

Chapter Four

The Nomadic Subject in the Spaces of the Other

In a way, the subject in a becoming is always “man,” but only when he enters a becoming-minoritarian that rends him from his major identity. (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 291)

Localizations can absolutely not be taken for granted where the lived experience of the body is concerned: under the pressure of morality, it is even possible to achieve the strange result of a body without organs—a body chastised, as it were, to the point of being castrated. (Lefebvre 40)

He [Richard] had gone beyond the world of metaphor and simile into the place of things that *are*, and it was changing him. (Gaiman, *Neverwhere* 307)

I. Introduction

This chapter shifts the focus from on the interaction between the subject and spatiality to on the protagonist’s nomadic subjectivity in *Neverwhere*. Richard is not only a rambling flâneur, but also a traveler, because he moves between the Upworld and the Underground. A travel is supposed to bring the difference, that is, to have an impact on the traveler’s subjectivity. As María Lugones notes, travel suggests “[t]he shift from being one person to being a different person” (396). In other words, a travel can lead to the change of one’s subjectivity. In *Neverwhere*, Richard’s journey to the Underworld forges his nomadic subjectivity; therefore, after the travel he has a

different vision of London as well as different views about his life.

When Richard strolls in London Below, he mentions several times that he intends to go “home,” to return to his world, London Above. Nevertheless, after coming back to his home, Richard is no longer satisfied with his life there, even if he is promoted to a higher position in the company which he used to dream of. To some degree, like Gulliver who prefers Houyhnhnmland after his travel, Richard misses his friends and life in the Underground and plans to revisit the place.²³ To deal with the reason why Richard wants to leave home while coming back, I employ Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of lines as a grid to explore the protagonist’s nomadic subjectivity.

For Deleuze, “[w]hether we are individuals or groups, we are made up of lines and these lines are very varied in nature” (Deleuze and Parnet 124). The lines which are comprised of our lives are “dynamic and abstract” (Bogue 157). They are never stable, but moving, changing and becoming. Some lines are predictable in their movements, so they can be graphed by regular courses, and mapped by vectors; others are as unpredictable as the line of flight, “a vital, nonorganic zigzag passing between things” (157). As Ronald Bogue comments, “Lines may be conceived of as moving from a point of origin to an endpoint, but the dynamic passage of the line is always between points, in the middle, and at any juncture of its passage it may swerve from its path (or conversely, return from its zigzag into a regular course of movement)” (157). Lines may deviate from original paths and lead to a possibility of becoming. Because of this, the lines are also abstract. They are “not the outlines and delineations of stable things but the tracings of their surges, flows and wakes” (157).

²³ In *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726), Gulliver, after his travel to Houyhnhnmland, regards the Houyhnhnms as the perfect creatures, and turns out to be a misanthrope who dislikes his fellow human beings. Similarly, in *Neverwhere* Richard, after his travel, dislikes his fellow company as well as his life in London Above.

In this chapter, I shall argue that postmodern spatiality makes Richard get lost wherein but it opens the line of flight and leads to the formation of his nomadic subject. The ensuing discussions will point out how three lines proposed by Deleuze and Guattari are interwoven in *Neverwhere* (that is, embodied in Richard's life).²⁴ The lines here are functioned as a thread to deal with the transformation of Richard's subjectivity.

II. The First Line: The Molar Line

Before the journey, Richard's life in London Above is rigid, stable and fixed. He lives in an organized world in which his life—promotion to a higher position, association with a beautiful girl and eventual marriage with her—is expected. His life is “a molar or rigid line of segmentarity” in a Deleuzian sense. The molar line graphs a structured line of life in which everything can be predicted, like an unchangeable schedule. This line “ensure[s] and control[s] the identity of each agency, including personal identity” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 195). Because one's role, identity, and status are defined in order to follow some given definition, the meanings of one's life are created not by one's own, but by a certain established norm.

Dreaming of having a home, a stable job and a beautiful wife, Richard practices his daily routine and never traverses the rigid line of his life. Following conventional

²⁴ In the eighth chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari discuss lines and separate them into three kinds: (1) a molar or rigid line of segmentarity; (2) a line of molecular or supple segmentation; (3) a line of flight. One of the texts that Deleuze and Guattari provide is Henry James's story “In the Cage.” In the beginning the heroine's life represents the first kind of line, for it shows a rigid line of life. Her life is so stable that her daily work as a telegrapher, vacations and marriage are predictable. However, after she meets Everard, the second kind of line is initiated, because she alters her routine, for example, to postpone her marriage with a grocer. Besides the first and second lines, Deleuze and Guattari point out a third line, i.e. a line of flight, “which is like a line of rupture or a ‘clean break’ and marks the exploding of the other two [lines] . . .” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 199). In Fitzgerald's “The Crack-Up,” which is regarded as the writer's melancholy autobiography, he dismantles his organic self-identity, so his unified self no longer exists. For Deleuze and Guattari, Fitzgerald's rupture with the past liberates him from his previous fixed identity and thus creates a line of flight.

trajectories, Richard does his best to play his roles of both a competent worker and a good fiancé. In order to have a family, he works hard to earn money. Whenever Jessica tells Richard how much she loves him, Richard also tells her that “he love[s] her and always want[s] to be with her, and they both [believe] it to be true” (*Neverwhere* 20).

Richard’s mindset represents most ordinary people’s view of life as molar lines. For example, Mr. Figgis, a security guard in Richard’s company, sticks to his work and he is described as someone who “guard[s] the doors with a diligence that bordered upon madness” (*Neverwhere* 18). Jessica’s life also belongs to this kind of molar line. She seeks to pursue her success in work and to win a husband. Jessica thinks that Richard is “the perfect matrimonial accessory” if he is “properly harnessed by the right woman” (11). When Richard accompanies her to treat her boss, she says to him, “Now, I do want you to make a good impression, fiancé-wise. It is vital that a future spouse makes a good impression” (21). Then Jessica teaches him some tips about how to please her boss, e.g., to have a laugh when her boss makes a joke. Richard, Figgis and Jessica are confined within their own territory, and each of their lives outlines a planned route, a straight line going from one point to another.

One’s identity is forged by one’s property and relation with some social context. In *Soft City* Raban reminds readers that “[a] city life is, in very large part, a life lived through symbols” (124).²⁵ The city is such a symbolic space in which one’s relationship with the city is defined by one’s possessions (124). Possessions refer to “both the hardware of purchasable objects and the software of beliefs and ideas” (124).

²⁵ Raban’s words echo Soja’s Thirdspace which resembles Lefebvre’s notion of representational space. The spaces of representation can be treated as “symbolic space,” since they are saturated with “symbols” (Soja, *Thirdspace* 68). As Soja further points out, “These spaces are also vitally filled with politics and ideology, with the real and the imagined intertwined, and with capitalism, racism, patriarchy, and other material spatial practices that concretize the social relations of production, reproduction, exploitation, domination, and subjection” (68).

Thus, possessions are related to both the material level and the mental level. The former level includes production, reproduction, etc., whereas the latter includes ideology, ideas, etc. Possessions can be regarded as a symbol interwoven by both the real and the imagined. For example, one who has a VIP card is taken as an important person. On the one hand, the card serves as a symbol which can prove one's real status. On the other hand, the meaning behind the card is instituted by a kind of ideology, so in a sense the card is the imagined product.

The relationship between subjectivity and social context is closely bonded. As Steve Pile argues, “[M]aps of subjectivity and space [are] constituted by the practices of everyday life that they seemingly [describe]” (74). One's subjectivity is defined by the space that one exists in. In *Neverwhere*, after Richard turns out to be non-person in London Above, his subjectivity and his relation with social context are changed. When Richard becomes invisible to his coworkers and landlord, his apartment is rented by other people, and his bank card becomes invalid. Without possessions, that Richard—the person who has a job about securities, who rents an apartment in London, and who has a girlfriend and dreams of marrying her—disappears. Possessions determine not only one's social status but also one's identity. The old Richard, that so-called true Richard from other people's eyes, is defined by his work, social status, and people around him. This invisible Richard can not be recognized by people or the cash machine, because he loses his possessions—his apartment, his bank card, and his engagement—which serve as a kind of evidence to prove his existence. Richard's loss of possessions suggests his loss of identity in London Above.

Richard's encounter with Door disrupts his molar line of life. When Richard intends to save Door from bleeding, Jessica warns him that their engagement will be broken off if he helps her, but Richard still insists on saving the girl's life,

disregarding her warning. When Richard does not obey Jessica's order, for her he is no longer "the perfect matrimonial accessory." Then instead of assisting Richard in saving Door, Jessica leaves alone, and next day she calls him that their engagement is cancelled. Then, after turning out to be invisible, Richard is only a stranger for Jessica. The appearance of Door breaks Richard's marital relationship with Jessica, so his expectancy of married life as a molar line is interrupted.

III. The Second Line: The Molecular Line

The relationship between citizens and cityspace is interactive. Cityspace can influence one's subjectivity through changing one's identity. That is, while citizens think that they can forge the image of the city by inscribing some identity on the city, the city can also requite citizens in the same way. Cityspace not only is passively controlled by urbanites, but also controls urbanites in return. In *Neverwhere*, London estranges Richard from himself as well as from the city. After Door leaves, Richard becomes impersonal to people in London Above. After becoming unknown to anyone, Richard turns out to be a stranger. He doubts who he is, so he tries to check his identity, for example, talking to a passerby. Richard is like "a balloonist adrift, and [he] need[s] anchors to tether [him] down" (Raban 3). Therefore, Richard intrudes into the Underside to look for Door and seeks to find the way home, that is, to return to his original identity. Richard's loss of his identity in London Above prepares for his later becoming, since his "blank" identity awaits inscription. Because of this, Richard has another view to see the things around him and makes his later becoming possible. Off the identity, Richard is to be a nomad who is not bound to one place.

It is Door who makes Richard's life molecularized. Lines of molecular or supple segmentation "make detours" and "even direct irreversible processes"

(Deleuze and Parnet 124). After meeting Door, Richard deviates from his fixed routes. He loses everything which can prove his existence in London Above. As he writes in his diary:

On Friday I had a job, a fiancée, a home, and a life that made sense. (Well, as much as any life makes sense.) Then I found an injured girl bleeding on the pavement, and I tried to be a Good Samaritan. Now I've got no fiancée, no home, no job, and I'm walking around a couple of hundred feet under the streets of London with the projected life expectancy of a suicidal fruitfly. (Neverwhere 135)

After losing his property and original identity, the molecular line of Richard's life is opened. The roles that Richard used to play are rigidly defined and circumscribed by the things he owns, like his job, card, social status, etc. In moving along the molecular line, Richard frees himself from his fixed identity and rethinks his previous belief in life. His nomadic subject is gradually formed while he undergoes his molecular line, because becomings happen in this line (Deleuze and Parnet 124).

Deleuze's philosophy of becoming can help to illustrate the nomadic subject embodied in Richard in *Neverwhere*. Deleuze and Guattari take the symbiotic relationship between the wasp and the orchid as an example to illustrate their philosophy of becoming (*On the Line* 19-20; *A Thousand Plateaus* 293-94). The wasp spreads the orchid's pollen, so the wasp "becomes a liberated piece of the orchid's reproductive system" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 293). Then, the orchid "becomes the object of an orgasm in the wasp" (293). In one sense, the wasp experiences becoming-orchid; the orchid, becoming-wasp. Symbiosis "deterritorializes" both, for the wasp "become[s] part of the orchid's reproductive apparatus" while the orchid "form[s] an image, an exact tracing (*calque*) of the wasp" (*On the Line* 19). This

symbiotic relation implies that bodies initiate their becoming “when they act upon other bodies or when they are acted upon by other bodies” (Patton 78). To intermingle other bodies leads to “the formation of a new and more complex body” (79).

According to Deleuze and Guattari, “A becoming is always in the middle; one can only get it by the middle. A becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the in-between, the border or line of flight or descent running perpendicular to both” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 293). That is, a becoming is neither “A” nor “B,” but the vacillation “between A and B.” A and B’s in-betweenness is a becoming which is not “A plus B,” but creates “C.” A becoming is the third (C) going beyond binary thinking (either A or B). Becoming frees one’s identity from one’s original position, and offers a “line of flight,” an escape from the status quo. Deleuze’s project, as Claire Colebrook asserts, “is united by an emphasis on becoming, rather than being” (125). In contrast with being which suggests foundation or ground, becoming, relatively unstable, denotes a flow of life and contains more possibilities. The process of a becoming is like at the moment when two primary colors meet. The mixed color which can serve as a trope of a becoming is always in the middle, in-between primary colors. The mixed color creates the third color that presents a wide spectrum of different colors (between primary colors). Therefore, a becoming that suggests multiplicity can break duality.

In *Neverwhere*, Richard goes through the metamorphosis, that is, a becoming, because he not only intrudes into the other world, but also assimilates himself to the other. Therefore, “the other” plays an important role in Richard’s becoming. The images of the other are represented by the lower-class people and rats. In one sense London Below embodies people’s fear of the city during the nineteenth century, for it congregates the homeless, the lower-class, rats, and it is set in the sewers. Throughout

the nineteenth century, people's fear of the city came from the poor, the slums, the prostitutes, smell, sewers, and rats, not only because they were regarded as "the other," but also because they were treated as the source of disease that constituted a threat to the bourgeoisie (Stallybrass and White 193-212).

The lower-class people, though invisible but still existent, have been chased from the center of the city. They are the marginalized groups in society. The juxtaposition of London Above/Below not only ostensibly refers to the different positions in a geographical sense; it also suggests the hierarchy between different social groups. The demarcation between higher/lower social classes is clear. Living in the Underground are the marginalized people who are overlooked by those in London Above. Jessica, who visits art galleries or museums and often does shopping in the department stores on weekends, represents the bourgeois class. When Richard gives a coin to a homeless man in the street, Jessica hurries Richard to walk quickly. Moreover, when she meets Door, who is bleeding on the sidewalk, she keeps talking to Richard and never notices Door's figure at her feet until he interrupts her. Jessica's neglect of the poor man and Door shows the indifference of the higher-class people to the lower-class people.

Whether London Below exists or not is not important, because what is more important is that the world of the Underground is a trope to represent the lower-class people in the society. When Richard tells Gary his journey to London Below, Gary thinks of his journey as a contrived story and replies, "[Y]ou [Richard] must admit, it sounds more likely than your magical London underneath, where the people who fall through the cracks go. I've passed the people who fall through the cracks, Richard: they sleep in shop doorways all down the Strand. They don't go to a special London. They freeze to death in the winter" (*Neverwhere* 365-66). Gary's words imply that the

line between these two worlds, London Above/Below, is not so distinct. Those in the Underground can be seen by people in London Above, but the mind of the latter is blinded and pretends that the former does not exist. For people in the Upworld, those who inhabit London Below, like Lamia as a prostitute, the Sewer Folk as ragpickers, and Anaesthesia as the homeless child, are invisible. As Door says to Richard, “If you’re part of London Below,” “they [people in London Above] normally don’t even notice you exist unless you stop and talk to them. And even then, they forget you pretty quickly” (186). The lower-class people are regarded as “the other” that people in London Above seek to obliterate. The invisibility of the other suggests that people in the Upworld avoid facing “the other,” positioned at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

The rats, especially during the nineteenth century, “furtively emerged from the city’s underground conscience as the demonized Other” (Stallybrass and White 207). Rats are thought to have latent power to destroy the city, not only because they are treated as the source of the disease, but also because they are so fertile that the population of rats is hard to control. When Richard, before his intrusion into the Underground, sees a mouse in his living room, he throws the remote control at it. His response shows urban people’s fear of rats.

In the novel, the image of the lower-class people is connected with rats that run through the sewer and the city, for example, the rat-speakers who do things for rats. The Lord Rat-speaker, who wears fur-trimmed rags, leads his people by following the order of Master Longtail, a rat. Anaesthesia, who comes from London Above as a homeless girl, turns out to be one of the rat-speakers after she is saved by rats. When Richard is questioned by the Lord Rat-speaker, Anaesthesia checks Richard’s bag and devours most of the fruit inside. The link between the lower-class people and rats is

embodied in the former's manners and ability to communicate with rats.

Richard's potential for becoming-other is foreshadowed via the depiction of his appearance in the prologue of the novel. Richard's "grimy face" makes him look like the homeless, so an old woman gives him a coin (*Neverwhere* 2). Moreover, when Richard gets wet in the rain, someone says to him, "You [Richard] look like a drowned rat" (4). These descriptions which associate Richard with the homeless or a rat anticipate his later becoming.

After his journey, Richard experiences becoming-other, for he does not avoid "the other" while encountering the other. Becoming involves the touch of the other, like the symbiotic relation between the wasp and the orchid in which the individual body breaks through its own territory so as to activate a molecular movement toward each other. Richard saves Door, who looks like the homeless, "the other" in the city. Unlike Jessica, who avoids touching the other by ignoring Door and thus is doomed to lack becoming, Richard cradles Door in his arms, despite how much blood poured from her long cut stains his clothes. The blood suggests the infection of the other. Door's blood leaves obvious marks not only on his shirt, but also on his scarf that Richard wraps around her cut to stop bleeding after taking her home. Richard wonders whether he can remove the mess on his shirt. The left stains on his shirt and scarf manifest his touch of the other. After Door leaves, Richard turns out to be invisible, like those in the Underground, the other of London.

Richard initiates his travel by encountering the other, touching the other and tracing the other. "Travel," as Syed Manzurul Islam argues, "means a traversal of the line of the inside, always going towards the other, moving without a telos, and without ever returning" (42). Tracing the other, Richard deviates from the line of the inside and explores that of the outside. The line of the inside is the most familiar line for the

subject whereas the line of the outside is a nomadic route. While intruding into the space of the other, the subject takes the line of the outside. Door, the other of the city, represents a kind of mystery. Richard thinks that if he can read her, he will achieve sense and order. In order to solve the mystery of the other, Richard traces Door, and then enters the space of the other, London Below where unmarked space defamiliarizes Richard's experience of the line of the inside. Consequently, Richard begins his nomadic route. As argued in the previous chapter, Richard constantly gets lost in the Underground, and gradually he learns that his conventional perception of a unified space is not workable in the other London. However, because of this he gains the chance to take the other route and to activate his nomadic subjectivity.

Deleuze's becoming proposes anti-humanism. As Philip Goodchild notes, "Becoming is always an escape from a majoritarian mode of existence" (92). For Deleuze, to treat the human beings as the subject is problematic, because such an anthropocentric idea which consolidates man as the center of the world leads to the oppositions established by human norms. Becoming proposes "to think without models, axioms or grounds" (Colebrook 126). By deviating from man's standpoints, more possibilities can be triggered. According to Deleuze and Guattari, "becomings are minoritarian" and "all becoming is a becoming-minoritarian" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 291). Thus, there is no becoming-man, becoming-majoritarian, "because man is the molar entity par excellence, whereas becomings are molecular" (292). For Deleuze and Guattari, the molar system conforms to the arborescent system that has a central point, but becomings happen in the molecular system, the rhizomatic system where there is no center. Man represents the subject, i.e., the dominant party. From the standard of man, "all other beings or becomings are supposedly determined," so man's viewpoints block "the active and affirmative difference of life" (Colebrook

139). Therefore, the value of becoming is to shake the fixed identity, and to search for other ways of combination.

Richard's invisibility leads to his nomadic route, and triggers his transformation, like Gregor Samsa in Kafka's story "The Metamorphosis" (1915). After Samsa becomes a beetle, he is becoming-animal and opens the route of the outside which is different from his daily routine (Islam 39). Like Samsa who is gradually overlooked and treated as a non-human being after the metamorphosis, Richard becomes invisible after his touch of the other. In a sense, Richard undergoes the process of metamorphosis which can be seen as "a symbol or allegory of the inhumanity, alienation or displacement at the heart of all finite human life," like Samsa's transformation into a giant bug (Colebrook 138). Richard's invisibility implies that he is a non-person (the other) in London Above, so his subjectivity as man is taken off.

Because of his contagion of rats and those figures associated with the image of rats (like Door, the Lord Rat-speaker, and the rat-girl), Richard's becoming-other is more specifically becoming-animal, becoming-rat. When Richard is asked by Door to apologize to a rat for scaring it, he doubts that the rat can understand human words. Before entering London Below, Richard confines himself within his own human territory, but during his journey, he gradually believes that human beings can communicate with non-human beings. When Richard is caught by the Lord Rat-speaker, the Lord intends to punish him, for the Lord mistakes Richard for the killer chasing Door. Then the rat to which Richard had apologized tells the Lord that Richard is not the killer, so Richard's life is saved.

Afterward, during his journey Richard makes friends with Anaesthesia, the homeless rat-girl. In Deleuze and Guattari's word, Richard starts to "deterritorialize" himself, for he communicates with the other, animals, or rats. Even after Richard

returns to London Above at the near end of the novel, he talks to a rat and asks it if it knows the Lady Door (*Neverwhere* 360). Richard's attempt to converse with a rat implies that he escapes from his original status and decenters his humanity. In vacillating between the self and the other, Richard undergoes becoming-other (or more specifically becoming-rat) and then initiates his flight from the rigid life. In doing so, Richard becomes a nomad whose identity is not fixed but fluid, so he can oscillate between London Above and London Below thereafter.

IV. The Third Line: The Line of Flight²⁶

In *Neverwhere*, Richard does not carry his "home" to travel in London Below. The home is the place which people connect their identity with. As David Ley claims, "The home is the most articulate landscape expression of the self and can reinforce either a positive self-image or, in the case of dreary public housing in an unwanted location, it may sustain an identity of a peripheral and low status member of society with little ability to mould his environment" (qtd. in Pile 55). For Ley, home dwellers can not separate their identity from their home, for the home is symbolic of dwellers' identity, memory, and subjectivity. After being treated as nobody in London Above, Richard has no home, so he becomes homeless. Because of this, he can not confine himself to his "home." Richard gets rid of his identity in London Above, and

²⁶ The line of flight, as Elizabeth Grosz asserts, is "not always clearly distinguishable from the molecular line," for both lines involve becomings, movement, and change (204). I propose that the line of flight can be taken as the apex of the molecular line, while the molecular line propels the process of becoming-minoritarian. Deleuze and Guattari explicate the three lines with examples drawn from primitive societies. The Roman Empire serves as the example of the molar line, for it has "its center of resonance and periphery, its State, its *pax romana*, its geometry, its camps, its *limes* (boundary lines)" (*A Thousand Plateaus* 222). In contrast with the Roman Empire which has its clear territory, the Huns represent the line of flight, because they as nomadic people do not confine themselves within some specific territory (222). The migrant Barbarians at times invaded the Roman Empire because they were defeated by other people, for example, the Huns; nevertheless, at times they were willing to be mercenaries and thus became the part of the Empire (223). Between the above-mentioned two lines, the migrant Barbarians, who were sometimes sedentary but sometimes nomadic, represent the molecular line. Although the difference between the line of flight and the molecular line is subtle, as a whole the former is more nomadic than the latter.

experiences the other identity in the Underground.

Islam in his *The Ethics of Travel* suggests two kinds of travelers: one is sedentary whereas the other is nomadic. In *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Crusoe is a sedentary traveler, for he “creates a citadel of his selfhood by enclosing himself within a boundary” (Islam 2). Robinson does not cross the boundary between “the self” and “the other.” “The bounded space” that Robinson creates emulates “Englishness,” so in one sense Robinson “never goes anywhere except from home to home” (2-3). Robinson meets the other, Friday, but lacks mutual understanding between both, so Robinson’s role fits a sedentary traveler.

As opposed to sedentary travelers, nomadic travelers break their own boundaries. In other words, nomadic travelers who assimilate into “the other” to some degree experience the process of “becoming” in Deleuze and Guattari’s word. Becoming not only deviates travelers from their normality, but also makes travelers’ points of departure different from their points of return. Richard assimilates to the life of those in London Below, “the other” life, so it makes Richard’s becoming(-other) possible in his travel.

Richard is a nomad, for he opens up himself to experience the spaces of the other, instead of sticking to his self-space. While confronting London Below, Richard does not retreat, but accepts it. Therefore, he has the chance to gain self-awareness through the reflection of his self-image from the other world. In *Neverwhere* the scene about Richard’s ordeal is significant, because it questions the totality of one’s subjectivity, because it leads to the subject’s reflection, and because it is the crucial moment when the protagonist begins his line of flight.

Before the analysis of Richard’s ordeal, I shall review this scene. In order to get the key, Richard has to accept the trial, so he enters the Underground platform alone

where his subjectivity is challenged, for he faces many divided selves as if they were reflected in the mirror. At the beginning of Richard's ordeal, nothing happens, but after a while, Richard sees Gary, his co-worker in London Above. Gary says to Richard, "I'm not really here," and "I'm not. I'm you. Talking to yourself," but Richard does not believe Gary's words (*Neverwhere* 243). Then Gary transforms himself into another person. The person is the other Richard, who looks tidy, and well-dressed, in contrast with the damp, muddy Richard. The former tells the latter, "I'm you, Richard" (243). Although the muddy Richard thinks that the tidy Richard looks really like himself, but the muddy Richard refuses to admit it. The other Richard says to the muddy Richard, "Look at this place, try to see the people, try to see the truth . . . you're already the closest to reality that you've been in a week . . ." (244). However, Richard denies whatever his another self says. Then Richard sits between the other tidy Richard and Jessica, his ex-girlfriend. When Richard calls Jessica, she shakes her head and says, "I'm still you. But you have to listen, darling. You're the closest to reality you've been—" (245). The spatiality embodied in the trial is like mirrors in which Richard has to encounter his reflections, i.e. his split selves.

The challenge of the ordeal is that Richard has to face "the existential spatiality of Being and Becoming, presence and absence, the inside and the outside" in Soja's words (*Thirdspace* 158). The three reflections (Gary, the tidy Richard, and Jessica) that Richard encounters constitute Thirdspace in which dichotomies, such as the real and the imagined, or the actual and the virtual, all break down. The three figures which are Richard's shadows form an unreal, virtual space. Richard gets lost in such a virtual space and loses his ability to differentiate between the true self and the imagined other. That is, he is on the brink of replacing the self (I) by the other (I in the mirror). At the moment when Richard believes that the other (virtual) Richard really

exists, Richard loses his own subject, because Richard's acceptance of the other suggests that he rejects his own presence.

In the novel, the trial is a becoming space which molecularizes Richard's subjectivity. Subjectivity will be shifted according to the change of space. As Pile notes, "The subjects may derive their identities from the world around, but that world is no longer stable or fixed" (64). "In everyday lives, people assume themselves to be the kind of people they are" (75). However, once people confront changing spaces, they will look at themselves in a way distinct from their everyday assumption. Soja's *Thirdspace* echoes Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of becoming, for both seek to attack dualisms, to propose a third possibility, and to focus on the fragmentary, indeterminate, and changeable traits.²⁷ "The subject is never in one place," and one's "subjectivity is reproduced in time and space" (74). When encountering becoming spaces, Richard's subjectivity undergoes the process of becoming(-other, -rat), as argued in the previous section. That is, the spaces of the other affect the subject and trigger the subject's becoming-other.

Richard's becoming-rat does not mean that he finally becomes a rat, but it implies that Richard's subjectivity tends to be nomadic like rats.²⁸ The movement of rats presents an image of a rhizome, for rats are packs, running through between interlaced tunnels of London Below and dark corners of London Above. Rats can go through porous spaces, and they are not bound to rigid routes. Similar to "the habitat of the molelike creature" of Kafka's "The Burrow" (1923), the tunnels in London

²⁷ Like *Thirdspace* which "does not derive simply from an additive combination of its binary antecedents but rather from a disordering, deconstruction . . ." (Soja, *Thirdspace* 61), becoming "is certainly no longer a matter of a synthesis of the two, of a synthesis of 1 and 2, but of a third which always comes from elsewhere and disturbs the binarity of the two, not so much inserting itself in their opposition as in their complementarity" (Deleuze and Parnet 131).

²⁸ As Deleuze and Parnet claim, the thing about becomings "is not one term which becomes the other, but each encounters the other, a single becoming which is not common to the two, since they have nothing to do with one another, but which is between the two, which has its own direction, a bloc of becoming, an a-parallel evolution" (6-7).

Below embody “a maze of interconnecting tunnels with no clear entrance or exit and multiple points of possible escape” (Bogue 88). Situated in such “a decentered proliferation of points,” Richard opens his flight from his everyday life (88). That is, he does not stick to his previous molar line, and his line of life becomes more supple.

After Richard explores the rhizomatic spaces in which one point may be connected to any other, his subjectivity begins to be molecularized. The fixed meanings imposed on him start to collapse and such collapse achieves its climax in his ordeal. His split selves challenge his fixed assumption of his identity. As the novel describes, in his ordeal Richard “[has] no idea who he [is], anymore; no idea what [is] or what [is] not true; nor whether he [is] brave or cowardly, mad or sane . . .” (*Neverwhere* 251). Richard is confronted with the notion that his subjectivity is split.

The split selves break Richard’s illusion about his organized Being. During the ordeal, the three imagined figures play the role of a mirror (reflecting Richard) to perplex Richard. On the one hand, the mirror (represented by the three figures) makes Richard occupy his own Being that becomes absolutely real space and is connected with all the space when he gazes at himself in the mirror. On the other hand, Richard’s Being is not so absolutely real, because his presence relies on the virtual space in the mirror to prove his existence. Richard’s ordeal makes him sense that one’s Being is composed of many split selves, instead of one. The three figures project Richard’s imagined selves that Richard mistakes for his real self. In the mirror-like world, Richard is on the brink of crack-up. When Richard asks those shadows if they are part of the ordeal, the other Richard retorts, “Can’t you tell how ridiculous all this sounds?” and Jessica replies to him, “You’re not going through an ordeal, Richard. You—you [have] some kind of nervous breakdown” (*Neverwhere* 245).

Richard’s crack-up makes his subject never unified, like Ahab in *Moby Dick*.

Following Deleuze and Guattari's interpretation of Ahab's becoming-whale, Tamsin Lorraine further points out that Ahab's subject is no longer universal, because "[i]n his becoming-other he becomes many selves all of whom are connected only by the continuity of a line of becoming" (169). Likewise, in the ordeal Richard's search for a totality of meanings in the spaces of the other is no longer retrieved. Richard starts to flee from his previous consolidated self anchored to some specific place in a fixed space.

The ordeal symbolizes a spiritual trial to all those who try to traverse it: only those who can create a line of flight can overcome it, like Richard. On the one hand, the "real-and-imagined" spatiality embodied in Richard's ordeal suggests that the line between the real self and the imagined self is blurred. On the other hand, those shadows can be treated as the reflection of a molar line of life. At the near end of the ordeal, the shadow (looking like Gary) reminds Richard that his life is so meaningless and tempts him to commit suicide. As Gary says to Richard, "Become an incident at Blackfriars Station. To end it all. Your life's a joyless, loveless, empty sham. You've got no friends—" (*Neverwhere* 247). In a sense, Gary's words reflect Richard's rigid life in London Above. When the train is coming, Richard feels painful and tries to stop his pain as soon as possible by suicide. However, Anaesthesia's necklace reminds him of the rat-girl and he seems to hear her voice uttering, "Hold on" (250). He is listening to the voice, although he is not sure whether it is his voice or the rat-girl's. Thereafter, instead of committing suicide, Richard steps onto the train and passes the ordeal.

Richard's success in the trial suggests his rupture with the molar line. Those who fail to pass the trial before Richard can not return to their normal state, either because they commit suicide in the trial, or because they are out of mind after the trail.

Their non-return implies that they stick to the totality of meanings, so while confronting indeterminate spaces, they completely crack up. They can not free themselves from fixed identities. By contrast, Richard can pass the ordeal because he undergoes becoming-rat. The rat-girl's necklace and her voice which represent the contagion of the other prevent Richard from suicide.

Richard's final refusal of Gary's proposal of suicide suggests his rupture with the past, his rigid life. The setting of the ordeal (a platform), a fixed space, symbolizes a molar line. Richard's encounter with Gary and Jessica represents Richard's past life in London Above. The other Richard reflects his previous molar entity. His touch of the other (represented by the rat-girl's necklace) triggers his line of becoming and flight from his daily routine. Therefore, eventually he does not listen to Gary's words, but leaves the platform, stepping onto the train. His departure from the platform means his flight from his past, his old identity, or any established norms imposed on him. If Richard encloses himself within his own territory, he will not undergo becoming-other; instead, he will very possibly fall into the trap of the ordeal because he, lacking becoming, is bound to old certainties.

The ordeal opens Richard's line of flight which can illustrate why he refuses to stay in London Above after his return from the Underground. Because Richard kills the Beast, after Hunter's death he becomes the heir to Hunter's status and her knife. The earl endows him with "the freedom of the Underside," so he is "allowed to walk freely, without let or hindrance . . ." (*Neverwhere* 344). Richard's bestowed ability to stroll through the Underside at will strengthens his characteristic as a nomad. After coming back to London Above, Richard gets a promotion as well as a new apartment, but he is not satisfied with his life. Although Richard dislikes the gathering, one Friday night he goes out with his co-workers and Gary introduces two girls to him.

Everything goes smoothly with him, and this is the life that the old Richard wanted. He used to dream of being promoted and marrying a beautiful girl, and he thought this is his life. However, the new Richard does not enjoy the gathering with his co-workers. One of the girls smiles at him, but he has nothing to say to her. All of a sudden, “the rest of his life” comes into his mind “as if he [watched] it on the big screen” (363). He can foresee the rest of his life like this: “He [will] go home tonight with the girl . . . and they [will] make gentle love, and tomorrow, it being Saturday, they would spend the morning in bed . . . In a year, or a little less, he would marry the girl . . . and get another promotion . . . and they [will] have two children . . . and they [will] move out to the suburbs . . .” (363). He does not want the rest of his life like this—planned, predictable, and rigid. Then he leaves the pub alone. When Gary finds Richard outside the pub, Richard asks Gary, “Work. Home. The pub. Meeting girls. Living in the city. Life. Is that all there is?” (364). Gary answers, “I think that sums it up, yes” (364). Gary’s reply represents most people’s stationary life—the rigid or molar line. After the journey, Richard is unwilling to follow the molar line, so he seeks to create molecular trajectories.

Richard’s reflection on his journey and intention to have the line of flight also reveal in his conversation with the old lady lying beside a shop doorway. As Richard asks the lady, “Have you ever got everything you ever wanted? And then realized it wasn’t what you wanted at all?” (*Neverwhere* 368). Before he enters London Below, he longs for a stable life. Nevertheless, after the journey, Richard does not want his life to be a lineal, planned route. Now Richard is a nomad who searches for the unfixed, becoming, and rhizomatic route to take. Although the novel ends with Richard’s return to the Underground, it is not necessary to mean that Richard will remain there. More possibly, Richard will keep vacillating between London Above

and London Below, because neither of the two constitutes by itself the truth of London, but a fluid continuum between the two allows a richer and more layered understanding of the complex spatiality of London.

V. Conclusion

Richard's journey to the Underside softens his daily rigid route, and launches the molecular line of life. His becoming(-other, -rat), line of flight, and nomadic subjectivity make him refuse to remain firm in the rigid line. In London Above, most people stick to their molar line of life, so they lack becomings, let alone the flight from their daily routine. Unlike other people, Richard initiates the molecular line of life after his encounter with the other and then goes beyond stable views about the world.

The significance of Richard's line of flight (from his "home," London Above) is worth noting here from two perspectives as a conclusion in this chapter: (1) to question man as the subject; (2) to criticize modern capitalist societies. First, Richard's becoming (-other, -rat) questions man as the subject. To treat human beings as the center is problematic, for anthropocentrism overlooks the voice of the other. For example, those in London Below (representing the marginalized group in society) are ignored by those in London Above. In the novel, the contrast between the two cities unmasks the indifference, greed, worldliness, emptiness and the tinselled superficialities of London Above. Richard's journey to the Underside discloses what seems to lie behind the radiant surface of the Upworld. After his return Richard is not satisfied with his world in part because he realizes that the seeming progression of the Upworld is an illusion. Therefore, in the end after his previous dream of life (to marry, to have a home, and to get promotion) is almost realized, Richard wants to leave for

the other London. Owing to becoming-other, Richard releases himself from mainstream views.

Second, Richard's refusal to stay in the Upworld reveals an indirect attack on capitalist societies. For Deleuze and Guattari, the Oedipal triangle of Father-Mother-I epitomizes another triad in modern capitalist societies (Capitalist-Product-Consumer). They propose to attack such a triangle, because it settles down individual identity in society and consolidates established organization.²⁹ That is, once each individual is attached to a certain role, the fluidity of life or any becomings turn out to be impossible. *Neverwhere* ends with the protagonist's departure from London Above, and this arrangement of the ending reveals the rejection of the Oedipal triangle. After his journey, Richard gradually realizes that Jessica used to treat him only as one of her possessions, and the love between them was reduced to a false belief. When Jessica returns the engagement ring to Richard, he does not intend to regain his marital relation with her. In contrast with their previous belief that they love each other, this scene appears ironic and shows that their love is fragile. Later when Gary introduces girls to Richard, Richard lacks interest in them. Both these scenes suggest his denial of marriage and thus smack of anti-Oedipus. The Oedipal triangle represents the molar line in which identities are fixed. After his life is molecularized, Richard as a nomad resists accepting such unchangeable paths.

When Richard leaves from the Underside and almost arrives in London Above, he notices Docklands, which used to be part of the poor area of the East London but now is rebuilt and treated as a symbol of Thatcher's Britain. Docklands can be regarded as the product of high capitalism under Thatcher's policy. His glance of

²⁹ In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari assert that the Oedipal triangle is "but one component of a general system of restraints and controls in modern capitalist societies that regulate desire (in this case, by insisting that desire is primarily situated in the family, an ego-subject, whole and discrete organisms, and so on)" (Bogue 75).

Docklands during his return to London Above seems to imply that he will enter a capitalist society and will be incorporated into a capitalist system, but he resists. Therefore, Richard's departure from London Above shows his refusal to be circumscribed by the marital system and the modern capitalist societies.