflections of fictional societies, they tend to mirror the underlying

structures that define such societies, bringing them to light. At the same time, they showcase the dynamic interaction of such structures: for instance, in moving from New Crobuzon to Armada, Tanner's body adapts and changes as his socio-economic position within each city shifts. Instantiated in each Remade, in sum, is the complexity of the worlds built by Miéville, where these figures epitomize interpretive keys to decoding the relations of power defining these sociospaces.

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