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# Under construction: infrastructure and modern fiction

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Dissertation

# UNDER CONSTRUCTION:

# INFRASTRUCTURE AND MODERN FICTION

by

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# UNDER CONSTRUCTION: INFRASTRUCTURE AND MODERN FICTION

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I argue that infrastructural development, with its technological promises but widening geographic disparities and social and environmental consequences, informs both the narrative content and aesthetic forms of modernist and contemporary Anglophone fiction. Despite its prevalent material forms—roads, rails, pipes, and wires—infrastructure poses particular formal and narrative problems, often receding into the background as mere setting. To address how literary fiction theorizes the experience of infrastructure requires reading "infrastructurally": that is, paying attention to the seemingly mundane interactions between characters and their built environments. The writers central to this project—James Joyce, William Faulkner, Karen Tei Yamashita, and Mohsin Hamid—take up the representational challenges posed by infrastructure by bringing transit networks, sanitation systems, and electrical grids and the histories of their development and use into the foreground. These writers call attention to the political dimensions of built environments, revealing the ways infrastructures produce, reinforce, and perpetuate racial and socioeconomic fault lines. They also attempt to formalize the material relations of power inscribed by and within infrastructure; the novel itself becomes an imaginary counterpart to the technologies of

infrastructure, a form that shapes and constrains what types of social action and affiliation are possible.

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# Introduction
## *Under Construction: Infrastructure and Modern Fiction*

Toward the end of Emily St. John Mandel's post-apocalyptic novel *Station Eleven*, a character holds a snow globe for the first time in decades in the "Museum of Civilization" at the defunct Severn City Airport. Amidst the collection of unusable iPhones and other artifacts collected from the novel's pre-pandemic world that are now considered to be obsolete, the snow globe instantiates a look-back into the world before that had produced it: Mandel writes, "Consider the snow globe. Consider […] the assembly-line worker who watched the globe glide past on a conveyer belt somewhere in China. Consider the white gloves on the hands of the woman who inserted the snow globes into boxes, to be packed into larger boxes, crates, shipping containers" (255). As the passage continues, it includes in its imaginative list "the ship carrying the containers across the ocean," "the shipping manifest when the ship reached port," "the driver delivering boxes to the distribution center," and "the UPS man carrying boxes of snow globes from there to the Severn City Airport" (255). It is clear that the snow globe is not just a relic from a general "time before." Rather, it is indicative of a pre-collapse modernity rife with global histories of invisible labor, production, and distribution, and the kinds of material infrastructures necessary for such distribution. Mandel's repetition of the imperative "Consider" at the beginning of each sentence emphasizes that we look beyond the material object to the infrastructural systems and workers that made its existence a possibility. Of course, in the post-apocalyptic world of the novel, such infrastructural systems are long gone. After all, the Severn City Airport is no longer a node in a working global transportation network, but instead has become an encampment

and a museum. Infrastructural systems and their regimes of labor only become objects of careful consideration when they have already broken down.

*Under Construction: Infrastructure and Modern Fiction* builds upon Mandel's imperative to "Consider"—that is, in this dissertation, I scrutinize the invisible histories of infrastructure that undergird our modern world. In the novel, and in our own Covid-19 realities, it is clear how fully the operations of the modern world, and indeed our very lives, depend upon the work of a host of infrastructural systems. And yet, infrastructure—the collectively engineered but often taken for granted material systems that facilitate the flow of bodies, objects, and information—often only becomes visible or only signifies in its misfunction.[1] We only notice it when it breaks down or when it is altogether absent. Otherwise, it tends to be invisible to those whom it benefits. The work of literary fiction, I contend, allows us to confront this question of infrastructural invisibility, but not only in the post-apocalyptic registers of Mandel and other writers who depict infrastructure's total disintegration. Rather, we can turn to the literary for its aesthetic and critical engagements with infrastructure and the everyday, unpacking the ways writers make visible, transform, or revitalize in narrative and aesthetic forms our daily encounters with the unseen aspects of built environments. For example, we can see how Colson Whitehead dramatizes social habitus and affective attachments through a commuter's daily trip on the MTA in *The Colossus of New York*, or we can recognize how Teju Cole excavates the infrastructural histories of daily itineraries along the streets and bridges of

[1] See Susan Leigh Star, "The Ethnography of Infrastructure."

New York City. Thinking about infrastructure and the literary allows us to ask new questions about the ways our worlds—real and imaginative—are constructed.

Issues of what constitutes infrastructure, whose responsibility it is, and whom it benefits, are taken up in literary fiction, as writers narrativize the role and function that infrastructures serve in our communities, not to mention the kinds of social, cultural, economic, and political modes they enable or deny. Similar questions have emerged with the recently renewed public and political attention to infrastructure because of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Despite these new debates about infrastructure's definitions and affordances, as well as its promises and problems, infrastructure remains understudied within literary criticism. *Under Construction: Infrastructure and Modern Fiction* endeavors to illuminate how a study of infrastructure within literary criticism not only can address these questions of infrastructure's definition, responsibility, access, and provision through narrative, but also can reframe our understanding of the novel as infrastructural in its own forms. My research argues that infrastructural development, with its technological promises but widening geographic disparities and social and environmental consequences, informs both the narrative content and aesthetic forms of modern and contemporary Anglophone fiction. Despite its prevalent material forms—roads, rails, pipes, and wires—infrastructure poses particular formal and narrative problems, often receding into the background as mere setting. To address how literary fiction theorizes the experience of infrastructure requires reading "infrastructurally": that is, paying attention to the seemingly mundane interactions between characters and their built environments. The writers central to this project—James Joyce, William Faulkner,

Karen Tei Yamashita, and Mohsin Hamid—take up the representational challenges posed by infrastructure by bringing transit networks, sanitation systems, and electrical grids and the histories of their development and use into the foreground. These writers call attention to the political dimensions of built environments, revealing the ways infrastructures produce, reinforce, and perpetuate racial and socioeconomic fault lines. They also attempt to formalize the material relations of power inscribed by and within infrastructure; the novel itself becomes an imaginary counterpart to the technologies of infrastructure, a form that shapes and constrains what types of social action and affiliation are possible.

My perspective is deliberately broad, both temporally and geographically, in order to underscore how similar engagements with infrastructure can be identified across literature in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The novels my project considers are exemplary modernist and contemporary works for understanding the relationships between infrastructure and the literary; they experiment with aesthetic strategies to draw attention to the production of social and political forms through modern infrastructure. Oftentimes, these aesthetic strategies implicate infrastructure within an ecology of other media beyond the novel, including, but not limited to, film, radio, and other print media such as newspapers. This formal engagement with infrastructure and/as other media creates a space for the novel not only to embed its politics within a textured media terrain, but also to address its own mediality. Across this introduction and these chapters, I intend to model what it means to read infrastructurally and to provide a sample of the formal experimentation and political work done by writers engaged in the infrastructural

environments of their time. What follows in this introduction is a roadmap, a blueprint—whichever infrastructural metaphor you prefer—for the development of the relationships between infrastructure and literary fiction.

**Critical Foundations for the Study of Infrastructure and Modern Fiction**

Infrastructure taken literally means below-structure, that is, what Michael Rubenstein, Bruce Robbins, and Sophia Beal describe as "the innards of a structure that are hidden by the structure's surface or façade" ("Infrastructuralism" 575). This description lends itself to Brian Larkin's claim that "infrastructures comprise the invisible, taken-for-granted substrate that allows our world to operate" ("Promising Forms" 186). When infrastructures are working well,[2] they become essentially invisible to those whom they benefit, a forgettable backdrop to the everyday. Yet, infrastructures condition the everyday in many ways by creating and closing types of social, economic, and political proximity and distance. In fact, Paul Edwards claims that infrastructure is integral to our experience and understanding of modernity: "To be modern is to live within and by means of infrastructures" (186). Although we don't often think carefully about them, roads and railways provide space for transportation; water systems provide easier access to water; and electrical grids provide power for nearly everything. They are the material networks upon which socioeconomic relations are built, attempting to meet the felt and imagined needs of the public. In capitalist terms, as Larkin frames it, infrastructures are the "built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas

[2] For anthropologist Dominic Boyer, among others, new critical interest in infrastructure is a commentary upon its collapse, decline, and decay ("Energopower"). Because infrastructure tends to go unnoticed when it is working well, its material failures heighten its visibility.

and allow for their exchange over space" ("The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure" 328).[3]

Larkin's definition positions infrastructure as a media technology. It is by no coincidence that Marshall McLuhan's seminal work *Understanding Media* first cites electrical light and railroads as examples to delineate what he means by "the medium is the message" (1-2). For McLuhan, a medium is "any new technology" that introduces a new scale to human affairs, restructuring our relations to one another or to ourselves (1). The railway, he argues, "did not introduce movement or transportation or wheel or road into human society, but it accelerated and enlarged the scale of previous human functions, creating totally new kinds of cities and new kinds of work and leisure" (1). Independent of what content trains may carry, the railroad amplifies or accelerates existing processes, transforming experience, space, and social formations. What McLuhan notes about the railroad applies equally to all infrastructural technologies, in that it is the deep material and medial structures of society, rather than their specific contents, that profoundly alter social and economic relations. Just as McLuhan implores us to consider the importance of any medium beyond its content, so too must we attend to infrastructure as a medium that invisibly gives shape to our daily lives.

[3] Because they are the material network through which economies and peoples circulate, infrastructures provide an "ideal ethnographic site for theorizing how broad and abstract social orderings such as the state, citizenship, criminality, ethnicity and class play out concretely at the level of everyday practice" (Rodgers and O'Neill 402). Put simply by Nikhil Anand, infrastructures are "the material articulations of imagination, ideology, and social life" ("Pressure"). As regulatory structures, infrastructures circumscribe the social, the economic, and the political on both a material and ideological level. They act as facilitators of capital and human circulation, and as such, they become valuable diagnostic spaces for understanding material and medial sites of power and belonging.

Lisa Parks and Nicole Starosielski chart a path toward a multifaceted infrastructure studies in their introduction to *Signal Traffic: Critical Studies of Media Infrastructures*, a path I follow in this project. Parks and Starosielski insist that we must attend to the relationality between the "multiscalar dimensions of infrastructures," registering how macroscale technical systems and microscale, even "mundane scale," interactions with infrastructure inflect one another in order to "emphasize the layering or bundling of distinct systems […] as well as the interconnections between infrastructures, environments, and users" (9). Infrastructures are fundamentally relational systems rather than simple static concrete objects. In taking seriously infrastructure's relationality, Parks and Starosielski—à la the new materialisms of Latour, Coole, and Frost—recognize the often-overlooked capacities of nonhuman agents in the production of the social. The social emerges for people in the interactions facilitated and permitted by the materiality of infrastructure. In heeding the multiple scales of infrastructures and their active medial capacities, Parks and Starosielski attend to the unevenness of infrastructural experience around the world, not to mention the differing political dynamics that perpetuate their labor, maintenance, and environmental impacts.[4] Infrastructural access fluctuates across "industrialized and developing regions, rich and poor neighborhoods, and urban and rural settings" (11), indicating the need to provincialize our study of infrastructural systems, to

[4] Although my project will only partially engage infrastructure's environmental impacts, it's important to note that infrastructure's construction, maintenance, and decay are purveyors of what Rob Nixon calls "slow violence," which is a kind of "violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (2). For example, the construction of roads might lead not only to deforestation and the ecological consequences of the forced migrations of human and nonhuman populations, but also, because of the increased presence of automobiles, to higher carbon emissions that have proven consequential for the earth's changing climate.

weigh how they operate and come to matter differently to various groups of people, and to assess how they impact particular environs.

Parks and Starosielski also point to infrastructure's production of affective relations, indicating that we must also "excavat[e] the various dispositions, feelings, moods, or sensations people experience during encounters with infrastructural objects, sites, and processes" (15). Brian Larkin indicates that infrastructural projects "emerge out of and store within them forms of desire and fantasy" at individual and societal levels, encoding within their base materiality semiotic forms and attachments to what Lauren Berlant would call "the good life" ("The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure" 329). Infrastructure, Larkin continues, "form[s] us as subjects not just on a technopolitical level but also through [a] mobilization of affect and the senses of desire, pride, and frustration, feelings which can be deeply political" (333). Infrastructure's political address and affective attachments emerge in its rhetorical capacity to represent the possibility of being modern, of belonging to a nation, and of having a future. Typically, states promote their power through the promise of infrastructure. They promise their constituents the "good life," a way of living that is enhanced by the kinds of socioeconomic access, modern convenience, and relative security that infrastructural projects would supply. Anyone who uses or pays taxes on infrastructure is inscribed as a subject of the state, and communities thicken around the imagined futures made possible by infrastructural development. In this way, roads and railroads are not just technical material objects that allow vehicular transport from one place to another, but rather, by promoting movement and the "enlightenment goal of society and economy as a space of unimpeded circulation"

(Larkin 333), they encode the dreams of individuals and societies around the emancipatory freedom the road comes to represent.

Despite infrastructural development being a hallmark of modernity and modernization that produces various social, political, and affective formations, infrastructure remains underdeveloped within the field of literary studies. Although much work has been done on material spaces since the spatial turn of critical theory, only recently have literary scholars began to examine more fully what it means to "read" infrastructure in literature.[5] A 2015 special issue of *Modern Fiction Studies* entitled "Infrastructuralism," edited by Michael Rubenstein, Bruce Robbins, and Sophia Beal, offers the first collective examination of infrastructure for literary scholars, inspiring further work such as the 2018 collection *Planned Violence: Post/Colonial Urban Infrastructure, Literature, and Culture*, edited by Elleke Boehmer and Dominic Davies. Infrastructuralism explores "the difference between the 'planned violence' of infrastructures of control and coercion, often imposed from above in the interests of power, and the infrastructures of provision and entitlement, often demanded from below" ("Infrastructuralism" 581). Because of its seeming invisibility, infrastructure belies the complex power dynamics involved in its development. Infrastructures are material sites of ongoing struggle between states and their subjects, complex terrains that negotiate where they are and who has access to them.

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[5] In approaching material and medial technologies, literary critics tend to focus on one infrastructural or media system at a time, such as the role of roads or telecommunication networks in a novel. I believe that such approaches are insufficient. We must recognize the multiple scales and dimensions of infrastructure, carefully attuning ourselves to how systems that may otherwise seem distinct are inextricably entangled.

Literary fiction is well positioned to investigate the imaginative and material properties of infrastructure. Rubenstein, Robbins, and Beal support this claim as they "begin with the assumption that […] new ways of thinking will find powerful forms of expression in literary fictions, where speculation and experimentation beyond the factual are made uniquely possible" (575). Although the study of infrastructure in literature is relatively new, it finds its seeds in Patricia Yaeger's 2007 article, "Dreaming of Infrastructure." Yaeger proposes a new "metropoetics" as a means to read infrastructure in literature: "Given infrastructure's importance, its play of surface and depth (subways, water mains), of hypervisibility (bridges) and invisibility (the electrical grid), it is tempting to imagine that the deep structures of city texts might mirror the deep structures of cities" (16). Although Yaeger admits infrastructure's role in literature is far more complicated than simple mimesis, she urges us to read literature as having a multi-layered and multi-directional engagement with the material spaces of infrastructure and the tangled complexities of aesthetic representation.

Caroline Levine answers Yaeger's call by outlining infrastructuralism as a new formalist and historical materialist literary critical method—as the "practice of attending closely to the jostling, colliding, and overlapping of social, cultural, and technological forms" ("Infrastructuralism: or the Tempo of Institutions" 65). Levine develops this concept of infrastructuralism, although without using the term explicitly, further in her book, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*. Form, for Levine, "always indicates an arrangement of elements—an ordering, patterning, or shaping" (3). She uses this broad definition in order to claim that "no form operates in isolation" (7). Rather, forms

intersect, overlap, and collide, and in the case of literature, forms become “the many organizing principles that encounter one another inside as well as outside of the literary text.” (16). Form can as easily refer to aspects of a novel as it can to the material structures of the environment. That forms are everywhere structuring experience carries serious implications for the understanding the collision of infrastructure, the social, and the literary. Approaching form plurally in a manner that includes the material, the social, and the aesthetic allows for mutual interaction without presupposing a hierarchy of forms in which one single form dominates or organizes the others. This kind of formal entanglement reinforces Levine’s claim that “the form that best captures the experience of colliding forms is narrative” (19). In this, Levine follows Bruno Latour, who indicates that fiction writers are often better at illustrating social relations than sociologists are because their fictional experimentation offers “a vast playground to rehearse accounts of what makes us act” (*Reassembling the Social* 55). Because narratives present causality metonymically as a series of events, narratives become useful heuristic forms: “they can set in motion multiple social forms and track them as they cooperate, come into conflict, and overlap, without positing an ultimate cause” (Levine 19). In other words, narratives allow us to imagine the “subtle unfolding activity of multiple social forms” (19).

Key to understanding the “unfolding activity of multiple social forms” in narrative is setting, the material environment in which these forms are able to unfold. By looking at material infrastructural environments and their social import in literature, I follow David Alworth’s concept of “site reading,” which uses a theoretical approach at the intersection of environmental criticism and textual materialism to answer how literary

fiction theorizes social experience through space. Literary fiction, as Alworth puts it, transposes "real sites into narrative settings and thereby render[s] them operative, as figures in and of collective life" (2).[6] Understanding the social as a "process of assembling" à la Latour, rather than a preconstituted entity, Alworth argues that "persons, things, texts, ideas, images, and other entities […] form contingent and volatile networks of association" (3), and these networks form in and through material spaces. After all, as Henri Lefebvre states, "[s]ocial relations, which are concrete abstractions, have no real existence save in and through space" (404). Lefebvre, Latour, and Alworth, among many others, remind us that material sites mediate sociality, and it is necessary to understand this mediation as active. As Latour writes, mediators "transform, translate, distort, or modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry" (*Reassembling the Social* 39). To produce a "site reading" is "to scrutinize an assemblage of humans and non-humans in the story world with an eye on how the interaction of such figures simultaneously models and theorizes social experience" (Alworth 19). To read infrastructurally, I argue, is to investigate how the bundled networks of material and medial infrastructures and their users interact, gleaning from such relations aspects of power and belonging that shape our daily lives.

**"Did it flow?": The Forms and Formation of Infrastructural Modernism(s)**

Considering the role of infrastructure within modernist fiction follows larger critical trends established in modernist studies in recent decades. Challenging the dogma

[6] Integral to Alworth's project is how the "question of setting (how to represent the palpable world) is imbricated with the question of social form (how to represent society and its constituents)" (10). But, as I've pointed out, my project extends beyond Alworth's approach by considering how the question of setting is also imbricated with the question of literary and narrative form à la Levine.

of a New Critical formalism that considered modernist texts as somehow ahistorical, modernist studies since the late 1980s have sought to explore the ways modernist works express modernity in a variety of capacities, approaching texts from their specific material, social, and political contexts in order to develop a culturally thick sense of how modernism was embedded in the increasingly (but unevenly) modernized world. Reevaluating modernist literature from these contexts has generated, among other avenues of inquiry, new ways of thinking about the relationships between materiality, technology, and culture, as well as between nationalism and national identity, in their historical and geographic particularities. Understood in this way, modernism is not determined by nor does it express an a priori and singular modernity. Rather, modernism is inseparably imbricated within the particular cultural, material, and geographic interactions of modernity from which it emerges, a view that positions modernism as existing within multiple "overlapping, criss-crossing, and labile networks" (Brooker et al. 3).[7] Despite a generation of modernist scholarship devoted to these overlapping networks, few have explored the intersecting material, political, and cultural formations of infrastructural development, a quintessential hallmark of modernity.

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[7] Thinking about modernity and modernism in this fashion demands using a critical approach akin to what Ian Hacking has referred to as "a local historicism, attending to particular and disparate fields of reflection and action" rather than "grand unified accounts" (345), replacing totalizing theories with attention to specific material and cultural contexts. To do this within a study of infrastructure in modernist fiction therefore requires a number of specialized critical orientations within and beyond the modernist camp. These orientations include the spatial turn of critical theory that has considered more fully the social and political relevance of space and place; the new materialisms that explore the shifting statuses of the human and nonhuman within material environments that have become increasingly technologized and mediated; and the new formalisms that have paid special attention to the collision of aesthetic and material form. Part of the task of drawing upon these multiple fields of inquiry is to avoid the overly specialist accounts that maintain a limited focus on individual infrastructures; such reductionism typically ignores the myriad material, political, and social entanglements of infrastructural networks.

One critical trailblazer for the study of infrastructure and literary modernism has been Michael Rubenstein. Although his book *Public Works: Infrastructure, Irish Modernism, and the Postcolonial* is limited geographically and nationally to Ireland, it serves as an excellent foundation for further approaches to the study of modernism through infrastructural development. Rubenstein's aim is to connect specific aspects of Irish literary modernism with Irish technological modernization: he argues, "works of art and public works—here limited to water, gas, and electricity—are imaginatively linked in Irish literature of the [modernist] period for reasons having to do with the birth of the postcolonial state" (2). Rubenstein's interest lies in the everyday mundane interactions with the state through the use of municipal and state services, suggesting a material revision of Benedict Anderson's imagined communities. Rather than a virtual communion with the state through the simultaneous acts of reading newspapers, belonging to the political community of the nation occurs in the minute and mechanized tasks that engage water, gas, and electrical services. Infrastructure comes to materially define political relations in and between public and private spaces, and subsequently becomes for artists a unique "lever for articulating a new relationship between utility and aesthetic, and thus between modernization and modernism" (35).

Literary modernism has also long been understood as a period involving interventions with other artistic media. Recent scholarship has made abundantly clear how embedded it is with new and popular media such as film, radio, and phonography.[8]

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[8] For more on modernism and media studies, see Julian Murphet, *Multimedia Modernism: Literature and the Anglo-American Avant-Garde* (2009); Mark Wollaeger, *Modernism, Media, and Propaganda: British Narrative from 1900 to 1945* (2006); and Mark Goble, *Beautiful Circuits: Modernism and the Mediated Life* (2010).

My effort is to introduce more fully infrastructural systems to this particularly intermedial understanding of modernist literature. We can situate this intermedial understanding of infrastructure historically because infrastructure comprised emergent technological phenomena that, as Rubenstein clarifies, "had far less settled, and far less certain, denominations as they were being built" (*Public Works* 6). The distinction between what we now refer to as infrastructure and what we now characterize as media was not as clear at the turn of the century, especially if we consider the term media, in its most general sense, as referring to technological mediation. Widening our definition of media in this way allows scholars like James Purdon to argue that traffic—an object and action that depends upon various infrastructures' ability to facilitate movement—"can be considered a medium in that it describes an intervening process in the conveyance of objects or signals from one place to another" (24). Understanding traffic in the parlance of twentieth-century technology, Pardon uses the term to refer to "anything communicated from one place to another, however material or immaterial" (25)—a point that resonates with Parks and Starosielski's concept of "signal traffic." For Purdon, the medium of traffic reroutes attention and habit for the modern subject to a similar effect as different artistic forms such as a short story or a film do.[9]

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[9] Purdon argues, "the association of traffic with new media stresses the new forms of competence – of sensory adaptation – that such innovations demanded. One thing traffic has in common with short stories, radio, and film is its demand for an alteration in the modality of attention brought to bear by a perceiving subject. Each of these forms was widely understood to require particular kinds of mental and physical attunement: whether a brief but intense concentration (as in the short story), an aural decoupling allowing for the simultaneous performance of other activities (as in the radio), or a gaze figured as passively receptive (as in the cinema). Before they mediate messages, such new media mediate attention itself" (10-11).

Kate Marshall provides critical assistance in thinking through the mediality of infrastructural forms in literary fiction. In *Corridor: Media Architectures in American Fiction*, Marshall explores how novels illuminate the mediality of material spaces. She indicates that in literature "the infrastructure, transit networks, and corridors that organize domestic and institutional space" can be best "understood as media, for through them novels encode their own communicative processes" (2). She argues that novels "enact and encode their medial processes in concrete structures of American modernity" such as infrastructural systems and other spatial structures (xiv). More specifically, she understands novels as communications systems in and of themselves, which are related to other communications systems such as pipe networks and transit lines. This relationship between the novel and infrastructure—or put more precisely in Marshall's purview, the relationship of the novel and the infrastructure that is present within that novel—points to layered forms of mediation: "When the physical infrastructure of the built world appears in its most explicit form as the architecture of communication in the novel, it becomes a mode by which the novel thematizes its own participation in the communication systems of modern sociality" (83). As Marshall clarifies, "this is where the novel thematizes, and therefore, communicates, itself" (83). Put simply, writing about infrastructural systems within a novel allows the novelist to reflect upon the mediating processes of the novel form itself and its capacities for participating within the nexus of other infrastructural, communication, and media technologies that make up the modern world.

To study an infrastructurally-inflected modernism, then, requires a rigorous engagement with both historicist and media studies orientations. But I argue that it also

necessarily involves an engagement with form. Form, however, has proven somewhat problematic in recent histories of modernism, having fallen into disrepute after decades of formalist accounts of modernist works from New Critics that tended to ignore historical materials and political commitments. Work over the last few decades, as I have already mentioned, has sought to reclaim modernism from these formalist progenitors by resuscitating suppressed histories and by paying attention to the complex politics that had been too often ignored. In my opinion, however, developing an understanding of modernism's historically situated relationships with other media need not be a separate enterprise from developing a sense of its multiple formalisms. In fact, historicism, media studies, and formalism have much to say to one another. In this, I follow Cara Lewis's recent endeavor to "bring the insights of the new formalist studies to bear on an intermedially defined modernism" (6).[10] Much of the energies of new formalist studies have been spent elaborating earlier literary fields such as Romanticism and its poetical forms. Lewis helpfully shows that a formalist study of modernism need not exclude its politically responsible historicisms and its rich interrelationships with other media cultures. Rather, "[f]ormalist reading can permit the critic to answer questions rooted in historical context and saturated with political and social import" (Lewis 8). Understanding formalism as existing with certain continuities with historicism, not to

[10] I also follow Andrew Thacker, whose work in *Moving Through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* asks us to consider the mutual imbrication of material spaces and literary spaces: "We need to reconnect the representational spaces in modernist texts not only to the material spaces of the city, but also to reverse the focus, and try to understand how social spaces dialogically help fashion the literary *forms* of the modernist text" (4, emphasis mine). Thacker's book, however, focuses primarily on the former, the relationship between representational and material spaces of the city, than on the latter, in which literary forms takes their cue or shape from such material conditions.

mention with media studies, allows us to recognize the unique interplay between the aesthetic shape of art and historical material and historical medial conditions. Like Lewis, I am drawn to Levine who to this point has most clearly and most forcefully demonstrated these continuities between formalism and historicism. As I briefly alluded to in the previous section, Levine argues the case "for expanding our usual definition of form in literary studies to include patterns of sociopolitical experience"—a critical gesture that shrinks "the traditionally troubling gap between the form of a literary text and its content and context" (2). In fact, according to Levine, thinking about and with forms is "as valuable to understanding sociopolitical institutions as it is to reading literature" (2). This is because "forms are at work everywhere" (2). As a result of the formalist reorientation, according to Lewis, "modernist studies' rejection of formalism has been shortsighted," or—and I think this is probably the most true—perhaps "we have been unconscious formalists, all along" (9).

The question for modernist writers was how different literary forms could reveal unexpected elements of the increasingly modernizing world that otherwise might remain hidden. The spatial and scalar refashioning of the city through the changing configurations of infrastructural networks produced new social arrangements and presented problems of representation for artists, with material and social processes of urban "flux" confronting the modernist impetus to "Make It New." For many writers, the flux of the urban scene proved disorienting and alienating; attempting to fix the fluidities of the modern world through any prior stable sense of literary form proved untenable. For example, E.M. Forster's Margaret Schlegel in *Howards End* complains, "I hate this

continual flux of London […]. [It is] an epitome of us at our worst—eternal formlessness" (184). Because the modernizing city was "[i]mpossible to pin down or convey in traditional forms," as Elizabeth Rechniewski puts it, the "modern city seemed to demand a revolution in artistic sensibility and aesthetic expression" (7). To represent something as broad, amorphous, and rapidly changing as the modern city required a continual experimentation in form—aesthetic innovations to match the material and technological innovations of their environment. New forms of the city gave way to new forms of writing, as techniques such as stream of consciousness and fragmentation emerged as a way of representing and mediating urban experience.

As major historical advancements, infrastructures became particularly potent sites for articulating these physical, social, and cultural transformations, functioning not only as purveyors of new modes of social affiliation and interaction, but also as technological touchstones that indelibly shape modernist forms. For example, in the opening scene of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, "the dizzying array of modern vehicles" of London's traffic along the busy thoroughfare of Victoria Street[11] indexes an urban existence caught up in new forms of technological movement and the new publics instantiated by them. Public traffic becomes for Woolf a site of mediated circulation. The traffic of pedestrians and vehicles, as well as a traffic of discursive and aesthetic forms, come to bear on the

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[11] After Clarissa Dalloway makes the decision to buy the flowers herself, she enters into "the midst of the traffic" on a June day in the city. There, "in the swing, tramp, and trudge" and "in the bellow and the uproar" of London's urban milieu, Clarissa Dalloway finds herself caught amongst a dizzying array of modern vehicles: "the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June" (4).

novel's modernist interplay of external and internal space.[12] As Clarissa Dalloway maneuvers her way through the urban environment, the narrative maneuvers through a play of interiority and exteriority, jostling between an omniscient account of the material world of objects and technology, and the interior world of subjective thought and consciousness. Akin to a kind of cinematic montage, Woolf records these movements formally through a series of perspectival jumps and interruptions according to the rhythms of the urban scene. The flux of the urban milieu is simultaneously experienced by and constructed around the individual subject. Like new forms of London public transit such as the omnibuses themselves, Woolf's narrative strategies mark the newly forming contours between personal freedom, individual consciousness, collective movement, public space, and public infrastructure. Narrative (inter)subjectivity comes to rely on and collide with the interdependency of the city's physical movements and rhythms. In many ways, Clarissa Dalloway's delighted immersion in the urban milieu comes from a position of privilege, from the fact that her class status allows her degrees of freedom that others in the urban environment do not have. She herself feels a part of the progress of modernity organized by the new technological arrangements of the city and elicited in the triumphant tone that organizes the scene.

[12] For more on Woolf and infrastructure, see Andrew Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (2009), particularly his chapter on "Virginia Woolf: Literary Geography and the Kaleidoscope of Travel"; and *Woolf and the City*, edited by Sarah Cornish and Elizabeth Evans (2010), particularly the keynote by Tamar Katz entitled, "Pausing, Waiting, Repeating: Urban Temporality in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Years*" and the essay by Eleanor McNees entitled "Public Transport in Woolf's City Novels: The London Omnibus."

Like Woolf, John Dos Passos[13] adopts particular aesthetic and formal strategies for his infrastructurally-inflected modernisms, seizing on the opportunities for innovation in aesthetic form through its interplay with infrastructure. The aesthetic, cultural, and structural forms of *Manhattan Transfer* and the *U.S.A. Trilogy* come to resemble the technical interfaces of urban infrastructures and the movements such complex machinery affords: streams of consciousness are produced or derailed by material environments; multiscalar experiences of simultaneity are routed through infrastructural transfer and transit points or through alternate media forms such as newspapers and film; and specific moments of stylistic mimesis occur in which the text's language mirrors its infrastructural objects of representation. The novel formalizes life as it is lived in an densely populous and infrastructurally mediated environment, and points to its own aesthetic replication of that experience with forms of fragmentation and disorientation jostling for narrative attention and connection.

However, unlike Woolf, Dos Passos registers the gaps between the types of progress and social coherence implicated in infrastructure's political address and its affective forms, and the lived realities of those who, unlike Clarissa Dalloway, do not have the class privileges necessary to maneuver through urban environments as freely, or with such a feeling of belonging. Early in *Manhattan Transfer*, a real estate agent

[13] For more on Dos Passos and infrastructure, see Desmond Harding's *Writing the City Urban Visions & Literary Modernism* (2003), particularly his chapter on "*Ulysses* and *Manhattan Transfer*: A Poetics of Transatlantic Literary Modernism"; Kate Marshall's "Sewer, Furnace, Air Shaft, Media: Modernity Behind the Walls in *Native Son* and *Manhattan Transfer* (2010); Alix Beeston's "A 'Leg Show Dance' in a Skyscraper: The Sequenced Mechanics of John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*" (2016); and Mark Whalan's "'Oil Was Trumps': John Dos Passos' *U.S.A. Trilogy*, World War I, and the Growth of the Petromodern State" (2017).

discusses the rapid forms of technological progress that have reshaped New York as the "second great metropolis," claiming to a client, "All these mechanical inventions—telephones, electricity, steel bridges, horseless vehicles—they are all leading to somewhere. It's up to us to be on the inside, in the forefront of progress" (14). Here, infrastructures—taken collectively—are the progenitors of modern progress, networks of technology wiring a new national future. Infrastructure, according to the agent's sales pitch, allows people to envision a unified and prosperous future. And yet the novel itself resists acquiescing to such optimistic visions of infrastructural connection and prosperity. The novel instead shows a city full of people unable "to be on the inside"—that is, the novel emphasizes people who are disconnected from others and from themselves, or who are crushed by, rather than a part of, this "forefront of progress." Characters become part of the city's cold machinery, rather than its beneficiaries. Instead of the social unification suggested through infrastructure's rhetorical and political promises, the city becomes for most a site of increasing disconnection, alienation, and destitution.

Narratives of developmental modernity—"the forefront of progress" that infrastructures index—generate an uneven politics of access, marking infrastructure as a political and social interface that typically reaffirms, rather than revaluates, societal barriers and divisions based on race and class status. If writers like Woolf and Dos Passos utilize modes of formal experimentation to make visible and palpable the infrastructural systems and networks of cities that condition the everyday, writers like Ralph Ellison and John Steinbeck attempt to make visible the forms and histories of social marginalization that obtain in infrastructural development. While Dos Passos's depiction of New York's

spatial structures is one of infrastructural saturation, Ellison's New York in *Invisible Man* remaps these spatial structures to show how race is constructed in and through the city's physical and infrastructural composition.[14] Hinging on the question of visibility and invisibility, Ellison narrativizes infrastructural racism through the ways Black citizens are kept out of view from narratives of modern urban progress through the planned violence of the city. Forced to live in segregated neighborhoods with limited economic opportunities and limited access to the basic utilities of their white urban counterparts, Black citizens, according to Ellison's novel, do not belong to the kinds of infrastructural modernity depicted in Woolf, Dos Passos, and other modernist writing. However, Ellison crucially stakes his revenge against this spatialized racial injustice through an infrastructural intervention and inversion. The novel's protagonist announces his resistance to a society that has marginalized him and rendered him invisible on account of his race through his ongoing "fight with Monopolated Light & Power" (5). He steals electricity not only to power 1,369 lights in a basement room in a building rented strictly to white people, but also to power his phonograph that enables other Black art and media forms to reverberate throughout the physical and textual space. Rather than continuing to pay for the basic and inconsistent utility services as he had in the past, he drains power—literally and metaphorically—from the state, and it is through this defiant act that he constitutes himself and his visibility: "Light confirms my reality, gives birth to my *form*" (6, emphasis mine). For the narrator and for the novel, becoming visible through this

[14] For more on Ellison and infrastructure, see Douglas Ford's "Crossroads and Cross-Currents in *Invisible Man* (1999); Johnnie Wilcox's "Black Power: Minstrelsy and Electricity in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*" (2007); and Sarah Wasserman's "Ralph Ellison, Chester Himes, and the Persistence of Urban Forms" (2020).

pirated access to infrastructure is not only to come into form, but also to come into life: "the deeper reason" for his battle with Monopolated Light & Power is to "feel [his] vital aliveness" (7). Attention to the role of race and infrastructure becomes key for understanding not only the racialized politics of access that undergird infrastructural development, but also for recuperating opportunities of resistance through infrastructure.

In addition to the unevenness of infrastructure with regard to race, we must also attend to the unevenness of infrastructural development across different regions and geographies, including rural environments. Although the rush of industrial and infrastructural modernization came most quickly to urban environments, coming to define the physical composition and social experiences of cities, these developments also determine rural geographies and their textual representations. For rural and regional inhabitants, connective infrastructural sites like roads and highways become important material and social terrains that define forms of belonging to the modern nation. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck carefully maps these regional and national infrastructures, focusing much of the narrative on Highway 66, the main migrant road for displaced and dispossessed farmers during the Dust Bowl. Highway 66 facilitates the Joad family and other migrants' movement toward California, where, they think, economic opportunity awaits. Formulating the highway as a highly political and affective medium, Steinbeck inscribes within the highway space and its various interactions the fantasies of the good life that awaits the Joads in California. However, infrastructure's cruelty manifests in the fact that these attachments to a prosperous future leave them doubly vulnerable to state violence and capitalist exploitation. Rather than receiving the

stable forms of belonging and economic opportunity that infrastructure suggests, the Joads and other displaced farmers only inevitably feel the wrath of such promises upon their arrival. Framing this human narrative are Steinbeck's intercalary chapters, an integral part of his underappreciated modernist experimentation. Because of their enlarged scales in time and in space, these intercalary chapters attempt to transform the uneven economic conditions faced by the migrants during the Dust Bowl into a powerful political polemic against capitalism. These chapters serve as a type of literary infrastructure for Steinbeck, a built network of social and infrastructural conditions that reciprocate at a larger scale the import of the Joad family's narrative. They are not simply spaces or chapters of transition, but rather occupy a formal and political significance. Steinbeck reveals the interplay between infrastructures as material, medial, and political sites that facilitate or foreclose types of affiliation and as a formal principle for his literary project.

Reading these texts through the rubric of infrastructural development allows us to see modernism as inextricably entangled in the particular cultural, material, and technological conditions of modernity from which they emerge. Infrastructural development creates occasions for writers to scrutinize the collision and collusion of political and technological energies for transforming the experiences and representations of space and sociality. Infrastructure, as I have shown, does not neutrally convey these experiences and representations, but rather becomes an integral part to them. My first two chapters on James Joyce and William Faulkner will demonstrate further how a robust engagement with aspects of the infrastructural and the literary can reveal the extent to

which modernist novels are steeped in modernizing social, cultural, and technological landscapes, and in turn, how these interactions between the aesthetic and historical materials create rich encounters between infrastructure, media, and form.

**Rebuilding and Reimagining Infrastructure in Contemporary Fiction**

If the early twentieth century saw in infrastructural development opportunities for new aesthetic innovation, as well as potential signs of modern progress that conjured promises of belonging, if unfulfilled, to the nation and its technological futures, a more contemporary period recognizes infrastructure in its crumbling or displacing forms. Because of these crumbling forms, recent critical investigations of infrastructure and contemporary fiction are often attuned to ideas of crisis, emergency, and disaster. For example, Jessica Hurley, in her book *Infrastructures of Apocalypse: American Literature and the Nuclear Complex* and in the recent edited special issue of *American Literature* entitled “The Infrastructure of Emergency,” approaches infrastructure in contemporary literary fiction as existing within the political and environmental ramifications of nuclear war and climate change. According to Hurley, settler capitalism and nuclear politics shape infrastructure as complicit with, as well as potentially responsive and resilient to ecological and political catastrophe. Linked to crises and disasters, infrastructures intersect at a number of critical points of emergency and their historical unfolding. These links are important for understanding the uneven and potentially catastrophic consequences of infrastructural development, and they will become even more apparent in my third and fourth chapters on the works of Karen Tei Yamashita and Mohsin Hamid, both of whom implicate infrastructure within a nexus of varying crises and disasters.

That said, such critical investigations of infrastructure and contemporary fiction fail to account for the innovative political and aesthetic energies that fuel contemporary authors' representations of infrastructure. If infrastructures are continuing to break down, contemporary writers, I argue, are interested in rebuilding them, but in new ways. Because contemporary writers have come to recognize infrastructure's capacities for social structuring and its realities of producing social breakdown, many attempt to reimagine and rewrite infrastructure as a tool for radical social change. Often, as writers engage in this radicalizing of infrastructure, it necessarily involves a confrontation with the deep histories of infrastructural development. To imagine new futures based in equity and sustainability requires first a recognition of and a reckoning with the various interlocking historical projects of global economic growth, nationalism and nationalization, urbanization and gentrification, and other world-building practices whose rhetoric upholds the public good, but often overwrites the injustices and inequalities produced by their development.

Counterhegemonic approaches to infrastructure have most often been imagined by contemporary writers through the affordances of different generic modes. Much like the formal interplay between technique and technology that we see from modernist writers, many contemporary writers come to represent their formal and political engagements with infrastructure through the strategic deployment of multiple genre, or generic, modalities. Like form, genre can be a slippery term, especially in contemporary cultural contexts in which texts across modes and media appear increasingly invested in using and challenging conventional genres. Genre is itself a kind of form, one that often

shapes how the action of a story will go or who will be a part of that story. Genres shape readerly expectations and create worlds in relation to those expectations, organizing and creating recognizable frames for their narrative elements such as plot and character. Similarly, as I have already shown, infrastructures organize and frame social action and social affiliation in material and medial environments. They are not passive, but rather active structures that shape aspects of the social. In the same way, genres are not mere "text types," the static containers that authors fill with familiar conventions; but rather, they constitute dynamic "complex social actions" (Bawarshi, Reiff 3, 78). Genres, as culturally built forms, and infrastructures, as collectively built material forms, then provide intersecting points for conceptualizing structures that facilitate or constrain use, movement, and connection. If infrastructures become most visible to its users in their broken-down forms, their vulnerability to rupture and ruin challenging expectations that they will work smoothly, so too do the social and political affordances of genre become most visible when contemporary writers allow them to break down either by interrupting generic expectations or through collisions with other genres that produce kinds of friction and slippage.

The genres of science fiction, speculative fiction, and dystopian fiction have become increasingly popular for representing issues of infrastructure. Writers as diverse as Octavia Butler, Paolo Bacigalupi, Chang-Rae Lee, and N.K. Jemisin, for example, have turned to these genres to draw attention to how infrastructure contributes to, among other dystopian situations, unending global war, climate catastrophe, and authoritarian violence, and to how infrastructure can be refigured and reformed in various post-

collapse futures. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, my interest lies more in the "genre friction"[15] produced by contemporary writers who incorporate elements of the specular, the fantastical, or the magical into otherwise realist works. The collision of realist and nonrealist generic frames destabilizes the structures of a literary work and the infrastructures of its imaginative world.

For example, in *The Underground Railroad*, Colson Whitehead engages in an historiographical metafictional revisioning of United States history. While the novel "hews closely to numerous conventions of the slave narrative" (Maus 123), it also departs from that genre and that history by introducing aspects of the fantastical and the speculative, in order to reimagine the metaphorical Underground Railroad—a loose network of secret routes and safe houses intended to facilitate the movement of enslaved peoples north—into an actual physical transit system of tunnels and stations. To quote from the novel, the railroad "ran south and north presumably,[16] springing from some inconceivable source and shooting toward a miraculous terminus" (67). The language describing the railroad's "inconceivable" existence and its "miraculous terminus" locates it in the realm of the fantastic or the speculative. The protagonist Cora, upon her first encounter with the dizzying technological array of steel and steam, asks one of the station agents: "Who built it?" The agent responds, "Who builds anything in this country?" (67).

[15] See Rebecca Evans, "Geomemory and Genre Friction: Infrastructural Violence and Plantation Afterlives in Contemporary African American Novels."
[16] Ilka Saal points out that the "inconspicuous adverb 'presumably' signals Whitehead's most radical intervention into both the popular, national mythology of the Underground Railroad and the plot structure of slave narratives, which the novel otherwise emulates closely. Whitehead's subterranean railroad does not necessarily take its passengers to freedom; it is not even clear whether such a 'miraculous terminus' called 'freedom' exists at all" (192).

The magical railway, like many of the nation's infrastructures, was built and engineered by enslaved peoples and other invisible laborers. In moments like these, Whitehead reveals the novel to be more than a story of a fugitive slave's struggling journey toward freedom; it reflects the material conditions of freedom and on the how these material conditions came to be.

Through the fantastical fictionalization of a literal Underground Railroad[17] as a physical and technological transit system built and maintained—even if invisibly—by enslaved peoples, Whitehead engages in the dismantling of societal narratives that chiefly uphold white saviors, using literary elements of the fantastic to overwrite historical narratives inflected by white fantasy. In doing so, he reframes a national historical imagination and rewrites into it the capacities not only to acknowledge the enslaved and exploited labor that has built this country, but also to challenge the continued presence and reality of violence in its racial, spatial, and infrastructural forms. Whitehead highlights the fact that those who build the material world around us are often barred from being able to use it in the same ways, and he emphasizes how the visibility of infrastructure, labor, and their conditions are formative concerns for our relationship to the past, present, and future. If infrastructure typically reproduces hegemonic relations, writers like Whitehead point to the urgent necessities of transforming our considerations of infrastructure in ways that make visible forms of resistance and social struggle.

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[17] Molly Geidel and Patricia Stuelke refers to Whitehead's formal genre experimentation here as "infrastructural-innovation realism": through this genre, "Whitehead's concretization of the Underground Railroad into a train constitutes a shift in emphasis in narrating the history of abolition and fugitivity: the infrastructure that always enabled or impeded enslaved people's escape becomes the main site of his imaginative reinvention of history" (109).

Radically rebuilding our world necessarily involves radical revisioning of infrastructure and its historical narratives. Through the experimental formal techniques and aesthetic strategies deployed in relation to infrastructure, contemporary writers like Whitehead transform the ways we conceive of infrastructure in order to seek out forms of reparative justice and to imagine new more equitable and socially just futures.

**Chapter Designs for *Under Construction: Infrastructure and Modern Fiction***

To this point, I have tried to develop a sense of how infrastructure works in and for literary fiction across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The chapters that follow are specific, in-depth case studies of how we can read particular novels "infrastructurally." Each chapter focuses primarily on an exemplary novel by one author, but gestures toward their other works as part of each author's larger infrastructural imaginary.[18] Each chapter scrutinizes the complex histories, media contexts, and cultural forms of these infrastructural imaginaries, in a way that illuminates the unique affordances of routing together the study of infrastructure and the literary.

My first chapter, "'Shunted, changed': Urban Forms and Infrastructural Modernism in James Joyce's *Ulysses*," defines "infrastructural modernism" through attention to how Joyce's shifting literary forms—from the initial style of *Ulysses* to its more experimental registers—respond to Dublin's infrastructures. I argue that Joyce

[18] For example, although the focus of the chapter is on *Ulysses*, I draw on a number of Joyce's other works, including the stories "Clay" and "A Painful Case" from *Dubliners* and portions from *Stephen Hero*, his unpublished precursor to *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*. In my chapter on Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, I also consider his early Yoknapatawpha novels, *Flags in the Dust* and *The Sound and the Fury*, as well as his later novel, *Requiem for a Nun*. In my chapter on Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange,* I explore the experimental formal structures of her other novels, *Through the Arc of the Rainforest*, *Brazil-Maru*, *Circle K Cycles*, and *I, Hotel.* In my chapter on Hamid's *Exit West*, I ground Hamid's infrastructural imaginary in two of his earlier novels—*Moth Smoke* and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*.

connects his modernist experimentation to the technological progress of Irish modernity as represented by infrastructural development at the turn of the twentieth century. It is through this interplay of literary techniques and infrastructural technologies such as trams and public waterworks, I contend, that Joyce reframes a material politics of the city. In the heart of the (Hibernian) chapter is an "infrastructuralist" reading of the "Aeolus" episode, unpacking the multiple ways in which Joyce intermingles Dublin's infrastructural systems with the city's other media technologies, generating overlapping networks of texts, bodies, and ideologies. The collision of these networks in "Aeolus" allows us to understand the differences between a nation or community imagined through discourse and one that is mediated materially by means of infrastructure. The episode refocuses our attention on the materiality and networked affordances of Dublin's circulation systems, recognizing infrastructure as an alternative medium for national purpose. The chapter concludes by "plumbing" Irish water and sanitation systems, both in terms of how they appear within the novel and in terms of how they figure as an important model for understanding Joyce's conception of Irish modernism and modernity more broadly.

In contrast to the sites of modern urban development in Joyce's Dublin, my second chapter, "Good Roads and Great Floods: Rural Infrastructure in William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*," addresses rural development and the politics of access that emerge from infrastructure's uneven provision in the U.S. South. More specifically, this chapter examines the transformation of the material and social geographies of the U.S. South in the early twentieth century through two specific events—the construction of

interstate highways that emerged from the Good Roads Movement and the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927. Originally, the objective of southern road development was to assist farmers by improving the material conditions for transporting crops, but the Good Roads Movement quickly reoriented its project away from improved rural farm-to-market infrastructure and instead toward the construction of tourist highways, marginalizing rural southerners from the nation. In *As I Lay Dying*, William Faulkner juxtaposes every reference to the "good roads" with references to local weather patterns and floods, charting a connection between road construction and the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927. One of the greatest disasters to afflict the United States, the protracted flood was caused by a slew of infrastructural and economic interventions with the environment including road construction. Despite the aspirational qualities of infrastructural projects like the Good Roads Movement, its material transformations carried irrevocable social and environmental consequences that destabilized the South's rural communities.

My third chapter, "'Anyone on the ground'd know': The Sites and Sights of Infrastructural Violence in Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*," considers how Yamashita elaborates the connections between infrastructural development and disaster by representing the social and environmental consequences of slow and planned violence in *Tropic of Orange*. Yamashita meets the representational challenges of slow and planned violence by redeploying multi-modal generic and cultural forms that typically operate through visual and audible registers, in order to bring the invisible materialities, histories, and consequences of infrastructural development into the foreground. Like the novel itself, the critical thrust of this chapter converges on the Los Angeles Harbor

Freeway where a catastrophic traffic accident reveals most fully the novel's connections between infrastructure and disaster. Through the unhoused population's embodied occupation of physical space and their visual media transmission upon taking over the Freeway and the news broadcast, Yamashita connects the links between infrastructural violence, historical precarity, and catastrophe that remain undocumented in popular media narratives. By demonstrating the efficacy of a community media for articulating the collective right to recognition and to previously dispossessed spaces, Yamashita asks us to understand the long histories of precarity and to seek out new frames of imagining those affected by spatial injustice.

My final chapter, "'As if by magic': Mediating Migration in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*," considers the way Hamid reimagines contemporary migratory crises through magical doors that connect places around the globe. The novel represents the materiality of migration as a moment of magic passage, in which special doors become portals to global elsewheres—a means for refugees to escape war, poverty, and oppressive governmental regimes. Representing the materiality of migration as a moment of magic passage, Hamid forges alternative modes of belonging beyond the nation, challenging the contemporary rise of xenophobic nationalism. In contrast to mass media accounts that produce politicized narratives of migrancy in ways that criminalize refugees, Hamid's novel adopts empathic perspectives for refugee communities. However, despite the speculative fantasy of a seamless global mobility, the imagined future of the novel is still subject to sharp structural divides of global capitalist regimes—most notably, in the forms of infrastructural inequity that create and sustain social, economic, and racial fault

lines. And even further, the magical qualities of infrastructures of mobility in the novel are not without their surveillant and oppressive counterparts such as the drone. The persistence of drone technologies in this imagined future, I believe, tempers a naïvely optimistic reading of the novel that regards the liberating possibilities of digital technologies as viable, if not inevitable, especially given that surveillance technologies like the drone come to impact the novel's own form as well.

My dissertation ends with a brief coda that compares Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and Tom McCarthy's *Satin Island*, in order to think further about the possibilities of meaning-making through infrastructural and novelistic forms, posing questions about the status of the novel in an increasingly infrastructural age. The novel, this dissertation endeavors to show, is an communicative genre and an aesthetic form up to the task of giving narrative shape to various networked infrastructures. In this way, it is itself a system, a network. If the world is networked by infrastructure, thick with technical layers and strata that speak to and beyond the idea of the human condition, writers like Pynchon and McCarthy—not to mention Joyce, Faulkner, Yamashita, and Hamid—attempt to formalize these networked relations. They ask us to read novels differently, to read them infrastructurally. Altogether, these chapters will elucidate different methods of reading infrastructurally—that is, paying close attention to the relationship between infrastructural development and social and literary form.

## Chapter One

## "Shunted, changed": Urban Forms and Infrastructural Modernism in James Joyce's *Ulysses*

Responding to the accelerating effects of an industrialized modernity, James Joyce compared the role of the modern artist to that of an engineer. In a comment to sculptor August Suter, recorded by his friend Frank Budgen, Joyce envisioned his writing process as a form of literary engineering: "I feel like an engineer boring through a mountain from two sides. If my calculations are correct we shall meet in the middle" (Budgen 320).[1] Joyce's portrait of an artist as an engineer situates his cultural production within the realms of technological production and modern social organization, suggesting the relevance of technological systems and material spaces not only within his writing, but also for his writing.[2] *Ulysses*, after all, is Joyce's attempt to constitute a full representation of Dublin, with all of its material and technological assemblages: he famously claimed to Budgen that his goal was "to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of [his] book" (69). Despite being an expression of artistic bravado, Joyce's hyperbole is charged by the material realities of his writing—namely, that his "picture of Dublin" was

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[1] In a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, his publisher, Joyce also calls himself an engineer: "I am really one of the greatest engineers, if not the greatest in the world besides being a musicmaker, philosophist and heaps of other things. I am making an engine with only one wheel" (*Letters* 251).

[2] Critics agree with Joyce's self-conception as an artist-engineer. Budgen, for example, notes that Joyce "wrote the 'Wandering Rocks' with a map of Dublin before him on which were traced in red ink the paths of the Earl of Dudley and father Conmee" and he "calculated to the minute the time necessary for his characters to cover a given distance of the city" (124-5). "To see Joyce at work on the 'Wandering Rocks,'" he writes, is "to see an engineer at work with compass and slide-rule" (123). Considering "Wandering Rocks" as a literary feat of engineering is echoed by Fritz Senn: the episode "fuses a seeming randomness […] with scrupulous engineering" (157).

"reconstructed" after the wreckage of the Easter Rising, the very real upheavals that had dramatically altered the cityscape.[3]

Although many critics have used Joyce's authorial boast as a platform to draw special attention to the relationship between the novel's spatial aesthetics and its archive of geographical information,[4] few have paid full attention to how Joyce stitches the city's infrastructural systems into the novel's urban fabric and to how such systems tie together formal threads of his literary modernism. Technical networks of wires, tracks, conduits, and pipes appear in Joyce's "picture of Dublin," infusing the city in dynamic sociotechnical processes of modernization. These technical networks, although often overlooked in critical practice and in everyday reality, form the material basis for Dublin's infrastructure, the systems vital to the city's functioning. I employ the term infrastructure[5] here to refer to collective engineering projects that facilitate the flow of people, objects, and information. This broad definition encompasses transportation and communications infrastructures such as roads, railways, tramlines, ports, post offices, newspapers, and telegraph and telephone networks, as well as energy and sanitation infrastructures such as electrical grids, sewage systems, and water supplies. Focusing on

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[3] Hugh Kenner was the first to venture forth in this vein, indicating that most of *Ulysses* in fact was written with the knowledge that the cityscapes "would never be seen again as they had been" (93).
[4] For example, Clive Hart undertook intensive mapmaking projects derived from reading *Ulysses*, even "timing the various routes taken by characters, and also gathering information about the frequency of trams, the normal speed of a cavalcade, etc" (200). An understanding of Joyce's scrupulous geographic realism is achieved "by working with a map, a ruler, and a knowledge of local conditions" (216), acknowledging *Ulysses* as a feat of literary geography, urban planning, and engineering by reproducing some of the techniques Joyce employed in mapping the novel himself.
[5] Michael Rubenstein, whose work on public utilities and Irish literature grounds much of the critical thrust of this chapter, helpfully reminds us that the term "infrastructure" would be an anachronism for characterizing the urban technologies of Joyce's time, as it only came into colloquial use in the 1930s (*Public Works* 6).

infrastructural systems in Joyce's fiction reminds us not only of the material and technological foundations that undergird much of the modern world, but also of the unique and ambivalent geopolitical position of Ireland at the turn of the twentieth century.[6]

Many modernist writers, however, neglect to represent urban infrastructure to the extent Joyce does in his fiction. Ezra Pound, for example, has summarized the general tenor of modernist attitudes toward infrastructure: "Some one ought to be employed to look after our traffic and sewage, one grants that. But a superintendence of traffic and sewage is not the sole function of man. Certain stupid and honest people should, doubtless, be delegated for the purpose. There politics ends [for] the enlightened man" (255). Although Pound admits the utility of modern technological systems, he positions "traffic and sewage," and thereby other forms of modern infrastructure, as unworthy material for cultural production, dismissing them as banal realities, the formal givens of modern life, that should only be accounted for and maintained by "stupid" people. Although pragmatic and important for the functioning of the city, infrastructure, understood in Pound's terms, does not belong in the high realm of the aesthetic. In contrast, I contend, Joyce embeds infrastructure at the interface of modernism and modernity, formalizing the networks of infrastructure through his modernist innovations, making visible the hidden structures of modern life. As a novel replete with networked infrastructure, *Ulysses* reveals the interplay of infrastructural systems, with Dublin

[6] Ireland's unique hybrid status, one that Joseph Valente has aptly termed "metrocolonial," straddled subordination as a colony to the British Empire even as it was an active participant in the metropolitan heart of that empire.

becoming for Joyce a staging post in the perpetual flux of modernity. Joyce's representation of Dublin's infrastructures emerges from his formal innovations: his experimental genre choices, perspectival shifts, and fluctuating styles all generate a literary map of Dublin that reimagines the material and cultural structures of the city. Although these formal experiments are literary features that often position Joyce in the context of a largely international modernism, their deployment in representing Dublin's infrastructure emphasizes the particular Irish inflection of his modernism. I argue that this dynamic thrust between technique and technology, between Joyce's literary forms and Dublin's material infrastructures, implicates his attempt to connect modernist experimentation to the technological progress of Irish modernity.

Even further, I contend that Joyce frequently situates these attempts in relation to other media technologies in a manner that reveals Dublin's complex media ecologies at the same time that it enacts modernism's mediality. Joyce establishes this relationship between infrastructure and other developing media technologies because infrastructure comprised emergent technological phenomena that, as Michael Rubenstein clarifies, "had far less settled, and far less certain, denominations as they were being built" (*Public Works* 6). The distinction between what we now refer to as infrastructure and what we now characterize as media was not as clear at the turn of the century, especially if we consider the term media, in its most general sense, as referring to technological mediation. Because Joyce witnessed the connections between technologies of infrastructure and technologies of new media, infrastructures in his novel, I argue, function as and in relation to media. Fiction for Joyce was a place not so much to reify

the meaning of infrastructural technologies as to set them in relation with other emergent technological forms.

In connecting these forms, Joyce addresses questions about the development of an Irish national identity in an era of technological modernity. The construction of new infrastructures performs an integral role for mediating the spatial development and cultural imagining of a new Irish nation, producing new forms of sociality and collective life. The interconnected emergence of infrastructural technologies alongside literary modernism produces the means of escaping both a colonial past and a backward-looking Irish nationalism. Joyce's attention to infrastructural development refutes stereotypes of Ireland as being technologically backwards, and instead depicts Ireland as a progressive participant in a nascent technological modernity. Modern infrastructures and modernist literature as technological and cultural apparatuses offer the means to wake up from what Joyce calls the nightmare of history. Reading Joyce's infrastructural imaginary in this way confronts the critical takes that situate Joyce as being "profoundly opposed to modernization" (Castle, Bixby 11). Altogether, this chapter will explore the ways in which Joyce's formal innovations are entwined with Dublin's infrastructural systems, emphasizing not only the way in which various infrastructural systems surface in the text, but also how they are transformed by Joyce's multiple formal registers. Ultimately, I argue that in mapping the infrastructures of Dublin, Joyce attempts not only to make formally palpable the material structures that condition the everyday, but also to rewrite the ways in which we can alternatively imagine communities within the city's mutually imbricated material, technological, and cultural landscapes. Urban infrastructure becomes

for Joyce a materially networked medium for articulating the complex terrains of literary modernism and Irish national identity.

Given that I am addressing multiple forms of networked infrastructures in a novel already regarded as complex, this chapter can only begin to unpack the expansive the relationship between Joyce's literary engineering and Dublin's infrastructural development. To simplify matters, I will organize the chapter as follows. First, I will explore Joyce's attempts to capture formally the fluctuating experiences of modern Irish infrastructures. More specifically, I will trace the ways in which Joyce's shifting literary forms—from the initial style of the novel to its later more experimental registers—recontextualize Dublin's infrastructures such as the tram system, continually reframing a material politics of the city. Then, I will offer an "infrastructuralist" reading of the "Aeolus" episode, unpacking the multiple ways in which Joyce intermingles Dublin's infrastructural systems with the city's other media technologies, generating overlapping networks of texts, bodies, and ideologies. The collision of these networks, I argue, allows us to understand the differences between a nation or community imagined through discourse and one that is mediated materially by means of infrastructure. Finally, I will conclude by "plumbing" Irish water and sanitation systems, both in terms of how they appear within the novel and in terms of how they figure as an important model for understanding Joyce's conception of Irish modernism and modernity more broadly.

**Novel Infrastructures and the "Velocity of Modern Life"**

Declan Kiberd reminds us that *Ulysses* is a novel that above all else attempts to "celebrate the reality of ordinary people's daily rounds" (10). Through the urban strolls of

Leopold Bloom on June 16th 1904, readers experience the material contingencies of a middle-class Dubliner's "daily round," passing through a remarkable number of public spaces and sites of infrastructural development at the turn of the century. Walking through the city's comprehensive road networks, roving through streets that have recently been widened and illuminated by public lighting, crossing a variety of stone and steel bridges, and encountering multiple electric trams, Bloom's travels remain open to the social possibilities afforded by the infrastructural networks of his environment. Kiberd suggests that the openness and spontaneity provided by these public spaces "allows Joyce to renew his styles and themes with each succeeding episode" (12). Kiberd does not follow through with this claim, however, as his attention to characters' everyday rituals—the way they walk, talk, and eat—often glosses over the formal and stylistic changes that Joyce adopts throughout the text. I believe the connections between Dublin's material sites and Joyce's experimental forms deserves further exploration. My attention therefore is directed toward the specific relationship between the technological materiality of the everyday as represented by encounters with infrastructure, the social bodies such encounters produce, and Joyce's formal experimentation that, like the cityscape itself, progressively changes course, shape, and feeling. This relationship, I claim, is mutually reinforcing for Joyce, the novel's literary forms and the city's material and social forms continually inflecting one another.

Before considering the multiple and expanding literary forms that Joyce deploys to respond to the changing urban environment, it is first necessary to understand his treatment of urban flux as material, technological, and social phenomena. To that end, it

will be helpful to look at a passage late in *Ulysses* that epitomizes the metropolitan transformation of Dublin in the years leading up to the text's present of 1904. In the "Ithaca" episode, Leopold Bloom remembers witnessing the "continual changes of the thoroughfare" along the North Circular Road (17.499-500) from 1892 to 1894, when he and an old widow Mrs. Riordan would watch "unrecognisable citizens on tramcars, roadster bicycles, equipped with inflated pneumatic tyres, hackney carriages, tandems, private and hired landaus, dogcarts, ponytraps and brakes passing from the city to the Phoenix Park and vice versa" (17.493-6). Joyce's "picture of Dublin" contains a variety of vehicles hustling about the city, and it imagines emergent traffic patterns "from the city to the Phoenix Park and vice versa." Joyce positions the city as being necessarily bound up in the construction of spaces of mobility and flow, in addition to the technologies capable of traversing them. The "continual changes of the thoroughfare," such as the widening, rerouting, and lighting of the streets, accommodate new types of vehicles and shape pedestrian and vehicular movement. These traffic patterns become a centrifugal part of urban flux, shaping material and social life itself. New forms of traffic "permeate and environ the daily life of modernity," and people in the city come to "dwell, move, and think in and around its patterns of flow, congestion, and stoppage" (Purdon 25).[7]

Metonymic of the urban processes of flux in which the city is subject to the constant rebuilding of its material and social spaces, new forms of traffic and transit

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[7] As noted in my Introduction, James Purdon argues that traffic "can be considered a medium in that it describes an intervening process in the conveyance of objects or signals from one place to another" (24). Understanding traffic in the parlance of twentieth-century technology, he uses the term to refer to "anything communicated from one place to another, however material or immaterial" (25).

become for Joyce mobile sites upon which to forge an infrastructural imaginary. The "continual changes" of modernization produce a community of "unrecognisable citizens," the new vehicular and traffic-oriented publics that form through the shared but uneven forms of the "velocity of modern life" at the turn of the century (17.1773). The adjective "unrecognisable" suggests an inability of Mrs. Riordan and Bloom as observers to clearly parse or label the nature of their sociality. Because of the rapid material, technological, and social transformations of the city in modernity, as Raymond Williams has argued, "any assumption of a knowable community—a whole community, wholly knowable—becom[es] harder and harder to sustain" (*The Country and the City* 165). The usual suspects of religion and politics do not bind this group together. Rather, their shared experience of using of transportation technologies within contiguous spaces of urban mobility transforms them into a pliable, transient community. The infrastructural networks that allow movement to and from downtown Dublin at North Circular Road to Phoenix Park organize urban space as material sites of belonging. Although "unrecognisable," these infrastructural users are understood as "citizens" which clarifies their relationship to the nation. National belonging here is not understood in ideological terms nor through sentimental fellow feeling. Rather, it is constituted through material and spatial contingency. These "unrecognisable citizens" offer an informal and transient model of community that attests to Bloom's own definition of a nation in the "Cyclops" episode: "A nation? says Bloom. A nation is the same people living in the same place. […] Or also living in different places" (12.1422-8). As a microcosm of a nation, the city's streets, as infrastructural networks, induct its users into a contingent and temporary

formation in “the same place,” while also conducting them through space, connecting users from and across “different places.”

Of course, the term “citizens” also recalls “the Citizen” Bloom encounters in Barney Kiernan’s pub. The transient, mobile belonging of the citizenry here troubles the reified and static images of belonging espoused by the nationalist Citizen. Joyce invites this comparison not merely through the term citizen itself, but also through the various modes of seeing ascribed to them. In contrast to the myopia of the “Citizen,” Joyce introduces new perspectives by mediating Bloom and Mrs. Riordan’s visions of urban bustle through “a rondel of bossed glass of multicoloured pane” (17.498-9) and “binocular fieldglasses” (17.490). That Joyce does so suggests the need for continually developing new perspectives for the moving parts of the modernizing world. This perspectival mediation underscores not only the mediating role of different technological apparatuses, but also the levels of mediation involved in his modernism. As a kind of kaleidoscope, the “rondel of bossed glass” produces an opalescent vision of the street’s dynamic infrastructural “spectacle” (17.499), a multicolored vision that continually changes its form depending on the relationship between subject and object, the movement of Bloom or the movement of the vehicles. The optical technology of the “binocular fieldglasses” collapses the visual field of space between Mrs. Riordan and the vehicles, magnifying the materiality of the changing streetscape.

Joyce’s shifting literary forms in *Ulysses*, I contend, operate similarly to these two apparatuses. The formal schematics of each episode continuously mediate its contents, its forms shifting with and shaping to its objects of representation. As a response to urban

flux, the novel formally reproduces Dublin, a metropolis in constant motion, by following trajectory of radical innovation itself. Like the fluctuating milieu in which it set, the novel materializes a series of formal experiments that shape each episode. Using the literary schemata Joyce provided Stuart Gilbert and Carlo Linati, which articulate the correspondences of each episode to a particular organ, color, symbol, art, and technique, we can understand the novel's formal experimentation, Joyce's modernist engineering, as providing a conceptual infrastructure to his novel. The purpose of Joyce's schemata is to orient the reader according to particular hermeneutics, to "lay bare," as Logan Wiedenfeld puts it, "the stylistic and thematic mortar that holds each episode together" (65). Molded from the elaborate design of these literary schematics, each episode is cast in a distinctive style, and the novel, like the modern city, continually metamorphizes its forms.

As readers of the novel, we can see even more clearly the changes that continued to happen in Dublin between 1894 and the text's present of 1904. One of the most potent forms of infrastructural development that emerged in that intervening decade was the electrification of the city's tram system.[8] The "tramcars" Bloom and Mrs. Riordan witness from 1892 to 1894 would have been horse-drawn, but the introduction of electric traction in the city in 1896 formed the basis of a technological and material revolution in

[8] A key figure in the development of this electrified tram system and a figure to whom I will return in this chapter is the shrewd entrepreneur, William Martin Murphy, who negotiated the merger of several horse-drawn tram companies in and around Dublin, becoming the founder and manager of the Dublin United Tramways Company (DUTC) in 1881. Following his acquisition of the Dublin Southern Districts Tramways in 1896, upon witnessing the profitability of their initial attempts at electrification, Murphy sought to replace his company's horse-drawn tramlines with electrified routes. Dublin's trams were almost fully electric by 1901.

Dublin. In addition to quicker travelling speeds and more efficient mobility, these trams, as many Dublin politicians promised, would increase local revenue and confer a feeling of modernity on certain parts of the city. The development of electrified tramlines at the turn of the century in Dublin materially connected and statutorily incorporated various suburban townships that were previously independent into the city. The sophistication and expansion of the electrified tram system transformed the administrative, technological, and economic shape of Dublin. Joyce refers to the new tram system as the “skeleton” of the city (15.2), “forming part of the sturdy body of Dublin’s infrastructure and mapping its popular pathways,” to use Julie McCormick-Weng’s words (31).

Throughout Joyce’s oeuvre, these trams transport characters to different areas of the city, moving them physically through space and psychically through their consciousness. In Joyce’s short story “Clay,” for example, the main character Maria rides a densely populated tram from Ballsbridge to Nelson’s Pillar and another from the Pillar to Drumcondra. Joyce uses the unique space and social proximity of the tram interior to characterize Maria, as well as Dublin’s new social worlds. For example, on the first leg of Maria’s journey, she finds herself on display: “The tram was full and she had to sit on the little stool at the end of the car, facing all the people, with her toes barely touching the floor” (97-8). As the tram begins to move so does her train of thought: she “arranged in her mind all she was going to do” (98). Clearly gendered, the scene negotiates women’s entrance into the public sphere, as Maria is subject to the gaze of a largely male contingent of tramcar riders while she thinks through her upcoming social and economic enterprises. The mutually reciprocal physical and psychic movement illuminates the ways

in which infrastructures such as the tram system serve an active role in producing Joyce's characters as subjects within a technological modernity, "shaping their interior preoccupations, preferences, and productivity," not to mention their entrance into new social relations (McCormick-Weng 32). The trams implicate the city's infrastructure with new formations of subjectivity and sociality by providing the conditions necessary for conveying subjective trains of thought among dynamic material and social worlds.

In *Ulysses*, the trams participate in the visual culture of the city and in Joyce's modernist framing in similar ways to the two forms of mediated seeing in "Ithaca." For example, early in the novel, when Bloom watches a woman get into a carriage from across the thoroughfare, a tram slews between: "The tram passed. [The carriage] drove off towards the Loop line bridge, her rich gloved hand on the steel grip. Flicker, flicker: the laceflare of her hat in the sun: flicker, flick" (5.138-40). Although Bloom curses the "noisy pugnose" for its disruption (5.132), the tram becomes an active and emergent figure in the urban environment, rather than just part of its background materiality. This figure/ground reversal is a moment of "infrastructural inversion," to use a phrase coined by Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star (34). "Refracted by the moving tram's window frames," as Sara Danius describes the scene, "the sunlight flows intermittently and transforms the lady's hand and hat into dazzling objects for Bloom's gaze" (166). Austin Briggs has suggested that this scene resembles of the flickering of a film projector, aligning the infrastructural technology of the tram with a new visual media technology (146). As a scene that attends to modernist preoccupations with fragmentation, perspective, and visual media forms, the tram "functions as a vehicle of

perception," simultaneously obfuscating and creating Bloom's vision (Danius 166). The tram partially blocks his view of the woman, but it also permits the "flicker[ing]" spectacle through its window frames. As a result, the tram moves beyond mere context by exhibiting the agentic capacity to structure, stylize, and frame Bloom's perceptual milieu. The mediating function of the tram for Bloom's experience also offers a meta-aesthetic moment for the novel itself. The "flicker, flick" as fragmented forms resemble the novel's portrayal of human consciousness as a chain of flickering images and associations. The tram and its window frames, much like the novel, also complicate notions of linearity and fracture notions of wholeness. Thus, Joyce positions trams as more than just material conduits for movement. They function medially, ultimately coming to mediate both the fluctuating experiences of the modern city and the novel form itself. Whereas infrastructures such as the trams represented in stories like "Clay" function simply as expressions of modernity, as specific historical and social referents, in *Ulysses*, infrastructures become much more. They lay the groundwork for new ways of seeing, representing, and imagining.

For this reason, infrastructural development becomes integral for both Joyce's experimental forms and his vision of Ireland's future. At the same time that the technological modernity of the city frames the visual stimuli that Bloom takes in, Bloom projects his visions of urban futures through the refracted lenses of infrastructure, his forward-thinking pragmatism often looking to "practical solutions to potential problems, that is, exploiting technology for the benefit and comfort for all" (Slote "Questioning Technology"). One important example of this is his advocation for the construction of a

tramline that would transport livestock from the Dublin cattle market to the quays.[9] Bloom's speculation about the possibility of carrying livestock by tram is repeated throughout *Ulysses*, each time changing its discursive framing through the changes in Joyce's literary forms. Reading the formal and political development of each iteration of Bloom's scheme as the novel progresses will help more fully unpack the relationship between Joyce's experimentalism and his infrastructural imaginary.

The first instance of Bloom's tramline scheme occurs in the "Calypso" episode, the first episode in which he appears. Upon approaching Larry O'Rourke's pub during his morning walk to fetch breakfast, Bloom reflects upon ideas of property value in relation to potential infrastructural development: "Good house, however: just the end of the city traffic. For instance M'Auley's down there: n.g. as position. Of course if they ran a tramline along the North Circular from the cattlemarket to the quays value would go up like a shot" (4.107-10). Bloom maintains that O'Rourke's is a "Good house" because of its location at the corner of Eccles and Dorset—"just the end of the city traffic." By comparison, M'Auley's location is not as good because it is too far north of the city center. According to Bloom, if "they" were to expand the tram system to include the North Circular thoroughfare, M'Auley's would increase its business and property values would soar, linking infrastructural and economic development. He recognizes that secondary market factors, such as a business's location and its accessibility by public

[9] Bloom had once worked as a clerk at the cattle market for a trader named Joseph Cuffe, giving him a firsthand understanding of the cattle market's processes of distribution. Interestingly, Bloom worked as a cattle market clerk at the same time that he would take Mrs. Riordan on urban strolls along the North Circular Road, which links his vision of modernity with a developing concern regarding infrastructural development.

transportation, would dramatically affect its commercial value. Significantly, this is Bloom's first interaction with the cityscape after he leaves his house at 7 Eccles Street, and it is notable that he refuses to simply accept the material and social environment as it is. Instead, he imagines what it could be. By coloring Bloom's first encounter with the cityscape in the novel with infrastructural and economic speculation, Joyce indicates that his "picture of Dublin" orients its geographical and historical referents toward possible futures, creating in fiction a subjunctive map of the Irish metropolis.

The second iteration of Bloom's tramline scheme occurs in the "Hades" episode, the first episode in which Bloom rides in a vehicle—a horse-drawn carriage used in a funeral procession. Seeing the funerary route and mode of transport through downtown Dublin simply as "a fine old custom" of Irish tradition (6.36), as Simon Dedalus does, refuses to acknowledge the very real material present of Dublin. The episode is permeated by infrastructural modernity, as Joyce frequently positions the funeral carriage in relation to the tramtracks, the newly paved roads of more affluent areas, and the unfinished sanitation and road construction of more impoverished areas.[10] The palpable tension between tradition and modernity increases as the funeral procession proceeds, but even more so when it is halted. As the funeral procession experiences a traffic jam caused by droves of cattle, Bloom announces his tramline scheme to the cortege: "I can't make out why the corporation doesn't run a tramline from the parkgate to the quays, Mr.

[10] For example, the horse-drawn carriage "swerve[s] from the tramtrack to the smoother road past Watery lane," only to, "passing the open drains and mounds of rippedup roadway before the tenement houses, lurch[] round the corner and, swerving back to the tramtrack, roll[] on noisily with chattering wheels" (6.38, 6.44-46)

Bloom said. All those animals could be taken in trucks down to the boats" (6.400-402).[11] Martin Cunningham responds, "Instead of blocking up the thoroughfare […]. Quite right. They ought to" (6.403-4). In this exchange, Bloom names the Dublin Corporation, rather than referring to an unnamed "they," as possessing the authority and the responsibility to transform the thoroughfare's infrastructure. Instead of increasing property value, Bloom's proposal in the funeral carriage seeks to transform the material and medial spaces of Dublin's downtown to alleviate the traffic congestion caused by the cattle driven through city streets. As cattle have long been symbolically linked with a pastoral vision of Ireland itself, their impeding of traffic in the city, as Andrew Thacker frames it, can "be read as a rural Ireland thwarting the progress of modernity forlornly wished for by Joyce" (129). Pushing Thacker's reading of the urban "geography of cattle and trams, rural Ireland and the Dublin metropolis" further (129), we can also read the scene as a vision of a nostalgic Irish nationalism that pines for its agrarian past as impeding the progress of modernity. Read in this way, Bloom's imaginative engineering seeks an infrastructural solution to a material and political problem, finding more efficacy in the adaptability of technology for urban change than in stunted forms of nationalist ideology. His modernizing impulse for new tramlines exceeds a national purview; he compares the potential of constructing

[11] This is hardly the first instance of Bloom's forward-thinking infrastructural pragmatism. Early in the episode, as the cortege sits in the horse-drawn carriage at Westland Row, Bloom observes the workings of the electric tram: "A pointsman's back straightened itself upright suddenly against a tramway standard by Mr Bloom's window. Couldn't they invent something automatic so that the wheel itself much handier? Well but that fellow would lose his job then? Well but then another fellow would get a job making the new invention?" (6.175-79). In May of 1903, an automatic unit was installed in the Londonbridge Road junction, leading the Dublin Corporation to install more than forty sets of automatic points throughout the city in 1904. Although these automatic points were a great improvement on the situation observed by Bloom, as Michael Corcoran notes, "they had their faults and were eventually superseded by newer and more advanced mechanisms" (70).

"municipal funeral trams" to the ones "they have in Milan" (6.405-7). Bloom sees trams not only as a more efficient technology for improving the material spaces of urban flow, but also as a means by which colonized Dublin could be seen as an international hub of modernity by bearing positive comparisons with modern European capitals.

From "Calypso" to "Hades," Bloom's idea for a new tramline to be constructed by the Dublin Corporation moves from a private thought to a public utterance, a personal desire that forges a communal bond and a potential communal identity. These moments occur in the novel's "initial style,"[12] but as the novel progresses into the heavily experimental registers of its later episodes, Bloom's scheme changes form. His scheme circulates through the novel in a series of repetitions and expansions, gestating in the novel's textual memory. Each iteration acquires greater specificity and assumes greater political dimensions. Knowing that in reality the Dublin Corporation failed to realize its municipal plans for improved cattle market tramlines,[13] Joyce transforms it into an election pledge in Bloom's fantasy of political power in "Circe," an episode that dramatizes the transmogrification of material spaces and objects. Among the phantasmagoria of "Circe," Bloom imagines himself in a dramatic performance of "public life" in which he is transformed into a politician, dressed in an "*alderman's gown*

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[12] The first six episodes of *Ulysses* were written in what Joyce referred to in a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver as an "initial style," a style engineered for intermingling third-person, past-tense descriptions of events with first-person present-tense accounts of a character's thoughts through the deployment of the modernist stream of consciousness technique.

[13] Joyce's knowledge of post-1904 tramway developments in operation by the time he was writing *Ulysses* likely contributed to Bloom's imaginative engineering for changing cattle transport. As Michael Corcoran records, "a later decision by the DUTC to handle freight resulted in some livestock wagons, mainly from the Dublin & Blessington, being employed for cattle market traffic" (70), but no rails were ever laid on the North Circular Road east of Berkeley Road, resulting in cattle droving from the markets down to the North Wall being a continual nuisance well beyond the end of tramway operation.

*and chain*” (15.1361, 15.1366). Cheered on as the “Lord Mayor of Dublin” (15.1363), Bloom produces the following “stump speech” (15.1353): “Electors of Arran Quay, Inns Quay Rotunda, Mountjoy and North Dock, better run a tramline, I say, from the cattlemarket to the river. That’s the music of the future. That’s my programme. *Cui bono?*” (15.1366-9). Bloom’s utopian reform manifesto for the development of the “New Bloomusalem” begins here, with his advocation for the construction of a new tramline along North Circular Road. Bearing the responsibility for the voting populace of these Dublin neighborhoods, Bloom proposes an Irish future that first must transform their material and technological environment. Although what follows in Bloom’s speech is at different moments highly fantastic, parodic, cliched, and just plain absurd, that he establishes the construction of a new tramline as his first political act suggests how integral infrastructural development is to his vision of Ireland’s future.

In the encyclopedic episode “Ithaca,” Bloom’s proposal reaches its fullest potential as it is described in complete schematic detail.[14] Bloom’s scheme, it is revealed, is not merely something that he thinks the Dublin Corporation ought to do nor some fantastical utopian dream, but rather it becomes a fully formed urban planning project. In

[14] “A scheme to connect by tramline the Cattle Market (North Circular road and Prussia street) with the quays (Sheriff street, lower, and East Wall), parallel with the Link line railway laid (in conjunction with the Great Southern and Western railway line) between the cattle park, Liffey junction, and terminus of Midland Great Western railway 43 to 45 North Wall, in proximity to the terminal stations or Dublin branches of Great Central Railway, Midland Railway of England, City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, Lancashire Yorkshire Railway Company, Dublin and Glasgow Steam Packet Company, Glasgow Dublin and Londonderry Steam Packet Company (Laird Line), British and Irish Steam Packet Company, Dublin and Morecambe Steamers, London and North Western Railway Company, Dublin Port and Docks Board Landing Sheds and transit sheds of Palgrave, Murphy and Company, steamship owners, agents for steamers from Mediterranean, Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium and Holland and for animal transport and of additional mileage operated by the Dublin United Tramways Company, limited, to be covered by graziers’ fees.” (17.1726-17.1743)

his imaginative civil engineering, he offers precise locations of where the new tramtracks could be laid, as well as how the new line could connect with other railroad, shipping, and storage facilities. In addition to surmising a way in which the project could be paid for (e.g. “covered by graziers’ fees”), this version of the plan also attempts to promote international trade in Irish beef beyond Ireland’s colonial relationship to England, again, as with the potential municipal funeral tram scheme, emplotting Dublin as integral economic nodal point in an increasingly transnational modernity.

The transnational affiliations of the tramways themselves resemble what McCormick-Weng terms “cosmomaterial connections”—that is, cosmopolitan material connections which “display the power of material objects to function as lively and connective forces that have an effect that extends across international boundaries” (48). Read in this way, Joyce’s tramways “emerge as both emblems and agents of technological kinship […], interacting both locally within their environments and also figuratively across cultural, linguistic, and geographic boundaries” (49). The trams function as interlocutors that connect local users together and to other users across the nation and abroad through the shared experience of utilizing such technologies, however distinct or nuanced each experience might be. Yet, Bloom’s vision goes beyond this form of “cosmomaterial connection” because his industrial infrastructure scheme invests in the material, rather than merely figurative, interaction between nations, as it involves the coordination between “agents […] from [the] Mediterranean, Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium, and Holland” and “the Dublin United Tramways Company.”

Vis-à-vis Bloom's scheme, Joyce fictionally overwrites the historical failure to develop a tramline along North Circular Road, creating instead a subjunctive reality of Irish infrastructural development. Joyce transforms tramlines from real referents to imaginative sites, moving beyond the realities of historical context in order to position Ireland's future as necessarily invested in the material and technological connections that extend beyond the nation. Importantly, Bloom's imaginative engineering can only reach its fullest development through the transformative effects of the novel's formal experiments, Joyce's own modernist engineering. The shifting politics of each iteration of Bloom's scheme for a new tramline is shaped by the forms of the episode in which it is uttered. Joyce's representation of Bloom's scheme continually shifts by taking on the form of each episode: it *performs* in "Circe" and *informs* in "Ithaca." Like the "Throwaway" that recurs in different forms throughout the novel, Bloom's infrastructural aspirations morph with each reading, following a logic of repetition with variation and expansion. Bloom's idea circulates through the machinery of the novel itself, obtaining new social and political valences through the unfolding of Joyce's dynamic experimental forms. Put another way, it's as if each episode contains its own algorithms, processing Bloom's scheme according to its own internal formal processes. Joyce's expanding modernist experimentation transports Bloom's scheme from its local effects—its effect on property values ("Calypso") and its potential for alleviating traffic in Dublin's thoroughfares ("Hades")—into broader political aims ("Circe") that grant Ireland entrance into an international economy and a thoroughly technological modernity ("Ithaca"). As Joyce's literary forms become more experimentally expansive beyond the

novel's initial style, so too does Bloom's infrastructural imaginary enlarge its scope, mediating new forms of transnational connection. New literary forms and new infrastructural technologies, taken together, foster new connections beyond the nation.

### Topography and Typography: Infrastructure and Dublin's Printed Forms in "Aeolus"

Because, as I have shown, Joyce's formal experiments across the novel are potent for the elaboration of the overlapping material, technological, social, and political affordances of infrastructural development, it is worth pursuing a sustained reading of a single episode, attending closely to the specific interactions of Joyce's literary experiments and Dublin's infrastructure. Joyce's convergence of innovative literary forms and progressive infrastructural technologies first occurs most forcefully in the seventh episode of the novel, "Aeolus," making it a perfect candidate for an extended "infrastructuralist reading." In order to fully account for the myriad criss-crossings and collisions of literary, infrastructural, and political forms in "Aeolus," the critical thrust of this section will, like the trams that radiate outward from the city-center at the beginning of the episode, move along multiple tracks.

As the first episode to break from the novel's initial style,[15] a radical departure of form marks a change in narrative consciousness, a collective urban perception generated from Joyce's interpolation of various bold newspaper headlines.[16] As the frame of the

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[15] Karen R. Lawrence notes that "Aeolus" "offers a departure from the 'novel' of the first six chapters and an adumbration of the experimentation in the subsequent chapters. It seems that Joyce deliberately altered the chapter to make it predict the antics of the later chapters and to give the reader early notice that the form of the novel was becoming obsolete" (390).

[16] Stephen Donovan has argued that these are not headlines, but rather "crossheads." Crossheads however, imply the existence of headlines that would be clearly demarcated spatially and hierarchically by preceding

narrative becomes more formally open through Joyce's insertions of newspaper headlines, the novel reveals that there is something beyond the narrative: the novel's departure from its initial style voyages through a world comprised of human and nonhuman objects unrelated to the main characters readers have followed closely for six episodes. What would typically remain relegated to the background materializes in the foreground. The episode breaks with literary tradition as Joyce exchanges the relatively familiar realism of the novel's initial style for a more pyrotechnic and palpable modernism. Newswriting gives way to new writing, with Joyce's sharp eye for the minutiae of a newspaper layout resulting in a new formal composition for the novel, a typographical intervention aimed to reproduce mimetically the materiality of the pages of a newspaper. Joyce's stylistic mimicry of newspaper forms has led Michael Rubenstein to argue that the "formal structure of the episode is dictated […] by its setting in a newspaper printing office" ("City Circuits" 116).[17]

Despite the bevy of critical attention to these headlines in "Aeolus," few have considered similar, albeit less sustained forms of journalistic typographical intervention elsewhere in Joyce's oeuvre. Significantly, Joyce enmeshes journalistic interpolations with other forms of infrastructure, revealing the interconnections between newspapers

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them. For simplicity's sake, I will refer to these typographical interpolations as headlines because, for my argument, it only matters that Joyce's modernist forms here reproduce the materiality of the newspaper.

[17] The "headlines operate on the level of form *only*, and not consistently on the level of content" (Rubenstein, "City Circuits" 116). Tamara Radak echoes Rubenstein in declaring that the "headlines formally act as an ordering principle" for the episode, but she clarifies that "they in fact interrupt the text's continuity and its narrative development at seemingly random intervals and do not appear to obey a logical pattern" (147). Indeed, initially the headlines are relatively unobtrusive, bridging connections to the textual passages that follow, but as the chapter progresses, they become increasingly unwieldy, their increasing irrelevance and obscurity culminating in the unutterable headline "???" (7.512).

and material infrastructures. For example, in "A Painful Case" in *Dubliners*, Joyce inserts a newspaper article bearing the same title. Marked off typographically in Joyce's text, the headline reads, DEATH OF A LADY AT SYDNEY PARADE[:] A PAINFUL CASE (126). Underneath the headline is an *en bloc* quotation of a newspaper article, read simultaneously by the character Mr. Duffy and ourselves, that details Emily Sinico's death—by implication, suicide—from a railway accident. As a form of modernist reinvention, Joyce collapses journalism into his fiction, adapting both the language and content from an article in the *Illustrated Irish Weekly and Nation* for his own story.[18] Joyce's inclusion of this article in his short story delineates, as Stephen Donovan has argued, the multiple connections of the newspaper and infrastructural technologies such as the railway: Joyce's association of newspapers and trains "had its origins in the technological and financial reorganization of the modern press; and his staging of the psychological effect of newspaper reading engaged with a wider social debate about journalism's novel status as purveyor of the 'shock of the news' to the mechanized perceptual faculties of a nation of train travellers [sic]" (35-6). Again, part of Joyce's project is to set various modern technologies in relation to one another. Instead of positioning a tram as acting like a flickering film projector, here Joyce aligns railway and print media technologies much more directly. Joyce's journalistic intervention in "A Painful Case" functions to illuminate the networked capacities of the newspaper and other infrastructural technologies for producing new social imaginaries.

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[18] See Jackson, *James Joyce's "Dubliners": An Annotated Edition*; Donovan, "Dead Men's News: Joyce's 'A Painful Case' and the Modern Press."

Joyce amplifies these capacities even further in his aborted novel, *Stephen Hero*. Toward the end of the extant novel, Stephen Dedalus and his friend Cranly walk toward the train station at Harcourt Street, discussing their future goals. Outside of the station, "Stephen pulled his friend's coat-sleeve and pointed to a newsbill which was exposed to public gaze on the roadway, held down at the corners by four stones. […] They stopped to read the [items] bill and four or five people also stopped to read it. Cranly read out the items in his flattest accent, beginning at the headline:

EVENING TELEGRAPH

[Meeting]

Nationalist Meeting at Ballinrobe.

Important Speeches.

Main Drainage Scheme.

Breezy Discussion.

Death of a Well-known Solicitor

Mad Cow at Cabra

Literature &. (221)

Placed deliberately on the roadway outside of a train station, a site where pedestrian traffic is increased due to its proximity to a public transit system, this newsbill captures the attention of several passersby. Just as the newsbill draws attention to itself as a piece of text imprinted upon the material streets of Dublin, so too does Joyce draw attention to the newsbill as a piece of text imprinted upon the page of his novel. It is the only moment of deliberate typographical intervention in *Stephen Hero*. Using examples of transit and

communications systems respectively, Joyce places the circulation of people into direct relation with the circulation of news, the material medium of transport with the material medium of information. A public of transit users and a public of readers merge, forming a transient community made possible by the intersection of the technological and the textual.

Because the *Evening Telegraph* was a longstanding Dublin newspaper with evolving Irish nationalist tendencies published by the Freeman's Journal Ltd., it's not surprising to find a "Nationalist Meeting at Ballinrobe" in its contents. The "Important Speeches" and "*Breezy* Discussion" that occurred in the meeting are characterized in a way that seems to anticipate the political speeches and rhetorical winds of Irish nationalism that circulate throughout "Aeolus."[19] In contrast to these vague discussions, "Main Drainage Scheme" stands out for its particularity. Conceived of by city engineer Parke Neville in 1853, the Main Drainage Scheme attempted to improve the city's sewerage system by laying large interceptor sewers along the North and South Quays of the River Liffey in an effort to put an end to the continuous discharge of urban offal into the river. It was legislated for in 1870, but abandoned until 1892 when the Dublin Corporation procured the necessary funds after a prolonged political battle. Upon

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[19] The episode's Homeric parallel from a moment in *The Odyssey* during which Odysseus and his men arrive at the island of the wind-god Aeolus, who secures all of the tempestuous winds that would trouble their quest to Ithaca, allowing them safe passage home. However, once at sea the crew greedily pries open the bag of winds, setting loose boisterous gales that buffet them back to the island of Aeolus where they began. Building from this Odyssean scaffolding, Joyce cleverly puns on Homer's "windbag," replacing the squalls that block Odysseus's passage home with inflated forms of political rhetoric that circulate through the newspaper offices of the *Freeman's Journal* and that, in Joyce's representation, also frustrate progress. Just as Odysseus's crew are sent backwards to where they began by the loosed winds, so too are the men that populate the newspaper office in "Aeolus" portrayed as *looking backwards*.

completion in 1906, the Main Drainage Scheme transformed Dublin's sewerage system, improving the city's water quality and, therefore, its public health. The history of the development and the implementation of the Main Drainage Scheme marked nearly half of a century of political struggle between British colonial rule, the city's private interests, and its citizens. Its inclusion on the newsbill suggests not only the public importance and urgency of advancing its development, but also the role of print for mediating various strands of public discourse surrounding such infrastructures.[20]

Once Stephen and Cranly resume their conversation, Stephen finds irony in the layout of the newsbill, which produces a hierarchy that renders "Literature &" as of less significance than the development of a drainage system, eliciting a debate about aesthetics and utility. Joyce foregrounds this debate at the intersection of the material and the textual. Newspapers and material infrastructures collide, in reality and in discourse, producing overlapping communities of readers and infrastructural users, in ways that confront questions of national identity and literary sensibility. Because Joyce reproduces the material logic of the newsbill, readers of the novel also become readers of a newspaper. For Benedict Anderson, medial technologies of print capitalism such as the novel and the newspaper performed integral roles in the rise of modern nationalism, as they create a "community in anonymity" by granting readers the illusion of a shared experience with others (36). In Joyce's rendering, however, the shared experience takes

[20] Irish newspapers served as a platform for public opinion regarding municipal matters such as infrastructural development. Citizens would write in to the newspapers, or political speeches would be reprinted in them, attempting to sway public opinion about urban progress. For more on public discourse and infrastructural development, see Corcoran, *Through Streets Broad and Narrow: A History of Dublin Trams.*

place materially in the street. Streets and newspapers, not to mention tramlines, railways, and sewage systems, form the material framework for collective life. If nations are "imagined communities" produced by the shared experience of texts and discourse, as Anderson has famously declared, they are in Joyce's purview also constructed through the collective relations to its material infrastructures. Like the "unrecognisable citizens" shuttling between North Circular Road and Phoenix Park, this transient community outside of Harcourt Station emerges from spatial contingency. It is a community pulled together by a shared experience in a shared space. Although the newsbill exhibits nationalist sympathies, no such political affiliation binds these people in the street. It is their being-there that matters.

Set in relation, but not subsumed into the Irish nationalist community outlined in the newsbill, the community by Harcourt Station resembles what Jean-Luc Nancy refers to as an "inoperative community." Instead of existing for or exacting any particular ideological ends, the "inoperative community" involves a spontaneous and contingent coming together, oftentimes in contiguous space, without any particular goal or purpose. Nancy understands the "modern experience of community as neither a work to be produced, nor a lost communion, but rather as space itself [...]" (19). As such, it is a form of community open to the multiple possibilities of "being-in-common," and in Joyce's case, this "being-in-common" is constituted through the shared experience of multiple infrastructural systems.[21] Nancy distinguishes an "inoperative community" from what he

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[21] Joyce formalizes this contingent and dynamic concept of "being-in-common" in contiguous space through the many interpolations of the "Wandering Rocks" episode of *Ulysses*.

refers to as a “lost community.” According to Nancy, a lost community is “a matter of a lost age in which community was woven of tight, harmonious, and infrangible bonds and in which above all it played back to itself, through its institutions, its rituals, and its symbols, the representation, indeed the living offering, of its own immanent unity, intimacy, and autonomy” (9). Nancy implores that we be suspicious of such a community because of its “retrospective consciousness”—"whether this consciousness conceives of itself as effectively retrospective or whether, disregarding the realities of the past, it constructs images of this past for the sake of an ideal or a prospective vision” (10). It is a type of community given over to the nostalgia for a more archaic past, in which community was, whether in reality or not, more stably defined by familiarity and fraternity.

Perhaps this is why Joyce renders the nationalist discourses of “Aeolus” as relatively ineffectual, as producing political imaginaries stuck in the past rather than mobilized in real experiences of the present. The episode acutely negotiates the competing discourses that produce an Irish national community—from the discourse of a print media that not only shapes a community of readers, but also imprints itself on the form of the episode, to the discourses of Irish political speeches that wind through the characters’ discussions.[22] While print media such as the newspaper ostensibly shapes its national imaginary through an ongoing representation and construction of the present, the Irish nationalist speeches presented in the episode only look to the past for ways to

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[22] The episode contains three formal speeches that are quoted by the inhabitants of the newspaper office: by Dan Dawson (7.243-49, 295, 320-28), Seymour Bushe (7.768-71), and John F. Taylor (7.814-69).

imagine an Irish nation. Reprinted in the newspaper, and read aloud by the inhabitants of the office, Dan Dawson's speech regarding "*Our lovely land*," for example, imagines an Ireland seemingly devoid of the accoutrements of modernity, as it instead relies on mythical and pastoral tropes that envision the country as an "*undulating plain and luscious pastureland of vernal green*." John F. Taylor likewise imagines an Ireland in "*an age remote from this age,*" invoking an account of Moses in Egypt to describe the Irish condition and to imagine national deliverance. While members of the newspaper office ridicule the flowery oratory of Dawson, they are affectively stirred by Taylor's speech, by the comparison between a hoped-for Irish revolution and the Jews' exodus from Egypt. In both cases, however, the Ireland of 1904 is nowhere visible, except in print.

The cultural and ideological nostalgia that permeates the discussions of political speeches in the newspaper office is ironic given their production in a setting that is, for all intents and purposes, dedicated to the production and circulation of the present moment.[23] This nationalist nostalgia can only be brought into full relief by the episode's emphasis on the material and technological present, a juxtaposition of political rhetoric, the city's infrastructure, and "cold print" (7.339). In contrast to the backward-looking nationalism that permeates the episode, Joyce grounds his own modernist experiments in the material modernization of the city itself, with the episode ultimately staging a confrontation between an oral history of Irish politics reliant upon a mythicized past and

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[23] Commenting on the backward-looking ethos that permeates the speakers within the newspaper office, R. Brandon Kershner argues that the characters "seem assembled by Joyce as examples of a preliterate, oral culture, hypnotized by the sounds of their own voices and the voices of their ancestors" (102). After all, Professor MacHugh even says, "We were always loyal to lost causes," referring generally to the Irish people, but equally and accurately describing the group around him (7.553).

a technologically inflected modernity represented by new infrastructure and media technologies.

Inasmuch as Joyce accentuates the present in "Aeolus," the episode's exploration of the relationship between print media and infrastructural systems does bear two important historical interlocutors worth mentioning here—Sir John Gray and William Martin Murphy. Sir John Gray was the proprietor of the *Freeman's Journal,* in addition to serving as chairman of the Dublin Corporation Waterworks committee during the development of the city's Vartry Scheme.[24] Founded in 1763, the "great daily organ" that is the *Freeman's Journal* was by 1904 one of Dublin's leading and longest standing newspapers in large part to its association with the Gray family for half of a century, having been sold to Sir John Gray in 1841. At the same time as he was involved in the dissemination of a nationalist ideology through the *Freeman's Journal* he was helping to provide the material and economic grounds on which to build Dublin's modern water system. By the time Joyce was writing "Aeolus," however, the *Freeman's Journal*'s position as a leading Dublin newspaper had been usurped by the *Irish Independent*, a nationalist periodical purchased by Murphy in 1900, around the same time that his tram company had nearly completed the total electrification of Dublin's trams.[25] Both Gray

[24] The Vartry Scheme was a project whose goal was to supply Dublin with cleaner water, improving public health by reducing the prevalence of waterborne diseases in the city and its environs. Serving as chairman of the Dublin Corporation Waterworks committee, Gray was politically and financially instrumental to the Vartry project, purchasing the land for the Roundwood reservoir himself, as well as negotiating contracts with the townships surrounding the city proper.

[25] The ascent of the *Independent* was propelled by Murphy's calculated commercial dealings, the paper's more modern style and production, and its political opportunism. For these reasons, Kershner characterizes its rise as "the most prominent local example of [...] the hegemony of capital and the pressures of modernity" (100). Kershner helpfully reminds us that newspapers at the turn of the century in Ireland did not have to assume some putative form of objectivity; rather, they "represented certain interests, which, more often than not, were those of a single owner" and they "had no choice but to stake out a position of

and Murphy participated in the construction of Dublin in its material and ideological senses, transforming technological topographies of Dublin, as well as the political and social imaginaries of the city. Their efforts linked inhabitants of Dublin and its environs, materially and imaginatively together, forming various communities of infrastructural users and newspaper readers. Because their work with infrastructural development was so intimately associated with their own publication of newspapers, we can understand how fundamental these figures were for the social and political changes that shaped Irish modernity. Although Murphy isn't explicitly mentioned in the episode, "Aeolus" concludes with professor MacHugh standing "halted on sir John Gray's pavement island," the base of a monument, glancing backward to "peer[] aloft at Nelson['s Pillar]" (7.1067). Although the literal gesture is a look from one monument to another, it also serves as a look back at the episode itself, which begins at Nelson's Pillar around which a caravan of electric trams radiates, as if to suggest that it is from Sir John Gray's position that we might retroactively read the episode.

The episode begins without Bloom and without Stephen, but rather with the urban infrastructures that sustain modern Dublin and its environs, with tramcars and postal carts facilitating the flow of people, goods, and information from the "HEART OF THE HIBERNIAN METROPOLIS" (7.1). Although of little consequence to the narrative proper of Bloom and Stephen's wanderings, these paragraphs about trams that "slowed,

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most of the issues of the day" such as nationalism or unionism, Home Rule or the rule of Parliament, or whether or not to support Parnell (97). Although the ideological differences between the two papers were subtly complex, a simple distinction could be drawn by their approach to Parnell. The *Freeman's Journal* rose and fell in step with Parnell's political trajectory, while the *Independent*, after Murphy's acquisition, capitalized on Parnell's descent by becoming anti-Parnellite and increasingly conservative.

shunted, changed trolley," along with the headlines themselves, were a late addition in Joyce's compositional process, which hints at a more significant set of connotations than the mere urban verisimilitude that most critics glean at first blush. Originally, as Michael Groden has discovered from Joyce's manuscripts, "Aeolus" was meant to begin with just a single, unimpaired sentence: "Grossbooted draymen rolled barrels dullthudding out of Prince's stores and bumped them up on the brewery float." However, because of a printing error, the episode published in the *Little Review* reproduces the same sentence twice.[26] After seeing this in print, Joyce made extreme revisions to the episode: interposing the newspaper headlines, inserting a litany of rhetorical and grammatical forms, and rewriting the opening scene to include the trams. Joyce also seized upon the mistake to convert the original sentence into the form of a chiasmus in the episode's final published version.[27] Karen Lawrence claims that this addition functions as a way to highlight "the written quality of the language […]. For chiasmus shifts our attention away from the meaning of a sentence to its spatial arrangement on the page" (69). This emphasis on the spatial arrangement of language on the page is clearly carried through the episode to greater degree with the formal insertion of the newspaper headlines. That Joyce responds to seeing an early version of the episode in print by producing this chiasmic relation reframes the episode's emphasis on textual and spatial materiality.

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[26] Set off as separate paragraphs, the episode repeats the following sentence with a typographical error: "Grossbooted draymen rolled barrels *dullhudding* out of Prince's stores and bumped them up on the brewery float. Grossbooted draymen rolled barrels *dullthudding* out of Prince's stores and bumped them up on the brewery float" (101, emphasis mine). Likely, the printer made a mistake by setting the sentence twice (as evidenced by the typographical error being the only difference).

[27] "Grossbooted draymen rolled barrels dullthudding out of Prince's stores and bumped them up on the brewery float. On the brewery float bumped dullthudding barrels rolled by grossbooted draymen out of Prince's stores" (7.21-24).

Thacker argues that through the distinctive spatial pattern of chiasmus Joyce demonstrates "a crossing over between material and metaphorical spaces" (133). The chiasmic "spatial arrangement" of the text becomes a version of the criss-crossing trams that pass Nelson's Pillar in the episode's new beginning, bringing to the fore the formal relations between the textual and infrastructural.

With this textual history in mind, the narrative beginnings of "Aeolus" no longer seem merely prosaic or non-diegetic. The episode's vision of the infrastructural circulation of city trams along Sackville (now O'Connell) Street takes on multiple meanings for the novel's literary, spatial, and material forms:

> Before Nelson's pillar trams slowed, shunted, changed trolley, started for Blackrock, Kingstown and Dalkey, Clonskea, Rathgar and Terenure, Palmerston park and upper Rathmines, Sandymount Green, Rathmines, Ringsend and Sandymount Tower, Harold's Cross. The hoarse Dublin United Tramway Company's timekeeper bawled them off:
> —Rathgar and Terenure!
> —Come on, Sandymount Green!
> Right and left parallel clanging ringing a double-decker and a singledeck moved from their railheads, swerved to the down line, glided parallel.
> —Start, Palmerston park! (7.1-13)

While Dublin's newspaper offices pump discourse into the "heart of the collective bloodstream," the infrastructural "HEART" of the city is its electric transportation system, which "circulates the characters, like corpuscles on odysseys around the city's arteries" (Ellmann 55). The spatial arrangement of the page and the spatial arrangement of the city, as Joyce frames it, reproduce similar forms. Shannon Mattern, for example, has described the ways in which "newspaper's graphic and material forms" bear a "homologous relationship with the streetscapes, facades, and topographies of the city" (69). Newspapers, "with their vertical orientation, *columnar* layout," pose a formally and

structurally homologous relation to Nelson's Pillar (Mattern 67, emphasis mine). The horizontal mobility and rapid circulation of newspapers reflect the span and flux of the city, the horizontal list of place names that radiate from Nelson's Pillar formally reproducing the sprawling materiality of Dublin and its environs.

By emplotting Nelson's pillar as the heart of the city, Joyce registers the spatial and historical ironies of Dublin—that its center is not an Irish one, but a British one. The list of tram destinations, according to Thacker, "show[s] how the spatial history of the city is embedded in many of the very names of its streets and areas, [with] places like Kingstown (now Dun Laoghaire) or Palmerston Park,[28] like Nelson's pillar, indicat[ing] the political topography of Dublin" as enmeshed with its colonial histories, a fact that makes the technological modernity of the passage all the more politically vexed (131). Although Thacker reads in the presence of Nelson's Pillar a "static image of imperial power [and] the panopticon-like gaze of the coloniser" (125), Joyce presents its literal function to metropolitan Dubliners as nothing more than a tram stop, which reduces its signifying power as an official imperial monument. The electric tramway system supplants the Pillar's political signification, and the horizontal flux of the city emerges as the city's reigning social and topographical form. Joyce shifts the Pillar's role as the ideological center of Dublin geopolitical life to the material core of Dubliners' experience of everyday life. Understood as a nodal point in a material network, Nelson's Pillar becomes no more than, as David Spurr puts it, "a relic of the imperial past" (192).[29] Joyce

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[28] Thacker describes Lord Palmerston, the British prime minister in the 1850s and 1860s for whom the street is named, as being "known in Ireland as an absentee landlord, notorious as one who did not assist any of his tenants in the passage to America during the time of the famine" (131).

[29] Spurr also argues that Stephen's "Parable of the Plums" further deterritorializes Nelson's Pillar (195).

displaces it in favor of new emerging Irish polities, in that the tram destinations also elicit the particularly local dimension of spatial and administrative power: these places were recently incorporated into Dublin's municipality because of the city's growing infrastructural development. Among these include "Blackrock, Kingstown and Dalkey," as well as "Rathmines," all of which were formerly independent townships, but achieved Urban District Council status in 1898 when their town commissioners were replaced by elected councilors (Corcoran 45). These townships had previously operated as separate and self-contained villages. But with the advent of the electric tramway system and with the resultant populational flocking to areas along the extended and improved routes, the city brought them within their administrative reach, granting the suburban inhabitants voting power for the metropolis. Joyce's list of tram destinations presents nascent local political communities, in addition to its confrontation with Ireland's colonial subjugation.

As the trams and Joyce's text "glide [in] parallel," they move away from Nelson's Pillar and instead toward the General Post Office of the succeeding paragraph, toward a historical site of direct and local anti-colonial resistance. To any contemporary Irish reader, mention of the General Post Office would signal the 1916 Easter Rising. [30] Although it was yet to take place in the Dublin of Joyce's novel, the Easter Rising irrevocably altered the cityscape as British incendiary bombs were dropped on the area surrounding the General Post Office, posing a very real threat that Dublin could "one day

[30] During the Easter Rising, over fifteen hundred volunteers led by Patrick Pearse and over two hundred of the Irish Citizen Army led by James Connolly occupied the General Post Office and proclaimed the Irish Republic there. This space became the rebel headquarters until it was left as an empty shell by the bombardment by British troops.

suddenly disappear from the earth."[31] Added after the Rising, Joyce's newspaper headlines and references to Dublin's infrastructures in "Aeolus" demonstrate the very real material and political conflicts embedded in the city's streets. Emerging in fiction, but destroyed in reality, the Dublin cityscape becomes a site of contested politics for Joyce, as he contends with representing English-Irish relations, both past and present. That said, Joyce doesn't memorialize the site as a scene of Irish martyrdom as his contemporary W.B. Yeats would—or as the episode's characters would had the novel been set after the Rising. Joyce refuses to locate his proleptic gesture toward the Easter Rising within the repertoire of nationalist images that spread throughout the episode. Instead, he rebuilds the Post Office as the city's center of communication, setting it in relation to Dublin's trams and newspapers, merging it with other infrastructural forms. Just as the trams convey people from place to place at accelerated speeds, the postal service conveys "sacks of letters, postcards, lettercards, parcels, insured and paid, for local, provincial, British and overseas delivery" (7.17-19).[32] The Post Office functions as a point in a network, blending seamlessly together with other forces that equally come to define the city.

Joyce's resistance against British imperialism and Irish nationalism here is waged through his scrupulous attention to the material present of infrastructural connection. To heed the materiality of Ireland's technological modernity as Joyce does is itself a political

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[31] In addition to the GPO, the newspaper offices of the *Freeman* building, in which "Aeolus" is set, were among the structures destroyed by the bombing. For a reconstruction of what the Freeman offices were like, see Beck, "Aeolus—A Sightseeing Tour."

[32] Throughout the novel, many characters are beneficiaries of Dublin's postal service, receiving letters and parcels throughout the day.

act. He rejects the hackneyed clichés and romanticized past of Irish nationalism in favor of Dublin's material present, the technological networks that innervate social and political life itself. Against static images of Irish nationalism, Dublin's infrastructural systems prove to be lively and energizing. Take, for example, the agency Joyce gives to the trams themselves, as well as the purely mimetic quality of his writing. The closely sequenced verbs that describe the trams' movements—"slowed, shunted, changed trolley, started"—not only position the trams as active, but also demonstrate the incessant energetic rhythms of urban life through its syntax. In addition to these acts of "dynamic verbalism" (Hung 82), Joyce accumulates references to the material components of the infrastructural systems themselves, labeling in succession "trams," "trolley," "double-decker," "singledeck," and "mailcars." The uninterrupted and onomatopoetic description of the trams' movement as "clanging ringing" contributes further to the bustle of the urban scene. As the DUTC's timekeeper "bawl[s]" off a verbal route of the trams, his voice is added to the urban cacophony, connecting human labor to the mechanization of the city. His voice and even his language stand in sharp contrast to the nostalgic political oratory that is propagated in the newspaper office, marking a point of departure between the modern lived experience of the metropolis and an unattainable past yearned for in Irish political discourse.

The passage's evocation of a dynamic materiality is representative of the episode's broader engagements with modernity and technology. In the episode, Joyce parallels the circulatory movements of Dublin's tram system with the mechanisms of print machinery that manufactures newspapers. The "clanging ringing" of the trams

echoes the "Thumping, thumping" (7.71) and "Clank it. Clank it" of the printing presses (7.136). The trams and printing presses both possess the capacity not only to act, but also to produce various forms of speech. For example, in a narrative section placed under the headline "ORTHOGRAPHICAL," Bloom hears the mechanical percussiveness of the printing press: "Sllt. The nethermost deck of the first machine jogged forward its flyboard with sllt the first batch of quirefolded papers. Sllt. Almost human the way it sllt to call attention. Doing its level best to speak. That door too sllt creaking, asking to be shut. Everything speaks in its own way. Sllt" (7.174-7). Bloom's thoughts afford a dual perspective: one that respects the machine's alterity and agency, but that also attempts to anthropomorphize the machine's noises into something intelligible for human understanding, such as the "Almost human" utterance of the machine or such as the door "asking to be shut." As a form of onomatopoesis, the machine's "Sllt" intrudes upon the text and transforms the train of Bloom's thoughts. It refuses intelligibility or signification despite Bloom's comparison to human speech. This perspective simultaneously acknowledges and disavows the distance between human and nonhuman objects, as the machine is able to "speak in its own way." Its machinic "speech" competes with the episode's political speeches, the noises of a technologically powered new media confronting oral myths of belonging.

According to Mattern, the "city's spaces of modern print production," like the cityscape itself, "engendered, and demanded, a multisensory mania, with humans and machines working together at breakneck speed" (69). However, Joyce's "multisensory" modernism reveals the agency of the technological and the material, as Bloom imagines

that the machines are able to act without their human counterparts: "The machine clanked in threefour time. Thump, thump, thump. Now if he got paralysed there and no one knew how to stop them they'd clank on and on the same, print it over and over and up and back. Monkeydoodle the whole thing" (7.101-104). The rhythm of the printing press imitates a musical piece, a waltz in "threefour time" that suggests the form of a circular movement of a couple turning rhythmically around and around as they progress over the dancefloor. This vision of circular but unimpeded machinic progress parallels visions of infrastructural progress, the ways in which infrastructural development posits notions of both circularity and forward movement, the mechanized loops that propel into the modern future. For example, Michael Corcoran has noted how "Once the service [of a tramline] became established and well patronised, it seemed as if the trams had always been there and would continue to run at their sedate pace for all time" (31).

However, Tamara Radak suggests that in this imagined moment of Bloom's, the "machinery becomes unproductive," "technological progress deteriorates into paralysis, since the printing press does not produce any meaningful discourse," and its "failed end product acts as a testimonial to the destructive power of unsupervised technology" (150). Her reading, however, attempts to assimilate machinic productivity into purely human economic and discursive terms. The machinery in this vision is only "unproductive" in so much as it refuses the economic goal of producing a sellable newspaper. Much like the aural sounds of the machines themselves, the randomly generated "Monkeydoodle"[33]

[33] Radak herself actually has an excellent footnote about this term that, in my reading, pushes against her own argument: "The term 'Monkeydoodle' itself is remarkable as it can be regarded as a nonsense word and thus, in this case, 'does, in appearance, what it is about' (Senn, 'Transmedial Stereotypes,' 61), but also evokes the idea of 'aping' human discourse, which is, in a sense, one of the functions of newspapers. As

exceeds human intelligibility. The machine announces its own communicative potential as a medium. The printing press, like its technological pair, the city's trams, communicate their inexorable drive through space and into the future. Joyce's printing presses and tramcars—as medial systems of communication and transport—return us to his novel as its own kind medial system, reminding us that these representations are part of the way he encodes the materiality of the modernist novel. After all, much of the episode itself is owed to a moment of wayward and errant printing.

That said, Radak's insinuation of technological paralysis is suggestive of the halted tram cars at the end of the episode:

> **HELLO THERE, CENTRAL!**
>
> At various points along the eight lines tramcars with motionless trolleys stood in their tracks, bound for or from Rathmines, Rathfarnham, Blackrock, Kingstown and Dalkey, Sandymount Green, Ringsend and Sandymount Tower, Donnybrook, Palmerston Park and Upper Rathmines, all still, becalmed in short circuit. Hackney cars, cabs, delivery waggons, mail-vans, private broughams, aerated mineral water floats with rattling crates of bottles, rattled, rolled, horsedrawn, rapidly. (7.1042-1049)

Although infrastructural systems and newspapers form "THE HEART OF THE HIBERNIAN METROPOLIS," not to mention the heart of Joyce's text, we also know from the previous episode "Hades" that hearts can fail.[34] Even though the tramlines, postal carts, and printing machines pump bodies and texts into circulation, they are vulnerable to "breakdown." Liam Lanigan argues that "the vocabulary and style" of this moment "seek to convey stagnation and failure as characteristics of mechanization,"

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Fritz Senn also pointed out (private conversation, August 2013), doodling is the opposite of goal-oriented writing" (Radak 150, n. 27).

[34] For example, when the funeral cortege passes the "Foundation stone for Parnell," Bloom thinks to himself, "Breakdown. Heart" (6.320).

portraying modernity as "an agent of paralysis, rather than its remedy" (43). However, his argument, like Radak's, misses the point. Infrastructures, like human bodies with hearts, are fallible: their breakdown is an experiential reality and an inevitable consequence of their materiality, their maintenance (or lack thereof), and their dependence upon other energy systems. What becomes evident from Joyce's presentation here is not how they breakdown in a way that characterizes modernity as "an agent of paralysis," but rather how society responds to their breakdown, revealing the modern city and its inhabitants to be "rapidly" adaptable. Although the trolleys stand motionless in their tracks, "becalmed in short circuit," traffic hardly seems to be disrupted, as evidenced by the litany of vehicles that continue to circulate through the streets, vehicles we might remember from Bloom and Mrs. Riordan's encounters with a Dublin modernity from a decade earlier. The city's response to the halted tramcars involves elements of adaptation and improvisation, two elements that not only work to sustain metropolitan life, but also inform many aesthetic and formal principles of modernism. The alternative forms of traffic that emerge in the wake of the tramcars' temporary malfunction reveal the older transit networks that had laid the foundation for Dublin's modern-day systems. The older transit systems of "hackney cars" and "delivery wagons" are, like Raymond Williams' category of the "residual," "formed in the past, but […] still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present" (122).

The only interruption caused by the halted trams is a narrative one, in that it directs attention to the material cityscape at the deflated climax of Stephen's telling of his

"Parable of the Plums." The halted trams act as an urban material punctuation mark to Stephen's story, a technological period that reenacts the story's feeling of stasis. But in contrast to the allegorical political paralysis of Stephen's story, these trams will move again, set in motion to continue shaping the material and social environment of the city. This interpolation of the tramcars and the city's residual transit networks functions similarly to the many narrative interpolations of "Wandering Rocks," as well as to the interpolations of the newspaper headlines themselves. On the level of literary form, these interpolations produce the effect of simultaneity and break the literary conventions that "spatial contiguity in serial paragraphs is generally taken for granted" (Senn 159). The sudden narrative transfer to different spots in Dublin serves as a reminder that multiple actions, by people and by technologies, are constantly taking place elsewhere in the city, in the country, and in the world, as well as outside of the main narrative.

In addition to these kinds of narrative interpolations, Joyce reminds us of simultaneous actions happening elsewhere through two other forms of infrastructural technologies—the telephone and the telegraph. Joyce's inclusion of the telegraph and telephone in an environment already heavily saturated by other technological forms frames "Aeolus" as "accumulat[ing] the complete infrastructure of communication" (Senn 51), deepening the media ecologies that underpin Irish modernity. Like the newspaper and the tram, the telegraph and the telephone are enrolled in the production of meaning and can traverse large distances. Joyce's representation of these technologies involves elements of the spatial and geographic. Bloom's phoning of Crawford, for example, is referred to by the headline, "A DISTANT VOICE," indicating that the

capacities of the new technology could effectively transform ideas of proximity by bringing Bloom's voice into the office without him being present (7.658). Because telephones were a relatively new phenomenon in Dublin of 1904, many businesses relied on huge teams of telegraph messenger boys for delivering intra-city messages.[35] Typically, though, telegraphs assumed the role of communicating across large swathes of distance, including international communications.

In "Aeolus," we are given the story of a journalist Ignatius Gallaher, who uses the telegraph to deliver news to a newspaper in New York about the Invincibles' murder in Phoenix Park in 1882. As Myles Crawford tells the story,[36] Gallaher, improvising in response to the technical and formal limitations of the telegraph, reproduces the movements of the murderers by superimposing a map of Dublin onto a print advertisement for Bransome's coffee, indicating that a given letter in the ad points to a specific location in the city:

> —B is parkgate. Good.
> His finger leaped and struck point after point, vibrating.
> —T is viceregal lodge. C is where murder took place. K is Knockmaroon gate.
> […]
> —F to P is the route Skin-the-goat drove the car for an alibi. Inchicore, Roundtown, Windy Arbour, Palmerston Park, Ranelagh. F. A. B. P. Got that? X is Davy's public house in upper Leeson street.
> […]
> —Gave it to them on a hot plate, Myles Crawford said, the whole bloody history. (7.659-69)

[35] Throughout the episode we witness the delivery of local telegrams and the "screams of newsboys" (7.391).

[36] During Crawford's retelling, Joyce inserts Bloom's first phone call, which is another moment of narrative interpolation, or interruption, positioning two forms of telecommunications media in direct relation to one another. Although it interrupts the narrative of the novel, it does not interrupt Crawford's account, again speaking to the simultaneity of events mediated technologically.

The telegraph here, as with Joyce's depiction of other infrastructural forms in the episode, marks the intersection of print, material spaces, and communication. Dublin becomes respatialized through a convergence of print and infrastructural technologies, an experimental remapping that speaks to Joyce's continually shifting representations of the city's material spaces. Topographical locations are reinscribed typographically, and are then transmuted through the trans-Atlantic telegraph cable. Gallaher's improvised map-making is an act of bricolage that develops its own spatial code, assembling disparate materials to reconstruct a map of the city. As he transforms the familiar spaces of Dublin into something entirely new, we recognize in the story of Gallaher a parallel to what Joyce attempts with his formal and narrative experiments in the episode. Simply put, like Gallaher, Joyce innovatively reconstructs Dublin through the materiality of print and the medial mechanisms of infrastructural networks.

Altogether, given the episode's explicit concern with textual materiality, political discourse, and infrastructural networks, "Aeolus" introduces most forcefully Joyce's experimentation with the aesthetic and the technical, between his modernism and Dublin's modernization. By refocusing our attention on the materiality and networked capacities of the city's circulation systems, we recognize how Joyce situates this episode as a meditation on the difference between a nation or community that is "imagined" through discourse and one that is fabricated or produced materially by means of infrastructure, onto which an imaginary nation might be continually projected. Materially, infrastructure attempts to bind space and connect people, linking far-flung areas of the city and its environs, establishing a material network of mobility and

communication that fosters political, economic, and social spaces to be held in common. Discursively, infrastructure is a medium for national purpose, a collective investment in the future through technological projects. While Joyce felt that the empty political rhetoric of Irish nationalism held Ireland back, Dublin's emergent infrastructural developments move it forward. By emphasizing the materiality of technical networks of Irish modernity instead of the airy rhetorical flourishes of political speech, Joyce discovers not only new forms for literature itself, but also the capacities to form new social communities, synthesizing the material infrastructures and communications media of the city to imagine anew the Irish nation.

**Pipes and Plenaries: Joyce's "Cloacal Obsession" and His Defense of Irish Modernism**

To conclude this chapter, it is worth returning to *Stephen Hero*. Midway through the text, Stephen Dedalus delivers a speech on "Ibsen and the New Drama" at University College in Dublin. His efforts are to redefine literary capital through a modern, rather than classical, approach to the arts, celebrating the dramatical works of Henrik Ibsen as encapsulating the spirit of the modern.[37] In responding to the paper, Whelan, the orator of the college, champions literary works from antiquity over those from the modern era, citing the "beauty of the Attic theatre" and predicting "that the drama of the Greeks would outlive many civilisations," for they are "not for a time but for all times […] imperial, imperious, and imperative" (101).[38] Stephen's friend, McCann, however,

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[37] We may infer from the semi-autobiographical nature of *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait* that the contents of this paper bear at least a modicum of resemblance to the contents of a lecture and a review written by Joyce years earlier—"Drama and Life" (1900) and "Ibsen's New Drama" (1900).

[38] In "Drama and Life," Joyce begins by briefly crediting Greek drama for its contributions to dramatic form, before indicating its obsolescence in modern times: "It may be a vulgarism, but it is literal truth to

upholds Stephen's defense of literary modernity, arguing, "Modern ideas must find their expression: the modern world had to face pressing problems: and […] any writer who could call attention to those problems in a striking way was well worthy of every serious person's consideration" (102). One of Stephen's harshest critics, however, is Magee, who derides Ibsen for having a play about the "sanitary condition of a bathing-place" (102). Disparaging Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People,*[39] Magee complains that "If this was drama he did not see why some Dublin Shakespeare should not pen an immortal work dealing with the new Main Drainage Scheme of the Dublin Corporation," a statement that unleashes a torrent of hostility toward Stephen on a number of social and political bases (102).

The climax of these retorts comes from the Irish nationalist Hughes, who accuses Stephen of being contaminated by the decadent and immoral literary sensibilities of other European capitals, by the "foreign filth" that threatens Ireland itself (103). According to Hughes, Stephen "was himself a renegade from the Nationalist ranks: he professed cosmopolitanism. But a man that was of all countries was of no country—you must first have a nation before you have art" (103). The range of these critiques proves somewhat contradictory: Magee's sardonic comment ridicules the possibility of using modern local materials for aesthetic purposes on the one hand, while Hughes bemoans Stephen's lack of attention to local politics on the other. What implicitly connects their critiques is the invocation of notions of contamination and sanitation. While Hughes conceives of Ibsen

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say that Greek drama is played out. For good or for bad it has done its work, which, if wrought in gold, was not upon lasting pillars" (*Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing*, 23).

[39] Hinging on the waterworks system of a small Norwegian town, Ibsen's play depicts the conflicts between failing infrastructure, municipal misconduct, and journalistic corruption.

as belonging to a cosmopolitan literary scene that harbors “foreign filth,” thus endangering the moral and political health of Ireland, Magee invokes the material and technological structures that quite literally dealt with the disposal of filth in the name of Dublin’s public health. Although meant to be a critique, Magee’s statement is precisely the strategy Joyce employs in *Ulysses*, a novel in which he self-consciously fashions himself a “Dublin Shakespeare” who writes about the material and political infrastructures of Dublin at the turn of the century. Joyce articulates an Irish politics grounded in the materiality of the city rather than in the moralizing and ideological nationalism that Hughes purports is missing from modern literature. Joyce does indeed “have a nation [for his] art,” but it is a nation, as we’ve seen, that is materially and technologically composed.

The language and content of this public forum in *Stephen* Hero returns us to “Aeolus.” Under the headline, “THE GRANDEUR THAT WAS ROME,” Professor MacHugh sets up a joke about waterclosets by first invoking an empire from antiquity: “We think of Rome, imperial, imperious, imperative” (7.483-6). Joyce connects these grandiose invocations of classical antiquity by having MacHugh repeat Whelan’s alliterative phrase containing the three roughly synonymous adjectives from the Latin word imperium—“imperial, imperious, imperative.” While Whelan seems sincere in his admiration of classical antiquity, granting it aesthetic and formal authority over modern thought, MacHugh’s gesture to grandeur is simply to take a swipe at the material pragmatism of the Roman Empire, namely, its insistence upon developing a sewer

system. Like the discussion in *Stephen Hero*, the movement in “Aeolus” progresses from a discussion of classical and modern aesthetics to a joke about sewage:

> What was their civilisation? Vast, I allow: but vile. Cloacae: sewers. The Jews in the wilderness and on the mountaintop said: *It is meet to be here. Let us build an altar to Jehovah.* The Roman, like the Englishman who follows in his footsteps, brought to every new shore on which he set his foot (on our shore he never set it) only his cloacal obsession. He gazed about him in his toga and he said: *It is meet to be here. Let us construct a watercloset*. (7.489-495)

MacHugh’s joke is much more elaborate than Magee’s remark about a “Dublin Shakespeare” penning a literary work on the city’s Main Drainage Scheme. Yet both consist of a public debate between aesthetics and utility, with Magee and MacHugh taking a position in which they cannot imagine someone valuing utility over the aesthetic. Whereas Magee’s retort is aimed at modern literature, MacHugh’s joke is thrust at the modern British Empire through its comparison to Rome. By poking fun at the “cloacal obsession” of these empires, MacHugh critiques imperial insistence upon pragmatism, order, and utility. Although waterworks systems have long been the foundation of advanced development for civilization, Whelan, Magee, and MacHugh prefer the contributions of aesthetic forms to civilization. For example, MacHugh suggests that the poetic qualities of the Irish far surpass British utility, and Lenehan contrasts MacHugh’s vision of Roman and English imperial infrastructural development with anecdotal Irish history: “Our old ancient ancestors, as we read in the first chapter of Guinness’s, were partial to the running stream” (7.496-8). MacHugh’s joke and the responses to it actually link Irish national identity with waste itself. That MacHugh and Lenehan identify British imperialism with infrastructural modernization and that they unintentionally represent Ireland as backwards—or backwater—reinforces British and Irish stereotypes in a way

that, as Rubenstein puts it, "explain[s] if not actually justif[ies] Irish subjugation" (*Public Works* 21).

In addition to reprising a moment from *Stephen Hero,* this discussion also forms a literary retort to an author contemporary to Joyce—H.G. Wells. In his March 1917 review of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Wells referred to Joyce as having a "cloacal obsession": "Like Swift and another living Irish writer, Mr. Joyce has a cloacal obsession. He would bring back into the general picture of life aspects which modern drainage and modern decorum have taken out of ordinary intercourse and conversation" (159). For Wells, like Joyce's MacHugh and Lenehan, there are links between national character, literary sensibility, and the use or lack of use of infrastructural waste systems. Although *Ulysses* does depict, among other representations of human waste, Leopold Bloom defecating in an outhouse at 7 Eccles Street, the novel also represents the wide panorama of Dublin's infrastructural modernity, making Joyce's "cloacal obsession" one that is as fully enmeshed with local infrastructural systems as it is with the contents such systems convey.[40] To invoke Marshall McLuhan's famous claim that the "medium is the message," the infrastructural pipes themselves, as material and technological extensions of ourselves, of our waste production, are transformational, the city's material infrastructural forms becoming communicative actors of and for the urban environment and its inhabitants. As we've already seen, many of Dublin's developing infrastructural networks were among the most advanced in all of Europe, placing Dublin at the cutting

[40] Rubenstein reinforces this point that we might read Joyce's "cloacal obsession" as an "infrastructural obsession" because etymologically it would be "truer to the Latin root *cloacae*, meaning sewer" ("City Circuits" 123).

edge of European modernity and modernization. To be Irish in colonial Dublin, for Joyce, was not to be backwards or merely "partial to the running stream," but rather to be a participant in a transnational technological modernity. If Joyce insists, as Wells has it, upon bringing "back into the general picture of life aspects which modern drainage and modern decorum have taken out," he also insists upon bringing back into the general picture aspects of modern drainage itself, the technical and material systems of infrastructure that are continuously overlooked in everyday life or are considered unworthy of literary representation.

Although the Main Drainage Scheme wouldn't be completed until two years after the text's present, Joyce's "picture of Dublin" includes another Dublin water system. In the novel's final lasting image of the city's infrastructure, Joyce traces in specific detail the entirety of the material waterworks system that delivers potable water from a reservoir in County Wicklow to the tap of the Blooms' residence at 7 Eccles Street in Dublin.[41] Although a number of critics[42] have touched on this famous waterworks passage, its most important function is to lay bare the systems and conditions by which

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[41] "Did it flow? Yes. From Roundwood reservoir in county Wicklow of a cubic capacity of 2,400 million gallons, percolating through a subterranean aqueduct of filter mains of single and double pipeage constructed at an initial plant cost of (X)5 per linear yard by way of the Dargle, Rathdown, Glen of the Downs and Callowhill to the 26 acre reservoir at Stillorgan, a distance of 22 statute miles, and thence, through a system of relieving tanks, by a gradient of 250 feet to the city boundary at Eustace Bridge, upper Leeson street, though from a prolonged summer drouth and daily supply of 12 ½ million gallons the water had fallen below the sill of the overflow weir for which reason the borough surveyor and waterworks engineer, Mr Spencer Harty, C. E., on the instructions of the waterworks committee, had prohibited the use of municipal water for purposes other than those of consumption (envisaging the possibility of recourse being had to the impotable water of the Grand and Royal canals as in 1893) particularly as the South Dublin Guardians, notwithstanding their ration of 15 gallons per day per pauper supplied through a 6 inch meter, had been convicted of a wastage of 20,000 gallons per night by a reading of their meter on the affirmation of the law agent of the corporation, Mr Ignatius Rice, solicitor, thereby acting to the detriment of another section of the public, selfsupporting taxpayers, solvent, sound." (17.163-182)

[42] See, for example, Fredric Jameson's famous essay, "*Ulysses* in History."

Bloom and other Dubliners are able to have drinkable water in their homes. As a passage, where, as Matthew Gandy puts it, "the outer limits of modern experimental prose meet the technological accoutrements of modernity" (20), Joyce transforms through his modernist innovation the taken-for-granted act of turning on a faucet to let water flow into a municipal, economic, and material map of the entire waterworks system developed by Dublin's Vartry Scheme. By asking "Did it flow?" Joyce forces readers to question notions of infrastructural provision; as Ariela Freedman reminds us, the fact that "water flows when we turn on a tap meets rather than jars our expectations" (855). What jars our expectations is not the water itself, but rather Joyce's text. As part of the episode's encyclopedic register, Joyce's answer far surpasses the scope of the question, piling on a textual excess beyond mere affirmation. It's as if Joyce's modernist prose provides its own response: his language, redirected only by the occasional comma, reenacts the municipal water supply flowing via catchment basins, pipes, and tunnels. Bloom's "ode to water" passage[43] that follows also flows: it is propelled syntactically by a succession of

[43] "What in what water did Bloom, waterlover, drawer of water, watercarrier returning to the range, admire?
Its universality: its democratic equality and constancy to its nature in seeking its own level: its vastness in the ocean of Mercator's projection: its unplumbed profundity in the Sundam trench of the Pacific exceeding 8,000 fathoms: the restlessness of its waves and surface particles visiting in turn all points of its seaboard: the independence of its units: the variability of states of sea: its hydrostatic quiescence in calm: its hydrokinetic turgidity in neap and spring tides: its subsidence after devastation: its sterility in the circumpolar icecaps, arctic and Antarctic: its climatic and commercial significance: its preponderance of 3 to 1 over the dry land of the globe: its indisputable hegemony extending in square leagues over all the region below the subequatorial tropic of Capricorn: the multisecular stability of its primeval basin: its luteofulvous bed: its capacity to dissolve and hold in solution all soluble substances including millions of tons of the most precious metals: its slow erosions of peninsulas and downwardtending promontories: its alluvial deposits: its weight and volume and density: its imperturbability in lagoons and highland tarns: its gradation of colours in the torrid and temperate and frigid zones: its vehicular ramifications in continental lakecontained streams and confluent oceanflowing rivers with their tributaries and transoceanic currents: gulfstream, north and south equatorial courses: its violence in seaquakes, waterspouts, artesian wells, eruptions, torrents, eddies, freshets, spates, groundswells, watersheds, water partings, geysers, cataracts, whirlpools, maelstroms, inundations, deluges, cloudbursts: its vast circumterrestrial ahorizontal curve: its

colons, which grammatically coordinate and equalize the qualities Bloom admires about water, conveying formally its "democratic" qualities.

Like Bloom's tramline scheme in "Ithaca," Joyce's prosaic tour through Dublin's water supply is so amply detailed that you could potentially "reconstruct it" out of his book. It firmly grounds itself in a specific time and place, not only identifying its materials ("a subterranean aqueduct of filter mains of single and double pipeage" and a "system of relieving tanks") and locations of passage ("by way of the Dargle, Rathdown, Glen of the Downs, and Callowhill to the 26 acre reservoir at Stillorgan"), but also its human interlocutors ("borough surveyor and waterworks engineer, Mr Spencer Harty" and "Mr Ignatius Rice, solicitor") and its municipal bodies and constituents ("waterworks committee," "the corporation," "public, selfsupporting taxpayers"). Joyce provides the material and municipal nodes of the Vartry waterworks system that connect spaces and peoples, mapping new publics around the provision of water. Joep Leerssen argues that this grounding is Joyce's "effort at normalizing and calibrating the position of Dublin in space and time, at showing how much part of the world it is, how it is synchronized with,

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secrecy in springs, and latent humidity, revealed by rhabdomantic or hygrometric instruments and exemplified by the hole in the wall at Ashtown gate, saturation of air, distillation of dew: the simplicity of its composition, two constituent part of hydrogen with one constituent part of oxygen: its healing virtues: its buoyancy in the waters of the Dead Sea: its persevering penetrativeness in runnels, gullies, inadequate dams, leaks on shipboard: its properties for cleansing, quenching thirst and fire, nourishing vegetation: its infallibility as paradigm and paragon: its metamorphoses as vapour, mist, cloud, rain, sleet, snow, hail: its strength in rigid hydrants: its variety of forms in loughs and bays and gulfs and bights and guts and lagoons and atolls and archipelagos and sounds and fjords and minches and tidal estuaries and arms of sea: its solidity in glaciers, icebergs, icefloes: its docility in working hydraulic millwheels, turbines, dynamos, electric power stations, bleachworks, tanneries, scutchmills: its utility in canals, rivers, if navigable, floating and graving docks: its potentiality derivable from harnessed tides or watercourses falling from level to level: its submarine fauna and flora (anacoustic, photophobe) numerically, if not literally, the inhabitants of the globe: its ubiquity as constituting 90% of the human body: the noxiousness of its effluvia in lacustrine marshes, pestilential fens, faded flowerwater, stagnant pools in the waning moon." (17.183-228)

and in proximity to, the rest of the world" (230). This "normalizing" of Dublin as a particular place through his description of Dublin's water system was part of what Leerssen esteems the "great ingenuity of Joyce," in that he "dared to describe an Irish setting in terms of its normalcy—for that was precisely the quality which all earlier authors, whatever their persuasions and sympathies, had denied Ireland" (231). The passage, read in this way, possesses simultaneously the abilities to defamiliarize and to normalize, defamiliarizing a quotidian action through his modernist experimentation, and normalizing Dublin's position within a European modernity, emplotting its waterworks system as a marker of its status.

However, this isn't to say that Joyce's modernism here stops at an uncritical celebration of Dublin's technological achievements, simply displaying the infrastructural systems that uplift Dublin's modern geopolitical position. Instead, by revealing the systems that innervate Dublin's modernity, Joyce also exposes their own uneven forms, meditating on the material conditions of class politics in ways that many other modernists typically avoided. Although the aims of the Vartry Scheme were also democratic in that they sought to provide Dubliners with comprehensive access regardless of class status to clean and sustainable running water, as Jacinta Prunty and Anne Marie D'Arcy have pointed out, these aims were not fully realized. Prunty, for example, in her study of Dublin's slums indicates that in the poorest districts of Dublin, "the infrastructure to distribute the water […] was very limited, so that ten years after [the Vartry scheme's] arrival […] many residents were reliant for drinking water on water 'taken from the cistern intended to supply the water closet' resulting in typhoid" (14). Although the

Dublin poorest who live in the city's tenement houses that Prunty describes remain invisible in this passage, Joyce still unveils the economic, social, and political contingencies of water distribution, as the passage's focus shifts from the material to the social, from an engineer-like attention to the material structures and passages of the Vartry water system to a more bourgeois anxiety about its social contexts, revealing the social differences and class divisions the water system enforces. Evoking the class politics embedded within Dublin's infrastructural topography by differentiating "paupers" from "selfsupporting taxpayers," and even going so far as to say that the water consumption of the "paupers" contributed to the "detriment" of the "selfsupporting taxpayers," Joyce shows that despite infrastructure's connective power, it still maintains internal divisions based on class. Yet Joyce ironizes these "selfsupporting taxpayers" as buying into what Rubenstein calls "the bourgeoisie's delusory fantasy of self-reliance" (*Public Works* 56). The purpose of highlighting the complex and vast material and municipal networks that undergird the waterworks system is to show how Dublin is collectively supported, rather than "self-supported." After all, what the passage shows is the panorama of specialized labor and of necessary materials that produces access to water at every stage of development, from its planning to its construction and maintenance. Joyce ironizes the bourgeois viewpoint that fails to regard the social scope, complexity, and geography of Dublin's infrastructural developments, suggesting that the public cannot be conceived of as a totalized social whole.

Greg Winston summarizes the intent of the passage well, identifying Joyce's sustained meditation on the specifics of the Dublin city water supply system as "the most

pragmatic and political" of his representations of water "for its concern with the question of human water use," exploring specifically "how the dissemination of water conveys notions of power and community" and "bring[ing] to surface some of the pressing social and moral questions that defined early twentieth-century Dublin, if not all cities and societies everywhere" (141). By representing the public water supply, Joyce emphasizes the promise of technological developments and the formation of political and social bodies. But why would Joyce suggest the collective promise of infrastructural technologies only to cloud Dublin's modern achievements by insisting on its internal divisions? If Joyce's intense attention to detail in representing Dublin was in response to the city's partial destruction in 1916 as well as to the potential of the new Irish Free State of 1922, his modernist depiction of the waterworks system, like his depiction of Dublin's other infrastructures, becomes even more applicably political. He rebuilds the waterworks system in his fiction, so to speak, in order to re-establish the collective modernity of a city that was disappearing through its political violence and destruction and to cultivate a sense in which local infrastructural development must also heed and work through its own class disparities in order to move toward a new Irish future. The material progress brought about by the development of the water system was substantial, but its efficacy for producing a more integrated social body lagged behind. But propelled by the flow of Dublin's infrastructures, the momentum of Joyce's modernism attempts to carry the technological achievements of Irish modernity into a new Irish future. His modernism becomes a site of Irish renovation, a type of literary engineering that is geared away from

reclamatory projects for a lost past, but rather toward an Irish modernity capable of enduring and actively participating in the modern world.

## Chapter Two

## Good Roads and Great Floods: Rural Infrastructure in William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*

Similar to the way James Joyce imagined himself as a literary "engineer," William Faulkner compared his literary production to other forms of craftsmanship.[1] He most often analogized his writing practice with that of carpentry. For example, in several interviews, he references writing as using the raw materials around him—"lumber in the attic, or in the carpenter's workshop"—to shape his stories: "now and then [the] writer needs a board so he reaches back and finds it and sure enough it fits—that is, he has to cut it and trim it a little, but it fits" (Gwynn and Blotner 3). But Faulkner's writing extends beyond his analogies with carpentry,[2] as his writing uses more than just spare bits of lumber. Like Joyce, Faulkner was a writer carefully attuned to a sense of place, and as a result, he used the raw materials of his environment to fabricate the fictional Yoknapatawpha County. Inasmuch as he declared himself the "sole owner and proprietor" of Yoknapatawpha County, he was very much its historian, its cartographer, and its architect. Perhaps even its engineer. If Joyce's goal in *Ulysses* was "to give a picture of Dublin so complete" that it "could be reconstructed out of his book," Faulkner's goal in his Yoknapatawpha novels, according to an interview with Jean Stein, was to write about his "little postage stamp of native soil" ("The Art of Fiction XII" 52).

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[1] According to one of Faulkner's biographers Frederick R. Karl, "Faulkner made things—which accommodated his sense of himself as a farmer, house painter, and carpenter. He is a craftsman, also a worker, part of that vast army which 'makes,' not the elite which authors" (15).

[2] Faulkner even includes carpenters as central figures within his work—most notably Cash Bundren from *As I Lay Dying*.

That Faulkner compares his native land of Northern Mississippi to a "little postage stamp" is important for a number of reasons. Faulkner himself actually worked at a post office at the University of Mississippi, where he was infamously lousy at his job.[3] Although Faulkner may not have taken his role as postmaster seriously, for a few years he was an intermediary in the U.S. postal system and would often spend time writing poetry and stories on the job, making his reference to a "postage stamp" for his literary aspirations hardly coincidental. Anne Hirsch Moffitt claims that the "spatial model" of Faulkner's comparison of his regional environment to a postage stamp is "insular and grandiose," or a kind of "self-containment" that imagines Northern Mississippi as a singular place cordoned off from the world (17). In contrast to Moffitt, I believe that Faulkner's analogy actively resists insularity, as it emplots his region within a wider web of communicative and political affiliation.[4] Although a postage stamp is indeed affixed to an envelope or package as a self-contained printed label, it is the means by which a letter or package can be conveyed elsewhere. After all, a postage stamp affords dynamic forms of mobility and exchange, not to mention national forms of belonging.[5] The U.S. Postal

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[3] Frustrated by his dull role as a civil servant as a postmaster at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, Faulkner often abdicated his role in order to play cards, write poems, and drink. Opening the post office on days when he felt like it, and throwing away university bulletins and advertisements, Faulkner's laissez-faire attitude toward the job was his employable undoing. However, sensing his seat as postmaster getting hot, Faulkner penned a defiant and now well-known resignation letter in October of 1924 to his superiors: "As long as I live under the capitalistic system, I expect to have my life influenced by the demands of moneyed people. But I will be damned if I propose to be at the beck and call of every itinerant scoundrel who has two cents to invest in a postage stamp."

[4] Moffitt's article does eventually and successfully articulate the way in which Yoknapatawpha's "rural insularity […] is founded in its prevalent and increasingly open confrontations with the modern metropolis's emergent paradigms" (17-8). However, her initial misreading of Faulkner's postage stamp analogy proves useful for my own thinking, in that the analogy stages the rural and the urban less as confrontations between opposing binary poles, and more as reciprocally embedded and engaged.

[5] Stamps also serve an ideological function. As Sheila Brennan has noted, stamps "are not mere instruments of postal operations, but rather, objects deeply embedded in culture, with complicated stories to tell" (1-2). Stamps often reproduce dominant national ideologies through their identifying signs and visual symbols:

Service has long been part of the nation's critical infrastructure, facilitating governmental, economic, and social communication and commerce across vast regional networks, and ensuring the ability of society to organize itself across multiple scales. What is most compelling about Faulkner's reference to his home region as a "postage stamp" is that although, on the surface, it seems to describe the U.S. South as its own particular and peculiar region, the analogy insists on locating the U.S. South within larger national systems of modernization, standardization, increased access, and improved transportation. The analogy indexes the U.S. South simultaneously as locally specific and nationally connected, as regionally contained but infrastructurally networked.

As Faulkner was writing his Yoknapatawpha novels, his "postage stamp of native soil" was undergoing dramatic transformations. The U.S. South was wrestling with various forces of modernization. Among the many material and social transformations of the geographies of the U.S. South in the early twentieth century, this chapter will focus primarily on two specific events—the construction of interstate highways that emerged from the Good Roads Movement, and the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927. As historic and geographic upheavals of the Southern landscape, these events altered notions of national belonging, socioeconomic possibility, and political and human security. For

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they "stand as symbols for nations as distinct political and ideological entities" (Brennan 2). The U.S. postal service began issuing commemorative stamps celebrating American history and identity at the turn of the century, and so by the time Faulkner himself was employed by the postal service, triumphalist narratives and images of the United States were embedded in the circulating material culture of the mail system. Users of the post office were constructed as materially and ideologically belonging to the nation through the purchase and circulation of these stamps. Importantly, although these stamps often promoted "social harmony and assimilation," they "simultaneously eras[ed] the presence of people of color or ethnic minorities," and often offered revised visions of the U.S. South in American history (4). Certainly more could be said about the mechanisms of citizenship and patriotism that the U.S. postal system engaged in, but what remains most resonant in the case of Faulkner is the constructedness of the past and its interpellative function in constituting collective life.

William Faulkner, these events haunt the complex terrain of his novel, *As I Lay Dying*, a novel replete with references to roads and to floods. The Good Roads Movement and the Mississippi River Commission implemented infrastructural developments motivated by political rhetoric that promised the good life, a way of living enhanced by socioeconomic access, modern convenience, and relative security. States promote their power through the promise of infrastructure, with developers and policy-makers championing to their constituents these enhanced modes of living through infrastructure. However, the promise of infrastructure, I argue, often bears a cruel obverse reality, primarily through infrastructure's (re)production of injustice and environmental devastation. In other words, despite the aspirational qualities of infrastructure, its development carries irrevocable socioeconomic and environmental consequences.

In the case of Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, infrastructure's "cruelty" manifests in the possibilities imagined but never actualized through the road systems that connect the Bundren family from a rural hamlet in Yoknapatawpha County to the town of Jefferson and to the nation at large. The novel's central plot depicts the Bundren family's continuously delayed and disastrous funeral journey to Jefferson to fulfill their matriarch Addie's wish to be buried there. The roads insinuate the promise of material connection, but prove difficult to navigate. When working well, roads facilitate the networked flow of goods, labor, and services, delivering the basic amenities and relations that form and sustain modern living and that attempt to shrink the socioeconomic divides between the country and the city. However, communities not connected to the nation-state by roads often see themselves as marginalized by their absence. Originally, the objective of

southern road development was to assist farmers by improving the material conditions of their transportation of crops and by offering a better standard of living to all rural inhabitants. However, quickly the Good Roads Movement reoriented its project away from improved rural farm-to-market infrastructure and instead toward the construction of tourist highways. Despite using rhetoric that would appeal to poor rural farmers, the politicians behind the Good Roads Movement instead benefitted tourist markets and private automobile owners, ushering in an era of increasing standardization for travelling between towns and regions. Faulkner's Anse Bundren, a bumbling and resentful farmer, believes that roads bring nothing but bad luck and economic destitution through the taxation that, he feels, ironically marks them as citizens. In contrast, his neighbor Vernon Tull provides vocal support for the development of new roads. Yet, despite Tull's repetition of Good Roads Movement rhetoric—that the "roads is good now"—the roads and bridges the Bundrens traverse have not been maintained at all, causing their wagon to breakdown at various points along their funeral journey, signaling the gap between the modern accessibility that the building of roads suggested and the possibility of the rural poor to use them successfully without efficient means of transportation. Significantly, Faulkner juxtaposes every reference to "good roads" with references to local weather patterns and floods, charting a connection between the infrastructural projects of road construction with the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927. One of the greatest disasters to afflict the United States, the protracted flooding of the Mississippi River was caused by a slew of infrastructural and economic interventions with the environment, such as the improper implementation of levees, monoculture farming, and regional deforestation. The

flood only widened the infrastructural and socioeconomic gaps between the rural poor and their urban counterparts. It is my goal in this chapter to trace the material and ideological effects of such infrastructural gaps and failures, reading the various ways the Bundren family finds themselves caught in the throes of a variety of geographic, economic, and social upheavals, with their movement to town largely transformed by increasing encounters with modernization.

However, this is not to say that Faulkner's depiction of the Bundren family is tethered to a unidirectional trajectory of an urbanizing core that brings the rural into its grasp. By analyzing the Bundren family's movement from rural Southern hamlets into the modern metropolitan scene through the emerging technologies of the early twentieth century, this chapter reconsiders typical assumptions about the rural and the urban in the U.S. South. Following Benjamin S. Child, this chapter stakes a crucial reversal of the typical urban-rural dynamic. Instead of considering modernity as only exacting its forces on the periphery from the center of the metropolis, Child explores "representations of people and places, objects and occasions, that reverse that trajectory, demonstrating how modernizing agents move in a contrary direction as well—from the country to the city" (3). In this reversal, as Child has it, "these figures aren't pulled by or into urban modernity so much as they posit alternate—and transformative—iterations of the modern, often bringing them to the urban world itself" (3). This way of thinking flips "the U.S. South's reputation as retrograde and unresponsive to modernity"[6] by aiming to

[6] In many ways, this aspect of Child builds upon the crucial approaches to southern modernisms made earlier by Leigh Anne Duck, whose book *The Nation's Region* examines the existence of the U.S. South as perceived as anachronistic and backwards alongside the region's contributions to a modern and modernizing nation.

document the co-constitutive effects of local, national, and transnational exchange and emerging technologies (3). Modern industrial forces "animate environments and bodies associated with, or performing, versions of the rural" (3), but these forces and spaces are also constructed in many ways by rural sources and resources—human labor and raw materials. In many ways, this approach affirms Janet Casey's recent call for greater attention to the rural and the modern—rurality and modernity—as "mutually constitutive" forces (4). Read in this way, the members of the Bundren family are not passive victims of the forces of modernity, but rather figures who also exert or posit an alternative modernity from their position in the rural environs of Mississippi.[7] Put another way by Jay Watson more recently, "Modernization is not just something that happens to them. It is also something they *do*. Faulkner's expansive vision of rural modernity [...] makes imaginative room for modernizing energies that proceed from as well as toward rural subjects and their 'peripheral' spaces, enclaves, practices, and itineraries" (70). The novel foregrounds and formalizes this friction between urban and rural, between center and periphery.

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[7] In reading the interpenetrating relationship between the rural and the modern, I avoid then the oversimplification of Jolene Hubbs's account of the novel. Hubbs, in her study of Faulkner's rural modernism, discusses the "symbiotic relationship between the country and the city" in *As I Lay Dying*, primarily the ways in which the Bundren family's rural labor is conditioned and upholds the region's industrialized markets (463). The features of rural modernization that Hubbs identifies—"the employment opportunities, the roads, the access to consumer goods"—do not "in any significant way modify their lives" (463-4). Although I am keen to agree with Hubbs's articulation of a "perennial obsolescence" in which poor rural whites like the Bundren family are repeatedly perceived "as uniformly and perpetually archaic" (by Faulkner's characters and scholars alike) as a means to create and define the modern through contradistinction, to say that the Bundren family does not experience any meaningful changes in their socioeconomic situation is a rather large overstatement (464). Even more, in my reading, the Bundrens exact meaningful changes on the towns in which they arrive.

In accounting for this "mutually constitutive" urban/rural relationship, this chapter, like my previous chapter on Joyce, considers the transformations and technologies of modernity and modernization alongside the aesthetic transformations and techniques of modernism. Reading modernity and modernization as part and parcel of Faulkner's modernism owes much to the work of John T. Matthews, who has identified Faulkner's literary output as responding to and with the advent of the "machine age" and its subsequent social and economic transformations. Matthews has long insisted upon a "central dialectic"—"the dynamic relation between modernization and modernism"—as undergirding the cultural transformations of the U.S. South and as significantly informing Faulkner's literary oeuvre ("Machine Age" 69). A rich tradition of Faulkner scholarship—as well as modernist scholarship more broadly—has emerged from this recognition.[8] This tradition necessarily entails what Jay Watson refers to as "historicizing modernity and materializing historicism, moving historical inquiry […] to encompass formative elements of social, economic, technological, political, and ecological change" (7).

[8] Richard Godden, for example, has comprehensively documented the transformations borne about by agricultural modernization and has shown how these transformations undergird many of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha novels. Barbara Ladd, Leigh Anne Duck, and Patricia Chu, among others, have unpacked the ways in which nationalism and the nation-state as key political discourses and key formations of modernity complicate Faulkner's representations of the U.S. South. Exploring the Great Mississippi Flood, Susan Scott Parrish attends to the environmental consequences of modernization, recognizing the bureaucratic and technological failures that led to the disaster, as well as the mediated discourses of its aftermath, including what she refers to as Faulkner's flood novels. Hosam Aboul-Ela extends his analysis of Faulkner's work to be connected with a larger contingent of texts from the Global South, understanding his novels as participating in the "poetics of peripheralization" that emerge from economic, social, and aesthetic transformations of modernization in the developing world (136). Julian Murphet and Peter Lurie, among many others, have contributed to our current understanding of Faulkner's work as emerging from a complex web of technological media including photography, film, and radio.

In understanding *As I Lay* Dying in particular as a novel of "the machine age"—and more specifically as a novel of the media ecological age—it is important to remember that Faulkner wrote it quite literally next to machines when he was working another odd job for a different infrastructural entity a few years after his employment at the post office. He worked the night shift in a power plant in the town of Oxford, Mississippi,[9] and it was during this time that he penned *As I Lay Dying*:

> I shoveled coal from the bunker into a wheelbarrow and wheeled it and dumped it where the fireman could put it into the boiler. About 11 o'clock the people would be going to bed, and so it did not take so much steam. Then we could rest, the fireman and I. He would sit in a chair and doze. I had invented a table out of a wheelbarrow in the coal bunker, just beyond a wall from where a dynamo ran. It made a deep, constant humming noise. There was no more work to do until about 4 A.M., when we would have to clean the fires and get up steam again. (Blotner 248)

It was against this backdrop, Faulkner claims, that he wrote the novel in six weeks without changing a word. Always crafting fanciful tales, Faulkner, of course, embellished the perfection of his "tour de force," as well as the extent to which he engaged in the physical labors of keeping the plant running. As Blotner notes, "The job was supervisory, with two Negroes to provide the labor" (Blotner 248).[10] Despite his embellishment, that

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[9] Joseph Blotner, in his biographical tome on Faulkner, describes the power plant at the University of Mississippi as follows: "The two-story thirty-year-old powerhouse of brick squatted beside the tall smokestack that rose above it. Inside, wrote one historian, the 'electric generator symbolized the University's entrance into the technological age of the twentieth century.' The building compactly housed the furnaces, boilers, the huge wheel and belt, the pulley and dynamo, and the banks of equipment with their gauges and switches" (Blotner 248).

[10] This situation likely provided some of the artistic material necessary for Faulkner's short story, "Centaur In Brass," which would later be adapted for the beginning of the *The Town*, the second novel in his *Snopes* trilogy. This situation also raises questions about Black labor and its narrative erasure—in history and in fiction. Faulkner's embellished anecdote about how he wrote the novel after shoveling coal himself overwrites the Black labor that actually powered the plant. Faulkner attempts to parallel his writing to a kind of manual infrastructural labor, but he ignores the realities of his privileged status and hierarchical position as a supervisor.

Faulkner's aesthetic labors coincide with these infrastructural forms and technologies is again significant for his literary production. "Composed with the hum of the University of Mississippi's power station in the background," as Matthews frames it, the novel "takes on the sheen of a highly technical, even machine-made object" ("Machine Age" 90). Modernist art bears the mark of not just Cash Bundren's "adze blade" (4), but also more predominately the industrial and infrastructural technologies of a developmental modernity[11]—of which roads are a central phenomenon.

**Building Yoknapatawpha: Southern Media Ecologies and Faulkner's Fiction**

Spearheaded most forcefully by Julian Murphet, recent critical movement toward understanding Faulkner's writings as embedded within a diverse ecology of media technologies of the modernizing world has produced sophisticated readings of his work. The opening salvo of Murphet's introduction to the essay collection, *William Faulkner in the Media Ecology*, formulates a way of reading technological mediation and literary aesthetics that is foundational to my own understanding of *As I Lay Dying*. Catalyzed by Faulkner's representations of modernization in the prose historical sections of *Requiem for a Nun*—the "veritable catalogue of the defining historic moments of technological

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[11] The characters within *As I* Lay *Dying*, however, would not be beneficiaries of these types of technological power, energy, and municipal provision. Clearly, the Bundren household and farm—a hardly arable plot of land precariously situated on the side of a hill—is a far remove from the increasingly technologized climes of Oxford, not to mention a distant cry from other famous households found in other works of urban literary modernism. Unlike 7 Eccles Street, for example, there is no faucet to turn on, no pipes connected to a reservoir, and no public works committee organized to bring running water to the Bundren farm. Far from it. Instead of receiving water from mechanical systems, Darl asserts that it ought to "be drunk from a gourd" after setting "at least six hours" in a cedar bucket" because "[w]ater," as he insists, "should never be drunk from metal" (10-1). Darl's statement readily privileges "natural" containers for water over the pipe fixtures that were becoming more common in metropolitan environments (11). Although Darl prefers water outside of municipal provision, infrastructure, read in this way, is revealed through its lack, its relative absence—perhaps even, its cruelty.

mediation"—Murphet attends to the ways in which Faulkner's modernism is inextricable from the "speeds, conveniences, movements, and transactions of modernity," recognizing the collision of the forces of modernization as impacting forcefully the novel form (3). A section[12] late in the novel details the dizzying scope and scale of technological mediation that Faulkner himself lived through, from traditional media technologies such as telegraphy, phonography, photography, film and radio, to other material forms of mediation that construct the American scene as we know it, such as transportation infrastructures and technologies like railways, automobiles, roads, and airlines, as well as public utilities like electricity and running water. The panorama describes

> Not only a new century and a new way of thinking, but of acting and behaving too: now you could go to bed in a train in Jefferson and wake up tomorrow morning in New Orleans or Chicago; there were eletcric [sic] lights and running water in almost every house in town except the cabins of Negroes[13]; and now the town bought and brought from a great distance a kind of gray crushed ballast-stone called macadam, and paved the entire street between the depot and the hotel, so no more […] need to lurch and heave and strain through the winter mud-holes; […] a new time, a new age […]. (*Requiem* 207)

Here, infrastructural development in the form of electric lights, running water, and paved roads produces the modern world with its "new way of thinking, […] acting and behaving." This "new age" developing in the seat of Yoknapatawpha County, however, is as much about cultural loss as it is about technological progress. Commenting on

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[12] The section begins with the development Redmond-Sartoris-Compson 1876 railroad, which was built "from Jefferson north into Tennessee to connect with the one from Memphis to the Atlantic Ocean; nor content there either, north or south: another ten years […] and the railroad was part of that system covering the whole South and East like the veins in an oak leaf and itself mutually adjunctive to the other intricate systems covering the rest of the United States, so that you could get on a train in Jefferson now and, by changing and waiting a few times, go anywhere in North America" (205).

[13] It is worth highlighting here that Black Southerners are left without access to these forms of infrastructural development, and are thus relegated to an outside status to the "new age" of the modernized South.

Faulkner's infrastructural panorama, Murphet writes, a "small regional town's destiny, in the America of electromagnetic propogation, coal locomotion, and the combustion engine, is to abandon its peculiar historic specificities to a relentless campaign of standardization and networked conformity" (2).

Among the most important new technological forms was the automobile. Faulkner's first novel set in his fictional Yoknapatawpha County, *Flags in the Dust*, hinges upon the juxtaposition of old Southern traditions and the new speeds of modernity, a juxtaposition signified by the ongoing tension between horse- and mule-drawn wagons and new automobiles in the streets of Faulkner's Jefferson. Young Bayard's automobile moves with a violent intensity, "[shooting] forward on a roar of sound like blurred thunder" (114). Mule-drawn[14] wagons, on the other hand, "mov[e] drowsily and peacefully along the road" (115). Murphet approaches this vehicular dichotomy from a formal and chronotopic perspective, analyzing the ways in which the Southern literary imagination—and Southern romance in particular—emerged from the kinds of mobility afforded by the labor of humans, mules, and horses. The relative slowness of this movement, according to Murphet, allowed Southern romance writers to embrace a pastoral writing steeped in Southern topographical description—a "romance scenography [that is] best seen in rolling vistas from a horse-mounted summit, or glimpsed from the

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[14] For an excellent analysis on Faulkner's use of mules more broadly, see Jay Watson's first chapter in *William Faulkner and the Faces of Modernity*. Writing about Faulkner's 1934 short story, "The Mule in the Yard," which would later be incorporated into the novel *The Town*, Watson reads the "modernizing trajectory" of the U.S. South through the figure of the mule (44). As the "bellwether of rural modernization in the twentieth-century South," mules emerge in Faulkner's fiction as almost "diasporic figures," "displaced again and again from their proper domain in the fields, bards, and feed lots" by an increasingly urbanized and industrialized South (46).

driver's seat of a carriage, which allows the narrative activity to halt and an ambrosial, changeless 'natural' environment […] to exude its ideological aura" (87). With the advent of the automobile age, however, this type of prose "suffers an absolute decline, indeed something approaching an extinction" (85). The speeds of the automobile produce an alternate experience of time and space, resulting in different forms of prose—often the fragmented prose most typically associated with literary modernism.

What remains understudied in this context, however, are the conditions of the roads that these vehicles traverse. We must look beyond the figure of the automobile as a medium of modern transportation, in order to attend to the more taken for granted medium of that medium—the road itself. The road as a material infrastructure has the power to shape southern modernity and its aesthetic representation. For example, the particular conditions of the roads slow Young Bayard's journey back from Memphis early in *Flags in the Dust*: "Memphis was seventy-five miles away and the trip had taken an hour and forty minutes because some of the road was *clay county road*" (75, emphasis mine). Although "guaranteed that [his car] would run eighty miles an hour," Bayard can only reach that speed on the concrete-paved interstate highways—not on the clay and dirt country roads that make up most of the state's road systems. Poorly kept road conditions force drivers to move differently in the country than in town or on the interstate highway: one character, for example, is characterized as "dr[iving] along a rutted wagon road, between swampy jungle, at a snail's pace" (278). The road conditions, when combined with Young Bayard's propensity for high speeds, become disastrous, eventually resulting in his crash into a ditch. Right before the accident, the road is described: "Earth, the

unbelievable ribbon of the road, crashed beneath them and away behind into mad dust convolvulae: a dun moiling nausea of speed, and the roadside greenery was a tunnel rigid and streaming and unbroken" (114). Roads made from many different kinds of material—dirt, gravel, clay, and macadam—innervate the geographies of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha. Faulkner's "postage stamp of native soil" was mottled with increasingly poor roadways, which were considered to be "the worst in the entire country" (Preston 36). Because of these poor road conditions, the speeds that Murphet attends to in the Southern literary imagination are hardly uniform, and thus, in Faulkner's rendering, these different speeds produce different experiences of space. If the automobile alters formal elements of fiction such as narrative description, so too does the material forms of the roadways alter the experience of movement. Whereas Murphet has been drawn to the speeds of Faulkner's "racier" novels through the figure of the automobile, my focus on roads allows me to linger in one of Faulkner's "slowest" novels, where automobiles barely achieve textual surface.

Faulkner's attunement to the construction and maintenance of roadways in the early twentieth century stems from material and intellectual labors of his brother Johncy and his family friend, Calvin S. Brown. In 1928, the year before Faulkner began writing *As I Lay Dying*, he witnessed first-hand the local road-making strategies and practices in Oxford performed by his brother: "Johncy Falkner and his crews had transformed the muddy streets with gravel and tar. Sidewalks went in as new streets were laid down" (Blotner 206). Calvin Brown's work as an archeologist and professor included working on a State Geological Survey from 1920, whose purpose was to define and provide

practical reference for the road-making materials of the state of Mississippi.[15] Johncy and his largely Black "crew"[16] would have been trained in road-materials best practices proposed by this reference guide, thus, their use of gravel and tar to pave and smooth what used to be muddy streets. Such practices are represented quite clearly in Faulkner's fiction, including scenes of road construction in *Flags in the Dust*[17] and scenes of sidewalk paving in his short story, "A Rose for Emily."[18] What's immediately notable about these scenes are the ways in which the town's road and sidewalk "reconstruction" is produced by Black laborers, who are often invisible in narratives of modern progress.[19] In Faulkner's narration, these Black laborers are presented in contrast to the machinery of northern modernity,[20] with "its noisy and measured fury" (*Flags* 376).

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[15] See Lowe, "Road-Making Materials of Mississippi."

[16] Johncy's supervising of Black labor recalls Faulkner's largely "supervisory role" at the power plant as he was writing *As I Lay Dying*. Both roles hierarchize infrastructural labor based on race, and also become troublingly suggestive of plantation overseers.

[17] "The street from curb to curb was uptorn. It was in the throes of being paved. Along it lines of negroes labored with pick and shovel, swinging their tools in a languid rhythm. Steadily and with a lazy unhaste that seemed to spend itself in snatches of plaintive minor chanting punctuated by grunting ejaculations which died upon the sunny air and ebbed away from the languid rhythm of picks that struck not; shovels that did not dig. Further up the street a huge misshapen machine like an antediluvian nightmare clattered and groaned. It dominated the scene with its noisy and measured fury, but against this as against a heroic frieze, the negroes labored on, their chanting and their motions more soporific than a measured tolling of far away bells" (*Flags in the Dust* 376).

[18] "The town had just let the contracts for paving the sidewalks, and in the summer after her father's death they began the work. The construction company came with niggers and mules and machinery, and a foreman named Homer Barron, a Yankee […]. The little boys would follow in groups to hear him cuss the niggers, and the niggers singing in time to the rise and fall of picks" (*Collected Stories* 124).

[19] Although a full account of blackness and infrastructural development lies beyond the scope of this present chapter, it is hard to avoid reading these passages without acknowledging this invisible status of Black labor and its production of the material U.S. South. More certainly needs to be said about how enslaved peoples built Southern infrastructure, how incarcerated and poor African Americans continued and still continue its development, and about how black labor more broadly, like infrastructure itself, becomes relegated to an invisible status of upholding modern society in the background.

[20] What also lies beyond the scope of the present chapter would be a more thorough investigation of Faulkner's thinking about disparate forms of infrastructure and spatial access between the more modernized North and the more agrarian South. One place to start such a survey would be to think about Quentin Compson's use of the public streetcar in *The Sound and the Fury*. The streetcar, or "interurban," simultaneously enacts for Quentin a mechanical form of time and brings him into contact with the diverse

*The Sound and the Fury* also depicts multiple forms of technological mobility, most notably "the first car in town," which gives its owner, Jason Compson, a head-splitting migraine (172, italics removed). Among Jason's many frustrations and complaints is the quality of the new roads that he drives along as he chases young Miss Quentin all over town: "Yet we spend money and spend money on roads and dam if it isn't like trying to drive over a sheet of corrugated iron roofing. I'd like to know how a man could be expected to keep up with even a wheelbarrow" (*Sound* 238). Ever the miser, Jason is upset that his tax dollars have contributed toward the development of roads that, in his opinion, are hardly usable. Rather than providing smooth transit, the new roads appear to Jason as actively impeding his pursuit of Miss Quentin—"like trying to drive over a sheet of corrugated iron roofing." The material spaces of the South, in other words, have not been brought up to the speeds of modern technology, despite efforts aimed at their development. This ongoing tension between the speeds of modernity and the spaces of the U.S. South undergirds much of Faulkner's work as it continued to develop, informing both his narrative content and his novelistic forms.

**"The roads is good now": The Good Roads Movement and the Promise of Infrastructure**

It is commonplace in Faulkner circles to account for *The Sound and the Fury* as originating from Faulkner's image of the young Compson brothers looking up at their sister Caddy's "muddy drawers" as she scales a tree. Less commonplace is the knowledge

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population of Boston and Cambridge, while also prompting his ruminations on his Southern heritage and personal past.

of the origins of *As I Lay Dying*, outside of Faulkner's hyperbolic account of writing it beside the hums and throbs of the modern dynamo. Like its sister novel, *As I Lay Dying* also finds its origins in the mud, but rather from the image of a man cursing a road newly constructed out of that Mississippi mud: "The idea from which the whole book grew, Allen Tate would remember Faulkner saying, was Anse Bundren's reflection that his troubles had come with the building of the road, that once it was built, it was easy for bad luck to find him" (Blotner 249). In many ways, Faulkner transforms Jason Compson's disdain for the development of poor-quality public roads funded by public tax dollars in *The Sound and the Fury* into the kernel of *As I Lay Dying's* conception with Anse Bundren. Roads, as we have seen, surface everywhere in Yoknapatawpha County, but they are nowhere more apparent, more deliberated, and perhaps more "flouting" than in *As I Lay Dying* (38).

The Good Roads Movement in the United States near the turn of the 20th Century was motivated by a number of different political energies from a number of political sources. It associated itself with notions of development, improvement, and modernity. The issue of good roads in the U.S. South was not only a regional concern. Its history attests to a diverse cross-section of political interests, including appealing greatly to the "reform impulses" of progressives across the nation (Preston 12). Improved southern roads became representational sites of aspiration, seeking to bring inhabitants of the rural South more fully into the nation. Under the direction of its National Committee on the Improvement of Highways, the League of American Wheelmen disseminated an illustrated pamphlet in 1891 entitled the "Gospel of Good Roads: A Letter to the

American Farmer." Its author, Isaac B. Potter, entreats his readers to consider the condition of roads in the U.S. South, seeing "the road question [as] far and away the most important one to the American farmer" (9), and offers up the pamphlet as a "way for the enrichment of [the farmer's] slender purse and the betterment of [his condition]" (6). Potter's treatise collects images, statistics, and anecdotes from across the United States and abroad to persuade the American farmer in the South to improve the road system. Improving the road system would benefit not only the farmers of the region, but also the nation at large, as Potter acknowledges the southern farmer as a measuring stick for the well-being of the nation, as "the prime source of national wealth" (6).

Despite his particular insistence upon an American nationalism in his appeal to the southern farmer, Potter argues for a European model for the "management and maintenance of the public roads," indicating that "these countries are practically unanimous in their policy of placing the important roads under the direct management of the general government and of paying the expenses of construction and maintenance out of the general funds of the State" (32). In making road management and maintenance the responsibility of the State through its use of taxpayer money, Potter argues, roads would save money in the long run and would provide more frequent repair than had previously existed: "The cheapest way to care for a road and to keep it in repair is to place it in charge of some person who will be held responsible for its condition throughout the entire year. In your township the roads are mended or 'worked' once, or at the most twice a year, and for the balance of the season are neglected" (36). When Potter refers to the fact that the roads are typically worked on "once, or at the most twice a year," he is

referring to a common practice of local farmers' road "repair days" to pay a "labor tax." Before federal intervention, southern roads were largely maintained through a small road tax paid by farmers in the form of labor—repairing roads themselves when the harvest season allowed.[21] Often a means to drink with other local farmers, these labor tax-driven repair days typically involved moving loose dirt into the center of the road, a makeshift attempt to give the roads water-shedding crowns for the rainy seasons.[22] These repair days accomplished little in the way of improving the roads, and so it is not surprising that southern roads were among the worst in the nation.

In order to convince the southern farmer of his responsibility and his potential rewards from road development, the Good Roads Movement sought to have farmers adopt a more "scientific" perspective, re-imagining the roads as technical objects or as technologies in and of themselves.[23] After all, this push for good roads came during a burgeoning age of science, in which "man believed nature was governable and scientists were daily promulgating new laws to subdue it" (Barry 51). According to Christopher Wells, one of the most significant changes borne from the initial good-roads campaigns of the 1890s was this intellectual shift toward science and technology: as farmers began

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[21] For more on this labor tax, see Wells, "The Changing Nature of Country Roads: Farmers, Reformers, and the Shifting Uses of Rural Space, 1880-1905."

[22] In a 1901 Bulletin by the Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station, JW Fox and WL Hutchinson enumerate the faults of such a repair system: "The defects in the system are evident. Three most glaring are: (1) The labor tax is not honestly paid […]. (2) The labor that is given to the roads is not intelligently directed. […] (3) The time and character of work is made to suit the convenience of the hands rather than the needs of the road." ("Good Dirt Roads for Mississippi," 4).

[23] As Potter puts it, "I have heard American farmers say that they were opposed to having the public roads put in charge of civil engineers; that they had no desire to be 'scientific' and were opposed to 'scientific' management of the public roads. […] Let me tell you in the most friendly way in the world that you could not, to save your soul, help being scientific. You are scientific when you paint your house, put tallow on your boots, grease on your wagon-axle […]" (34). This appeal conflates technical action with a "scientific" quality, in order to appease southern anxieties about modern science and engineering.

to engage with the broader and increasingly more modern world, they traded "the belief that roads were 'natural' local resource to be husbanded for the idea that they were 'technological' publicly owned tools to be engineered through human ingenuity" (144). Potter indeed asks directly in the "Gospel of Good Roads," "Did it ever occur to you that this road is part of the machinery of agriculture?" (8).[24] This kind of intellectual battleground forced farmers to rethink their roads as more than just "natural" phenomena shaped by the interaction between their use and the weather. According to Wells, typical "rural conversations about road conditions often resembled conversations about the weather" (147). This was largely due to the fact that although farmers "knew that they could influence road conditions in a caretaking capacity," they ultimately "believed that their influence paled in comparison to the power frosts and thaws, water and wind, and the characteristics of the soil that formed any particular road's surface" (147, 148). Most often, these natural phenomena were attributed to God's will, and so within this rural worldview, roads were indeed the responsibility of the farmer, but a responsibility that recognized their limited agency and control in the face of natural changes brought about by Providence. In this way, rural roads became a site of struggle between the kinds of environmental and religious stewardship that imagined the farmer as a responsible caretaker of God's lands and the kinds of modern management that emphasized the capacity of human engineering and organization to transform the land itself. Despite rural

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[24] Potter's line of questioning continues, locating roads within a larger sociotechnical nexus: "That your farm wagon is a machine, pure and simple, and that the road bears the same relation to your wagon that the steel rail bears to the railway car?" (8). Potter acknowledges Southern reticence toward new technological forms such as the locomotive and the telegraph, but reveals the extent to which they have saved time, labor, and money once implemented in the region. He argues that improved roads would be just as enriching, if not more so, than these technologies.

resistance, progressive reformers eventually “dislodge[d] the prevailing rural view that roads were a product of nature and the seasons,” replacing it “with the idea that roads were a man-made technology that could be engineered in ways that could improve rural life” (Wells 151-2).

In advocating for this intellectual shift and for centralizing road-building responsibilities under expert guidance and control, Good Roads reformers also continually pointed to the economic benefits that would emerge from specific rural road improvements. However, farmers were reluctant to embrace the economic argument, wary that the economic benefits would offset the increased taxes and initial costs of new roads. The initial costs and continual taxation to invest in the roads far exceeded what farmers were used to paying, and under the proposal, they would no longer be able to pay their share in the form of labor. State aid for roads became the compromise between progressive reformers and local farmers, “which reduced local fiscal responsibility for road projects in exchange for moving toward centralizing authority over roads” (Wells 156). Although “[s]tates divided the costs and responsibilities among various levels of government differently,” most governing bodies operated on the principle that “the changing uses of rural space made it impossible to regard all country roads as strictly local in character” (Wells 157). Rather, as these roads could be increasingly considered as pathways within a networked assemblage of rural and urban interests, local communities could no longer recognize their roads as their own and their responsibility. Financed by the public treasury and used “increasingly for non-local as well as local

purposes, rural roads," Wells explains, "were becoming 'public roads' in fact as well as name" (157).

Ultimately, these paradigm shifts that reconsidered roads as technological rather than natural, and as built and maintained through a centralized authority rather than local prerogatives, created space for private interests in the North and South to more easily co-opt and reroute the original intentions of the Good Roads Movement away from benefitting southern farmers. As Preston describes it, because of the "immediate prospect of attracting automobile tourists from other parts of the country, business-minded southerners were able to transform the good roads movement from an effort to construct rural farm-to-market roads into a well-funded, highly visible, and sustained effort to build tourist highways" (4-5). Despite its entreaties on behalf of the local farmer, much of the rhetoric surrounding the proposed improvement of southern roadways eventually became couched in paradigms of "federal nationalism, […] franchise consumerism, and Northern capital" (Murphet, *Faulkner's Media Romance* 89). As a result, the road system whose incipient construction was motivated by the economic promise of connecting farm-to-city markets now found itself breaking ground instead for the profitable prospects of "enhanced tourism from the North and the flow-on effects on real estate and capital accumulation" (Murphet 89). Desiring the economic booms of such enhanced tourism, state-aid programs "generally funded only well-traveled routes of clear trans-local importance, thus leaving less-traveled local roads—well over 90 percent of the rural road system—beyond the pale of state aid" (Wells 157).

Funding interstate highways rather than local and regional roads for farm-to-market travel created a sharper distinction between good roads and regional "backroads." Interstate highways opened the U.S. South to the rest of the nation and "introduced southerners to a new national popular culture manifest in filling stations, tourist cabins, endless roadside advertising, [and] a variety of automobile-related businesses that accelerated the South toward modernization" (Preston 7-8).[25] The Good Roads Movement ultimately "failed to bring about the new rural South of less austerity and greater accessibility that farmers and progressive-thinking southerners originally projected" (Preston 95). In place of this imagined new South, the construction of tourist highways proved integral to "the emergence of a different South: one that conformed more closely to national rather than regional standards, and one with a future that promised prosperity not to farmers but to the business community" (Preston 95). Contrary to their transformative ambitions, the Good Roads Movement, like many road-building projects aimed at repairing uneven geographies of access and mobility, failed to address the historically and socially entrenched inequalities that render the livelihoods of rural inhabitants as precarious. Despite first being presented as a fair and equitable provision that would enhance rural farmers economic and social mobility, the Good Roads Movement amounted more akin to a form what postcolonial scholars refer to as infrastructure's "planned violence," widening the gaps between privileged and underprivileged populations through infrastructural development (Boehmer, Davies).

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[25] Preston elaborates further that these new "highways were the very symbols of progress. They were to the rural South what skyscrapers were to the urban South: an undeniable sign of economic vitality, tangible evidence that the inferior South was finally exchanging its backwardness for progress, and a manifestation of a region that was no longer stagnant but vibrant and on the move" (5).

In *As I Lay Dying*, Faulkner comments on the Good Roads Movement, its rhetoric, and its material and social consequences from multiple perspectives. Voicing protest and support respectively for improved and federally funded roadways, neighbors Anse Bundren and Vernon Tull function as historical nodes in local and national debates about public infrastructure. The novel itself, however, with Faulkner's characterization of the material world, muddies the two polemical viewpoints espoused by Anse and Tull.[26] It is worth remembering that Anse's "Durn that road" diatribe lies at the heart of Faulkner's conception of the novel as a whole, making his polemic against road development worth quoting at length:

> Durn that road. […] A-laying there, right up to my door, where every bad luck that comes and goes is bound to find it. I told Addie it want any luck living on a road when it come by here, and she said, for the world like a woman, "Get up and move, then." But I told her it want no luck in it, because the Lord put roads for travelling: why He laid them down flat on the earth. When He aims for something to be always a-moving, He makes it long ways, like a road or a horse or a wagon, but when He aims for something to stay put, He makes it up-and-down ways, like a tree or a man. And so He never aimed for folks to live on a road, because which gets there first, I says, the road or the house? Did you ever know Him to set a road down by a house? I says. No you never, I says, because it's always men cant rest till they gets the house set where everybody that passes in a wagon can spit in the doorway, keeping the folks restless and wanting to get up and go somewhere else when He aimed for them to stay put like a tree or a strand of corn. Because if He'd a aimed for man to be always a-moving and going somewheres else, wouldn't He a put him longways on his belly, like a snake? It stands to reason He would. (35-6)

[26] Sean Latham has written extensively about the active function of land in Faulkner's work: "Faulkner's cartographic impulse is everywhere evident in his fiction's fascination with space, which rarely functions conventionally as mere backdrop or landscape. Land—its acquisition, maintenance, and loss—pervades the major novels, but it is striking how rarely this land is actually described, how little of it is surveyed by a narrative consciousness" (254). In *As I Lay Dying*, the rural landscape—in its organic and built forms—certainly appears as no "mere backdrop." It shapes and impedes the characters' movements, acting as the major material motivating factor for the novel's actions.

Anse's argument about the roads' bringing "bad luck" operates through a rural worldview that privileges the role of Providence and through the novel's complex geometry—its directional insistence on vertical and horizontal axes of stasis and movement. Anse's logic relies on an understanding of divine will that authorizes man "to stay put," privileging notions of settlement, autonomy, authority, and local stewardship, and the vertical hierarchies embedded within such notions. In contrast, things that are always "a-moving" are often "restless," and according to Anse, attempt to unsettle his God-given authority as patriarch of the family. What's ironic about Anse's comparison between humans, strands of corn, and trees as being vertically emplotted—and thus, fixed in space—is that the novel depicts all three as continuously circulating through various social and economic spaces.[27]

As his diatribe continues, Anse aims his vitriol most forcefully at the effect of roads on his family's farming, this time levying his critique at how roads produce a shortage of kin capable for their agricultural labors:

> Putting it where every bad luck prowling can find it and come straight to my door, charging me taxes on top of it. Making me pay for Cash having to get them carpenter notions when if it hadn't been no road come there, he wouldn't a got them; falling off of churches and lifting no hand in six months and me and Addie slaving and a-slaving, when there's plenty of sawing on this place he could do if he's got to saw.
>
> And Darl too. Talking me out of him, durn them. It aint that I am afraid of work; I always is fed me and mine and kept a roof above us: it's that they would short-hand me just because he tends to his own business, just because he's got his eyes full of the land all the time. I says to them, he was alright at first, with his eyes

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[27] Corn, after all, attains its value for the Bundrens only in its capacity to be moved into the marketplace and sold as a good. Even more, as we will see more fully in the following section, trees are hardly stationary in the novel. Like the Bundrens who are forced to move throughout their region because of forces beyond their control, so too do trees in the form of lumber circulate throughout the nation as products of the timber industry.

> full of the land, because the land laid up-and-down ways then; it wasn't till that ere road come and switched the land around longways and his eyes still full of the land, that they begun to threaten me out of him, trying to short-hand me with the law.
>
> Making me pay for it. She was well and hale as ere a woman ever were, except for that road. (36-7)

Altogether, Anse blames the roads for Cash "having to get them carpenter notions," which resulted in his broken leg from a fall from a roof, leaving him unable to work the farm for half of a year; for Darl's drafting into World War I, resulting in another labor shortage for the family ("trying to short-hand me with the law"); and finally for Addie's declining health and eventual death—apparently, she "was well and hale as ere a woman ever were, except for the road." Anse's protest here stems from a feeling of subservience, from a transition from local autonomy to national governance. The new roadways widen the environs of which he is a part, a modern public that is thickening with new socioeconomic and political networks. These new developments deprive Anse of what little power, privacy, and autonomy he had as a poor farmer.[28] Having already lost his position as capable patriarch of the family, he has also seemingly lost control over his land and his sons. As Matthews has put it, "Anse blames the expansion of state authority as much as any natural catastrophe for his troubles[.] It is state paternalism in the twenties and thirties that replaces the individual father's authority in the modernized United States, but such paternalism is a social transformation that […] helps to expose the arbitrary authority of the father in the nuclear family" ("Machine Age" 77). The "taxes on

[28] To be sure, Faulkner ironizes Anse's criticism of the roads because Anse himself looks forward to the consumer enticements that lie ahead in the city, thinking that the commodity culture of Jefferson "will be a comfort" (111).

top of it" ironically constitute Anse's belonging to the state and amplify the blow. In contrast to Anse, Vernon Tull participates within the emerging economic and state-related networks of the modernizing South and comes to defend the roads. Before the Bundrens embark for Jefferson, Tull assuages Anse's anxieties about the funeral journey to bury Addie: "'Sho,' Vernon says, 'she'll hold on till [the coffin's] finished. She'll hold on till everything's ready, till her own good time. And with the roads like they are now, it wont take you no time to get her to town'" (18). The roads "like they are now," according to Tull, embody a recent improvement in rural infrastructure, and by commenting on the present condition of the roads that connect farm to town, he suggests that the funerary journey to Jefferson will be quick and efficient, providing a modern technological and temporal contrast to the slow ecology of Addie's dying. Significantly, the same scene is narrated again from Tull's perspective a few chapters later, although the dialogue is slightly different, and some of the language is attributed differently. Its first iteration is set within a chapter narrated by Anse's son Darl. The second time is from Tull's perspective: "But the roads is good now," I say. It's fixing to rain tonight, too" (29). Faulkner transforms Tull's qualifying clause—"the roads like they are now"—into the more assertive and declarative, "the roads is good now." This verbal transformation emphasizes a rhetorical movement toward "good" roads. The sentence is reformed by Faulkner as a way to call attention to the Good Roads Movement and how they have insured the "good" quality of the roads.

Vernon Tull's surname, Cliff Staebler suggests, recalls Jethro Tull and thereby alludes to a kind of agricultural husbandry increasingly becoming modern through

technological means (27). Tull himself is consistently implicated within the new socioeconomic relations of a U.S. Southern modernity, such as the rural-to-urban economy constituted by his wife's cake-baking for the townswoman Miss Lawington—albeit a failed transaction—and such as his participation in a regional and national lumber economy to pay off his mortgage. Staebler argues that "Vernon's successful ability to move lumber illustrates his mobility and his ideological willingness to embrace change" (29). Because he participates in a more modern agronomic economy, it makes sense that Tull would champion the new roads circulating through the U.S. South, touting the "now" of the South's present modernity as producing new possibilities for social and economic exchange.

Like the Tulls, the Bundrens also attempt to engage in this new lumber economy, in order to improve their economic standing. However, during Darl and Jewel's attempt to make three dollars off of a sale of lumber, the Bundren family's wagon breaks down. Despite Tull's insistence that the "roads is good now," the wagon cannot withstand the muddy conditions of the roads. Darl's narration of the wagon's breakdown comes as a narrative intrusion, set apart by italics, from his clairvoyant depiction of his mother Addie's death. His attention to the broken wagon is highly aestheticized, bringing the materiality of the poorly maintained roads into Faulkner's formal modernism:

> *In the rain the mules smoke a little, splashed yellow with mud, the off one clinging in sliding lunges to the side of the road above the ditch. The tilted lumber gleams dull yellow, water-soaked and heavy as lead, tilted at a steep angle into the ditch above the broken wheel; about the shattered spokes and about Jewel's ankles a runnel of yellow neither water nor earth swirls, curving with the yellow road neither of earth nor water, down the hill dissolving into a streaming mass of dark green neither of earth nor sky.* (49)

Like Addie's corpse, the roads are in a state of decomposition. Here, Darl collapses various distinctions between earth, water, and sky, and the categories are "only to be held in place by chiasmus" (Godden 243).[29] Faulkner's characteristic formal negatives imagine the road as no longer a material road, but rather a liminal, if not purely aesthetic space. However, the fact that the wagon breaks down in this "not-road" does have a material explanation: the "great destroyers of the common earth roads," according to Potter's "Gospel of Good Roads," were "water and narrow wheel tires" (39). The "ruts in every dirt road are multiplied and made deeper and more troublesome because the hind wheels of the ordinary farm wagon 'track' the front ones" (Potter 40). Within the novel, the "stogged wagon," as Richard Godden puts it, "functions primarily to impede transition, from work to wage; from dying to death; its broken wheel slows the Bundrens' departure, setting a precedent for motion as all but stasis" (243). Despite Tull's insistence on the quality of improvements made on rural roads through his repetition of Good Roads Movement rhetoric, the fact that the Bundren family's wagon breaks down signals the gap between the promise of the infrastructural development and the cruel material reality of its poor rural roadways. In other words, Tull's rhetoric insists on a kind of faith in modern development, but by a cruel twist of fate, that modern development and its attendant associations of progress have not yet come to the isolated hamlets the Bundrens and other rural farmers call home. The poor road quality creates the feeling that progress, narratively and materially, is not taking place, if not altogether impossible. Or, as Darl

[29] Godden writes, "that which is 'neither water nor earth' cannot go far where formally constrained to recur as 'neither of earth nor water': further, one chiasmus implies another, ensuring that 'earth' and 'sky,' as 'sky' and 'earth,' will retain their distinctions, albeit tacitly, no matter what the 'stream' or 'dissolution'" ("Mired Mediations" 243).

himself notes about their journey, “We go on, with a motion so soporific, so dreamlike as to be uninferant of progress, as though time and not space were decreasing between us and it” (108).

What is most striking about Faulkner’s depiction of these rural infrastructural failures is that when the roads do fail to facilitate physical movement efficiently, their failure facilitates aesthetic movement for Darl, stretching time and space in a way that orients, if not altogether informs, his artistic sensibility, not to mention Faulkner’s.[30] The novel becomes much more than a mere documentation of the realities of uneven infrastructural development; the novel comes to formalize these very realities. At play is the dialectical tension between modernism and modernization, the process, as Matthews has put it, that “mediates social reality by turning it into aesthetic form” (“Machine Age” 73). Although Murphet has shown that the relative slowness of wagon travel had formerly produced the pastoralized prose of Southern romance, the slowed movements of the Bundren family produce a different kind of aesthetics, adopting prose forms informed by fragmentation and contradiction. For example, after Darl describes the movement of their wagon as “uninferant of progress,” he maps the road itself:

> It turns off at right angles, the wheel-marks of last Sunday healed away now: a smooth, red scoriation curving away into the pines; a white signboard with faded lettering: New Hope Church. 3 mi. It wheels up like a motionless hand lifted above the profound desolation of the ocean; beyond it the red road lies like a spoke of which Addie Bundren is the rim. It wheels past, empty, unscarred, the white signboard turns away its fading and tranquil assertion. […] The signboard passes; the unscarred road wheels on. […] The wagon creaks on. (108)

[30] Darl’s aesthetic perception is often attributed to the fact that “he’s got his eyes full of the land all the time” (36).

Through description of the road that "turns off at right angles" and that assesses the road's material quality via the passage of time (since "last Sunday"), this scene echoes the novel's opening in which Darl and Jewel walk along the footpaths of the Bundren farm that also turn at "four soft right angles" around their cottonhouse.[31] This scene, like the novel's opening, articulates Darl's peculiar eye for material proximity and positionality, as well as for the blurred formal relations between subjects and objects. By referring to the road itself here as a "smooth, red scoriation," Darl marks it as a site of contradiction. At once, the road is characterized as "smooth," suggesting the capability of the Bundren's wagon to pass over it without impediment, and as a "scoriation," a crudely cut furrow or trench, which implies that it would hardly be smooth at all.[32] The contradictions continue in the passage, as the signboard along the roadside actively "wheels up" while also appearing "motionless," producing a chiasmic sense of arrested motion. The road and sign exchange descriptors as well, as the road too "wheels past" and "wheels on," suggesting that the materials of the road become the source of movement, rather than the mule-driven wagon. However, even though the road itself "lies

[31] Darl's aesthetic economy in the novel's opening scene transforms Faulkner's modernist textures into formal shapes and patterns that become guiding forces throughout the novel. The opening of the novel demonstrates its penchant for multiple perspectives when Darl and Jewel walk toward the family home from their field "following the path in single file" when Darl's perspective shifts from imagining "anyone watching us," to an almost aerial perspective: "The path runs straight as a plumb-line, worn smooth by feet and baked brick-hard by July, between the green rows laidby cotton, to the cottonhouse, in the center of the field, where it turns and circles the cottonhouse at four soft right angles and goes on across the field again, worn so by feet in fading precision" (3). Not only does this opening scene perform the novel's "cubist aesthetics," but Darl's bird's-eye view of the Bundren farm also articulates unfolding geometries of labor, refracting through metaphor and metonymy the labor of technology ("plumb-line"), human farmers ("feet"), ecology ("July"), and material economies ("cotton"). Cotton is simultaneously the material, geographic, and economic center of the family's way of life, as well as the dominant term of Faulkner's labyrinthine sentence, as if generating the twists and turns of his syntax.

[32] We also might think of the strange word "scoriation" as a composite term that combines "excoriate" and "striation," which would imply that wagon wheels have flayed or scratched parallel grooves into the road itself, characterizing their development as a kind of violent instantiation.

like a spoke," suggesting that it functions as a supportive structure for movement, we know that the mottled surfaces of these rural roads have already caused the "shattered spokes" of the Bundren wagon earlier in the novel. Even if this particular road remains relatively "unscarred," Faulkner's description of it gestures toward the material circumstances that transform the Bundren family's suspended traversal of it as "uninferant of progress." Faulkner reinforces this notion of arrested motion by having the Bundrens recross this exact road in the other direction after being turned away by a washed-out bridge, making the "motionless hand" of the white signboard for New Hope Church feel always out of reach.[33] After all, they never get closer than three miles to New Hope, its name a resonant, if not altogether ironic, commentary on the inability of rural Southerners to access the promises of modernity.

This reversal of motion occurs throughout the novel, as the Bundrens are forced to redouble the distance of their journey time and time again due to the effects of poorly maintained rural infrastructure. Even more, these forced returns have significant implications for the form of the novel itself, including its plot and narrative temporality. Although, as Patrick Samway admits, the novel "appears to have a deceptively uncomplicated plotline" (284) that moves in a seemingly straightforward manner—from Addie Bundren's death to her burial in Jefferson—Joshua Kavaloski argues otherwise, as

[33] A few monologues after Darl's aesthetic contemplation of the road and signboard, Faulkner replays the scene from Dewey Dell's perspective, a perspective that magnifies the anxieties induced by confrontations with the modern world: "The signboard comes in sight. It is looking out at the road now, because it can wait. New Hope. 3 mi. it will say. New Hope. 3 mi. New Hope. 3 mi. And then the road will begin, curving away into the trees, empty with waiting, saying New Hope three miles. I heard that my mother is dead. I wish I had time to let her die. I wish I had time to wish I had. It is because in the wild and outraged earth too soon too soon too soon. It's not that I wouldn't and will not it's that it is too soon too soon too soon. Now it begins to say it. New Hope three miles. New Hope three miles" (120-1).

he suggests that in the novel's opening scene the path's rerouting at the cottonhouse, its loss of perfect material linearity, "prefigures a profound failure of linearity *of* the narrative, so that the novel's literary form uses performativity to unsettle the convention of unidirectional progress" (167). We might think of the Bundrens rerouting along the road three miles from New Hope as prefiguring the same failure of linearity of the narrative. Kavaloski refers to Faulkner's unsettling of linearity as occurring through a "chiasmatic mode of time whereby past, present, and future overlap not just in narrative organization of the story, but in the story world itself (167).[34] If this layering of chiasmatic modes of time opens for Darl a contemplative and aesthetic space, for the other Bundrens, such as his sister Dewey Dell, this complex experience of time is unbearable.

Although the roads of the New U.S. South promise a kind of progress, a new hope of belonging to the modern nation, to the Bundrens, this progress is felt at best as inaccessible, always just out of reach, and at worst as traumatic, repeatedly coming "too soon too soon too soon" (121). Faulkner uses the infrastructural lacks and gaps in his "little postage stamp of native soil" to his aesthetic advantage. He eschews the plotted progression of a linear narrative in favor of psychological sketches and digressions from those left behind by material forms of infrastructural progress. Whereas the state has refused them the space through which to move efficiently and smoothly, Faulkner

[34] Unlike *The Sound and the Fury*, and unlike Faulkner's later novel, *Absalom, Absalom!*, *As I Lay Dying* largely avoids heavily stylized temporal jumps and ripples. Even if the temporal momentum feels relatively straightforward, time in the novel is more complex than initially meets the eye. For more on the unique temporal qualities of the novel, see Pardis Dabashi, "'too soon too soon too soon': Continuity, Blame, and the Limits of the Present in *As I Lay Dying*."

provides the Bundrens with ample textual spaces for reflection and representation, positing alternate experiences of modernization from modernity's rural "backroads." Significantly for Faulkner, the experience of travel along these deteriorating rural backroads yields "high" aesthetic effects just as readily and just as urgently as the experiences of driving on modern superhighways or walking through bustling urban scenes. If the Bundren family cannot actively and effectively participate in the emerging social, economic, and political networks of the modern nation because of the poor quality of the roads, Faulkner allows his characters to participate in the aesthetic and representational economies of an international modernism, as if to link the Bundrens—and thereby, the rural South—upward through formal associations with high culture.

**"They hadn't never see the river so high": The Great Mississippi Flood and the Disaster of Modernity**

What makes the southern roadways even more impassable than usual in the novel are the aftereffects of a storm the night Addie dies, which transforms backroads into backwaters.[35] Faulkner attaches references to this storm to every reference to the Good Roads Movement. For example, after Tull says, "the roads is good now," he thinks to himself, "It's fixing to rain tonight, too" (29). This is a pattern that repeats throughout the novel—a comment on the roads followed by a comment on the storm—which yolks weather patterns into the infrastructural geographies of the South. Anse recognizes how the rains would impact road conditions and thus delay his sons' journey to deliver the

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[35] Just as the Bundren family waits for Addie to die, they also wait for the impending storm. One character describes the feeling before the storm as follows: "The sun, an hour above the horizon, is poised like a bloody egg upon a crest of thunderheads; the light has turned copper: in the eye portentous, in the nose sulphorous, smelling of lightning" (40).

sale of lumber: "Durn that road," he reflects, "And it fixing to rain, too. I can stand here and same as see it with second-sight, a-shutting down behind them like a wall, shutting down betwixt them and my given promise" (35). The muddy roads are such an impediment in Anse's "second-sight," that he likens the roads to "a wall," a legitimate barrier to mobility. Not only do these poor road conditions establish a barrier "betwixt them and [Anse's] given promise" of burying Addie in Jefferson, but they also impede him from accessing the given "promise[s]" of what lies ahead in town—namely, the commodities and consumer goods of urban life.

The effects of the storm are both immediate and long-term. Neighbors report that the river's rising waters have washed out a bridge, causing the Bundrens to reroute their journey. Neighbors attending Addie's funeral exchange small talk about the bridge:

> "I knowed it would go," Armstid says.
> "It's been there a long time, that ere bridge," Quick says.
> "The Lord has kept it there, you mean," Uncle Billy says, "I dont know ere a man that's touched a hammer to it in twenty-five years."
> "How long has it been there, Uncle Billy?" Quick says.
> "It was built in …..let me see…..It was in the year 1888," Uncle Billy says. "I mind it because the first man to cross it was Peabody coming to my house when Jody was born." (88-9)

Infrastructural decline and decay are inevitable consequences of infrastructure's materiality. Wood bridges, like the one mentioned here, are hardly permanent structures. They require continual maintenance and repair. The collapse of this bridge becomes a near certainty due to public neglect and to systems that didn't make infrastructural repair and maintenance a priority. Because the washed-out bridge hadn't had "a hammer to it in twenty-five years" and because it was doubtful to be rebuilt, Faulkner represents the lack of care for rural infrastructure, leaving the material spaces of transport for rural

southerners in disrepair and vulnerable to the damaging effects of harsh weather. Although these men pay their last respects to Addie Bundren, demonstrating a type of neighborly care for one another, it's clear that neither they nor the State have extended their care for their material technological environment, leaving them underprepared for the effects of the storm. Elsewhere in the novel, Faulkner describes the region's harsh weather as "slow, violent; shaping and creating the life of man in its implacable and brooding image" (45),[36] a description that calls to mind Rob Nixon's "slow violence." As with Nixon's conception of slow violence, the novel doesn't just show how weather affects man-made structures like roads and bridges; it also shows how infrastructural development shapes weather patterns and ecological systems, positioning infrastructure and the environment as co-constitutive.

To understand the flood that occupies the dramatic center of the novel, the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927, we must understand how it happened.[37] By the turn of the twentieth century, the Mississippi River and its many tributaries served as environmental and economic lifelines for much of the United States, providing potable water for drinking and alluvial soil for fertile farms, as well as acting as a transportation network for goods and commerce. However, as Richard Mizelle puts it, "[w]hat riparian landscapes provided to the region from the richness of soil and alluvial content was easily taken away by seasonal flooding in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, making survival alongside the Mississippi River a precarious give and take with nature" (4). Its

[36] This characterization of weather comes from Doctor Peabody, and the full quote is worth citing: "That's the one trouble with this country: everything, weather, all, hangs on too long. Like our rivers, our land: opaque, slow, violent; shaping and creating the life of man in its implacable and brooding image" (45).
[37] For more on approaches to Faulkner and the Great Mississippi Flood, see Parrish and Caison.

complex hydraulic and geographical makeup consists not only of the River itself, but also its greater environs such as its floodplains, drainage basins, tributaries, swamps, headwaters, and backwaters. Control of the River and its environs became crucial for the region's growth, but also "set the stage for an epic battle between humans and the Mississippi River that led to the 1927 flood" (Mizelle 4). "Because the Mississippi watershed is a continental land feature funneling matter, and material practices, of the North, West, and East into the Gulf South," according to Susan Scott Parrish, "its hydro-geography turned the river's Delta into a place that made national (and global) environmental regimes visible" (4). Before human intervention, the Mississippi River had naturally formed barriers called high ridges, the amalgam of soil deposits at the water's edge from seasonal flooding. In the early nineteenth century, artificial levees—often "simple embankments, normally no more than three to six feet high, built of a combination of sod, clay, and cypress slabs"—were erected by and were the responsibility of nearby individual landowners, who often "used black slave labor or Irish workers to build and maintain the structures" (Mizelle 4). Like rural roadways in the South, these antebellum levees were noticeably "uneven and poorly designed" (4). Without a centralized standard of implementation or federal intervention to finance and develop an effective and efficient network of levees across a number of states, these makeshift levees often reflected power imbalances that stemmed from economic disparities: the property of wealthy landowners often had protection, while poorer areas were left with little security.

Similar to the debates surrounding the construction of new southern roads, one of the most central questions regarding the construction and maintenance of levees was who had the authority to make decisions about levee building and how could they be implemented across disparate local and state environments. In 1879, Congress created the Mississippi River Commission, a bureaucratic entity comprised of officials from states along the Mississippi River, aimed to address the lack of unified river management and levee construction and maintenance. Along with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Mississippi River Commission inaugurated engineering policies at the turn of the century in an effort to consolidate mechanisms for controlling the river. The Mississippi River Commission policy implementations included closing the river off from its natural outlets and reservoirs, and building levees as the sole means by which to control the river's flow. In theory, these shifts toward modern engineering were designed to make the river more predictable for nearby regions. They promised a kind of security through technological control. However, they also were designed to make the lands of the watershed more profitable. Because profit often trumps protection, these changes in the built environment made the southernmost regions of the Mississippi Valley much more vulnerable to flooding because this "levees only" approach forced the river to carry a greater volume of water and increased the strength and velocity of its current. Relying solely on a towering system of levees was an ill-conceived compromise between politicians, engineers, scientists, and Delta landowners. Because the volume of the River increased on account of the construction of these levees, engineers had to continually build taller and taller levees in order to deal with the rising waters, meaning that a "break in the larger, modern

levees [would wreak] tremendous devastation" (Randolph 48). The construction of these levees created a precarious situation for poor whites and African-Americans who lived in the Mississippi Delta, as they would bear the brunt of the River's volatile changes from the implementation of these levees.

Although the "levees only" approach dominated flood control politics of the early twentieth century, other land-use interventions amplified the flood risks for the greater Mississippi region.[38] The region's history of monoculture farming, industrial deforestation, and wetlands drainage—which altogether cleared millions of acres for development, road-building, and population resettlement (Parrish 24)—contributed to the changing weather patterns and the more volatile ecology of the region. Monoculture farming, characterized by the overreliance on planting and harvesting cotton in the U.S. South, altered the water cycles of regional biospheres, increasing their susceptibility to ecological instability. Intact forests often provide natural flood control and contribute to other critical forms of environmental support such as purifying the air, ensuring a clean supply of drinking water, and soaking up carbon pollution from the atmosphere. However, the lumber industry near the turn of the century cleared forests across Mississippi River region for further development, including road construction. Because wetlands are naturally major flood-control agents, their drainage and subsequent

[38] Parrish discusses the influx of development that transformed the region: "The Delta bottomlands of southeastern Missouri, eastern Arkansas, northwestern Mississippi, and northeastern Louisiana, which at first seemed too impenetrable for cultivation, came to attract outside capital investment in the later nineteenth century. Not only were lumbermen interested in the bottomland forests, but investors were now poised to 'reclaim' the rich alluvial soil for cotton. Along with deforestation, they needed to drain the wetlands and then protect the exposed soil from the very flooding that had constituted and nourished it. Allegiances of outside investors, big southern planters, and economically depressed but resource-rich postbellum southern states came together to accomplish these ends" (26).

development left the denuded soil of the watershed unable to help absorb and stall the effects of heavy rains. These transformations in land-use practices created an ecological maelstrom, increasing the volatility of weather patterns, while stripping the land of its natural flood barriers.

As a result of the combination of "levees only" engineering and the particular weather effects produced by monoculture farming, deforestation, and wetlands drainage, the number of annual floods increased in number and in effect over the course of the 1910s and the 1920s.[39] In the winter and spring months of 1927, consistent torrential rainfall throughout the country caused the Mississippi River to swell beyond its already elevated water levels, surpassing record flood stages. Runoff from melting snow in northern states saturated the watersheds already straining to manage the excess waters. As these excess waters accumulated and plunged southward, the "levees only" policy was put to its most difficult test, and the result was a catastrophic failure. As the waters tried to seek their own level without its natural outlets and floodplains, the River's force became too great for the artificial levees to withstand. These breaches first occurred in

[39] Oftentimes such floods generated print discourse in newspapers about local and collective responsibility, as well as about potential reparations for the damage that was inflicted. Newspapers simultaneously appealed to and produced public sentiment regarding the floods, which affected political perspectives at local and national scales. The "public relations campaign that coincided with the 1912 flood and another devastating flood the next year garnered enough public sentiment to sway all the major political parties to incorporate planks in their platforms 'recognizing the national character' of the disasters and committing their candidates 'to the speedy resolution of the problem'" (Randolph 49). The 1917 Ransdell-Humphreys Flood Control Act initiated federal aid for two-thirds of levee construction along the Mississippi River, while "[l]ocal interests remained responsible for acquiring the right-of-way and some maintenance costs" (Randolph 49). Despite renewed and increased allocation of federal funding to improve and increase levee quality and quantity, the lower Mississippi Valley continued to flood because of the flawed design of anthropogenic control over the River. Continuing to implement a "levees only" policy, while also suffering from other harmful effects of technological interventions with the region's land, did little to quell the region's increased vulnerability to floods.

northern states, and the cascading levee failures created a domino effect of disaster. Once northern levees broke down due to higher volumes and faster currents, it was inevitable that disaster would come to the Deep South. By April and May, federal levees along the Lower Mississippi began to breach. By late spring, floodwaters destroyed more than 120 levees and flooded over one thousand square miles of land across the country. The breadth of the disaster was immense, as thousands perished during and in the aftermath of the flood. Millions of people were temporarily or permanently displaced, and economic damages were calculated in the billions of dollars according to 1927 figures (Mizelle 9). Marginalized communities, such as the poor whites and African Americans that constituted much of the Mississippi Delta region, were disproportionately impacted by the flood. Uneven infrastructural implementation yielded an uneven disaster.

Disasters like this flood acquire their meaning, in scope and scale, through their mediation, through the images and narratives that thicken around the event. The Great Mississippi Flood, according to Parrish, might be the first and most distinctly modern disaster to afflict the United States “because of the particular social and cultural conditions at play in the event”: “Telephones, the wireless, and the radio, combined with aerial surveillance, made communication about the flood across vast distances almost instantaneous. […] [T]hese technologies speedily *produced* the geographic extent of the disaster” (48). As newly established media circuits[40] hooked national audiences through day-by-day accounts of the spectacle and appeals to mobilize resources on behalf of those

[40] Shortly before the flood began, the radio had become a newly nationalized and regulated medium, when “a Radio Act was signed into law that gave the new Federal Radio Commission the power to divide the country into zones, assign frequencies, and control licensing” (Parrish 71).

affected by the disaster, the flood's mediation cast the nation at large as an audience in the daily theater of environmental disaster and social and economic crisis. The radio created a sense of immediacy, enabling listeners to experience an event as it happened. It was the only medium that could be experienced at the precisely same time by a mass of people, forming a new kind of "imagined community" of listeners, to borrow from Benedict Anderson. Herbert Hoover, whose radio broadcasts about the flood captured the country's attention and ushered in a new era of broadcast nationalism, declared the flood to be the greatest peacetime disaster in U.S. history, as it caused an overwhelming amount of human suffering and economic damage across seven states. The flood resulted in a "logistical nightmare for the federal government and the American people in terms of how best to respond to citizens in need" (Mizelle 1). As such, it informed notions of national identity and collective belonging: "Nationhood was the distinctly modern political geography in which the flood occurred, for the catastrophe occurred very much as a national drama—a drama in which the U.S. citizenry publicly wondered about what obligations national union entailed" (Parrish 48). Because of the utility and the efficacy of the radio's ability to unify experience across distances, to create a shared cultural event, to communicate collective meaning, the government enlisted the power of private communications infrastructures in order to bring together the public in the work and the cost of disaster aid.[41] Whereas infrastructural failures and human interventions in the land produced the conditions for the devastating flood to occur, new communications

[41] "The state needed to use commercially owned networks to mediate between a 'disaster-stricken population' and the rest of the nation. Newspaper and radio outlets made themselves available to do this work of mediation, and simultaneously noted and promoted their function as the vital pathways in a top-down, diffusive program of national coherence" (Parrish 71).

infrastructures such as newly regulated radio broadcasts produced the conditions by which the flood could have meaning for the nation.[42]

In the case of *As I Lay Dying*, Faulkner draws upon these rich histories of human interventions with the environment and the forms of technological mediation that positioned the Flood as a uniquely modern mediated event. For example, in the novel, some of the changes in land use that contributed to the Flood's ferocity can be found in Tull's lumber practices. Faulkner positions Tull's lumber practices in relation to both roadwork and flood control through a conversation late in the novel between Cash and Darl, when they are trying to find the ford to cross the flooded river in their wagon:

> 'I reckon we're still in the road, all right.'
>
> 'Tull taken and cut them two big whiteoaks. I heard tell how at high water in the old days they used to line up the ford by them trees.'
>
> 'I reckon he did that two years ago when he was logging down here. I reckon he never thought that anybody would ever use this ford again.'
>
> 'I reckon not. Yes, it must have been then. He cut a sight of timber outen here then. Payed off that mortgage with it, I hear tell.'
>
> 'Yes. Yes, I reckon so. I reckon Vernon could have done that.'
>
> 'That's a fact. Most folks that logs in this here country, they need a durn good farm to support the sawmill. Or maybe a store. But I reckon Vernon could.'
>
> 'I reckon so. He's a sight.'
>
> 'Ay, Vernon is. Yes, it must still be here. He never would have got that timber out of here if he hadn't cleaned out that old road. I reckon we are still on it.' He looks about quietly, at the position of the trees, leaning this way and that, looking back along the floorless road shaped vaguely high in air by the position of the lopped

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[42] In many ways, however, this new sense of national connection was uneven, as the prolonged radio reporting about the flood often was positioned as a gripping narrative of the United States' internal Other for Northern consumption.

> and felled trees, as if the road too had been soaked free of earth and floated upward, to leave in its spectral tracing a monument to a still more profound desolation than this above which we now sit, talking quietly of old security and old trivial things. (142-3)

Through Cash and Darl's conversation, Faulkner represents how Tull contributes locally in the wider deforestation of the region's watershed. Capitalizing on the timber resources on his land, Tull reenacts, as Parrish puts it, "the postbellum practice of southern states that handled their straightened economies by selling off the region's forests […] to external financiers" (220). Further, the passage—as it invokes the ecological ensemble of roads, trees, and the river—adumbrates the imbricated effects of the timber industry, the construction of roads, and flood management.[43] Tull's practices are merely a microcosm of the kind of environmental interventions taking place, but this kind of technological environmental intervention provides an anthropogenic explanation for the flooding that dooms the region and the Bundren family at the center of the novel.

Faulkner formalizes the Flood's historic technological mediation via radio broadcasts by staging the novel as a series of monologues, a concatenation of voices that broadcast not only the diegetic story-world of the novel, but also the characters' inner consciousnesses. Although the gramophone that Cash acquires at the end of the novel has been the eminent audio media technology preoccupying Faulkner scholars over the last few decades,[44] the radio also clearly informs the novel's formal acoustics. Twice, the

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[43] Elsewhere in Faulkner's oeuvre, we also see the connection between deforestation and land development, including the building of roads for automobiles: "People in the neighboring counties […] moved there and *chopped all the trees down* and built themselves mile after mile of identical frame houses with *garage* to match: the very air smelled of affluence and *burning gasoline*" (*Flags in the Dust* 373, emphasis mine).
[44] See Murphet, Knowles, and Matthews in particular.

novel produces its own meta-aesthetic commentary in relation to the radio through the unique acoustic properties of the Bundren house:

> Tilting a little down the hill, as our house does, a breeze draws through the hall all the time, upslanting. A feather dropped near the front door will rise and brush along the ceiling, slanting backward, until it reaches the down-turning current at the back door: so with voices. As you enter the hall, they sound as though they were speaking out of the air about your head. (19-20).[45]

Addie's funeral produces a similar same sonic effect:

> The women sing again. In the thick air it's like the voices come out of the air, flowing together and on in the sad, comforting tunes. When they cease it's like they hadn't gone away. It's like they had just disappeared into the air and when we moved we would loose them again out of the air around us, sad and comforting. (91-2).

Although referring to the air circulating through the house, the phrase "down-turning current" carries a potential connection to electrical currents and electromagnetic waves. Considered in this way, as the voices are carried by the breeze, they are also, as with the mediation of the radio, carried by electrical phenomena. The house itself has become a modern technological instrument of communications media, in which the dynamic interplay between the broadcasting and reception of these voices is carefully delineated: the voices are broadcast "out of the air" and are received by its listeners in the house, as well as by the novel's readers. By encoding the architecture of the house within terms of transmission and reception in this way, Faulkner also stages the mediality of his novel.[46] As each chapter operates as a discrete but embedded monologue, Faulkner encodes the

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[45] Tull observes the same acoustic occasion shortly after this passage: "We can hear the talking, coming out over the draft" (31).

[46] Although Kate Marshall does not write about Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, her book *Corridor: Media Architectures in American Fiction* is incredibly pertinent for theorizing how literary representations of architectural spaces such as the "corridor" function as communications media in a way that reveals the novel's own medial and mediating processes.

novel as a series of interior broadcasts to the reader, transmitting multiple currents of consciousness and voice through different sonic frequencies. Faulkner's use of voice in the novel, however, stages a kind of resistance to typical radio broadcasts, in that rather than adopting a standardized national perspective, the novel grants representational space to unique voices whose local experiences are largely idiosyncratic and thus unyielding to attempts at unification or conformation to a common standard.[47] After all, supplying the Bundren family not only with the space and agency to speak, but also with depths of their social and existential ruminations shatters stereotypical assumptions and expectations about rural life.[48] In doing so, he holds up the Bundrens as worthy of recognition in the face of prevailing national worldviews that considered the South as backwards and as subordinate to the industrial North. If the function of the radio in the particular historical and social contexts of the Mississippi Flood was to enlist aid from across the nation, positioning its victims as belonging to a particular set of national obligations and responsibilities, Faulkner's transmission of the Bundren family's voices in the novel generates a more vocal call for recognition of the rural disenfranchised like the Bundrens.

That we can read the novel as informed by radio technologies—and infrastructure more broadly—in the specific contexts of the Mississippi Flood is emphasized during the Bundren family's encounter with the flooded river at the novel's dramatic center. Faulkner presents the flooded river through a narrative triptych, with three different

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[47] Of course, the novel does reveal a set of shared linguistic customs, as certain rhetorical techniques and phrases are re-used by different characters in different chapters. However, these moments are less about a mechanical reproduction of voice than it is about rural denizens being part of a shared language community.

[48] Even more, Faulkner allows the dead to speak by granting Addie her own monologue after her family faces the disastrous flood.

perspectives representing the family's failed attempt to ford the river safely. Upon reaching the flooded river, Tull explains that "A fellow couldn't tell where was the river and where the land. It was just a tangle of yellow and the levee not less wider than a knife-back" (126). Darl perceives the river as having its own voice: "Before us the thick dark current runs. It talks up to us in a murmur become ceaseless and myriad" (141). The "thick dark current" again brings to the surface a variety of meanings, and the river "talks up" to the Bundrens by transmitting it voice through its current. The river itself becomes a noisy medium, enmeshed in the novel's signal traffic of ecology and infrastructure. Significantly, Faulkner channels the river's voice in relation to trees and roads. When Darl and Cash "reckon [they're] still in the road," they observe the trees above the road and the river: "Above the ceaseless surface they stand—trees, cane, vine—rootless, severed from the earth, spectral above a scene of immense yet circumscribed desolation filled with the voice of the waste and mournful water" (142). These "rootless" trees create "invisible wires" overhead through which the river's "voice" of "waste and mournful water" is carried (142). In their "spectral" state, "severed from the earth," these trees appear less as natural objects of the environment and more as transmitters or conduits for the river's "musing sound" (142). "[F]loorless" and "soaked free of earth," the road too exists in a liminalized state, and this incomplete road construction, with its connection to deforestation, raises the river's ecological force, as well as its power as a medium. This produces an aura of catastrophe, as Darl describes the flooded river as "the place where the motion of the wasted world accelerates just before the final precipice" (146) and as "in the thick water the shape of disaster which they could not speak" (147).

In Darl's narration, the disaster of the flood again becomes an occasion for aesthetic contemplation. Like the muddy and faulty roadways that create a sense of arrested motion, the flooded river "enters a kind of otherworldly time zone characterized by freeze-frames" (Donoghue). The flooded river produces profound transformational experiences for all involved, shifting identities and relations to space and time. For Darl, the spatial again becomes temporal: "It is as though the space between us were time: an irrevocable quality. It is as though time, no longer running straight before us in a diminishing line, now runs parallel between us like a looping string, the distance being the doubling accretion of the thread and not the interval between" (146). Caught in the rising tides of the flooded river caused by environmental and infrastructural crises, the Bundrens are caught in a present moment perpetually repeating itself. As Matthews puts it, the "crisis threatens to destroy their world," to "make the land all but unrecognizable," and to "strand them from a future they may not be able to bridge" (*Seeing Through the South* 144). Of course, if the wagon was unable to withstand the muddy trenches of the rural roadways, it does not stand a chance in crossing the flood. What ultimately upends the Bundren wagon is a log, surging "*for an instant upright* […] *like Christ*" or like an "old man"[49] (148). Faulkner's personification of the log is significant, according to Parrish, in that it "incorporates an environmental critique as he links the commodification and destruction of forests with flooding through the figure of the crucified tree" (222). The felled tree returns with a vengeance, toppling the Bundren family and their wagon

[49] The "Old Man" is a common nickname for the Mississippi River itself and is even the title of the flood sections of Faulkner's contrapuntal novel, *The Wild Palms*, making the allusion here to the Great Mississippi Flood obvious.

into the river. As the wagon falls into the river, Addie's coffin and their mules surge downstream. Although they recover Addie's waterlogged corpse, Cash has broken his leg, and they have lost their mules and some of Cash's tools. Injured and bereft of their possessions, the Bundrens continue their journey to the Jefferson as traumatized victims of disaster.

Having suffered physical and economic damage through their prolonged journey and their experience in the flooded river, the Bundren family faces further difficulty in the form of urban disavowal. In the flood's aftermath, as the Bundrens come nearer to Jefferson, Darl notices the changing roadside vistas: "We have been passing the signs for sometime now: the drugstores, the clothing stores, the patent medicine and the garages and cafes, and the mile-boards diminishing, becoming more starkly reaccruent: 3 mi. 2 mi" (226). Seeing these markers of the modern city for the first time from atop the crest of a hill, Vardaman asks, "Is that Jefferson?" (226). As Darl turns to answer, he notices in Vardaman the damaging effects of their traumatic migration: "He too has lost flesh; like ours, his face has an expression strained, dreamy, and gaunt" (226). It is clear that the Bundrens are both harmed and haunted by their experiences of moving into the modern world. Acutely attuned to their own traumatic experience of the economic disparity of modernity, the members of the Bundren family feel sharp ontological and onto-social anxieties, interrogating their belonging to an evolving society, as well as their very existence: Vardaman asks Anse, "Why aint I a town boy, pa?" and thinks to himself, "God made me. I did not said to God to made me in the country" (66). Vardaman feels

the economic disparity between his family and people in the town as an unfair theological determination over which he has no control.[50]

As the Bundren family approaches nearer to the city after the flood, the pace of the novel quickens, and its narrative perspectives shift. Once the Bundrens are on more major roads as "migrants or nomads whose presence offers scandal on the public byways," according to Patrick O'Donnell (86), they are "given over to the state, and they become objects of public scrutiny" (87). The public quality of their travels subverts Addie's need for privacy: their journey "becomes a topic for communal discussion and advice, thus falling within the public venue—policed, as it were, under the eye of the public" (O'Donnell 86). Subject to an urban public gaze, the Bundrens are perceived as outsiders, and as if to reinforce the Bundren family's spectral relation to the metropolitan center, the townspeople are unable to identify them, envisaging them as alien, or as "half-evolved grotesques," to borrow Matthews' phrase (148). The inability of the townsfolk to identify[51] the Bundrens signals them as Others, a group that encroaches on the city's formulations of community. Moseley, a clerk in Mottson, remarks, "They came from some place out in Yoknapatawpha county, trying to get to Jefferson with [a corpse]. It

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[50] The onto-social anxieties experienced by the Bundren family morph throughout the novel into a more general concern over the nature of their existence, as they call into question their modes of "*is*-ness," such as Darl's "I dont know if I am or not" (80). According to Donald Kartiganer, the prevailing understanding of ontological certainty in the novel is that a "thing *is* by virtue of its being possessed by someone" (154). This idea of ownership, or possession, begetting existence underscores the fundamental problem of the Bundren family's social ontology. They feel the pulls of economic possession from increasing modernization, but the pulls themselves are immaterial, spectral, forcing them to confront "an *is* different from [their] *is*" that throws their sense of belonging into chaos and makes their social ontology unintelligible (Faulkner 56).

[51] As the Bundren family approaches Mottson, Samson and MacCallum both have trouble naming the Bundren family because they exist outside of their usual community: MacCallum says, "Who's that? […] I can't think of his name," while Samson thinks, "Durn it, the name is on the tip of my tongue" (112-3).

must have been like a piece of rotten cheese coming into an ant-hill, in that ramshackle wagon that Albert said folks were scared would fall to pieces before they could get it out of town" (203). Vaguely understanding the Bundrens as coming "from some place" outside of their community and witnessing their abjectness—Addie's putrefied corpse, Cash's broken leg encased in cement, and Anse's lack of teeth—the townspeople feel threatened by the Bundrens, "scared" that the wagon would "fall to pieces" and thereby allow their continued presence in the city.

Hosam Aboul-Ela contends that this Othering of the Bundrens occurs at the level of narrative perspective. Whereas much of the book is narrated by the Bundrens themselves and their neighbors, forcing "metropolitan culture to the periphery and pull[ing] the margins to the center," the last quarter of the novel, narrated in large part by town dwellers, "reinforces the very peripheralized position of the Bundren and other New Hope points of view that have constituted the entirety of the rest of the narration" (Aboul-Ela 96).[52] This shift in narrative perspective resonates as a kind of radio broadcast, in that the urban position becomes more representative of a nationally standardized perspective. Whereas radio broadcasts appealed to national audiences to promote aid and relief efforts for those affected by the flood, these urban narrative perspectives fail to provide sympathy for the Bundren clan. As Lester has it, the perspectives of the metropolitan inhabitants "hold the Bundrens in 'comic' contempt," and it is this view that "achieves

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[52] Significantly, chapters written from the perspectives of the Bundrens and their neighbors are often in the present tense, as if to foreground their experiences of modernity as happening at the moment of narration. By contrast, chapters written from the narrative perspectives of townspeople are often in the past tense, which formalizes the political determination of their view that the Bundrens are backward, archaic, or antimodern.

dominance" (36). In contrast to earlier sections of the novel narrated by the Bundren family themselves, this urbanized narrative perspectives refuses to represent singular events from multiple perspectives and instead produces large gaps in the novel's action—the most obvious gap being the missing burial scene.

Significantly, this "dominant" perspective consistently racializes the Bundrens as Black as they approach the modern urban world. Like Vardaman who comments on Cash's gangrenous leg and Jewel's burned back as resembling a "nigger's" (224), so too do the town storekeepers read Dewey Dell's country qualities as a "stranger" who might want to buy "a bottle of nigger toilet water" (199). The representation of poor rural whites seamlessly slips into a racial and racist discourse that endeavors to further marginalize the Bundrens. As Leyda puts it, the alignment of the Bundrens as poor white trash with the added stigma of biologically racial inferiority "allows the middle-class townsfolk to distance themselves from the trash in socio-economic terms and simultaneously to view them as inherently different" (46). Southern classism finds its legibility within notions of antiblackness.

Because the threatening presence of the rural poor in the city prompts the townspeople's hostility, the town marshal argues that they're "liable to jail for endangering the public health," as if to suggest their racialization and their poverty might be contagious, collapsing the health hazards of Addie's rotting corpse with the Bundren family's precarity (204). Citing their "endangering [of] public health" resonates with the experiences of displaced victims of the Mississippi Flood. In the aftermath of the flood, "Tens of thousands developed pellagra," a disease in which "[s]ores erupt on the skin and

form a thick black crust" (Barry 387). It's as if the Bundren family presents visible symptoms of pellagra upon entering town, embodying the harsh consequences of infrastructural interventions with the environment, not to mention the social and environmental racism suggested by their blackened appearance.

Of course, this is not to say that their experience of social estrangement and oppression is totally consistent with Southern racism. Indeed, their whiteness "enables them to move from place to place, even if they are compelled to move by forces that are beyond their control, without the expectation that they might be apprehended, brutalized, imprisoned, or killed" (Lester 42). Although the Bundrens face social and material challenges that frustrate their access to the modern world, they "do not face the life-threatening dangers that inspired black Southerners to migrate and that deterred most from returning South" (Lester 42). Still, however, the movement of rural whites like the Bundrens into new spatial and social locations is always accompanied by alienating pressures, social limitations, and socioeconomic tensions that preclude their full entry into the modern nation. The anxieties experienced by the townspeople in confronting the rural poor only find relief once the Bundrens are out of town, either in Jefferson or in jail as the marshal reflects, "thank the Lord it's not [their] jail" (205). To bring the Bundrens into jail would be to recognize their citizenship, bringing them into the nation's legal system, so their ostracization indicates their lack of recourse to the systems that acknowledge national identity. Although physically entering into metropolitan spaces representative of the modern nation, the Bundrens do not have access to the utilities and privileges such a space affords.

Anse's attempts to appeal to the city marshal run counter to his earlier invective against roads. He emphasizes to the marshal that his family is on a "public street: 'It's a public street,' the man says. 'I reckon we can stop to buy something same as airy other man. We got the money to pay for hit, and hit aint airy law that says a man cant spend his money where he wants'" (203). Elsewhere, as we know, Anse has decried public roads, resenting their development and the types of social, political, and economic interaction they bring into being. In this moment, however, Anse relies on his legal ability to occupy the physical space of the public street. O'Donnell suggests that Anse "might be regarded as engaging in a major revision of his cultural identity […], for the legalistic rhetoric in Mottson stands in glaring contradiction to the antiauthoritarian statements regarding roads, taxation, and draft boards that he makes" earlier (89). Although more likely a calculated attempt at political expediency rather than some genuine ideological revision, Anse's argument in the face of the State as represented by the city marshal is an advocation for their collective right to occupy the physical space of the public street. He argues for his family's right to the city through their purchasing power, indicating that they also have a right to spend their money—what little of it there is—where they choose. In a novel in which the Bundren family is largely subjected to forms of infrastructural and institutional violence, Anse's declaration here demonstrates a significant form of agency, as he demands the same social, economic, and legal standing of their urban counterparts. They too are entitled to the kinds of provision and access promised by the modern nation. Of course, Anse's declaration comes through the rhetoric of a modern consumer, rather than that of a citizen safeguarded by infrastructural provision and

access. Anse's declaration is performative in a way that might stretch beyond an advocation for equal entitlement, and the consumerist shape of his grievance seems to overwrite his argument about the public street as a civic space. Instead, the street is transformed into a commercial space for those who have buying power, creating an alternative sphere of belonging.

Given this rhetorical movement from legal citizen to potential consumer, it is by no surprise then that *As I Lay Dying* ends with the Bundren family's ironic acquiescence into modernity as consumers. Toward the novel's end, the Bundren family now looks like "any other [persons] in town" (254), and they begin to emulate the consuming practices of the townspeople, so as to demonstrate and to constitute their belonging.[53] The commodities purchased by the Bundren family offer forms of consolation. The graphophone is a "comfortable thing" for Cash (236); the false teeth are a "comfort" for Anse (111); and the bananas "represent luxury consumption" outside of the food to which the Bundren family normally has access (Willis 591). No matter what "comfort" these commodities might bring, they can hardly make up for the Bundren family's physical and emotional traumas engendered by the journey to Jefferson.[54] In emphasizing these modes

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[53] Darl observes his family from the State vehicle taking him to Jackson: "The wagon stands on the square, hitched, the mules motionless, the reins wrapped about the seat-spring, the back of the wagon toward the courthouse. It looks no different from a hundred other wagons there; Jewel standing beside it and looking up the street like any other man in town that day, yet there is something different, distinctive. There is about it that unmistakable air of definite and imminent departure that trains have, perhaps due to the fact that Dewey Dell and Vardaman on the seat and Cash on a pallet in the wagon bed are eating bananas from a paper bag" (254).

[54] The intense flurry of acquisition at the end of the novel remains marred by other forms of spectrality—the phantasmagoria of the commodity and the spectral economic relations within and beyond the United States. The bananas the Bundren family eats, as Susan Willis declares, are "crucial for our reading of the novel," in that they illuminate the fact that the "plight of farmers […] is a culmination of economic patterns which Faulkner discerned in the rural South in the Twenties and Thirties whose final outcome will be the massification of agribusiness in the First World and the shift of much agricultural production to the Third

of consumption, as Matthews declares, “The novel shrewdly observes how modernity fills the very holes it has itself dug” (153).

Altogether, Faulkner’s novel gives body and voice to the multiplying subaltern publics of the U.S. South who struggle to participate in the spatial politics of their region and of the nation. Through the Bundren family’s journey to Jefferson, Faulkner narrativizes a tiered version of citizenship dependent upon infrastructural access, provision, and protection. The development of roads in the U.S. South produce and reveal uneven access to working and environmentally sustainable infrastructures and the economic and social values they bring. The Bundrens, like many poor farmers in the South, don’t have access to the goods, services, and securities in common with their city counterparts. The point is that everyone must have access to properly functioning infrastructures and that we must attend to the kinds of social displacements and environmental traumas engendered by infrastructural development. If the urban world operates on the presumed functioning of these infrastructures, those without access or without proper security are left even further behind and are disproportionately vulnerable to economic gaps and environmental risks. Policy-makers, developers, and engineers from the Good Roads Movement and the Mississippi River Commission implemented infrastructural developments detached from the bitter social and environmental consequences of their designs. Faulkner’s novel, on the other hand, provides an

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World” (591). In this light, the bananas reflect the movement of spectral modes of production inhering in intranational United States imperialism to those inhering in international imperialism. Although the Bundren family experiences the sharp depravity engendered by such economic exploitation, their entrance into modernity causes them to peripheralize or ignore the larger global systems that are at play.

immediate and immersive experience of these consequences, showing how one particular family has suffered from and has been transformed by the region's changing landscapes.

# Chapter Three

## "Anyone on the ground'd know": The Sites and Sights of Infrastructural Violence in Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*

Karen Tei Yamashita's magical realist novel, *Through the Arc of the Rainforest*, centers on the discovery, excavation, and development of the fictional Matacão in the Amazonian rainforest. A site full of magical plastic, the Matacão causes a frenzy of national and international activity, becoming a contact zone for various communities. While Brazilian locals envision the site as a "divine place" of religious miracles (24), multinational corporations commoditize the magical material, and Brazil's government rebuilds its infrastructure with it. Rapidly, Brazil, and indeed the entire world, ushers in a new (post)modern age of plastic. The Matacão plastic is found in built environments such as roads, bridges, and buildings, as well as in everyday consumer goods such as clothes and food. But the invidious properties of the material are revealed when scientists discover that the plastic is actually "nonbiodegradable garbage" produced by Western countries, formed through geological processes underneath the Earth (203). Ironizing the magical material as refuse and as a material return of the repressed, Yamashita depicts its complete corrosion, causing total infrastructural collapse. Buildings are condemned, roads and bridges are blocked off, and millions of people die because of the ecological devastation. At the novel's climax, Yamashita has the "old forest" return, altered by years of anthropogenic processes, but overcoming the "crumbling remains" of civilization, offering a magical vision of life during and after the Anthropocene (212).

Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* casts a similar eye toward infrastructure and disaster. But rather than the fictional Matacão and its connection to deep histories of Western waste, Yamashita casts multiple historical and material sites including the Los Angeles Harbor Freeway for her infrastructural and disaster imaginary. The novel maps the expansive social and ecological consequences of a magically mobile Tropic of Cancer, tracing looping narrative threads about warped environments, human trafficking, deadly oranges, and a catastrophic accident on the Los Angeles Harbor Freeway. After a traffic accident involving two semis carrying propane and diesel fuel creates a catastrophic situation on the Freeway, Los Angeles's unhoused population takes over the space. They build an alternative community out of the abandoned cars, making visible the formerly uneven distribution of infrastructural access. Launching a televised revolution after taking over the media broadcast, the unhoused community participates in a visual reframing that recontextualizes catastrophe in the deep histories of infrastructural development. They position themselves within historical struggles over the meaning and use of space. However, the police violently quell the Freeway takeover in order to return infrastructural normalcy to the privileged inhabitants of Los Angeles.

I begin this chapter with accounts of these novels because they urgently animate relationships between infrastructural development and disaster, as well as the communities that are formed and displaced by them. As we saw in the previous chapter, infrastructural development carries the promise of progress, around which various publics thicken or dissolve, but such forms of development often fail to achieve equal distributions of access to the modern conveniences they tout. Infrastructural projects, and

the political rhetoric surrounding them, promise the actualization of "the good life," and promote ideas of democratic access, modern convenience, and improved security, hailing and heralding particular communities in their sweep. However, despite the aspirational qualities of infrastructure, infrastructural development, as we saw in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and as we see here in Yamashita's two novels, often carries irrevocable social and environmental consequences—destabilized and disavowed communities, increased social and economic precarity, and accelerated toxic buildups that challenge our planetary future. Infrastructure, in this way, participates in a kind of creative destruction, extending and energizing certain material and social relations of capitalist society at the expense of others, often impacting marginalized communities most forcefully. Infrastructure (re)produces distributional injustice along racial and class lines, as well as contributes to forms of environmental devastation and disaster.[1]

In *Tropic of Orange*, Karen Tei Yamashita elaborates the connections between infrastructural development and disaster by representing the social and environmental

[1] Popular narratives of disaster often portray disasters as singular apolitical events. Conceived or narrativized as impositions from the environment, or even as acts of divine intervention, natural disasters are represented as unavoidable phenomena. Yet, the dichotomy between "natural" and "man-made" disasters is socially and politically conditioned, offering a semantic distinction that relinquishes human responsibility for altering environmental and social processes. Because of infrastructure's prolonged intervention in human-landscape relations as the bedrock on which capitalist culture can flow, infrastructures factor as major contributors to these processes. Disasters, like infrastructures, become diagnostic spaces for understanding material relations of power, precarity, and belonging. Just as I have called infrastructural development a kind of "creative destruction," Kevin Rozario uses the same term to identify the idea that disasters and the cultural meaning attached to them help facilitate progress for a culture (88). Disasters can provide a quasi-blank slate opportunity to transform geographic and social areas. Taken in this way, disaster, much like infrastructure, offers a space to establish power from above through redevelopment and future promises of security. But these promises rarely extend to all. As Rob Nixon has shown, the effects of climate change are gradual and often invisible, like infrastructure itself, but they disproportionately affect those who are disempowered and displaced, redoubling the precarity of those cast out of the futures imagined by infrastructural development.

consequences of slow and planned violence.[2] Although attending to the attritional forms and protracted consequences of slow and planned violence is particularly challenging due to issues of representation and visibility,[3] I argue that Yamashita meets these representational challenges by redeploying multimodal cultural forms that typically operate through visual and audible registers, in order to bring the invisible materialities, histories, and consequences of infrastructural development into the foreground. Whereas the effects of slow and planned violence are often gradual and hidden from view, lacking the immediacy of more spectacular forms of violence, Yamashita repurposes technological and cultural media forms and frames to make legible the deeper causes and effects of such violence. Because literary fiction is well positioned to investigate the imaginative and material properties of infrastructure and disasters as diagnostic political spaces,[4] Yamashita is able to redistribute the representational potential of these multimodal frames through the dynamic formal and spatiotemporal dimensions of the novel, drawing attention to how catastrophic events and collective dispossession are rooted in histories of infrastructural development.

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[2] Rob Nixon characterizes violence as "customarily conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility" (2). In contrast, slow and planned violence unfold over long periods of time and over large swathes of space. "Slow violence," as Nixon defines it, "refers to a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (2). The concept of planned violence, as articulated by Dominic Davies and Elleke Boehmer, representatives of the "Planned Violence" network, understands violence as being built not only into the structure of society, but also into the material *structures* of society, "embedded within the spatial and infrastructural configurations of contemporary city life" (9).

[3] The "major challenge" of slow violence, according to Nixon, "is representational: how to devise arresting stories, images, and symbols adequate to the pervasive but elusive violence of delayed effects" (2).

[4] Nixon underscores literature's capacity to better imagine the relationship between infrastructure and forms of slow and planned violence by examining narratives that "plot and give figurative shape to formless threats whose fatal repercussions are dispersed across space and time": literature utilizes "creative ways of drawing public attention to catastrophic acts that are low in instant spectacle but high in long-term effects" (10).

To explore these issues, this chapter will unfold in four sections. The first section will consider the collision of narrative forms and political frames within Yamashita's writing. In particular, I will address the multimodality of the "Hypercontexts" that precede *Tropic of Orange*, suggesting that Yamashita offers us a way of approaching the novel as a transmedia network, an interactive map that represents the complex relations between media technologies, urban space, and historical and cultural forms. This section will serve to define and develop Yamashita's infrastructural imaginary as foundational to the novel's formal concerns. The second section will build on the first, paying particular attention to the character of Manzanar Murakami, an unhoused man/maestro who attempts to map the multiple material grids and strata of Los Angeles by conducting a symphony of the city's urban and infrastructural rhythms. Yamashita, I contend, uses Manzanar not only to aestheticize and make legible the interconnected infrastructural networks of the city that too often are taken for granted by its users, but also to develop an historical and ecological awareness of infrastructural development within the larger Owens Valley region. Through Manzanar, Yamashita locates modern infrastructural networks as built on multiple histories of displacement and dispossession including the internment of Japanese Americans. Similarly attuned to ideas of infrastructural violence, the third section follows the character Buzzworm, a black Vietnam veteran who walks the streets of South Central Los Angeles as a community activist. Plugged into the streets, Buzzworm articulates the direct impacts of the planned violence of the city, connecting

infrastructural development to forms of gentrification that displace poor and minority populations of Los Angeles.[5]

Like the novel itself, these three sections will converge on the Los Angeles Harbor Freeway where a catastrophic traffic accident reveals most fully the novel's connections between infrastructure and disaster. If the first three sections of this chapter pay close attention to form, infrastructure, and politics, this final section will consider the problems of framing dispossession and precarity during crisis and catastrophe: specifically, how popular media relies on the spectacular to keep out of frame the underlying conditions that precipitate catastrophes. Through the unhoused population's embodied occupation of physical space and their visual media transmission upon taking over the Freeway and the news broadcast, Yamashita connects the links between infrastructural violence, historical precarity, and catastrophe that would otherwise remain undocumented in popular media narratives. By demonstrating the efficacy of a community media for articulating the collective right to recognition and to previously dispossessed spaces, Yamashita asks us to understand the long histories of precarity, to seek out new frames of imagining those affected by spatial injustice.

The transnational character of Yamashita's literary works has often positioned her within larger critical frameworks interested in the material, political, and cultural

[5] The novel's spatial practices of mapping the city "from above"—through the urban conducting of Manzanar Murakami—and "from below"— through the pedestrian mobility of Buzzworm—epitomizes the distinction Michel de Certeau draws between "voyeurs" and "walkers," between abstract "maps" and embodied "itineraries," giving depth to "changing" grids of the city in its designed and lived forms. These practices allow Yamashita to conceptualize the city and its infrastructures as spatiotemporal projects, and its peoples as subject to different shifting configurations of space and sociality. Yamashita ensures that technical, logistical, and bureaucratic sides of the urban environment are not privileged over, or seen as distinct from, its social, political, and aesthetic sides.

processes of globalization. Globalized and globalizing forces that produce and are produced by the movements of goods, capital, and people within and across borders, indelibly shape all of Yamashita's fiction, but none more so than *Tropic of Orange*. The majority of criticism about the novel explores Yamashita's critique of globalization, focusing on the individual and collective impact of evolving political and cultural spheres.[6] More recent criticism has focused on issues of social, spatial, and environmental justice, embedding the novel's critiques of globalization in the material and social spaces of Los Angeles and the US-Mexico border.[7] For example, critics such as Sarah Wald and Esen Kara deploy spatial theories proffered by Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, and Edward Soja to survey the novel's complex geographies of justice. Also attuned to space, Jina Kim most recently and, to this point, most forcefully has identified the underappreciated role of infrastructure in Yamashita's fiction, exploring how Yamashita's use of "infrastructure as a fictional strategy enable[s] *Tropic of Orange* to foreground questions of dependency, access, and material provision within the context of a globalizing, multi-ethnic LA" (3). Like Wald and Kara before her, Kim's attention to Yamashita's infrastructural imaginary draws heavily from Lefebvre, Harvey, and Soja, as well as from Patricia Yaeger's influential essay "Dreaming of Infrastructure." Her work ultimately is attuned to how the novel, through its depiction of infrastructure, highlights

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[6] See Chuh, ""Of Hemispheres and Other Spheres: Navigating Karen Tei Yamashita's Literary World"; Adams, "The End of America, The End of Postmodernism"; Lee, "'We Are Not the World': Global Village, Universalism, and Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*"; and Mermann-Jozwiak, "Yamashita's Post-National Spaces: 'It All Comes Together in Los Angeles.'"
[7] See Wald, "'Refusing to Halt': Mobility and the Quest for Spatial Justice in Helena Maria Viramonte's *Their Dogs Came With Them* and Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*"; Zhou, *Cities of Others: Reimagining Urban Spaces in Asian American Literature*; and Blyn, "Belonging to the Network: Neoliberalism and Postmodernism in *Tropic of Orange*."

"interdependency as [having] both political and aesthetic value," especially for underprivileged populations (2). My work also emphasizes the importance of material geographies and infrastructural systems for Yamashita's advocacy for social justice. However, I locate this political advocacy through her overlapping cultural forms, technological mediation, and disaster imaginaries. The novel becomes a transmedia network that makes visible multiple converging histories of social and spatial injustice.

**"HyperContexts" and Hotels: Yamashita's Formal (Infra)Structures**

Yamashita often foregrounds the formal and structural characteristics of her novels in ways that portend their thematic issues and political stakes. *Through the Arc of the Rainforest*, for example, is organized into six parts that structurally emphasize the confrontation between the teleological trajectory of global capitalism and the cyclical returns of the natural environment. The novel itself, as I have mentioned, centers on the discovery, excavation, and development of the fictional Matacão in the Amazonian rainforest. The first three sections of the novel signal a clear organizing logic of expansionist development, with titles such as "The Beginning," "The Developing World," and "More Development." The novel breaks down in its final three sections—"Loss of Innocence," "More Loss," and "Return." This final chapter marks the return of the "old forest," if irrevocably altered by the Matacão mania (212). Through this structure, the novel refuses the developmental narratives of global capitalism in favor of the cyclicality and resilience of natural processes. Yamashita's interest in cyclical forms extends to two of her other books, *Circle K Cycles* and *Brazil-Maru*. Collecting pieces that Yamashita wrote for an Internet travel journal, the multi-genre and multi-lingual text,

*Circle K Cycles*,[8] maps patterns of cultural exchange along a circular itinerary between the United States, Japan, and Brazil. *Brazil-Maru*—a title that "riffs on the Japanese suffix 'maru,' which means cycle or circle" (Bahng 36)—maps a similarly recursive transnational exchange through multiple narrative perspectives. Kandice Chuh suggests that Yamashita's obsession with cyclicality and multimodal connections contributes to an artistic vision that "reject[s] the progression-orientation of a world mapped in two dimensions" and instead "demarcate[s] a circum-oceanic spatial logic" informed by the fluid terrains of "place, identity, and worldview" (622).

Yamashita's structural foregrounding takes a different shape in *I Hotel*. Her most formally experimental novel, *I Hotel* is constructed out of ten novellas, or what Yamashita refers to as "ten hotels" (qtd in Lu, 75). Like the episodes of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, each "hotel" assumes dramatically different narrative techniques. For example, Yamashita deploys the more conventional literary forms of the short story and the dramatic play, but expands into the graphic forms of comics and illustrations, as well as the nonliterary form of dance choreography. Instead of a conventional table of contents preceding the narrative(s) proper, Yamashita provides narrative blueprints[9] for each "hotel" on the inside flaps of unfolded boxes—"origami boxes" or "take-out boxes"—which gives her experimental schema a three-dimensional quality ("A Talk with Karen Tei Yamashita"). In engineering these boxes, Yamashita was inspired by her husband's architectural blueprints, noting the parallels between novel writing and building design.

[8] For more on the formal elements of *Circle K Cycles*, see Kam, "Traveling Identities: Between World in Karen Tei Yamashita's *Circle K Cycles*.
[9] See Figure 1.

These malleable boxes function as novelistic blueprints that give the novel an architectural form. Like the layers of architectural blueprints that include striated floorplans and plans for electricity and plumbing, the novel attains a multi-dimensionality through its layering of formal techniques. The novel's layers also consist of multiple narrative temporalities and timelines, a concatenation of different voices and perspectives, and palimpsestic material and conceptual spaces. With their narrative, geographical, and cultural orientations, the finished boxes function as a kind of "map for the reader to figure out" where they are in the book, according to Yamashita (qtd. in Lu, 75). Orienting her reader in this way, Yamashita challenges the conventional linear form of the novel, and instead renders it as a complex aesthetic space to be inhabited and explored.

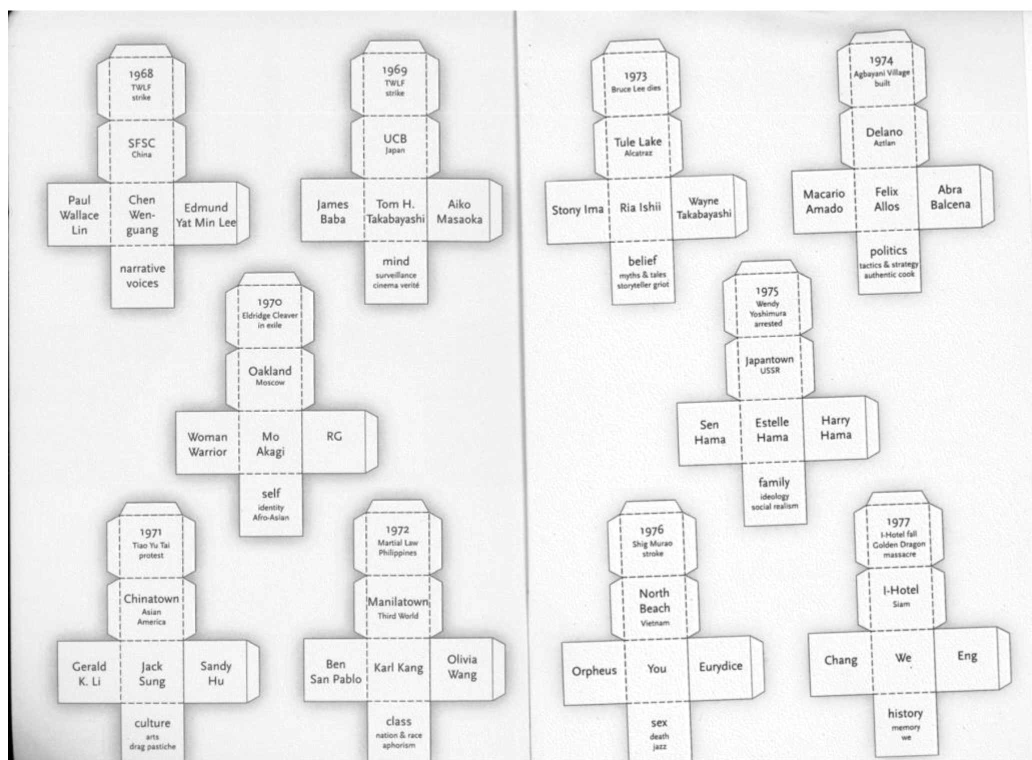


Figure 1

Written as a series of "hotels," the novel's formal architecture borrows from its major setting and history—San Francisco's International Hotel along Kearney Street in Manilatown. For decades, the International Hotel was a long-term dwelling for transients and migrant laborers from the Philippines and China. An "urban renewal" project in 1968 threatened to evict the hotel's immigrant inhabitants, galvanizing residents and Asian American student activists into action. For the next decade, the hotel became a major site for burgeoning Asian American social movements, before the police eventually evicted all legal and illegal tenants in 1977. Four years later, the building was demolished, and the lot where it stood remained empty for decades. As readers move through the complex formal and aesthetic spaces of the novel, they also move through the political spaces of multiethnic social movements. Yamashita's formal experimentation recasts revolutionary histories from multiple perspectives and through multiple aesthetic forms in order to give depth to the political multiplicity of the ethnic and cross-racial networks the novel narrates, "insisting," as Nathan Ragain puts it, "on the particularity of any given position while also holding them in tenuous, conflictual relation with one another" (138). Yamashita's experimental narrative architecture rejects a totalizing impulse. She opts instead to design formal spaces that make visible particularized histories of marginalized peoples. Through its formal consonance with the hotel itself, the novel serves as a physical repository, a literary archive, that houses multiple histories, perspectives, and trajectories of revolutionary actions during the 1960s and 1970s. In modeling this literary repository after the hotel, Yamashita transforms the novel itself into a dwelling for transients, laborers, and political organizers.

This kind of formal play most clearly undergirds and animates *Tropic of Orange*. Despite its unorthodox narrative, *Tropic of Orange* is primarily and formally concerned with structure, space, and media technologies in a globalizing age. Such concerns are made legible by the chart of "Hypercontexts" that precede the narrative proper of the novel.[10] These "Hypercontexts" structure her narrative into a different kind of box than the ones found in *I Hotel*. The seven-by-seven matrix locates each chapter and character in time and place, functioning as a kind of "map" for the novel's narrative threads.[11] I contend that these "Hypercontexts," like the folding box hotels in *I Hotel*, provide a formal key for understanding the aesthetic and political aspirations of the novel. They position the novel in relation to material and media technologies of the globalizing world and as a kind of material media technology itself. As such, the novel's plot is not only informed by, but is also consistently mediated through technological frames such as television and computer screens, electrical and communications grids, and transportation systems. The transmedial forms and frames of her novel are hardly rigid or fixed. Rather, they shift and interact in dynamic ways: "Once again, the grid was changing" (*Tropic of Orange* 204).

According to an interview with Yamashita and Ryuta Imafuku, the "Hypercontexts" chart resembles the narrative and digital architecture of the novel in its initial drafting stage: "there was here a structure before there was a book," and this structure was at first "in a digested form on a spreadsheet program called Lotus" ("The

[10] See Figure 2.
[11] Melanie Pooch identifies Yamashita's "Hypercontexts" as "one of the novel's methods of incorporating the textuality of the interconnectedness of time, space, and literary conventions" (180).

Latitude of Fiction”). If folding boxes and her husband’s blueprints influenced the structural and formal arrangement of *I Hotel*, Lotus software provides a framework for *Tropic of Orange*. Discussing the use of Lotus software, a spreadsheet system used for calculations, instead of a traditional word-processing software on Windows, Yamashita notes the ability to columnize her material and create graphs and charts: “You have this column and that column, and I started to write swatches of the novel into the columns. Following this map, I knew that in this chapter, such and such would happen” (“The Latitude of Fiction”). Yamashita depends on the operations of the Lotus software, and the operations of her computer more generally, for her novel’s aesthetic and formal effects. By using the platform Lotus to draft the initial narrative architecture of her novel, and by referring to the “map” or structures of her novel as “Hypercontexts,” Yamashita positions her novel as formally multimodal and intrinsically transmedial.

HyperContexts

| | MONDAY<br>Summer Solstice | TUESDAY<br>Diamond Lane | WEDNESDAY<br>Cultural Diversity | THURSDAY<br>The Eternal Buzz | FRIDAY<br>Artificial Intelligence | SATURDAY<br>Queen of Angels | SUNDAY<br>Pacific Rim |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Rafaela Cortes* | **Midday**<br>*–Not Too Far from Mazatlán*<br>CHAPTER 1 | **Morning**<br>*–En México*<br>CHAPTER 10 | **Daylight**<br>*–The Cornfield*<br>CHAPTER 18 | **Dusk**<br>*–To the Border*<br>CHAPTER 24 | **Dawn**<br>*–The Other Side*<br>CHAPTER 30 | **Nightfall**<br>*–Aztlán*<br>CHAPTER 38 | **Midnight**<br>*–The Line*<br>CHAPTER 45 |
| *Bobby Ngu* | **Benefits**<br>*–Koreatown*<br>CHAPTER 2 | **Car Payment Due**<br>*–Tijuana via Singapore*<br>CHAPTER 12 | **Second Mortgage**<br>*–Chinatown*<br>CHAPTER 15 | **Life Insurance**<br>*–L.A./T.J.*<br>CHAPTER 26 | **Visa Card**<br>*–Final Destination*<br>CHAPTER 34 | **Social Security**<br>*–I-5*<br>CHAPTER 40 | **American Express**<br>*–Mi Casa/Su Casa*<br>CHAPTER 49 |
| *Emi* | **Weather Report**<br>*–Westside*<br>CHAPTER 3 | **NewsNow**<br>*–Hollywood South*<br>CHAPTER 9 | **Disaster Movie Week**<br>*–Hiro’s Sushi*<br>CHAPTER 20 | **Live on Air**<br>*–El A*<br>CHAPTER 27 | **Promos**<br>*–World Wide Web*<br>CHAPTER 29 | **Prime Time**<br>*–Last Stop*<br>CHAPTER 41 | **Commercial Break**<br>*–The Big Sleep*<br>CHAPTER 44 |
| *Buzzworm* | **Station ID**<br>*–Jefferson & Normandie*<br>CHAPTER 4 | **Oldies**<br>*–This Old Hood*<br>CHAPTER 13 | **LA X**<br>*–Margarita’s Corner*<br>CHAPTER 16 | **You Give Us 22 Minutes**<br>*–The World*<br>CHAPTER 22 | **AM/FM**<br>*–Free Zone*<br>CHAPTER 31 | **The Car Show**<br>*–Front Line*<br>CHAPTER 37 | **Hour 25**<br>*–Into the Boxes*<br>CHAPTER 48 |
| *Manzanar Murakami* | **Traffic Window**<br>*–Harbor Freeway*<br>CHAPTER 5 | **Rideshare**<br>*–Downtown Interchange*<br>CHAPTER 8 | **Hour of the Trucks**<br>*–The Freeway Canyon*<br>CHAPTER 19 | **Lane Change**<br>*–Avoiding the Harbor*<br>CHAPTER 28 | **Jam**<br>*–Greater L.A.*<br>CHAPTER 35 | **Drive-By**<br>*–Virtually Everywhere*<br>CHAPTER 42 | **SigAlert**<br>*–The Rim*<br>CHAPTER 46 |
| *Gabriel Balboa* | **Coffee Break**<br>*–Downtown*<br>CHAPTER 6 | **Budgets**<br>*–Skirting Downtown*<br>CHAPTER 14 | **The Interview**<br>*–Manzanar*<br>CHAPTER 17 | **Time & a Half**<br>*–Limousine Way*<br>CHAPTER 25 | **Overtime**<br>*–El Zócolo*<br>CHAPTER 32 | **Working Weekend**<br>*–Dirt Shoulder*<br>CHAPTER 39 | **Deadline**<br>*–Over the Net*<br>CHAPTER 43 |
| *Arcangel* | **To Wake**<br>*–The Marketplace*<br>CHAPTER 7 | **To Wash**<br>*–On the Tropic*<br>CHAPTER 11 | **To Eat**<br>*–La Cantina de Miseria y Hambre*<br>CHAPTER 21 | **To Labor**<br>*–East & West Forever*<br>CHAPTER 23 | **To Dream**<br>*–America*<br>CHAPTER 33 | **To Perform**<br>*–Angel’s Flight*<br>CHAPTER 36 | **To Die**<br>*–Pacific Rim Auditorium*<br>CHAPTER 47 |

Figure 2

Like the folding boxes of *I Hotel*, this grid transforms the more conventional form of a Table of Contents, a textual key that normally implies and imposes a linear trajectory onto the narrative. By rearranging her Table of Contents into the technical matrix of "Hypercontexts," Yamashita disrupts particular assumptions about narrative teleology, opting instead for a conception of her fiction as an interactive system. Akin to hypertext, her novel belongs in many ways to the realms of the technological, the electronic, and the digital. Robin Blyn, for example, claims that Yamashita's "Hypercontexts" chart "presents itself as a network modeled on the World Wide Web" (195), while Jina Kim refers to the multiple possible directions of reading the grid's intersecting columns and rows as "a nod to the Internet's rhizomatic pathways" (4). The grid's structure visually connects discrete units of text in a way that enables multiple directions of navigation, shaping the narrative as a network, as web-like, rather than a traditional linear path. Characters become hyperlinks, connective nodes for the novel's narrative structure and multidirectional vectors for its thematic and geographic development.

Inasmuch as these "Hypercontexts" resemble and are constructed through computer platforms, I argue that the grid also resembles the format of TV Guides and modern television listing supplements that were popular in newspapers in the 1990s.[12] Rather than an hour by hour and channel by channel orientation, Yamashita's narrative guide spans one week, broadcasting her plot from "Virtually Everywhere," as the subtitle for chapter 42 suggests. Yamashita reinforces this resemblance to a TV Guide by having

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[12] According to John Ellis, an integral part of the expansion of televisual culture and popularity in the 1990s was the "ever more ingenious variations on the time-grid systems of listings layout" in newspaper and guidebooks (235).

the novel's span of seven days coincide with "Disaster Movie Week" on the local TV station (24) and by titling certain chapters after media broadcast segments such as "Weather Report," "Prime Time," and "Commercial Break" (x-xi).[13] Even further, a few of the chapter's subtitles are the names of films themselves—"*Chinatown*" and "*The Big Sleep*" (x-xi). Both of these films are set in Los Angeles and belong to the noir genre typical of many Los Angeles films, a genre that the novel takes up primarily through the character of print journalist Gabriel Balboa.[14] Given that each chapter begins in media res and takes on dramatically different perspectives and narrative forms from the one previous, the act of reading the novel comes to resemble channel surfing.[15] Yamashita's interest in the televisual and the filmic hardly is a surprise. She refers to her first novel *Through the Arc of the Rainforest* as a kind of Brazilian telenovela,[16] and the author's note to *Tropic of Orange* imagines the novel as mediated through a screen: "We were all there; we all saw it on TV, screen, and monitor, larger than life" (3). Her literary forms, I contend, converge with other media modes, bringing together technological, cultural, and historical layers of remediation, in order to produce a new multimodal and transmedial poetics of the contemporary global novel.[17]

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[13] Because *Tropic of Orange* moves through a number of daily crises and catastrophes, an alternative title for the novel could be "Disaster Movie Week."
[14] Yamashita updates the noir detective for the televisual and digital age by having Gabriel, a print journalist, get increasingly caught up in a web of conspiracies generated through the internet.
[15] The idea of novel reading as channel surfing is reinforced by the characters' consumption of media within in the novel—namely, the ways in which Buzzworm constantly changes radio stations and Emi surfs the internet.
[16] Her Author's Note begins, "The story that follows is perhaps a kind of *novela*, a Brazilian soap opera, of the sort that occupies the imagination and national psyche of the Brazilian people on prime-time TV nightly and for periods of two to four months, depending on its popularity and success" (*Through the Arc* xv).
[17] If Yamashita's "Hypercontexts" constitute the novel itself as and in relation to other forms of media, it also labels her character's attachments to various forms of media. For example, when the chart identifies Buzzworm on the corner of "Jefferson & Normandie" during the "Summer Solstice," it also informs us that

This kind of mediation challenges conventional novelistic representations of the material world, so much so, that in Yamashita's purview, it becomes simultaneously liberating and constricting: "That's a new geography created within a space the size of a computer screen and in a room at a desk. It's a visual world that I think can be very wide but also can be very limited" ("The Latitude of a Fiction Writer"). Screens dominate Yamashita's novel, creating layers of mediated geographies, producing sites and sights of expansion and containment. Although warped spaces and circuitous routes hardly seem to fit into an organized grid, Yamashita, like an urban planner, systematizes her narrative material, imposing orderly form on the unwieldiness of her magical realism. She labels the spatial and temporal structures in which her characters are situated, even if the narrative itself will exceed the bounds of such formalization. By creating new geographies and by likening her "Hypercontexts" to a map, Yamashita charts her narrative grid like the spatial patterns of the city: the "narrative elements of character, temporality, setting, and plot are re-visioned through the matrix-like form of street intersections" (Kim 4). If *Ulysses* acts as a kind of novelistic partner to *Thom's Directory* in Joyce's "portrait" of Dublin, Yamashita's "Hypercontexts," as John Blair Gamber puts it, "serves in the stead of the ubiquitous Southern Californian's *Thomas Guide*, the map that so many motorists keep in their cars to help them navigate the city" (128). Similar to how *I Hotel*'s formal structure took shape in relation to the International Hotel itself over

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is plugged into his radio as he scans "Station ID[s]." It is significant that Yamashita attaches various mediating technologies to each of the novel's narrators—the most obvious being Buzzworm's radio, Gabriel's print journalism, and Emi's broadcast television, cellphone, and internet. These are obviously recognizable as popular technological media forms. Yamashita has her characters become themselves nodes in networks of technological media, human interfaces for nonhuman systems.

the years, the formal structure of *Tropic of Orange* resembles the city's infrastructure, as the narrative geography of the novel and the material geography of Los Angeles are built through fragmentation rather than around any origin or center. Additionally, the mobile interplay of the chart's pathways, its potential flows between its *x* and *y-axes*, suggests a democratization of character and setting: no single voice or place dominates or organizes the arrangement. Each character traces "a different map of LA's socially and economically stratified cityscape," enabling multifocal perspectives, rather than a totalized vision of the city (Kim 6). For Yamashita, these "Hypercontexts" reroute alternatives to narrative omniscience and spatial totality. Imagined as and through visual media as varied as the internet, television, and maps, the multimodal chart becomes a structural embodiment of networked social relations. As a multimedia palimpsest, the chart works as a conceptual schema that challenges traditional representational codes, and insists that narrative and spatial totality is not apprehensible except through the conjunction and intersection of multiple modes of interaction.

Significantly, the points on Yamashita's narrative map possess varying degrees of specificity, from the general ("*Not Too Far from Mazatlán*") to the hyperlocal ("*Jefferson & Normandie*"). Some of the spatial coordinates that Yamashita provides for her narrative map accrue layers of meaning through processes of historical and cultural remediation. In a technological era increasingly devoted to ideas of immediacy, Yamashita rewards the more exploratory reader who attends to these remediated webs of form and content. For example, although the chapter subtitle "*Jefferson & Normandie*" specifically locates the character Buzzworm on a particular intersection in Los Angeles, it

also excavates a spatial history of racial unrest in the city. After the police beating of Rodney King, which had been video-recorded and widely viewed on television broadcasts in 1991, and after the officers' subsequent acquittal in 1992, an uprising later known as the L.A. Riots took place in several areas of South Central Los Angeles. In many ways, Normandie Avenue was the epicenter. As depicted through popular media, Normandie Avenue was a site of racialized chaos. Broadcasts perpetuated images "of a burning LA filled with African American rioters, Latino looters, and armed Asian (Korean) American shop-keepers," images that preyed upon the nation's fears of multicultural violence (Joo 249). Yamashita's invocation of this intersection isn't simply a form of Joycean hyper localism; instead, it positions her novel as responding to contemporary histories of mediated racial and civil struggle. In Yamashita's novel, Buzzworm "was born and raised near about the corner of Jefferson and Normandie" (30). As an adult, he functions as "walking social services" for this neighborhood, ensuring that the people of his community have access to "rehab number[s], free clinic[s], legal services, shelter, soup kitchen[s], hotline[s]" (26). If it "[w]eren't for him, [there would have] been more dead people on the street" because he offers "[t]wenty-four-hour service" to anyone in need of aid (26). Instead of the images that mediated Normandie Avenue as a site of racialized and multicultural violence, Yamashita identifies the intersection as belonging to a culture of racial and multicultural care. As we will see, Yamashita uses her novel, and Buzzworm in particular, to challenge the racial bias of popular media framing and its reliance on portraying spectacularized forms of violence. She revitalizes the meaning and use of a particularly charged space, shifting the cultural

imaginary of South Central Los Angeles toward one of communal and collective responsibility.

If locations in Yamashita's formal matrix extend beyond functioning as a singular point on a two-dimensional map, becoming flickering signifiers that point to the proliferation of multiple semiotic processes and medial forms, then the chapter subtitle "*Chinatown*" does more than simply position the chapter's narrative action in the Chinese ethnic enclave of the city. Its connection to Roman Polanski's famous film situates Yamashita's narrative not only in relation to film noir and neo-noir genres, but also in relation to the history of infrastructural conflicts. The critically acclaimed film takes as a major plot point the historical struggle between the city of Los Angeles and the Owens Valley over land rights and the municipal water supply in the early twentieth century. The film fictionalizes this infrastructural conflict through its neo-noir plot, in which the private investigator J.J. Gittes investigates the murder of Hollis Mulwray, the chief engineer of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and in the process, uncovers a vast scheme involving the exploitation of the public water supply for private profit. Although Yamashita takes up meaningfully this particular history of infrastructural exploitation specifically through her character, Manzanar, she invokes Polanski's *Chinatown* here as a noir genre classic "against which Asian American writers of crime fiction must write" (Huang 8), and as an actual geographical location in which people live, something the film glosses over in its overt racialization of the neighborhood. In the novel, Chinatown becomes a physical and cultural nodal point in a complex web of mediation. Like the intersection of Jefferson and Normandie, Chinatown in Yamashita's

hands is more than a geographic referent; it becomes a multiply contested site of cultural and collective representation.

These examples illustrate how Yamashita formalizes multiple technological, cultural, and historical layers of remediation. To approach the novel as a transmedia network is to understand how the novel as a form participates in multiple visual ecologies of screened content—the internet, television, film, and maps. In these complex webs of mediation, Yamashita challenges us to reframe, formally and conceptually, the ways we see through and beyond these screens. Her multimodal aesthetic is charged with a political effort to reconstruct the histories and peoples often overlooked—kept off-screen or out of frame—in popular media, and yields opportunities for reimagining and repurposing these sites and sights of historical and collective erasure.

### "There are maps and there are maps and there are maps": Mapping Systems and Histories of Infrastructural Violence

Following the logic of Yamashita's "Hypercontexts," Manzanar's name becomes part of the novel's hypertextual apparatus, inviting readers to understand him and his position as emerging from a deeply traumatic history of racial, ethnic, and infrastructural violence: he "created his name out of his birthplace, Manzanar Concentration Camp in the Owens Valley" (96). Although the novel does not offer a description of Japanese American internment camps themselves, Yamashita indexes their histories through Manzanar. Like the particularly mediated history of the "L.A. Riots" that surfaces in Yamashita's invocation of the corner of Jefferson and Normandie, Manzanar's experience of internment becomes a kind of assumed knowledge for the novel, and we can understand his trauma as a consequence of military infrastructure itself.

Manzanar's birthplace in the Owens Valley of California, the geographical site of the Manzanar Relocation Camp, involves long histories of spatial injustice, including the forced removal of indigenous peoples, poor whites, and people of color. Chiyo Crawford documents that the Owens Valley region of southern California witnessed the "displacement of three groups of people: the Paiute Indians during the mid- to late nineteenth century; poor white ranchers, farmers, and miners in the early twentieth century; and Japanese Americans during World War II" (89). Indigenous to the region, the Paiute peoples were displaced by white prospectors who sought to mine the area for gold. A war was waged from 1861 to 1863, and on July 22, 1863, over one thousand Paiute people "were forcibly marched almost two hundred miles south to a relocation camp at Fort Tejon" (Crawford 89). A year later, hundreds more were again forcibly relocated to the Tule River, about fifty miles southwest of the present-day Manzanar National Historical Site, before scattering about the region in the ensuing decades. This particular history replays violent histories of genocide and displacement of indigenous peoples by white settlers during colonization.

Many descendants of these white miners became local farmers and ranchers, and they officially settled a small fruit town that they named Manzanar in 1910. Shortly afterward, however, the city of Los Angeles began encroaching upon this region, stealing land and water rights from the new municipality "for the construction of an aqueduct to carry water from the Owens Valley to Los Angeles" (89).[18] Because of a series of land buyouts and water rights purchases arranged by the Los Angeles Department of Water

[18] Notably, this is the historical backdrop that the film *Chinatown* fictionalizes.

and Power, the Los Angeles Aqueduct was completed in 1913. By 1929, Los Angeles owned all of Manzanar's land and water rights. During this period, farmers and ranchers attempted resistance by setting off explosions on the aqueduct and wells, but these attempts were to no avail. The subsequent water depletion and desertification of the area caused by the development of this metropolitan water infrastructure forced farmers to relocate for survival. Within five years, the town was abandoned.

Not long after, Japanese Americans were forcibly relocated into concentration camps located in the abandoned town[19] due to "race prejudice, war hysteria, and failure of political leadership" (89). While the Paiute peoples and white farmers were forced out of the region, tens of thousands of Japanese Americans were *forced in*, incarcerated by the American government who leased 6,200 acres from the city of Los Angeles during World War II. At a fundamental level, the War Relocation Authority (WRA) had to provide basic services and amenities for their incarcerated population. It had to build the infrastructure necessary to support its spatial containment. While initial land clearing, utility ditch excavation, and building construction for the Manzanar internment camp began in March of 1942, its first internees were incarcerated less than a month later, leaving many of the structural foundations of the camp in question.[20] Access to livable housing, heat, electricity, sanitation, and food, according to Connie Chiang, "required significant alterations to surrounding and distant lands and yielded many complications

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[19] Originally, the Manzanar Relocation Center was referred to as the Owens Valley Reception Center, but was officially re-named Manzanar shortly thereafter, recognizing the former settlement.

[20] One sociologist, after visiting the camp for a few days, discusses this lack of preparation: "On March 20 the first convoy of Japanese arrived, about 60 in number. There were no furnished barracks for them, nor doors, windows, or steps, and the expression that 'The houses were built around the Japanese' can be taken literally" (qtd. in Smith, 81).

due to volatile social and environmental conditions" (239). Because Los Angeles residents and officials expressed concern for the safety of the Los Angeles Aqueduct—after all, the Manzanar internment camp lay entirely on lands owned by the City of Los Angeles—the U.S. military was forced to "take adequate provision to protect the water" for the municipality (Lillquist 350). For this reason, the camp itself initially had to rely on water diverted from Shepherd Creek and from other streams in the Sierra Nevada Range. This "dependence on surface rather than ground water resulted in water shortages in the dry season" (351). This disproportionate allocation of water speaks to the broader inadequacies of provision for those in the internment camp.

Among the volatile environmental conditions that affected short- and long-term building at Manzanar included severe winds that, because of the region's recent clearance of vegetation, produced disastrous dust-storms. As Patricia Nelson Limerick has argued, these "dust-choked" environs came to define the incarceration experience: nature and the WRA "seemed to have joined forces to construct landscapes designed to break the spirits of the prisoners" (206). Sand would penetrate the cracked floors and shoddy windowsills of the barracks, making its presence ubiquitous, and domestic and personal cleanliness an impossibility.[21] Whereas the poorly built barracks provided little barrier to the ecological environment, the camp's barbed wire fences, guard towers, and spotlights provided major

[21] The *Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* describes the conditions of the barracks as follows: they were "nothing but a 20 by 25 foot of barrack with roof, sides of pine wood and covered with thin tar paper . . . no attic, no insulation. But the July heat separated the pine floor and exposed cracks to a quarter of an inch. Through this a cold wind would blow in or during the heat of the day dusty sand would come in through the cracks. To heat, one pot bellied wood stove in the center of the barracks" (*Personal Justice Denied* 138-9).

physical barriers for internees and served as a constant reminder of their imprisonment.[22] Constrained through surveillance and the punitive infrastructure of the camp, internees were forced to confront their lack of rights, citizenship, and civil liberties, not to mention their lack of access to sustainable forms of housing and food.

In response to the violence of their surroundings, Japanese American internees sought to improve their environment by creating gardens. As Kenneth Helphand has noted, these gardens were "a subversive response to internment, where individual and collective gestures were a way of denying the camp administration and environment" (189). According to Karl Lillquist, gardening "helped evacuees deal with the trauma of incarceration" and helped "buffer the evacuees from the often harsh environments of the centers" (Lillquist 365). These gardens became the resilient and resourceful response of Japanese American internees to the specific conditions of their incarceration. Without reliable water, the desert heat and short growing season limited what internees could grow, but they "combined materials on hand with those from afar to create distinctive incarceration camp gardens" (Chiang 251). As a result, Chiang argues that these gardens "reflected the process by which Japanese Americans developed their own visions for the land and gained personal and collective strength by transforming environments that, at first glance, seemed so grim and oppressive" (251). In many ways, gardening at Manzanar came to be understood by its internees as an act of direct resistance to their

[22] A now famous poem, "That Damned Fence," written by an incarcerated student during their internment reveals the oppressive reality of the built environment: "They've sunk in posts deep into the ground/ They've strung wires all the way around/ With machine gun nests just over there,/ And sentries and soldiers everywhere!/ With nowhere to go and nothing to do/ We feel terrible, lonesome, and blue;/ That DAMNED FENCE is driving us crazy[.]" (Hathaway xi)

incarcerated status.[23] Importantly, these gardens also come to figure as acts of resistance within the larger infrastructural histories of the region as well. To water their gardens, they diverted water that fed into the Los Angeles aqueduct to form their own stable reservoir, reclaiming the provisions that had formerly only been granted to the metropolis. In the middle of the desert, and in the face of their own demoralizing imprisonment, incarcerated people at Manzanar demanded access to water not merely to grow gardens, but to establish the roots of their community resistance to oppression.

Altogether, the multiple histories of displacement that obtain in the Owens Valley region map an intersectionality of communities violently mistreated by governmental entities. These histories reveal how infrastructure often doesn't serve the interests of its people. But these histories also reveal possibilities of resistance, such as the incendiary tactics of farmers against the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and the community gardens cultivated by incarcerated Japanese Americans at Manzanar. In the novel, the past internment and present homelessness of the character Manzanar serve as forceful reminders of these historical processes of repression and dispossession. By identifying himself with his birth in a Japanese internment camp in the larger Owens Valley region, Manzanar grounds his identity in the material histories of dispossession,

[23] In fact, what has been referred to as the "Manzanar Riot" began in Block 22, which was "the site of the beautiful mess hall garden that fused ancient Japanese garden design with the frontier west, pre-World War II Los Angeles, and the environment of Manzanar" (Lillquist 365). After a government informant in the camp was beaten for diverting resources from internees in a particular portion of the camp, leading to the arrest of the camp's well-known resistance leader Harry Ueno, a crowd of nearly a thousand internees waged a protest. In the ensuing clash with military police, two young internees died and several more were injured when the military police seemingly attempted to disperse demonstrators with tear gas, before firing submachine guns into the smoke. The event sharpened tensions even further between officials and the incarcerated Japanese Americans. In the aftermath, many internees "engaged in a month-long strike that virtually shut down the camp's daily operations" (Kurashige 387), which undercut the WRA's ambitious plans for industry at Manzanar.

displacement, and exploitation.[24] But like those displaced and incarcerated, Manzanar also factors forms of resistance into this reclamation of this identity.

Although not entirely visible in *Tropic of Orange* except through Manzanar's name, Yamashita explicitly connects these historical legacies of colonization, racism, and social injustice to Manzanar in an earlier iteration of his character in *GiLArex (or Godzilla Comes to Little Tokyo): A Musical*. In the musical performance, Manzanar camps along the Los Angeles Harbor Freeway overpass and discusses a time when he was living at Manzanar, "that manmade desert in the Owens Valley": "When you're in the desert and you're thirsty," he says,

> You get to thinking about water. I had a theory that it connects things together. Connects past to present. Maybe I could get back to the sea where my folks came from. So I followed the water. L.A. Department of Water and Power. There's an aqueduct that sucks the water right on out through the desert. Start up at Mono Lake and winds down through the tunnels and canyons. I must've followed it for more than three hundred miles. And it all ends up right here [on the Overpass]. (102-3)

Like Leopold Bloom who admires water for its democratic qualities, this iteration of Manzanar admires water for its connective properties, intuiting that water not only "connects things together" for survival, but that it also "[c]onnects past to present." If Bloom appreciates water for the way in which it "seeks its own level," Manzanar appreciates it for the way he can use it to seek its origin stories—whether origin stories about the "sea where my folks came from" or stories of origins in Mono Lake where Los

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[24] In his self-chosen identity, dislocation, and homeless status, Manzanar, as Xiaojing Zhou claims, "embodies resistance to historical amnesia about the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II […], while making visible the presence of the homeless" in the city (276). As Chiyo Crawford contends, "Manzanar's homelessness is not a liberating circumstance; rather, it is a manifest displacement borne out of a long history of forced removal and land theft perpetrated against Japanese Americans and other racial minorities" (92).

Angeles draws its water over three hundred miles away. As I have shown, implicit in water and water infrastructures here are deep histories of personal, collective, and cultural development. Manzanar links these histories—he "connect[s] past to present"—to make visible the exploitative relationship between the city of Los Angeles and its surrounding rural areas where resources have been extracted and unevenly distributed. The modern metropolis, Manzanar shows, depends upon these exploitative histories. Like Joyce who articulates how Dublin receives its water from a reservoir in County Wicklow, Yamashita reveals that Los Angeles sources its water from the larger Owens Valley region and that it has historically come at a collective cost. The climax of the musical redeems this history of infrastructural exploitation through a parodic intervention of a Godzilla-like dinosaur who, led by the musical orchestrations of Manzanar, destroys the aqueduct itself, reversing spectacularly historical forms of infrastructural violence. As water rushes forth from the destroyed aqueduct, Manzanar proclaims it as reparative justice: "This desert valley of sorrow and tears has become an ocean! Water has returned to the Owens Valley" (148). Manzanar reenacts in a big way the diverting of water from the aqueduct by incarcerated Japanese Americans for their gardens, staging spectacularly generations of resistance to the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and its uneven provisions. Altogether, the Manzanar in *GiLArex* establishes historical connections between the infrastructural battles of the Owens Valley and the municipality of Los Angeles, and the internment of Japanese Americans at the Manzanar Relocation Camp.

Because in this passage these histories converge in the present location of an overpass on the Los Angeles Harbor Freeway, Yamashita establishes the Freeway, like

the aqueduct itself, as a site that contains histories of spatial injustice. It is upon this particular overpass where readers encounter Manzanar again in *Tropic of Orange*. Rather than conducting the movements of a Godzilla-like dinosaur, the unhoused Manzanar of this novel acts as an orchestra conductor of the city's infrastructural rhythms. By understanding these often overlooked histories of infrastructurally motivated dispossession, and by understanding the particular textual genealogy of Manzanar as a character of reparative justice for historical traumas, we can more readily recognize in his infrastructural symphonies in *Tropic of Orange* the roots of a political and aesthetic vision. Riffing on the double meaning of "Traffic *Jam*" as he stands atop the overpass of the Harbor Freeway, he gives aesthetic form to the structural aspects of modern life that "ordinary persons never bother to notice" (52).[25] He channels the invisible municipal, geological, and historic grids of metropolitan life into a symphony, rendering into audible terms a spatial archeology of the city and its infrastructures.[26] Manzanar's symphonies map infrastructural networks as ongoing and interdependent sociotechnical processes, revealing multi-dimensional and multi-directional relationships between humans and nonhuman technological systems that produce a host of social, ecological, cultural, and historical meanings. Further, because Manzanar is concerned with the convergence of

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[25] In a novel with characters attached to various media, Manzanar stands out as unique. Rather than being plugged into a radio, a cellphone, or a television, he is tuned into the material infrastructures of Los Angeles and its environs. By association, Yamashita asks us to consider infrastructures as media technologies, as connective material structures that facilitate the flow of bodies, objects, and information.

[26] He invites the reader, as Jina Kim suggests, "to hear the underlying networks of labor, maintenance, and civic support that the novel amplifies" (2). Kim argues that Manzanar's orchestral mapping practice attunes "readers to LA's infrastructure, the oft-unnoticed roads, pipes, and labor networks that enable the city to function" and highlights "interdependency as both political and aesthetic value" (2). XiaoJing Zhou, on the other hand, argues that Manzanar's urban symphony is a "critique of the notion of civilization and progress" and its "development and dependence on technology" (277).

aesthetic techniques, material and medial technologies, and urban space, his musical map-making resembles Yamashita's own literary enterprise and operates within the novel's transmedial web of cultural forms and aesthetic practices. After all, he too is concerned with producing and animating various "grid[s]."

Manzanar produces interactive maps of Los Angeles defined by systems and sociotechnical processes: "*There are maps and there are maps and there are maps*. The uncanny thing was that he could see all of them at once, filter some, pick them out like transparent windows and place them even delicately and consecutively in a complex grid of pattern, spatial discernment, body politic" (52). Like the novel's "Hypercontexts," Manzanar gives form to a "complex grid of pattern, spatial discernment, and body politic" in a way that views infrastructure as a set of intertwined systems working in concert. Manzanar's "grid[s]" are formed by the complex strata of infrastructural and cultural formations that have shaped the city. Mapping these layers musically from his concrete rostrum on the Los Angeles Harbor Freeway, Manzanar experiences a sort of infrastructural sublime. His musical movement begins first with "the very geology of the land," documenting the "artesian rivers" and the "complex and normally silent web of faults" (52). Then, Manzanar looks below these natural waterways and geological formations to the

> man-made grid of civil utilities: Southern California pipelines of natural gas; the unnatural waterways of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and the great dank tunnels of sewage; the cascades of poisonous effluents surging from rain-washed streets into the Santa Monica Bay; electric currents racing voltage into the open watts of millions of hungry energy-efficient appliances; telephone cables, cable TV, fiber optics, computer networks. (52)

Pipelines, waterways, tunnels, cables, and networks—these are the materials that Manzanar brings into the foreground. He draws attention to the unique materialities of sociotechnical systems that distribute resources such as energy and power. By emphasizing the often taken for granted physical materials and processes of municipal provision, Manzanar makes visible and audible the technologies, resources, and relations that are required not only for the modern conveniences of in-home plumbing and electricity, but also for the very structures on which much of the production and consumption of the modern world depends. His reference to the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power indexes the hidden histories of exploitation that uphold this modern world, and reckons with the political valences of infrastructure's "power."

As his music resurfaces from this "complexity of layers [that] should drown an ordinary person," Manzanar arpeggiates through the "historic grid of land usage and property, the great overlays of transport—sidewalks, bicycle paths, roads, freeways, systems of transit both ground and air" (52). Although these "overlays of transport" are hyper-visible, in contrast to the subterranean infrastructures composed of pipes and wires, they become largely invisible to those who use them. Manzanar draws our attention to these spaces of mobility and circulation from a vantage point that is different from those who are driving in a car. His stationary vantage point from the overpass allows him to recognize sidewalks and bicycle paths, roads and freeways, as existing in relation from above. They become visible, in other words, when perceived in their networked totality, in their reciprocal dependence, and mutual interplay. Among these spaces of variegated mobility, the freeway is foundational for Manzanar's infrastructural vision: to him, the

"freeway was a great root system, an organic living entity" (35).[27] Because the "complexity of human adventure over lines of transit fascinated him," Manzanar's interest in conducting the sounds of the freeway and other sites of transport is an interest in the palpability of collective life in its everyday interaction with the material world, suggesting an aesthetic desire for noise, traffic, and friction.

In these infrastructural symphonies, Yamashita also sounds ideas of ecological dependency and the ecological consequences of technological infrastructures. Although emphasis is placed on the distinction between what is natural within the "geology of the land" and what is "man-made"—or "unnatural"—Yamashita shows how we depend on the bedrock of geology in order to build our material and cultural structures. Historically, infrastructures have originated in locations with environmental formations that are amenable to their construction and use. Yamashita draws on this history by locating the region's infrastructures on or alongside "rivers" and "faults." She illustrates their environmental effects when Manzanar's symphony follows the "cascades of poisonous effluents surging from rain-washed streets into the Santa Monica Bay," revealing how a "natural" body of water is indelibly shaped by human intervention and waste, and rendering the distinction between natural and man-made materially meaningless.[28] If

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[27] As "an organic living entity," or characterized by what Jane Bennett would call its "vital materiality" (14), the freeway and other forms of the built environment are not mere background, but rather lifelike forces that animate and are animated by social interactions and meanings. As Sue-Im Lee points out, the novel's "language of organicity" used to describe the city's infrastructure is not coincidental, given Manzanar's former work as a surgeon (326). But Manzanar goes further; to him, the freeway is also "nothing more than a great writhing dinosaur and nothing less than the greatest orchestra on Earth" (35). By having Manzanar refer to the freeway as a "dinosaur," Yamashita invokes an earlier vision of Manzanar found in her musical, *GiLArex (or Godzilla Comes to Little Tokyo): A Musical*.

[28] Attuned to the city's infrastructural systems as ecosystems in their own right, Manzanar's symphony is a symphony of the Anthropocene. Manzanar's layered vision is important given that global environmental issues such as climate change recognize that identifying a pure "nature" distinct from human activity is

Manzanar's symphony sounds the infrastructural systems of the city as inherently ecological, it allows us to rethink and re-vision the city in an era of anthropogenic change. It also allows us to witness the local environmental and human consequences of urban development. Manzanar himself exists in a kind of city-living that is constantly vulnerable to exposure to hazardous environmental conditions. Having a "blackened appearance like a chimney sweep" from his exposure to car exhaust, dust, and dirt, Manzanar embodies the harsh consequences of human technological impacts on the environment, not to mention the environmental racism suggested in his "blackened appearance" from such exposure. This also recalls the histories of the region and Manzanar's origins—most notably the pervasive dust and dirt of Japanese American internment camps. Yet despite his exposure to the slow violence of urban effluents, Manzanar looms as a figure of sustainability practices, as he "imagine[s] himself a kind of recycler" (52). But, "like other homeless in the city, [he] was a recycler of the last rung," and his "recycling" of the "residue of sounds in the city" is compared to other homeless people "collecting refuse, carting it this way and that for pennies" (52).[29] Like the incarcerated Japanese Americans who transformed the harsh materials of their environment into elaborate gardens, Manzanar recycles the local materials at his disposal to produce his own art.

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essentially impossible. As Melissa Sexton suggests, the city "might be imagined less as something distinct from nature, and more as an intensified collection of the layered systems everywhere shaping human interaction with the more-than-human world" (16).

[29] This comparison draws attention to the offloaded and disproportional impact of environmental degradation upon poor communities.

By recycling these layered sounds, Yamashita produces a spatial archeology of the city's geologic, municipal, and transit systems. Each layer provides a different rubric from which to see the city. Manzanar's map of the city reveals how infrastructure systematizes the complex sprawl of human and nonhuman urban materials into a calculated grid of roads, pipes, and wires. Although these layers imply a verticality in a literal physical sense, Manzanar's orchestrations endeavor to flatten any perceived hierarchy. As Cristina Rodriguez frames it, Manzanar's "musical map incorporates all the grids at work, thus presenting a model of unity without exclusion" (126). However, even if Manzanar refuses to exclude or hierarchize any of the musical layers of the material city, this isn't to say that he does not also recognize the particular urban formations that (re)produce hierarchies and inequalities. He orchestrates the reciprocal and interdependent interactions between a host of systems, even if the systems themselves lack a mutual reciprocity. If Manzanar gesticulates his baton all in an effort to recognize and dissolve "a thousand natural and man-made divisions" into a symphony of patterns and connections, he also sounds the various "patterns and connections by every conceivable definition from the distribution of wealth to race, from patterns of climate to the curious blueprint of the skies" (52-3). Manzanar's musical maps recognize the economic divisions and racial segregation that have been historically stitched into the fabric of the city, as well as the ecological impact of human "blueprint[s]" on the climate. Although striving for harmony, Manzanar's symphony strikes notes of division, sounding the physical and municipal structures that regulate and police forms of access and mobility.

Manzanar's inclusion of these forms of social division finds its historical roots in the generations of urban labor that have built the city's infrastructures, not to mention those histories of peoples displaced by them. His musical visions spread out not only in space, but also in time, as he envisions "the first infrastructures built by migrant and immigrant labor that created the initial grid on which everything else began to fill in," including the railroads, the ports and harbors, "freeways crash[ing] into each other," and the aqueducts through which "water was eventually carved away from the north, trickled, then flooded, into this desert valley" (203). "Spread across these infrastructures" was a "map of labor"—a musical map that makes audible and visible the underappreciated and underrepresented forms of human labor that undergird the city (203).[30] Manzanar extends this multicultural "map of labor" into the present, drawing attention to the "daily hires hugging their knees on the backs of pick up trucks" to those employed in tourism and entertainment industries and in "federal, county, and city" sectors (203). Through Manzanar, Yamashita demonstrates that the city is not only founded upon geologic, geographic, and technological structures, but also upon the backs of people who have largely been ignored or left out of narratives of Los Angeles's development. By including exploited laborers in his symphonic maps of the city's urban grids, Manzanar recovers

[30] In addressing the novel's "map of labor," Jina Kim draws on AbdouMaliq Simone's formulation of "people as infrastructure" to extend her reading of the novel's infrastructural systems to include domestic and janitorial work as infrastructure. We might reframe this concept as Arcangel himself does in poetic form when he refers to "all of the people who do the work of machines: human washing machines/ human vacuums, human garbage disposals" (172). These jobs are overwhelmingly occupied by racialized immigrants of color. "Given that this work supports the imperative of global capital while remaining unseen and unvalued," as Kim argues, this form of labor "resonates with the function of infrastructure as a network of invisible reinforcement that supports a larger totality" (12).

the role of migrant and immigrant labor in the production of the city.[31] By approaching infrastructure from the perspective of labor, he highlights the fact that those who build the material world around us are often barred from being able to use it in the same ways. Underlying these systems that Manzanar maps are the political questions of access, provision, and entitlement—where they are, who has access to them, who takes care of them, and who is forced to live without them.

The metaphor of Manzanar's infrastructural symphonies also becomes instrumental for Yamashita's own aesthetic project.[32] From a literary historical perspective, Yamashita uses Manzanar's multiple infrastructural symphonies to channel Joyce's famous water passage from the "Ithaca" episode of *Ulysses*. Whereas Joyce traces the geographic, technological, and bureaucratic journey of water through its infrastructural mechanisms from the "reservoir" in County Wicklow to the tap in Leopold Bloom's house on 7 Eccles Street, Yamashita's infrastructural vision is somehow even more expansive. Manzanar's arrangement is dizzying in its content and scale, pointing to the complexity of ecological, technological, economic, and social networks that make up the material environment. If Joyce draws our attention to the specific details of the

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[31] Given Manzanar's overt racialization and his personal history of being a concentration camp internee as a child, there is an implied solidarity between Japanese Americans and Chicanx laborers, all of whom bear a shared history in California agriculture and infrastructure.

[32] There is a mimetic quality to Yamashita's writing and the city's infrastructure, which aligns with what Patricia Yaeger has called the temptation "to imagine the deep structures of city texts" as mirroring "the deep structures of cities," especially considering the "play of surface and depth (subways, water mains), of hypervisibility (bridges), and invisibility (the electrical grid)" (16). For example, Yamashita's reference to the freeway as a "great root system" draws attention to the root/route systems of globalization. Her novels as migration narratives are often heavily invested in the hybrid identities and forms of cultural exchange fostered by these root/route systems. In this way, the "complexity of human adventure over lines of transit" come to resemble, if not reenact, the complexity of human adventure over lines of her own texts. The mimetic quality of her writing, however, does more than simply mirror the material urban and infrastructural forms with the forms of her novel.

material and technological conduits that distribute potable water to Dublin dwellings in 1904, Yamashita similarly points to the systems and conduits that facilitate the movement of people, objects, and information, and she registers their deeply uneven histories. Yamashita shows how such a local constellation of spatial structures operates dynamically as media by aligning physical transit systems with electrical conduits as mechanisms of circulation. Just as Joyce locates his novel "IN THE HEART OF THE HIBERNIAN METROPOLIS," so too does Yamashita ground her novel in the material and technological flows of Los Angeles: the cement and steel, the cables and wires, the fiber optics and the airwaves of Los Angeles's infrastructural systems, not to mention the histories of human labor underneath it all, act as a circulation system, "pumping and pulsating […] the great heartbeat of a great city" (33).[33]

In addition to the modernist novel, Yamashita also draws upon modernist cinema as means to reimagine the novel as fundamentally multimodal. To characterize Manzanar's attention to the city's infrastructure as a kind of symphony borrows from a particularly niche but wildly influential cinematic genre in the early twentieth century known as the city symphony.[34] In fact, Yamashita's reference to the sounds of urban traffic in Los Angeles as forming "the great heartbeat of a great city" takes as its textual and artistic echo one of the forerunners of the city symphony genre, a film by Walter

[33] Yamashita parodically inverts this metaphor of vehicular traffic as the city's central pumping organ by making an important plot point the very literal *trafficking* of human organs. Later in the novel, the traffic jam caused by the accident along the Harbor Freeway reinforces this metaphor by characterizing the blocked-up road as "a transportation artery that a vehicle could [not] pass through. It was a big-time thrombosis. Massive stroke. Heart attack" (187).

[34] For more on the city symphony genre, see *The City Symphony Phenomenon: Cinema, Art, and Urban Modernity Between the Wars*, edited by Jacobs, et al; and Turvey, *The Filming of Modern Life: European Avant-Garde Films of the 1920s.*

Ruttman known as *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*. City symphony films were experimental in their portrayal of the city's materiality—its spaces, people, infrastructure, and technologies—as a protagonist of documentary footage, rather than its mere setting. Among the characteristic formal and aesthetic elements of a city symphony included "unusual perspectives, skewed angles, [and] rapid and rhythmic montage" that endeavored to capture "a kaleidoscopic sense of modern life" (Jacobs, et al.). These films prioritized and emphasized a montage aesthetics, as they were edited in ways intended to suggest a musical structure: "Shots were treated like musical notes, sequences were organized as if they were chords or melodies, scenes were built up onto movements or acts, and issues of rhythm, tempo, and polyphony figured prominently" (Jacobs, et al.).[35] The effect of these cinematic techniques rendered these films ostensibly to be about the cities they documented, but also to be about the nature and affordances of cinematic mediation itself. By indexing this historical cinematic genre through Manzanar, Yamashita not only deploys its montage aesthetics to integrate the external spectacle and internal rhythms of Los Angeles's infrastructure into his symphony, but also to draw attention to mediating techniques that enact this integration at a literary formal level. As Manzanar incorporates multiple aesthetic and infrastructural perspectives into his orchestral productions that represent the systems of Los Angeles, so too does Yamashita incorporate multiple intertextual and transmedial forms to produce this effect. While

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[35] These cinematic techniques have become part of the iconography of film, defining a "cinematic shorthand for modern metropolitan life."

Manzanar "recycles" the sounds of the city, Yamashita "recycles" generic forms and media frames in her novel.

Yamashita's use of multiple genres and media becomes even more evident during the "percussive orchestration" of the "greatest jam session the world had ever known," in which Manzanar excitedly orchestrates the music of a large convergence of vehicles on the freeway: "And CLICK, one two, SLIDE, three four, FLOMP, one two, BLAM, three four, SNAP, one two VROOOM, three four. Just amazing. And then the syncopated REAR VIEW CHECK IT OUT and a one and a two, and AC UP TO THE MAX and a three and a four, and CREEP ON OUT and a five and a six, and MERGE, MERGE, MERGE" (177). Yamashita adapts musical counting for her literary representation and impressively navigates a shift in time signature and syncopation as the cars on the highway begin to merge. Shouhei Tanaka reads Yamashita's energetic and palpable formalization of a traffic jam—its musical cadence and use of capitalized verbs—in relation to "comic book onomatopoeias" and "F.T. Marinetti's futurist automobilism," locating its form in a kind of historical and cultural pastiche (206). The interplay of sound and image here reveal the techniques and technologies of different aesthetic mediums: Yamashita relies on heavily graphic, and thereby visual, forms of literary intertextuality in order to produce the audible music of the freeway. Tanaka argues that automobility becomes "our narrative analogue" as a "chaos of traffic [is] sliced, sequenced, and exported into narrative order" (206). Through a digital montage aesthetic that Tanaka implies with the language of slicing, sequencing, and exporting, Yamashita's complex depiction of physical and digital infrastructural systems merges with her own set of

narrative and genre architectures. As automobiles in the scene "MERGE MERGE MERGE," so too does a multiplicity of narrative, generic, cultural, and medial forms merge across the entirety of the novel. In this way, therefore, infrastructural systems such as the freeway become medial sites through and upon which to reveal the mediality of the novel form itself.

The formal entanglements of Manzanar's urban symphony, and by extension the formal concerns of Yamashita's novel, are not merely for the sake of form itself. Rather, drawing attention to the interplay of multiple formal systems allow Yamashita to reveal complex histories of cultural, social, and political struggle. As Caroline Levine remarks, "forms are the stuff of politics," and "politics [are] a matter of distributions and arrangements" (3). Political power imposes order on space and organizes time, enforcing boundaries and hierarchies, spatial and cultural arrangements that participate in "ongoing contests over the proper places for bodies, goods, and capacities" (Levine 3). Those within the spatial and political arrangements "never bother to notice" the forms that contain and shape their movements, nor the human labor that had produced such arrangements. But because Manzanar's position is both within and outside this material network of political power, Yamashita is able to excavate personal and collective histories that inform our understanding of the infrastructural and cultural developments of the greater Los Angeles region. As a "conductor," Manzanar is a node, an integral intermediary, within a complex system of material technologies and cultural histories. His position in relation to infrastructure is doubly exceptional, in that he is an eccentric artistic genius able to see what the masses take for granted, but also in that he, as an

unhoused man, is excepted from the very infrastructures he orchestrates. After all, he has no car to drive, no home with plumbing or electricity. Manzanar occupies a formal position both outside of the state and capitalism, and it is this peculiar position that, as Hee-Jung Serenity Joo contends, “marks him with an urban clairvoyance that allows him to see how flexible accumulation has resulted in the racially segregated, class stratified, and palimpsestic geography of the city” (260). Manzanar doesn’t and cannot belong to the community of infrastructural users; he can only stand as “a fixture on the freeway overpass much like a mural or a traffic information sign” (34).

Ultimately, by identifying himself with a geographical site rife with histories of collective dispossession, Manzanar assumes a redemptive mantle as he conducts the infrastructural flows of the city below him. His conducting performs his claim to the city, transforming his personal history of dispossession, and “challenging and transcending the history of race-based dislocation in the United States” (Crawford 92). In laying aesthetic claim to the spaces and networks of former spatial injustices, Manzanar provides a counterhegemonic glimpse into the invisible histories of dispossession that undergird the structures of modern society. By transforming the city and its sprawling networks into an aesthetic medium in *Tropic of Orange*, Manzanar’s effort is to conduct mass relations to the physical and digital infrastructures of the city. Because infrastructure largely becomes invisible to those who use it, Manzanar merges its spontaneous sounds and flows with its deeper social, economic, and ecological histories in an ensemble that reveals the

contingent relationships and exploitative histories of infrastructural systems.[36] The extent to which Yamashita reveals these relationships and histories, the novel insists, would be impossible in conventional mapping practices. Manzanar's experience of space is not reducible to the two-dimensional form of a normal map. Only through "the surrealist depiction of a symphony of traffic sounds" can a map of his caliber be produced (Rodriguez 126). Only literature, Yamashita contends, can produce such an elaborate three-dimensional map. His challenge in "conducting" infrastructure, and by extension Yamashita's challenge, is to defamiliarize infrastructural systems in a way that might recuperate the experiences of lived space; that might refocus our understanding of infrastructural development in relation to histories of dispossession; and that might reshape the way in which we inhabit and are conditioned by infrastructural systems.

**"What's the Buzz?": Mediating Community on the Streets, Airwaves, and Freeways**

Although the Los Angeles Harbor Freeway operates as Manzanar's orchestral rostrum, Yamashita gets at its local history as a site of urban displacement even more clearly in the novel from Buzzworm's perspective: "He remembered years ago. Neighborhood meeting at the old recreation center. City bureaucrats come over to explain how they were gonna widen the freeway" (73). Freeways have long become synonymous with Los Angeles, but the consequences of their development are often overlooked. After World War II, the Los Angeles Interstate Highway program wrought fissures upon the

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[36] Despite the "man-made divisions" of race and class that shape infrastructural development and its environmental impacts, Manzanar's symphonies are utopian in scope: "he bore and raised each note, joined them, united families, created a community, a great society, an entire civilization of sound" (33). Even though "[t]hose in vehicles who hurried past under Manzanar's concrete podium most likely never noticed him" (33), Yamashita renders his infrastructural symphonies as highly visible and highly audible.

social geography of the city.[37] East and South Central LA had been prominently diasporic hubs of the working-class. But, as Eric Avila describes, "freeways encroached," "dislodging tens of thousands and isolating a growing concentration of racial poverty from the rest of the city" (833). These freeways, Avila continues, enforced "formidable barriers, as if to underscore the barrio's geography of utter difference" (833).[38] As Raúl Homero Villa documents, city boosters viewed freeway expansion through a lens of technological hubris: one booster described the expressway system as "one of the wonders of the modern world" (84). State highway officials relied on vague ideals of progress to justify the construction of freeways through certain residential neighborhoods. The state-sponsored Division of Highways used these vague ideals to minimize the appearance of communal opposition to infrastructural development. After clearing over fifteen hundred homes for the construction of part of the Harbor Freeway, for example, the Division of Highways publicized their belief that progress was such a worthwhile pursuit that even those displaced by the construction happily understood their role in paving the way toward the modern future.[39] After clearing thousands of homes,

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[37] Mike Davis has referred to the widening of the Los Angeles Harbor Freeway as "a traumatic removal of housing and restriction of neighborhood ties that was the equivalent of a natural disaster" (298).

[38] The Interstate Era continued in the vein of previous infrastructural projects that had adversely and disproportionately affected the city's racial underclass. The rail lines of the late nineteenth century and the channelization of the Los Angeles River, which followed the path of the railroad, in the 1930s "enforced a vast concrete gulf between Boyle Heights and Downtown" (834). Freeway construction widened this gulf further, concretizing the city's racial imbalances.

[39] The only instance of a community successfully resisting the proposed construction of a freeway through their community was Beverly Hills. Beverly Hills had a "distinct advantage that other municipalities lacked: it could hire its own consulting firms to evaluate the conclusions reached by the state Division of Highways" (Avila 834). Although these consulting firms did not repudiate the Division of Highways prescription to build a freeway through Beverly Hills, they did try to highlight the stability and affluence of the residential community. Implicitly, their argument was based on their relative wealth and their relative whiteness as compared to other regions of the city. Unlike the white affluent community of Beverly Hills whose successful resistance to the program's spatial interventions was through their bureaucratic and moneyed sway, the poor, immigrant, non-English-speaking peoples in the barrios of Boyle Heights made

the Division of Highways indicated that they were met with "wholehearted cooperation" by those who knew "they should not stand in the way of progress" (qtd. in Avila 834).[40] The program's physical transformation of the city politically and spatially framed certain communities, maintaining neighborhoods where affluent white people lived, and dispossessing those neighborhoods where minorities and economically impoverished people lived.[41] The project's function was to forge racial and class boundaries into the spatial fabric of the city, while suggesting that the changes were to everyone's benefit.

Buzzworm, as Yamashita's vehicle for an "urban collective memory that bears witness to the reshaping of whole neighborhoods and their socio-economic structures" (Kara 78), provides a complete account of how state officials and city bureaucrats publicized the freeway development as an urban renewal project. The plan was to

> Move some houses over, appropriate streets, buy out the people in the way. Some woman just like grandma stood up and wanted to know what the master plan was. How'd she know it wasn't gonna be more than just widen the freeway? How'd she know wasn't gonna be more than one ramp? Wasn't gonna be some other surprises? An airport maybe? Condominium and hotels and convention halls? Who was gonna guarantee she was gonna have a place to live under the master plan? Bureaucrats unveiled their poster boards and scale models. Everything in pastels, modern-like. Made the hood look cleaned up. Quaint. Made the palm trees look decorative. This was the plan. Just a little freeway widening. Wasn't gonna affect her house. Her house was her house. Wasn't gonna affect her (73).

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for easily displaceable targets. As a result, they built six freeways in Boyle Heights and zero in Beverly Hills.

[40] The full quote reads, "The freeway location is through an area of older houses that some of the occupants have owned for thirty years or more. Some of the occupants are older people who expected to live in their home for the rest of their lives. It would be assumed, in approaching the owners of this type, that one would meet with tears, hesitation, and reluctance and perhaps outright defiance when asked to move. This is not the case. The older folks seem to have resigned themselves to the fact that they should not stand in the way of progress and gladly cooperate. This is the rule rather than the exception. We have met with wholehearted cooperation and support many times where least expected" (qtd. in Avila, 834).

[41] By the 1980s, urban renewal and freeway expansion projects had "consumed 12 percent of the land in East Los Angeles while displacing approximately 10 percent of its residential population" (Villa 82).

This meeting resembles traditional public engagement efforts for infrastructural development. It follows a top-down approach in which "City bureaucrats" inform and educate the community on a decision, without allowing them to contribute to shaping the outcome. Despite the community fears voiced by some "woman just like [Buzzworm's] grandma," the community has little input on freeway development. Evidenced by the "poster boards and scale models," the design decisions had already been made—and made in the image of a neighborhood that is almost unrecognizable to the one in which the community lived. The bureaucrats dismiss the potential consequences of development, deny any sort of meaningful public participation in decision making processes that affect their lives and their homes, and characterize any community resistance as "crazy paranoid" (73).

As Cristina Rodriguez makes clear, the "master plan" is "based on Downtown's growth and the freeways needed for movement in and out of the city, not on the maintenance of residential neighborhoods" (118). It is a brand of city-making that determines where and whose lives are to prosper. The bureaucratic power of the municipality takes the form of "Time and paper," according to Buzzworm: "By the time the freeway could be widened, people forget what they promised. Politicians who promised could be gone. Situations change, bureaucrats don't. So they said it wasn't gonna affect her" (73). But inevitably, the development—not to mention its delayed completion—indelibly affects the neighborhood: bureaucrats "[m]ake sure it took five years to clear out the houses. Make sure the houses left to be broken into and tagged. […] Use for illegal purposes. Pass drugs. House homeless. Make sure the ramp took another

five years. Slow down the foot traffic and the flow. Break down the overpass crossing the freeway. Make it impossible for people to pass" (73). Rodriguez summarizes the consequences of development, indicating that "[d]elays in clearing and construction attract crime, eliminate foot traffic, and crush local businesses" (118). The master plan—in actuality, rather than in the bureaucrats' pastel depictions of the freeway—is to "[l]eave the neighborhood crumbling. Just plow it away" (74). The promise of infrastructure again rears its ugly head, yielding cruel and uneven realities.

Freeway expansion not only dispossessed certain racial communities, denying them spatial and transportation justice, but also attempted to obfuscate the damaging consequences of infrastructure from being visible, from being seen.[42] By contrast, Buzzworm and Manzanar insist on the presence and visibility of Los Angeles's displaced communities. Like Manzanar, Buzzworm also takes an interest in maps, but at a different scale.[43] According to Buzzworm, maps as forms of hegemonic power don't accurately

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[42] One of the few times in the novel that Buzzworm rides in a car over the Harbor Freeway, he realizes that the neighborhood the Freeway encroached upon is scarcely visible to drivers and passengers: "Got to pass over the Harbor Freeway, speed over the hood like the freeway was a giant bridge. He realized you could just skip out over his house, his streets, his part of town. You never had to see it ever" (31). From the space of the freeway, the communities reeling from the impact of its construction remain invisible. According to Eric Avila, rendering invisible the racial communities and tensions aggravated by Los Angeles freeways was a deliberate part of their construction: "Dense landscaping or concrete walls alongside freeway arteries, for example, obstructed the driver's passing glance at the sights of the city. This kind of a visual screening sustained ignorance of, or indifference to, the surrounding built environment and negated the sense of passing through the city's landscapes of work and community" (213).

[43] Xiaojing Zhou argues that Buzzworm and Manzanar "become subjects of knowledge production through their respective modes of contesting the official maps and remapping the urban space" (270). Cristina Rodriguez frames it similarly: "Buzzworm and Manzanar occupy spaces profoundly different from the representations of space they know from maps, master plans, and even non-natives of the city. […] [T]hey possess a vision of the inner city, shared by the distinct populations they represent" (109). As Shouhei Tanaka contends, "Buzzworm's street maps primarily identify the local forms of racial and socioeconomic segregation, dispossession, and displacement, while Manzanar's maps frame Los Angeles across broader contexts" (203).

reflect the communities they attempt to represent.[44] He yearns for someone to "put down all the layers of the real map, [so] maybe he could get the real picture" (72). Buzzworm's mapping practice emerges as a form of "walking social services," in which he acts as a social and peer mediator (26). Although similarly invested in contesting the hegemonic forces that shape the city, Buzzworm serves as the novel's counterbalance to Manzanar in terms of how he approaches the city. As Hee-Jung Serenity Joo puts it, "Whereas Manzanar has retreated from the state, Buzzworm occupies an alternative space within it—one from which he engages its social welfare system on his own terms" (261). Whereas Manzanar is interested in the multi-scalar systems of the city "from above," Buzzworm grounds himself in the hyperlocal, connected to the streets and the people living there as a "new kind of flaneur," making meaning out of spaces that would typically be blank in dominant maps (Zhou 272).

Buzzworm's sustained attention to the relationships between poverty and community, between homelessness and space, allows him to be particularly attuned to the collective impacts and spatial transformations of local gentrification: he "remembered conversations he had with people saying they used to live here or there. Now here or there is a shopping mall, locate the old house somewhere between Mrs. Field's and the Footlocker" (72). The homes of the poor working class have been replaced by new

[44] "Buzzworm studied the map. Balboa'd torn it out of a book for him to study. *Quartz* City or some such title. He followed the thick lines on the map showing the territorial standing of Crips versus Bloods. Old map. 1972. He shook his head. Even if it were true. Even if it were true, whose territory was it anyway?" (*Tropic of Orange* 72). Responding to this passage, Hande Tekdemir writes, "By questioning the validity of Davis's book, which is considered as one of the most insightful and realistic analyses of the city, Buzzworm not only expresses the importance of perspective that changes from person to person, but also implies the temporal mobility of the city as a historical entity" (47-8).

consumer chains, ruining the small businesses in the neighborhood, such as the "dress shop" formerly owned by Buzzworm's grandmother (73). In order to combat the structurally violent histories of gentrification and displacement, Buzzworm assumes the mantle of an "Angel of Mercy" (26), a self-defined role in which he aims to ensure members of his community have access to food pantries and free clinics. His efforts reveal the dearth of social services available in South Central Los Angeles. The neighborhood lacks "major supermarkets, department stores, pharmacies, medical and dental clinics, hospitals, banks, factories, and industry" (151). Because of the stratified economic and social geographies of the city, Buzzworm indicates that "you have to risk your life; go farther, and pay more to be poor" (151). The Freeways enact violence by inhibiting access to essential goods and services. Infrastructural systems like freeways benefit those who are able to afford and use automobiles, but make it more difficult for less mobile individuals to access food and healthcare. If Manzanar maps a "metropolitan ecology rutted with power asymmetries" (Kim 11), Buzzworm indicates that the consequences of such planned violence leave the poor and destitute doubly vulnerable without easily accessible provisions for the reproduction of life and wellness.

Buzzworm's community embraces him because he is more reliable than state actors; whenever there is an emergency, no matter what time of day or night, "he [is] there long before anyone, especially the police" (26). His contributions to communal well-being are part of a "holistic plan" (Rody 144), which he straightforwardly defines: "Restore the neighborhood. Clean up the streets. Take care of the people. Trim and water the palm trees" (Yamashita 74). In order to reclaim the community, they must take care

of each other and their environment, and in this, Yamashita carries an echo from Manzanar's garden-making practices. Buzzworm, as Caroline Rody frames it, "believes that his neighbors in the home of the notorious 1992 riots will not be truly well until they become attuned to and claim stewardship of their natural and built landscape" (144). Born in historic places of ethnic and racial violence—the sites of Japanese internment and the L.A. Riots respectively—Manzanar and Buzzworm forge their relationship to the city through mapping practices that reveal structural inequities and violence. To counter infrastructural dispossession and division, they instead enact social forms of provision and care.

While Manzanar's musical maps account for the spatial and economic injustices abetted by infrastructural systems, Buzzworm confronts and aids the very human consequences of such injustices on the street. As Francisco Delgado notes, "these injustices are not only part of [Buzzworm's] day-to-day activities—visiting the local market or mentoring young men to stop street violence—but are also broadcast every night in the news" (159). Whereas Manzanar is plugged into the symphonic tones of the city's infrastructural network from his concrete rostrum on the freeway, Buzzworm plugs into the music of the city through its radio airwaves. Constantly plugged into his radio, Buzzworm not only hears the news broadcasts that depict his neighborhood through violent and racially inflected soundbites, but he also opens himself to different genres and cultures through local, national, and international radio stations: "he listened to everything. He listened to rap, jazz, R&B, talk shows, classical, NPR, religious channels, Mexican, even the Korean channel" (28). The radio, for Buzzworm, "had a special wave,

a pulse. AM or FM, it didn't matter, long as it was coming over the air" (28). If Manzanar feels the city's heartbeat through its infrastructural rhythms, Buzzworm finds the city's "pulse" over the airwaves. This interest in the polyphonic and multicultural properties of the radio, like Manzanar's aesthetic practices, reiterates the medial forms of the novel itself, which functions through different chapters, or "channels," featuring different views and different voices.

Yamashita foregrounds Buzzworm's interest in media technologies—and forms of mediation more broadly—in terms of their ability to facilitate epistemological and empathetic modes: "Buzzworm figured that some representations of reality were presented for your visual and aural gratification so as to tap what you *thought* you understood. It was a starting place but not an ending" (25). Although Buzzworm understands that "many people get their information from film and TV," he uses media technologies like the radio as a "starting place" for knowledge and for empathetic connection with people on the streets (25). Buzzworm listens "to everything the air had to offer" because it allows him to develop multiple perspectives and to teach local youth about "expand[ing] their horizons": he contends that you "Couldn't be tuned into the Beat or the Power only. […] Had to get behind another man's perspectives. Hear life in another sound zone. Walk to some other rhythms" (89). If Manzanar's role is to make visible and audible the infrastructural systems that "ordinary persons never bother to notice," Buzzworm's role is to encourage multiple perspectives that remain open to the different "sound zone[s]" and "rhythms" of modern life.

Because many of the youth and the unhoused with whom Buzzworm speaks exist outside of the state, except in their vulnerability to incarceration, they lack access to the participatory forms of social and civic engagement that would benefit themselves and their community on their own terms. As a result, Buzzworm promotes his diverse listening habits as a means for articulating an historical consciousness and cultivating communal identities within other modes of sociality beyond the state. For example, when he encourages someone to listen to the jazz station, he recommends that

> You had to listen to the station more, call in for requests even, get you some tapes and CDs, find out what you like, participate in the give and take. Pretty soon, you'd find you getting yourself an education. History of jazz followed the history of a people, black oppression, race, movement of the across the Earth, across this country. Ended up here in South Central. […] Found out you came from somewhere. History. (90)

By encouraging his community to "participate in the give and the take" of cultural and epistemological exchange, Buzzworm demonstrates the importance of becoming actively engaged in the local media culture of the community. Performing both sides of "the give and the take" collapses the distinction between media producers and media consumers, creating and sustaining collective relations, resulting in a more democratized mediascape that empowers local cultural autonomy. In linking Buzzworm's commitment to community relations and to community solidarity with historical networks of racial affiliation, Yamashita reveals how community media can provide an "education" about various racial histories and collective struggles. As a result, Yamashita illustrates the political and social efficacy of a community-engaged media apparatus. She underscores how local media can facilitate and support local identities and collective autonomy in the face of social and economic crises.

If Buzzworm walks the streets to provide forms of community care and to enlist active engagement with community media, he also does so to acquire community information, which he redistributes to other news outlets in his role as a de facto community liaison for the print journalist, Gabriel Balboa. His instincts to pay attention to the daily news through the airwaves and through the community, according to Caroline Rody, connects him "with what is most current in a wider collective sphere" (136). Within this wider sphere, he is not merely a consumer; rather, he acts as an active intermediary between the local community and the national news, foregrounding not only the role communication plays in articulating community, but also the interpenetration of local, national, and global media flows, forces, and actors. He is not just the "eyes and ears" of his neighborhood, but also its invisible mouthpiece. He identifies with his community in their plight against structural inequalities. He extends the public reach of his social work to warrant broader recognition of the realities of uneven spatial justice. He promises Gabriel that he will supply a Pulitzer Prize worthy story about the disenfranchised populous of Los Angeles. He "wanted desperately to see in print the stories of the life surrounding him, to see the wretched truth, the dignity despite the indignity" (40). His community's lack of representational power necessitates a writer like Gabriel, who has access to social and political forms of media authority across regional and national spheres. As Buzzworm himself asks, "Who else but Balboa's gonna write about us?" (41).

As Gabriel Balboa's connection on the ground, Buzzworm suggests that Gabriel write about Manzanar as a "Real human interest" piece (39). Balboa dismisses Manzanar

as crazy, but Buzzworm emphasizes the stakes of representing the unhoused population: "You wanna humanize the homeless? Then humanize the homeless. […] It's a wake-up call, Balboa. All these people living in their cars. The cars living in garages. The garages living inside guarded walls. You dump the people outta the cars, and you left with things living inside things. Meantime people going through the garbage at McDonald's looking for a crust of bread and leftover fries" (40). Of course, Gabriel, like a true noir detective, instead opts for following loose threads surrounding organ trafficking, citing the conspiracy as being more "hardcore" than a piece on Manzanar and homelessness in Los Angeles (81). Buzzworm chastises Gabriel for such a response: "Homelessness's hardcore. Forty-two thousand citywide. Hundred-fifty countryside. That enough homeless for you? Only thing, it's not a crime to be homeless. […] It's all part of the same system" (81). Although structural and systemic violence is often hard to pinpoint, Buzzworm's pleas with Gabriel illustrate the human consequences of such forms of violence—namely, the drastic increase in homelessness in the city. While private property is valued by virtue of its "living inside guarded walls," human lives are not. They are instead left "out" and forced to fend for scraps of food on the streets.

Buzzworm's plea hinges on the question and importance of visibility, as he inherently defines the media (via Gabriel) as having an important role to play in addressing homelessness and poverty more generally: "Homeless are like the dead. You the medium. We gonna talk through you, [Balboa]" (157). Buzzworm's efforts are to reanimate "the dead," the dispossessed, reasserting local autonomy and humanizing particular identities that are often left out of view in mainstream media narratives.

Buzzworm insists that Gabriel see the mounting crises facing the city and the nation as systemic and catastrophic in their own right. He insists that the media has incredible power not only to disseminate the stories of his neighborhood to wider audiences, but also to act as a diagnostic tool that can frame together the anecdotal with the structural. They can provide representation to human lives while also discussing the more abstract political and economic systems at play. And yet the media ensemble of content, perspective, and context of reception in typical media accounts works to render social and economic precarity as outliers or altogether invisible.[45]

After accusing Gabriel of "producing pulp," and not "Real human interest," Buzzworm conducts the interview with Manzanar himself, legitimating his role as a media correspondent. Although Gabriel is present at the interview, he is "without a pen or an audio recorder, without words" because he didn't anticipate it being worthwhile (94). Ironically, as he hears the interview unfold, he tries "to get comfortable on one of those curved bus benches that won't support a sleeping homeless person" (94). Gabriel is thrust temporarily into uncomfortable position by the hostile architecture of the anti-homeless bus bench.[46] Uncomfortable physically and ethically, he listens to Buzzworm converse with Manzanar about "the rise of homelessness in L.A.," "psychiatric care," "welfare,"

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[45] We see this, for example, not only in Gabriel's reticence to craft a story about Manzanar and the increasing number of those unhoused in the city, but also more explicitly in his refusal to write a story about a flood that wipes out a trans encampment in the L.A. River. "A flash-flood-LA-river-transvestite-drowning story," he thinks, "What else you got?" (38). Despite Gabriel's pretension of being invested in the stories of the disenfranchised, he knows that a story about an unhoused trans community won't make for good copy. He keeps these precarious lives out of the media frame.

[46] In *City of Quartz*, Mike Davis documents various "design deterrents" built into public spaces of Los Angeles by planning committee, city governments, and property owner to deter select groups—primarily homeless people—from a particular space. For example, Davis cites the construction of "barrel-shaped" bus benches by LA's Rapid Transit District as a form of hostile and exclusionary architecture.

and access to food and shelter (95). Although Gabriel remains uncertain about the purpose of a news' story about Manzanar, Buzzworm reinforces the point about humanizing the unhoused: "Balboa, forget the social agenda. Just tell the story. Point is there's people out here. Life out here" (96). Buzzworm's insistence on the fact that there is "life out here" foregrounds the realities of lived experience, reimagining space, politics, and infrastructure as fundamentally human and social problems.

It is Buzzworm's goal, and by extension Yamashita's, to make these histories of displacement visible. Buzzworm's earlier reflection that "Situations change," but "bureaucrats don't" underscores the historical patterns and cycles of displacement and dispossession that disproportionately affect ethnic and economic minorities. As Sarah Wald has pointed out, "Los Angeles' postwar freeway expansion displaced Mexican American communities from their neighborhoods, echoing the displacement and loss of land Mexican inhabitants suffered after California transferred from Mexican to US ownership" (73). Wald continues, "This history suggests continuities between the loss of indigenous land to the Spanish, the loss of Mexican land to the US government, and the loss of the barrio to Los Angeles' urban renewal projects" (73). Although Wald's focus is on the Mexican-American aspects of cyclical spatial injustices, we can also include the larger histories of dispossession manifested by Manzanar in this patterning. Buzzworm himself makes these larger historical connections for us. As Buzzworm reflects on people displaced by "the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, or Union Station, or the Bank of America, Arco Towers, New Otani, or the freeway," Yamashita writes, "People saying if they coulda owned the property, if the property had been worth anything at the time, if they'd

a known then every square foot of that land was worth millions […]. And then Buzzworm thinking about before that. About the Mexican rancheros and before that, about the Chumash and the Yangna" (72-3). As Wald argues, Buzzworm's reflection "suggests a thread of continuity in the transformation of land to property and the removal of people from a place" (84). His reflection connects the dispossession and transformation of the city's material geography—for "progress" and for profit—with earlier moments of displacement and conquest, connecting municipal and private development to histories of settler colonialism.

Yamashita connects the specific local histories of dispossession with the histories of colonialism further by positioning Buzzworm's reflection on gentrification next to a chapter focusing on the colonization of the Americas. In this adjacent chapter, Arcangel, a Garcia Marquezian prophet figure and a character based largely on the multimedia performance artist and activist Guillermo Gómez-Peña, serves as the novel's transhistorical consciousness by predicting doomsdays based on historical cycles tied to acts of colonization. As his "narrative persona grasps an understanding of deep time and the singularity of the Americas as a geographic body" (Gamber 129), Arcangel imagines the origin of the first "doom" as Columbus's discovery of the New World in 1492 (44). Each subsequent "doom" is dated specifically to emerge from moments of colonial conquest, from the discovery of Brazil in 1500, to the Pilgrims landing on Plymouth Rock in 1621 (44-6). He recites in poetic form, "*Every year/ there has been a historic discovery of our lands/ to make the dates of doom a certainty*" (46). His visions of doomsdays articulate a particularly global disaster imaginary for the cycles of historical

dispossession made visible by Manzanar and Buzzworm. His visions of doomsdays, however, portend economic or environmental catastrophes that create space for revolutionary action—disaster as a type of creative destruction, to use Rozario's term, in that these disasters provide a tabular rasa opportunity to transform geographic and social areas. By narratively positioning Buzzworm's thoughts on gentrification next to Arcangel's prophecies based on colonization, Yamashita forges transhistorical links between acts of spatial and cultural dispossession and claims these acts as precipitating catastrophes. From this narrative logic, the construction of the Freeway contains within its historical and material reality the inevitability of catastrophe and its revolutionary takeover. In other words, while the disastrous accident on the Los Angeles Harbor Freeway at the novel's end might be explained as merely a result of chance, the novel foregrounds that it is in fact deeply tied to systemic, administrative, and structural forms of violence that have historical foundations in the multiple forms of infrastructural dispossession revealed by Manzanar and Buzzworm.

**"El-A is Apocalypse": Representing Disaster and its Aftermath**

The novel's multiple narrative threads, including these threads of historical dispossession, converge at the site of the disastrous Los Angeles Harbor Freeway accident. Conducting the musical score of the accident, Manzanar invokes the disaster imaginary of global cinema by recognizing in the foreboding sounds of traffic the "salutary marching orchestral backdrop a la Yojimbo/Atom Boy [which] hinted at the

original Godzilla theme" (104). Although Yamashita removes the Godzilla-like monster[47] while adapting her musical *GiLArex* into the novel, she retains the emphasis on spectacular urban destruction. The traffic accident happens in a "cartoonish" fashion, and Manzanar's soundtrack seems to glitch out of real space and time into a transnational cinematic temporality—"the timing was purposely out of sync as if the entire thing—even Godzilla's wail—were dubbed" (104).[48]

Even more materially, however, the disjunctive and disconnected quality of the scene emphasizes the literal disruption of the highway space. It is no longer a contiguous space for the flow of traffic. Two towering infernos block off a mile stretch of the Freeway, with vacated cars scattered in between. With stalled and abandoned cars strewn about the road, the highway space  resembles a precarious, temporary parking lot.[49] From

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[47] In a keynote conversation at the 25th Annual CDE conference in Eichstätt in 2014, Yamashita shared that in preparation for her musical *GiLArex*, the precursor to *Tropic of Orange*, she watched a number of films from the *Godzilla* franchise. After watching a dozen old *Godzilla* films, Yamashita noticed that, "no matter what Godzilla movie," the cinematic emphasis is on "Godzilla destroying Tokyo" (177). Infrastructure in these films matters only to the extent it can be destroyed. Importantly, Yamashita argues that this monster-driven urban destruction reenacts historical forms of violence against Japan: Godzilla was "the recurring memory of the firebombing not only of Tokyo but the leveling destruction of 50% or more of every major urban city in Japan, not to mention the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, associated with Godzilla's radioactive birth" (177-8). At the same that Yamashita cycled through images of a destroyed Tokyo in order to write her musical, she was also bombarded with images of the 1992 Los Angeles Riots unfolding live. Noting the parallels between the fictional and real images on her television screen, she recalls, "I watched my city burning up across its landscape, and I wondered what the hell I was doing writing this musical" (178).

[48] In glitching the cinematic flourishes of the disaster, Yamashita channels her fictional disaster through a distorted cultural feedback loop, as if to depict both how translations of other media forms into the novel and how the historical cause and present action of the disaster are slightly "out of sync."

[49] This has intertextual resonance with Yamashita's *Through the Arc of the Rainforest,* where a "rain forest parking lot" (88)—a mysterious junkyard of cars and aircraft—is discovered hidden deep in the recesses of the Amazonian rain forest near the site of the Matacão. In the novel, scientific explorers and anthropologists find U.S. vehicles of the 1950s and 1960s, hearkening back to a specific post-World War II global scene of US imperialism and hegemonic expansion. Nestled in their own toxic mire of napalm, rust, lead, and gasoline, these vehicles include examples from America's golden automobile age, such as Cadillacs and Dodges, as well as military crafts ranging from Humvees to "F-86 Sabres, F-4 Phantoms, Huey Cobras, Lear Jets and Piper Cubs" (87). Treasa De Loughry reads this abandoned lot of vehicles as "evidence of the ramifications of the US's post-World War II imperial integration, intensive resource

underneath the overpass, the “dense hidden community living on the no-man’s land of public property” rush the freeway (105). As Manzanar observes from his orchestral rostrum, “[I]n a matter of minutes, life filled a vacuum, reorganizing itself in predictable and unpredictable ways” in the precarious and newly abandoned space (105). The unhoused population respatialize the freeway into its own organized and sustainable city, naming de facto streets and opening up businesses and sustainable urban gardens[50] out of the cars. They repurpose interstate refuse in order to form a new kind of community and to restate their right to the spaces of which they have been dispossessed.[51] If Manzanar’s artistic “recycling” occurs from above and at the level of sound and rhythm, this repurposing of the Harbor Freeway offers an example of how such practices can work on the ground and at the level of the material. A kind of (re)settlement, this community formation is a process of “gentefication,” to use a word coined by Buzzworm to describe the transformation of urban space by and for the people, rather than city developers and private interests.[52]

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grabbing and ecological degradation” (338). “What was most interesting” about the discovery of abandoned parking lot in the depths of the Amazonian rain forest, according to Yamashita, was “the way in which nature had moved to accommodate and make use of it. The entomologists were shocked to discover that their rare butterfly only nested in the vinyl seats of Fords and Chevrolet and that their exquisite reddish coloring was actually due to a steady diet of hydrated ferric oxide, or rusty water” (88). Yamashita echoes in *Tropic of Orange* this earlier attention to red vinyl seats: “The vans and camper trailers went first; then the gas guzzlers—oversized Cadillacs with their spacious pink and red vinyl interiors, and blue Buicks” (105).

[50] These urban gardens offer a unique spin on the gardens that marked Japanese American defiance at Manzanar.

[51] Elisabeth Mermann-Jozwiak locates this resettlement in terms of Yamashita’s broader depictions of mobility: “While Yamashita challenges the ‘great freeway system’s’ connotations of freedom and access to distant spaces by highlighting its birth through the destruction of neighbourhoods and impoverished (Buzzworm) or indigent (Manzanar) people’s relative lack of mobility, she most manifestly explores the impact of the politics of mobility through its opposite, a standstill” (18).

[52] “Buzzworm had a plan. Called it gentrification. Not the sort brings in poor artists. Sort where people living there become their own gentry. Self-gentrification by a self-made set of standards and respectability. Do-it-yourself gentrification. Latino has this word, *gente*. Something translated like *us*. Like *folks*. That sort

Although the Freeway accident makes the news,[53] its initial coverage is framed as spectacle. The media coverage provides "an imminent collective sense of immediate live real-time action better than live sports whose results—one or another team's demise—were predictable, and better than CNN whose wars were in foreign countries with names nobody could truly pronounce" (106). The media does indeed produce a "collectivity," but unlike the collective on the highway space, this form of collectivity is produced through the linkages of news and entertainment. The media literalizes their spectacular frame[54] when Yamashita puts the coverage in a split-screen, one side showing a disaster

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of gentefication. Restore the neighborhood. Clean up the streets. Take care of the people. Trim and water the palm trees. Some laughed at Buzzworm's plan. Called his plan *This Old Hood*." (74).

[53] In the case of disaster, the political role of broadcast media framing increases: how the media frames disaster carries serious ideological weight. As Simon Cottle contends, "media and communications *enter into* disasters, shaping surrounding social relations, conditioning political power and projects for change, and infusing them with meanings" (4). Victor Marchezini puts it even more bluntly: he writes, the "media control information and the social production of meaning, shaping and mediating our perception of disasters. This framing process creates a narrative in a selective manner in which news events are presented to the public as natural, rather than complex cultural constructions" (365). Understanding disasters, such as earthquakes or floods, as part of naturally occurring phenomena is typical among popular media and often obscures their real origins. Emi herself reveals in the novel how pervasive this media sentiment is: "El A is A-apocalypse […]. Earthquakes. Riots. Fires. Floods. It's just natural phenomena" (163). The accident is simply "One more L.A. disaster" (177). By placing "Riots," a racially inflected term with a resonant historical charge considering the city's racial unrest, within a list of so-called "natural" disasters, Emi reveals the extent to which racial conflict in the city appears as "natural," if not entirely inevitable—at least within certain media narratives. However, so-called riots are only inevitable in the sense that they erupt from long processes of oppression and histories of racialized violence.

[54] As if to borrow from the disaster film genre, media portrayals of catastrophe also tend to use spectacular aesthetics, inviting, as Anders Ekstrom claims, "a mode of spectatorship oriented towards the disruptive experience of shock, engaging audiences in the mechanical aspects of remediation through which disastrous events are disconnected from their origins" (473). It's an aesthetic of disruption and passive reception, an aesthetic that shuns critical and politically oriented spectatorship. Media portrayals also tend to perpetuate certain disaster myths at odds with the evidence of disaster research. They promote panic myths, suggesting narratives of mass demoralization and social breakdown in the aftermath of catastrophe, as well as looting myths and images of riotous mobs. These racially inflected frames for so-called deviant behavior are deployed in order to reinstate the authority of the government to intervene. Evidence, of course, opposes these media frames. Kathleen Tierney, among others, cites a body of sociological work to indicate that "social cohesiveness increases during disasters, as members of the public behave proactively and prosaically to assist one another" (58).

film for "Disaster Week," and the other showing the actual catastrophe unfolding live.[55] Coverage of the unfolding crisis and the fictional disaster film, *Canyon Fires*, play simultaneously, effectively equating the real disaster with its cinematic counterpart. As one viewer puts it, "No difference. Fire here. Fire there," while pointing to the two sides of the screen (108). Portraying the freeway crisis as a mode of entertainment creates a marketing situation in which "the station couldn't lose" (108). Yamashita pairs the initial shots of the fires with the collective perception of the cars' owners who see their property being taken: "as car owners watched on TV sets or from the edges of the freeway canyon, there were the usual questions of police protection, insurance coverage, and acts of God" (106).[56] Spectacle and looting occur in one visual narrative frame. Yamashita bemoans this media coverage, recognizing "the violent assumption underlying everything: that the homeless were expendable, that citizens had a right to protect their property with

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[55] The station is showing a film a night with the parodic titles *Inferno in the Tower, The Northridge Quake, Canyon Fires, Airport III, Bomb Threat at the Pacific Exchange, Burn Baby Burn,* and *The Day After* (24). These fictional film titles presume and present L.A. as a place where catastrophes are expected. It is important to note that Los Angeles belongs to a longstanding cultural tradition of representing disaster. As Mike Davis puts it, the "City of Angels is unique, not simply in the frequency of its fictional destruction, but in the pleasure that such apocalypses provide to readers and movie audiences" (Ecology of Fear 276-7). Just as noir as irrevocably shaped the cultural imaginary of the city, so too has the representational history of disaster films set in Los Angeles generated a legacy of, as Emi puts it in the novel, "El-A is A-pocalypse" (140). Hee-Jung Serenity Joo has located *Tropic of Orange* in Los Angeles's large repertoire of cultural texts representing disaster. Joo contextualizes Yamashita's disaster imaginary in relation to the films *Blade Runner* and *Demolition Man* which play upon racialized anxieties, in order to show how *Tropic of Orange* "emerges as an imaginative critique of this trend of assuming multiculturalism as disaster" (253). Yamashita's novel emerges from and challenges typical assumptions about disaster by situating it within sociohistorical processes of slow violence and its attendant displacements, rather the spectacular forms of violence often portrayed in journalistic and fictional media texts of disaster. Yet, Yamashita subverts these traditional and popular media narratives by utilizing their familiar forms of spectacular violence, reappropriating them in order to render visible to historical cycles of racial and economic dispossession.

[56] What's ironic about this assumption of looting is that the novel insists that the dispossessed lay claim to the abandoned cars not because of their potential exchange value, but rather because of their use value: "A spacious interior with storage space was favored, while the exterior condition of a car was deemed of secondary importance. […] Porsches, Corvettes, Jaguars, and Miatas were suddenly relegated to the status of sitting or powder rooms or even telephone booths" (105).

firearms, and that fire, regardless of whether it was in your fireplace or TV set […] was mesmerizing" (106-7). This portrayal disconnects the catastrophe not only from its origins in spatial injustice, but also from the prosocial community taking shape. The unhoused population remain leaderless but work together in building their community: Ruth Hsu writes, the unhoused "act in concert even though they are not a mob; they are a collectivity of unique individuals; they offer a glimpse of future multitudes" (112). Because the broadcast sides with the interests of private property, however, media frames can only represent the unhoused community as a homogenous mob of looters. They cannot represent what Buzzworm referred to as "Real human interest."

This type of media framing is more than a conscious choice, according to Yamashita. It is reinforced as a kind of blindness, as an inability to see altogether. For example, as the Harbor Freeway stretches and bends due to the space-warping properties of the northwardly mobile magical orange, literalizing the transformation of the freeway space within the magical realist genre, the spatially perceptive Buzzworm attempts to direct Emi's attention to the material transformations of the freeway. "Can't you see it?," he asks her. "Where we are. Harbor Freeway. It's growing. Stretched this way and that. In fact, this whole business from Pico-Union on one side to East L.A. this side and South Central over here, it's pushing out. Damn if it's not growing into everything!" (163). The camera man suggests that it might be some "video distortion" creating the illusion of an expanding freeway, but Buzzworm knows otherwise. He cites his position on the streets as giving him epistemological and phenomenological superiority over the media team: "anyone on the ground'd know. These folks weren't on the ground. They were online or

somewhere on the waves" (163). The bizarre and surreal growth of the Harbor Freeway connects to Los Angeles's broader histories of infrastructural expansion. The surreal scene encroaches upon Pico-Union, East Los Angeles, and South Central, threatening the low-income and minority communities that reside in these neighborhoods, reenacting the historical invasion of the freeway into the barrios. Of course, Buzzworm, whose grandmother had been displaced by the widening of the freeway decades earlier, is able to notice the shifting terrain of the freeway and the threat its expansion poses. But it's not just him who sees the shift; it's "anyone on the ground," anyone who experiences and is forced to confront daily the uneven materiality of the urban environment. The media, as represented by Emi and her cameraman Kerry, cannot or refuse to see the shifting freeway because they are "online or somewhere on the waves." Always online, developing programming schedules, or always trying to capitalize on getting the right televisual frame, Emi lives a completely technologically mediated existence. As such, she lacks embodied and empirical street-level and streetwise experience, and therefore, lacks the ability to discern the palpable spatial changes of the freeway.[57]

Although Emi refuses to acknowledge the spatial transformations and its consequences, Buzzworm recognizes the extreme precarity of the situation on the freeway. Expansion, when it is developed by political and bureaucratic organizations to benefit white property owners, is considered to be progress. Expansion, when it benefits the black and brown unhoused population, is a crime. Buzzworm understands that their

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[57] As Kim puts it, drawing upon new materialist theory, "the freeway never attains thingness" for Emi (11); it never attains "thingness" because the freeway is always already mediated for Emi.

occupation of the freeway space is perceived as a threat. As someone familiar with street and police violence, he knows the threat won't be handled equitably through judicial systems.[58] As the space continues to transform and as the unhoused community solidifies its hold on the freeway space, tension mounts with the increasing presence of helicopter surveillance and military police: "Buzzworm'd been taking a hard look at the urban front line, trying to figure where exactly the line might be drawn. It was all war talk. […] If he stepped over the invisible front line, he could get implicated, arrested, jailed, killed. If he stepped back, he'd just be invisible. Either way he was dead" (187).

As the unhoused community sense the vulnerability of their spatial reclamation, seeing that the "entire LAPD was lined up on either side of the Harbor Freeway readyin' up to catch any homeless wantin' to flee the canyon" (121), they decide to take the media broadcast into their own hands, to show that they too are human and worthy of recognition. Before the disaster, they had been screened visually from view of drivers on the freeway. Now, they force themselves visually onto television screens, reappropriating the media in order to be seen, to be heard. The "invisible" become visible, and the "dead" are brought back to life. If Yamashita grounds resistance to the planned violence of the city in the strategic reclamation of the physical urban infrastructures of the city, she also emphasizes the important role of media in producing empathy for their plight. The unhoused call their broadcast "TV in the FreeZone. TV from the bottom," running shows about the "Lifestyles of the poor and forgotten" (165). Their media and spatial takeover

[58] "Everything's colliding into everything. No place for these people to go. What they gonna do? Put us all in jail? At forty thou per head, doesn't seem too cost effective" (165).

results in a transformation of visibility through disaster. By taking over the broadcast and by inscribing the catastrophe with a radical cultural meaning, unhoused inhabitants of LA challenge traditional relations of communication power. They produce shows typical of popular television, but with a grassroots twist—cooking and talent shows, shows on urban gardening in which flatbed pick-up trucks are repurposed for mobile agriculture, and documentary shows about Vietnam veterans left homeless after the war. Yamashita positions this takeover in the tradition of what Eric Avila has termed, the "folklore of the freeway" (842).[59] The broadcast provides a remediated view of "on-the-ground experience of highway construction and its inimical consequences for the communities hardest hit by that program" through aesthetic forms (842). Their media takeover[60] draws attention to local and global socioeconomic relations, and promotes civic participation through modeling local cultural autonomy.

The unhoused producers and participants of the broadcast do more than rehearse popular televisual forms; they demand specific forms of infrastructural access and provision that are typically assumed to be given to citizens. For example, they ask for running water and a sewage system, basic water infrastructures for survival. They also ask for a change in the timer of the sprinkler system so that they are able to shower

[59] Avila documents how Chicana artists utilized visual culture as a form of protest on and about the Los Angeles Harbor Freeway.
[60] In taking over the media broadcast, the freeway community also constitute what Kevin Howley has described as "community media": their goals are to "appropriate communications technologies in an effort to enlarge the terms of public discourse, secure a space for local cultural expression, and enhance participatory democracy on local, national, regional, and international levels" (16). It is, in an enlarged form, the kind of participatory community media that Buzzworm encourages earlier in the novel.

during the daytime when the weather is warmer (187).[61] These requests not only show how the city typically denies unhoused and impoverished citizens their rights to urban infrastructural provision, which suggest that their lives aren't deemed worthy of state action, but they also replay and reveal the historical patterns of struggle in the greater Los Angeles region over the use and access to water. As the absence of these material claims before the accident allowed the unhoused population to be conveniently overlooked, if not altogether invisible to the state, these televised demands perform their right to representation and to infrastructural access. Such demands summon local and national politicians to the freeway. Politicians come to the freeway encampments to "[t]ake a look into something looking like a big border town. They projected their words in the general direction. Mostly they looked good for the cameras. Whole world watching […]" (186). Off camera, however, the politicians acknowledge their surprise in finding the encampments to be clean and organized, as if to underscore their assumptions about homelessness and filth. To the freeway community, the "Politicos didn't say much. That is, they said a lot, but not much. It was a quantitative sort of thing. Not qualitative. It was promises and pledges—sort that could be broken, misinterpreted, or never paid up" (187). These "promises and pledges" resemble the earlier empty promises from the Interstate Highway Program. Buzzworm's distrust of these political promises reiterates the earlier

[61]That they ask for a change in the sprinkler timer is not out of mere convenience. Rather, it has its historical basis in the city's mechanisms of homeless dispersal and containment. Like the "bus-benches" characterized by Mike Davis as "design deterrents," the city installed in public parks or other green spaces "an elaborate overhead sprinkler system programmed to drench unsuspecting sleepers at random times during the night" (233).

skepticism toward the freeway expansion as an urban renewal project—"Situations change, bureaucrats don't."

Given that unhoused populations often are at best invisible to those privileged enough to have homes and other forms of private property, a homeless community media broadcast would seem an unlikely source of public interest. But rather than taking a dip, television ratings soar, as "Everyone" is watching (152). The modes of urban renewal and radical claims of right to the city make for greater TV than raging fires and images of moblike looting. The new community seizes the efficacy of media framing to articulate alternative social relations and uses of space in a way that warrants public recognition. By strategically reclaiming the material and media infrastructures of the city, the community counteracts a political climate defined by invisibility, apathy, and alienation. Despite the media's efforts to frame the catastrophe in the service of hegemonic forces, the freeway media revolution and the traffic jam itself reconstitute the public in ways modeled after Buzzworm and Manzanar. For example, one of the consequences of the respatialization of the city because of the traffic jam, Buzzworm notices, is the "Amazing thing [that] everybody in L.A. was walking": "Streets'd become unrecognizable from an automotive standpoint. Only way to navigate was to feel the streets with your own two feet. So people were finally getting out, close to the ground, seeing the city like he did" (187). The traffic jam is less disastrous than the media would have liked to frame it. Instead of creating social breakdown, it produces an urban ecology of walking, a pedestrian mode of experiencing Los Angeles that would have been before largely

unknown.[62] Rachel Adams argues that through this pedestrian ecology the city "rediscover[s] forgotten means of conveyance and perception": "the dreaded gridlock does not bring urban life to an end. Instead, the crisis forces people to see and feel the city differently […]. And perhaps, the novel suggests, these new experiences, like the L.A. riots of 1992, might lead to lasting changes in the way that individuals and communities perceive one another" (266). If the city's inhabitants begin "seeing the city like" Buzzworm does, the implication is that fundamental urban transformations toward more equitable modes become possible. Closer to the ground and thereby closer to each other, this embodied approach to the city, the novel insists, fosters empathetic connection.

The potential transformations borne by this heterotopic space are not fully realized in the novel, however, as Yamashita's revolution falls to military intervention. The military might that had been surveilling the freeway canyon first try to destroy the satellite broadcast in order to reestablish their authority, including their narrative authority, but they miss the dish, shooting Emi by accident.[63] Immediately after firing this first shot, a war begins, and "Buzzworm look[s] around, wondering if the net could save anyone from the current situation":

> In the smoke, he could see the military, in jungle camouflage, making its move down the freeway canyon. The *live* monitor didn't show this. It was too busy repeating the beginning of the end, ad nauseum. Being the hero of this footage, he looked to her as the heroine. Finally, her death would be unforgivable. Emi's enraged media would see to that. A thousand homeless could die, but no one would forget her ultimate sacrifice (216).

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[62] As Tanaka claims, the city's inhabitants, or "post disaster flaneurs," "develop a form of […] cognitive mapping centered on situated intimacy, curiosity, and knowledge" (207).

[63] As a television producer obsessed with always getting the right "shot," Emi's death is ironic in that she dies from a missed gunshot: Emi says, bleeding out, "I actually saw them out there aiming for the dish. It's such a dick in the air, you…wouldn't…think…they'd…miss" (202).

The freeway revolution is violently quelled, re-enacting scenes of the 1992 L.A. riots. But this time the "revolution will not be televised" (187). The networks replay footage of Emi's martyrdom, rather than the live violence unfolding on the Freeway. By replaying the footage of Emi's accidental death, media control returns to the dominant culture, ultimately rendering "disaster" and its fallout in simplistic and sensational soundbites and images. They keep out of frame the thousands of dying homeless on the ground. Although occurring off-screen, the violence on the freeway is written in cinematic terms as if the novel itself takes up the destroyed camera for its readers: "droves of screaming and panic-stricken people" are likened to "so many walk-ons"—a "*cast* of thousands—military and civilian—r[unning] this way and that in an epic disaster" (214, emphasis mine). Ultimately, the unhoused community on the freeway is routed violently by the "coordinated might of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, the Coast and National Guards, federal, state, and local police forces of the most militaristic of nations" (204). Yamashita positions this violence in relation to colonialism: these forces "looked down as it had in the past on tiny islands and puny countries the size of San Bernardino" (205). To put down this revolution of the unhoused is to repeat the histories of colonial suppression.

As television networks cut the live broadcast, the novel begins to unplug its other media technologies. Buzzworm disconnects from his radio, becoming "[u]nplugged and timeless" (228). Manzanar, too, lowers his conducting baton in the aftermath of the violent suppression: "Manzanar let his arm drop. There was no need to conduct the music any longer" (218). However, his abdication of his orchestral rostrum is not an action stemming from hopelessness. Rather, he stops conducting because he senses "a new kind

of grid, this one defined not by inanimate structures or other living things but by himself and others like him" (203). Manzanar finds "himself at the heart of an expanding symphony of which he was not the only conductor" (203).[64] Despite the violence, the "entire city had sprouted grassroots conductors of every sort" (218). Although this particular revolution was violently quelled, the historical cycles of dispossession and displacement that Manzanar and Buzzworm have seen in the Los Angeles region—and even the cycles of "doom" that Arcangel prophesies—do not have to persist only in fatalistic terms. Rather, they are steps in a movement toward alternative forms of community and urban equity. The Freeway accident and its consequences allows Yamashita to reimagine community, delineating through catastrophe a space of possibility in which social relations not only can be something radically different, but are foundational for revolutionary trajectories of collective action rooted in the frames of shared precarity.

If it is Manzanar's aesthetic orientation to reveal the layered complexities of urban infrastructural systems and their histories, and if it is Buzzworm's mission to make visible the consequences of planned violence and to humanize the unhoused and the destitute, it is Yamashita's purpose to narrativize and mediate the networks of human communities that often go unnoticed. Through the unhoused population's embodied occupation of physical space and their visual media transmission, Yamashita challenges the hegemony of traditional and popular media frames. Her novel provides a multimodal

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[64] His widening vision of other conductors is panoramic, but not totalizing: "On a distant overpass, he could make out the odd mirror of his figure, waving a baton. And beyond that, another homeless person had also taken up the baton. And across the city, on overpasses and street corners, from balconies and park benches, people held branches and pencils, toothbrushes and carrot sticks, and conducted" (203).

network for representing the sites and sights of dispossession and displacement that would otherwise remain undocumented in traditional media narratives. Using fiction's capacity to make transhistorical and transmedial connections and by demonstrating the efficacy of a community-oriented media representation from below for articulating the collective right to recognition and to previously dispossessed spaces, Yamashita asks us to understand the long histories of infrastructural violence and to seek out new frames of imagining those affected by spatial injustice. If the novel illuminates how the urban infrastructures of Los Angeles rehearse and preserve global and historical patterns of inequity and inequality, Yamashita ultimately shows us how to reimagine these histories, realities, and futures of the urban and the infrastructural as being dynamically and urgently human. As Melissa Sexton puts it, "The legacy of our cities, our economies, and our cultural concepts, the novel warns, may be disaster-driven warfare unless we recognize class, racial, and gendered inequalities, then work to build durable and resilient alternative communities" (27-8). In order to build these "durable and resilient alternative communities," the novel teaches us that there needs to be a conceptual and formal reframing of the city, beginning with addressing the legacies of settler colonialism and gentrification, as well as other forms of exploitation, dispossession, and displacement under capitalism. The novel reveals how a shutdown of the Los Angeles Harbor Freeway and mainstream media broadcasts results in alternative forms of collective life and spatial justice for a couple of days. However, the novel more urgently pushes us to confront the relations that drive these historical and political forms of exploitation, dispossession, and displacement. The novel implores us to see that prioritizing the equitable use of urban

space, infrastructure, and media forms can lead to sustainable forms of collective life and its futures.

## Chapter Four

## "As if by magic": Mediating Migration in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*

In *Discontent and Its Civilizations: Dispatches from Lahore, New York, and London*, a disparate collection of essays written since the early 2000s, Mohsin Hamid maps the intersections of the personal and the political. He writes about and from the perspective of several infrastructural entities that facilitate or inhibit types of mobility, including the London Tube, the Qatar airport, and VISA/Passport offices. Oftentimes these infrastructurally mediated movements produce for Hamid spaces for self-reflection on place and position in a globalizing world. Most of these self-reflections are tinged with specters of terror, locating his experience as a "half-outsider" amidst the particularly charged forms of globalization in the aftermath of 9/11 (3). Throughout the collection, he writes of his experiences in Pakistan, the United States, and England, wrestling with the brutalities of globalization—its "mass displacement, wars, terrorism, unchecked financial capitalism, inequality, xenophobia, climate change" (2)—and its promises—that we are "more free to invent ourselves" (2) and that we can "explore the empathy that arises from such a shared experience" in an interconnected world (9). For Hamid, globalization's catastrophic convergences yield opportunities for movement and hybridity. He identifies his "half-outsider" experience as "increasingly universal": "On our globalizing planet, where the pace of change keeps accelerating," he writes, "many of us are coming to feel at least a bit foreign, because all of us, whether we travel far afield or not, are migrants through time" (9).

Two years after the publication of *Discontent and Its Civilizations*, Hamid reuses this provocative phrase—"migrants through time"—in his novel *Exit West*.[1] Published shortly after the Brexit vote and Donald Trump's Muslim Travel Ban, Hamid's 2017 novel *Exit West* is a literary response to the myriad global migration crises of our contemporary moment.[2] Resonant with the extreme migratory flows into Europe out of war-torn countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, the novel reimagines migratory crises through magical doors[3] that connect places around the globe. The materiality of migration becomes a moment of magic passage, with special doors transforming into portals to global elsewheres—the means for refugees to escape war, poverty, and oppressive governmental regimes. For the novel's protagonists Saeed and Nadia, these doors allow them to leave their home, an unnamed country[4] which becomes embroiled in

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[1] The phrase occurs during one of the novel's many intercalary vignettes. Whereas most of the novel's narrative interpolations depict various peoples migrating to new places through magical doors, this particular vignette describes an old woman who lived in the same house in Palo Alto her entire life, and traces the changing demographics of her neighborhood over time: "every year someone was moving out and someone was moving in, and now all these doors from who knows where were opening, and all sorts of strange people were around, people who looked more at home than she was, even the homeless ones who spoke no English, more at home maybe because they were younger, and when she went out it seemed to here that she too had migrated, that everyone migrates, even if we stay in the same houses our whole lives, because we can't help it. We are all migrants through time" (*Exit West* 209). Compare this with the sentence that follows the phrase "migrants through time" in *Discontent and Its Civilizations*: "Even if you are eighty and have never left your hometown, yours has become another country from that of your childhood" (9).

[2] Some critics such as Ewa Kowal consider the novel to be a literary response to the specific migrant crisis of 2015. Although there is evidence to support Kowal's claim, I believe that Hamid's novel responds more broadly to a global juncture increasingly defined by the forced movement of peoples.

[3]. Hamid borrows his conceit of a magical door that transports its users elsewhere from fantasy novels he read as a child—namely, *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis. Writing about his childhood, Hamid recalls the comfort fantasy novels had given him when he was dealing his sudden transplantation from Pakistan to the US and back again to Pakistan: "I read *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis. The idea of children passing through a wardrobe into a strange and magical land seemed entirely plausible to me" ("Mohsin Hamid on the Dangers of Nostalgia").

[4] While some attempt to pin down the unnamed city that the main protagonists Saeed and Nadia call home, identifying it variously as Mosul, Aleppo, or Hamid's own Lahore for example, the novel itself resists specific geographic identification in the Global South.

a civil war, for other places—Mykonos and London, for example, as well as a future version of Marin County, located north of San Francisco and Silicon Valley. The conceit of magical doors responds to the infrastructures of global immigration that Hamid addresses in *Discontent and Its Civilizations*, and challenges what Mai Linh Hong refers to as the "refugee regime"—that is, "the global infrastructure of international and domestic laws, institutions, and legal processes that contour refugee flows" and that serve "mostly a gatekeeping function for wealthy nations" (34). Rather than mitigating particular refugee movements, these doors facilitate a borderless mobility, radically and rapidly transforming global experiences of place and position through their affordances of instantaneous travel.

Within the purview of the novel's "international broadcasters" and "world leaders," the magical doors are conceived of as "a major global crisis" (88). In Hamid's fiction, and in reality, narratives of immigration produced by such figures are often deeply political. Refugees are either rendered as a passive, homogenous mass—the helpless recipients of the "gift of freedom" from the West's so-called humanitarianism (Nguyen 4) [5]—or labelled as illegal aliens, criminals, and terrorists. Put another way by Hong, dominant cultural narratives about refugees often "are narratives of salvation that center the self-proclaimed rescuers of refugees, or narratives of threat by an encroaching

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[5] Mimi Thi Nguyen has shown in *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages* how promises given to refugees often belie an invitation to governmentality and control, as well as a rationalization for continued war. For Ngyuen, Western imperialism has become couched in a rhetoric of humanitarianism, a paradox that uses rhetorical appeals of peace and freedom to justify war and dislocation. Refugees seeking freedom are often met with the kinds of violence, both literal and structural, that undergird it.

tide of refugee Others" (35).[6] Such narratives circulate across various media platforms, creating frames for seeing migrants as less than human, not to mention manufacturing an occasion or rationale for re-instantiating Western empire. Whereas popular media and Western governments alike identify the increasing global movement of peoples as a "crisis," Hamid's novel locates the "crisis" in the experiences and perspectives of refugees themselves, understanding the conditions of displacement from within that experience, and allowing for a representation of refugees as human subjects, rather than objects. Rather than seeing refugees as posing a problem—of policy, of governance, of logistics—Hamid identifies the various problems refugees themselves face, such as the uneven material conditions for movement, survival, and wellbeing. He emphasizes how inadequate access to the material provisions of modern society is determined by racial, ethnic, and class statuses, and how this lack of access contributes to the ongoing movement of peoples seeking better and more sustainable futures.

On the surface, the conceit of magical doors seems to overwrite the barriers and borders that inhibit mobility in its physical, political, and socioeconomic dimensions. The apparent seamlessness and instantaneity of movement provided by these doors gestures

[6] The emerging field of critical refugee studies emphasizes the perspectives and experiences of refugees themselves, rather than the narratives that often overdetermine and overwrite these experiences. Such perspectives make visible the various structures of empire, colonialism, and race that undergird and shape these experiences. For more on how critical refugee studies have critiqued narratives of humanitarianism, see Yến Lê Espiritu, *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge(es);* and Mimi Thi Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages*. For more on race and gender in refugee studies, see Serena Parekh, *Refugees and the Ethics of Forced Displacement*; and Yến Lê Espiritu and Lan Duong, "Feminist Refugee Epistemology: Displacement in Vietnamese and Syrian Refugee Art." For the infrastructures of refugee movement, see Joseph Pugliese, "Penal Asylum: Refugees, Ethics, Hospitality"; Jana Lipman, *In Camps: Vietnamese Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Repatriates*; and Yến Lê Espiritu and J.A. Ruanto-Ramirez, "The Phillippine Refugee Processing Center: The Relational Displacements of Refugees and the Indigenous Aetas."

toward a vision of a borderless world. Significantly, the novel aligns the kinds of free movement and borderlessness associated with the doors with already existing technologies of the internet and the smartphone. The novel itself recognizes digital technologies like smartphones also as portals to virtual elsewheres. If the forced displacement of peoples gives way to a new kind of unfettered immigration in the novel, Hamid locates this transformation as wedded to a significant degree to forms of technological mediation. Michael Perfect and Liliana Naydan, among other critics of *Exit West*, have paid close attention to the relationships between the novel's magical doors and existing communications technologies. As Perfect describes it, the novel juxtaposes the "virtually instantaneous transmission of text" with "the instantaneous transportation of a human being" (196). The magical properties of digital technology also offer Hamid new geopolitical imaginaries. As Naydan puts it, digital screens and magical doors are Hamid's response to the borders that "divide people from one another," and that are upheld by "nationalism, xenophobia, and state- and non-state-sanctioned terrorism" (433). Naydan argues that "screens," in their material and digital senses, "function as figures for thinking through problems involving national borders," and that ultimately, Hamid "positions digital art and art about digital connectivity as poised to reshape" our political moment (434).

However, I argue that this attention to transnational digital connectivity in the critical scholarship surrounding Hamid's novel has risked a potentially naïve belief in the liberating possibilities of digital technologies in a globalized world. I am not saying that readings like Perfect and Naydan's miss the mark, but I believe it is necessary to temper

their utopian optimism. Inasmuch as the novel finds a borderless movement through magical and technological means as potential models for a post-national future, the novel also insists that this global mobility is not completely unfettered. Despite the speculative fantasy of a seamless global mobility, the imagined future of the novel is still subject to sharp structural divides—most notably, in the forms of infrastructural inequity that create, reaffirm, and sustain social, economic, and racial fault lines. For example, although smartphones offer a model for magical doors that transport its users immediately elsewhere, they are also technologies subject to various forms of tracking and control, [7] existing in a nexus of other technologies used for surveillance, including the drone. If *Exit West* opens up the possibility for future beyond the nation envisaged through magical doors, it also scrutinizes the structural and infrastructural forms of control, power, and violence that continue to divide the present and this potential future.

Throughout the novel, and indeed throughout his oeuvre, Hamid locates his characters as enmeshed within and dependent upon a web of infrastructures including these magical doors, but also electrical grids and water services. The following section investigates these infrastructural webs in two of Hamid's earlier novels—*Moth Smoke* and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*—in order to show how he represents infrastructural accessibility as a bifurcating paradigm for the division of social and

[7] In *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics,* Wendy Hui Kyong Chun articulates the ways in which digital technologies such as the internet have come to be conceived as a medium of freedom, while concealing its capacities as a medium that works through power and control. I believe Hamid's representation of contemporary technologies is more firmly located at this nexus point between freedom and control than others have suggested. Rather than only associated with the fantasy of movement and connection, technology in the novel has much to do with power, surveillance, and manipulation.

economic classes. These issues become more expansive and are figured more specifically in relation to digital infrastructures in *Exit West*. Addressing this digital infrastructural expansion in the second section, I establish how smartphone and internet infrastructures offer potential technological models for global mobility. If Hamid realigns the physical passage of refugees from place to place with the digital mobility of smartphone infrastructures through the novel's conceit of magical doors, he also negotiates the promises and problems of such a realignment. The third section explores the consequences of the novel's "magical migration"—namely, the protagonists' entrance into particular racialized discourses and histories associated with infrastructural power, or lack thereof. In this section, I show how the binaries of infrastructural access of Hamid's earlier novels return with a vengeance. Because infrastructures continue to present formidable barriers to power even in the quasi-post-national societies of the novel's imagined future, my final section considers how the novel transfigures power through technologies of surveillance and security—namely, the drone.

## "Unseen Networks" and Uneven Binaries: Mapping Infrastructural Divides in Hamid's Fiction

Michael Rubenstein has argued that Hamid's first three novels—*Moth Smoke* (2000), *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013)[8]—"function as national allegories focalized around national infrastructure,

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[8] I am choosing, for the sake of space and for the sake of emphasis, to skip over Hamid's literary breakthrough, his second novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.* Written as a dramatic monologue inspired by Albert Camus's *The Fall* and with a frame story that offers a postcolonial retort to Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*, the novel depicts a Pakistani victim of formal and informal Islamaphobia in the United States shortly after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Although the novel itself has less to do with the social stratification of society through infrastructural development found in *Moth Smoke* and *How to Get Filthy*

particularly in the Department of Water and Power" ("Life Support"). Although Rubenstein risks a potentially reductive, if not problematic "third-world national allegory" à la Fredric Jameson, his critical attention to infrastructure in Hamid's fiction recognizes how the "material structures of electricity grids and water supply network have their conceptual counterpart in the discourses and institutions of 'water and power'"—that is, in the state's discursive political economy. In addition to examining the political ecology "that indexes, defines, and invents the material forms" of Pakistan's infrastructural networks, Rubenstein's goals include reading for the ways in which "the symbolic structures of material infrastructures […] impact the construction of setting, plot and character in fiction." Like Rubenstein, I am drawn to the way Hamid dramatizes the social and economic effects of the built environments of Pakistan in these novels, most notably the ways infrastructures produce, reinforce, and perpetuate social and class-based fault lines, as well as the ways they impel the development of plot and character. Infrastructures structure the social and narrative space of each novel. By locating his novels across rural and urban settings, Hamid is able to illuminate the varied ways that infrastructures—specifically, their implementation and use—fluctuate across different environments, emerging in relation to, as well as perpetuating, conditions of difference and unevenness.[9]

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*Rich in Rising Asia*, Michael Rubenstein offers a reading of the novel "in light of Pakistan's energy crisis" that connects it with an infrastructural investment in water and power.

[9] In many ways, Hamid is attuned to the critical work done by urban studies scholars such as Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin. In their book *Splintering Urbanism*, Graham and Marvin reveal through extensive fieldwork the interconnected infrastructural landscapes and technoscapes that "interlace, infuse and underpin cities and urban life" (8). Using site-specific infrastructure nodes in cities in the Global North and Global South, they demonstrate how networked infrastructures across various sectors—from water and

Hamid's debut *Moth Smoke* is set in Lahore and depicts the fall of protagonist Daru Shezad into a life of drugs and crime. In addition to employing a number of narrative techniques,[10] the novel meditates on the uneven distribution of power in its material and symbolic forms. Varying degrees of access to utilities such as electricity define the socioeconomic stratum of Lahori society in the novel. For example, after losing his job at the bank, Daru has his electricity turned off because he cannot pay the utility bill:

> Having the power cut is serious. I was a month behind on my payments even before I lost my job, unprepared as usual for the summer spike in my bill that sucks a quarter of my paycheck into the air conditioner, and now I owe them half a month's salary. Power prices have been rising faster than a banker's wages the last couple of years, thanks to privatization and the boom of guaranteed-profit, project-financed, imported oil-fired electricity projects. I was happier when we had load-shedding five hours a day: at least then a man didn't have to be a millionaire to run his AC. (78)

Here, Daru laments the inflation of electricity costs. This inflation is due to the shift from publicly supplied electricity—affordable, though at times unreliable and subject to "load-shedding" measures for "five hours a day"—to privately supplied and imported electricity. Access to reliable electrical power, and its benefits of cooled interiors in the sweltering heat, is meted out to the wealthier population of Lahore.

Elsewhere in the novel, a character named Professor Superb defines the "two social classes of Pakistan" in terms of access to available and properly functioning

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energy to telecommunications and transportation—produce social, economic, and even physical forms of urban fragmentation.

[10] Oana-Celia Gheorghiu catalogues these narrative techniques, identifying Hamid's use of "a framing narrative of historical inspiration, alluding to the fratricide conflict between India and Pakistan, multiple focalization, embedded interviews, [and] long soliloquies and digressions" as producing an "allegorical story of the downfall of an 'everyman'" (83).

electricity: "The first group, large and sweaty, contains those referred to as the masses. The second group is much smaller, but its members exercise vastly greater control over their immediate environment and are collectively termed the elite. The distinction between members of these two groups is made on the basis of control of an important resource: air-conditioning" (111-2). Superb elaborates this distinction further, characterizing the "elite" as recreating the "living standards of say, Sweden, without leaving the dusty plains of the subcontinent" through their air-conditioning, whereas the "rest of the people, the great uncooled," can only pray for "admittance to an air-conditioned heaven" (112). The overuse of air conditioners by the wealthy leads to the frequent breakdowns of existing infrastructures such as the electrical grid, often plunging entire neighborhoods into darkness, with their impoverished residents forced to suffer the sweltering conditions. It is as if the air-conditioned elite are not subject to the same Pakistan as others. Rather than being subject to electrical blackouts and scorching heat, they reconstruct and inhabit the "living standards" of the West.[11]

Daru's technical and socioeconomic interests in Lahore's electrical grid, and to air-conditioning in particular, is a matter of power and belonging.[12] As Hamid narrates,

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[11] These descriptions of air conditioner use, as Saba Pirzadeh clearly states, "gives us a sense of the acute social disparities in the country whereby the masses suffer in the scorching heat, whereas the elites are able to effectively maintain their comfort, health, and mobility" (101).

[12] Daru also has a particularly personal connection to electrical outages, as he attributes his mother's untimely death during his childhood as the result of an electrical blackout. Without a working air conditioner, his mother had opted to sleep on the roof of their apartment one night to cool off. There, she was struck and killed by a wayward bullet fired during a celebration. To Daru, the stray bullet that kills her functions as a stand-in for the deadly consequences of electrical stoppages: "Darashikoh believed in consequences. He knew that his mother would not have died if the AC had been cooling her room that night" (119). Although his attribution of his mother's death to electrical load-shedding requires a leap of logic, Hamid uses this connection to point to the very real deaths that result from electrical blackouts in Lahore.

"when [Daru] lost his job and had his power disconnected, he felt more than just the discomfort of the heat in his house" (119):

> He felt an insecurity, a disease that gnawed at him day and night. Perhaps he merely feared the loss of social status that the end of his air-conditioning represented. Or perhaps he feared something more profound and less easily explained. He needed money to have his power and air-conditioning and security restored, and he swore that nothing would stand in his way. He, a man who hated guns, came to accept that he would have to use one. (119).

Air-conditioning and electricity represent Lahore's socioeconomic fault line, the division between the haves and have-nots. Without access to working air-conditioning, Daru's social status wanes, diminishing other forms of access to public and private provisions, leaving him precarious. The shutting off of his electricity incites his movement into criminal activity: without access to material and symbolic power, he must take matters into his own hands by purchasing a weapon. The novel's main plot of Daru's downfall hinges upon his access to working electricity: his criminal acts are done in the service of having "his power and air-conditioning and security restored."[13] If "The whole plot of *Moth Smoke* is set in motion by Daru's felt need to turn his electricity back on," as Rubenstein frames it, it's because working electricity affords him more than just material power and convenience; it allows for and exemplifies a particular social status and social power.

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[13] Elsewhere in the novel, Hamid makes clear this point about how lack of infrastructural access generates a worldview wherein malevolent individualism becomes the necessary means by which to acquire wealth in response to the structural inequities of Lahore. On this topic, Aurangzeb, or Ozi for short, is the novel's spokesman: "What's the alternative? You have to have money these days. The roads are falling apart, so you need a Pajero or a Land Cruiser. The phone lines are erratic, so you need a mobile. The colleges are overrun with fundos who have no interest in getting an education, so you have to go abroad. And that's ten lakhs a year, mind you. Thanks to electricity theft there will always be shortages, so you have to have a generator. The police are corrupt and ineffective, so you need private security guards. It goes on and on. People are pulling their pieces out of the pie, and the pie is getting smaller, so if you love your family, you'd better take your piece now, while there's still some left" (202).

Daru's problem is one shared by the majority of the inhabitants of Lahore, whose lack of access to power in its electrical and socioeconomic forms makes them particularly vulnerable to the catastrophic weather patterns of the region. After all, what Rubenstein refers to as "the energy landscape of Pakistan" that ultimately forms the setting of the novel "lives at the vital intersection of the environment (a windless heat wave) and the economy (huge spikes in demand for electricity due to the windless heat wave, combined with suboptimal electrical production and distribution, resulting in load-shedding)" ("Life Support"). Economic and infrastructural precarity reveals the slow destruction of environmental violence in Pakistan's wet seasons as well. As Daru explains, "But this year I see [monsoon season] as a time of festering, not rebirth" (231). Daru characterizes the thick humidity of monsoon season as harboring disease and unrest:

> Without air-conditioning, temperatures are still high enough for me to sweat as I lie on my bed trying to sleep, but now the sweat doesn't evaporate. Instead, it coagulates like blood into peeled scabs of dampness that cover my itching body. Unrefrigerated, the food in my house spoils overnight, consumed by colored molds that spread like cancer. […] The entire city is uneasy. (231).

Without properly functioning electricity, the rising temperatures and thick humidity of monsoon season produce serious illness and threaten food storage, generating physical and social uneasiness. Those with access to properly functioning electricity, the novel insists, do not have to confront directly the "festering" qualities of monsoon seasons. Benefitting from the uneven technological and infrastructural development of the region, wealthy inhabitants of Lahore rarely face the environmental consequences that their industrial practices produce. Meanwhile, Daru and others like him are forced to fend for themselves and remain subject to the infrastructural and environmental violence of the

region. In this way, Hamid dramatizes not only how infrastructure enforces social norms and classes, but also how it can enact physical harm for those without access to the securities and safety they provide.[14]

Hamid's third novel, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, also has its primary concern aspects of development in a globalizing world. Hamid rewrites a particular history of development in the Global South in the parodic form of "a self-help book" (3).[15] Imitating a self-help or how-to guide, the novel charts the personal development of its protagonist and the socioeconomic and infrastructural development of "Rising Asia."[16] Because the entirety of the novel is written in the second person,[17] development in the novel comes entirely from "you." Following the neoliberal ideology of traditional social mobility narratives, the novel depicts the protagonist's rise—"your rise"—from living in

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[14] Anthropologists Dennis Rogers and Bruce O'Neill have also pointed out this connection between infrastructure and violence: "infrastructure is not just a material embodiment of violence (structural or otherwise), but often its instrumental medium" (404). More than socially and economically dividing people, infrastructure itself can injure, if not kill. The kinds of load-shedding and unequal distribution of working electricity, as Hamid shows, can spoil food resources, can shut the poor off from ways of cooling off in sweltering temperatures, and can create conditions for the spread of disease.

[15] According to Beth Blum, the ideology of self-help is tethered to "the neoliberal romance of upward mobility" (1099) and is "widely understood as a technology of neoliberal self-governance used to discipline citizens and manage populations" (1100). Writing about Hamid's particular play with the genre of a self-help book, Angelia Poon has argued that the novel "raises questions about the fundamental things that novels do—construct both the self and the world as a dialectic between the individual subject and historical forces" (149).

[16] Commenting on this aspect of the title, Adnan Mahmutovic suggests that "Hamid's use of 'Asia' as the only geographic specificity denies that [the] nation-state is the main unity of analysis and draws attention to the city as a global strategic space" (71). Mahmutovic points to the following passage from the novel to show how Hamid "seeks to probe processes of globalization that need cities to assume the role of strategic centers, to be a part of global infrastructures" (71): "you marvel at the resilience and potential of those around you, particularly of the youth in this city, in this, the era of cities, bound by its airport and fiber optic-cables to every great metropolis, collectively forming, even if tenuously, a change-scented urban archipelago spanning not just rising Asia but the entire planet" (217-8).

[17] In his essay "Enduring Love of the Second Person" collected in *Discontent and Its Civilizations*, Hamid remarks how reading Camus's *The Fall* showed him as a writer "the potential of 'you,' of how much space it could open up in fiction" (103).

a rural village in a country, although unnamed, that resembles Pakistan, to becoming a moderate tycoon in the privatized water trade in the region.[18]

The protagonist's social rise is temporal and spatial. A playful kind of bildungsroman, the novel maps the protagonist's movement from childhood to adulthood as mirroring his movement from a rural village to the city. "Move to the city!" is after all the novel's first chapter heading and thus, its first directive (1).[19] Hamid superimposes the region's own development on this individual narrative. The protagonist's first bus-ride simulates this experience of development, as he likens his physical movement toward the city as stepping into the future: "Just as when headed into the mountains a quick shift in altitude can vault one from subtropical jungle to semi-arctic tundra, so too can a few hours on a bus from rural remoteness to urban centrality appear to span millennia" (13). Notably, Hamid grounds this spatialization of human development in the region's developing infrastructure. For example, as the protagonist moves closer to the city, "Dirt streets give way to paved ones, potholes grow less frequent and soon all but disappear" (13).[20] Moving closer still, "Electricity makes its appearance, first in passing as you slip below a steel parade of high-voltage giants, then later in the form of wires running at bus-top eye level on either side of the road, and finally in street lights and shop

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[18] The young entrepreneur's ability to climb up the socioeconomic ladder owes much, as Hager Ben Driss puts it, "to the ethos of individualism, self-reliance, and survivalism propagated by self-help guides"(5).
[19] Mahmutovic claims this directive "not only establishes the city as *the* space of possibility for economic prosperity, but also dismisses other spaces and effectively reinforces the dichotomy between rurality and urbanity" (69).
[20] The protagonist completes this journey in reverse midway through the novel. Returning to his village again spatializes the infrastructural divide of the region: "As you return, slowly, through innumerable blockages, dismounting to help heave vehicles free of treacherous mud, you are reminded again of the yawning gap that exists between the countryside and city" (132).

signs and glorious, magnificent billboards" (14).[21] As with *Moth Smoke*, electricity here is a sign of power and development, a sign of technological advancement that divides the region spatially and temporally, and thereby socially.[22]

Yet if *Moth Smoke* hinges most forcefully upon notions of power and development signified by access to working electricity, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* depicts power and development as constituted through access to potable water. The novel consistently spatializes and economizes water. When "you" are a poor peasant living in a rural village, drinking and cleaning water comingle with raw sewage and industrial runoff.[23] However, even once "you" move to the city, the problem of access to clean water remains. In the city, it is not the complete absence of water infrastructures, but rather, their neglect that creates problems with its potability:

> Your city's neglected pipes are cracking, the contents of underground water mains and sewers mingling, with the result that taps in locales rich and poor alike disgorge liquids that, while for the most part clear and often odorless, reliably contain trace levels of feces and microorganisms capable of causing diarrhea, hepatitis, dysentery, and typhoid. Those less well-off among the citizenry harden their immune systems by drinking freely, sometimes suffering losses in the

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[21] Later in the novel, when the protagonist is less overawed by the newness of infrastructural development, he notices their haphazard construction: "Rows of electricity poles rise in various stages of completion, some bare, some bridged by taut cables, occasionally one from which wires dangle to the ground" (81).

[22] While the dichotomy of rural villages and the city is sharp, the socioeconomic divisions of the city are placed in much closer proximity, often literally marked by various forms of infrastructure: "Your city is not laid out as a single-celled organism, with a wealthy nucleus surrounding an ooze of slums. It lacks sufficient mass transit to move all of its workers twice daily in the fashion this would require. It also lacks, since the end of colonization generations ago, governance powerful enough to dispossess individuals of their property in sufficient numbers. Accordingly, the poor live near the rich. Wealthy neighborhoods are *often divided by a single boulevard* from factories and markets and graveyards, and those in turn *may be separated from* the homes of the impoverished only *by an open sewer, railroad track, or narrow alley*" (20, emphasis mine).

[23] "The people of your village relieve themselves downstream of where they wash their clothes, a place in turn downstream of where they drink. Farther upstream, the village before yours does the same. Farther still, where the water emerges from the hills as a sometimes-gushing brook, it is partly employed in the industrial processes of an old, rusting, and subscale textile plant, and partly used as drainage for the fart-smelling gray effluent that results" (6-7).

> process, especially of their young and their frail. Those more well-off have switched to bottled water[.] (99-100)

The socioeconomic binary is clear: those "more well-off" are able to afford bottled water and thus are able to avoid serious illness, whereas "those less well-off" are forced to risk their health because of the crumbling and neglected pipes and water mains. Implied here too is the fact that those living in rural villages don't even have the potential choice. They are forced to drink water known to have the "levels of feces and microorganisms" capable of causing violent illness. It is no surprise, then, when late in the novel "your sister" who remained in the village dies from waterborne illness.[24]

The protagonist enters the private water trade, and his "illegal business thrives in direct proportion to the decay of the public water infrastructure" (Rubenstein, "Life Support").[25] As his water venture begins to prosper, the protagonist seeks greater economic opportunity. He oversees the increasing privatization of water in the country and lands a project partnering with a new exclusive housing development for wealthy clientele. The new housing development is a gated community designed for the

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[24] The monsoon season, like in *Moth Smoke*, carries illness and suffering for the poor: "The arrival of the monsoon has brought with it sudden floods, and while the houses of your ancestral village, through a blessing of topography, have mostly been spared, resultant pools of stagnant water have bred armies of disease-carrying mosquitoes. Your sister is killed by dengue, her high fever relenting, and briefly offering false hope, before internal bleeding starves her organs and causes them to fail" (131).

[25] The protagonist's business model is hardly aboveboard, in that it involves gathering previously used plastic bottles and refilling them with tap water that has been boiled before resealing and reselling them. Hamid provides a full description of this so-called sterilizing process as follows: "Your front room has been converted into a workshop-cum-storage depot. There, in sequence, are a pipe bringing in tap water, a proscribed donkey pump to augment the sputtering pressure from outside, a blue storage tank the size of a baby hippopotamus, a metal faucet, a lidded cooking pot, a gas-cylinder-fired burner to boil the water, which you do for five minutes as a general rule, a funnel with a cotton sieve to remove visible impurities, a pile of used but well-preserved mineral-water bottles recovered from restaurants, and, finally, a pair of simple machines that affix tamper-resistant caps and transparent safety wrapping atop your fraudulent product" (100).

privileged to have ample access to in-home water and power services, “immersing,” as Rubenstein contends, “paying clients in a U.S.-inspired fantasy of electrical and hydrological plenitude.” “You” hear a recruitment pitch from a developer of this gated community known as “Phase Ten”:

> Other premier housing societies are installing electricity plants. We’re rolling them out across all our phases, in all our cities. No, what’s going to make ten unique, and why you’re here, is water. Water. In ten, when you turn the tap, you’ll be able to drink what comes out of it. Everywhere. In your garden. In your kitchen. In your bathroom. Drinkable water. When you enter phase ten, it’ll be like you’ve entered another country. Another continent. Like you’ve gone to Europe. Or North America. (*How to Get Filthy Rich* 163)

To have in-home tap water in Pakistan is so unbelievable that the sales pitch forces “you” to imagine yourself elsewhere—on “Another Continent” like “Europe” or “North America.” Whereas the middle-class Leopold Bloom had domestic access to potable running water in Ireland in 1904, in the new millennium in Pakistan, such a thing is a luxury for only the most well to do. According to this model, the home is transformed to belong to a modern Western future: “You’ll still be here,” the developer says to the protagonist. “But in a secure, walled-off, impeccably maintained, lit-up-at-night, noise-controlled, perfectly regulated version of here. An inspiration for the entire country, and for our countrymen abroad too. Where even the water is as good as the best. World class” (163-4). Phase Ten is, as Rubenstein puts it, “a first-world fantasy walled off from and nestled within third-world scarcity: your own private ministry of water and power” (“Life Support”). The premier housing development would sharpen the socioeconomic stratification of Lahori society, dividing the haves and have-nots according to their proximity and access to working and sustainable water sources. The protagonist himself

has successfully leapt into the society of the "haves" by capitalizing upon this infrastructural divide.[26]

Even "if the protagonist seems relatively indifferent to the social injustice and the ecological degradation that his schemes promote," Rubenstein suggests that "he seems to become aware, as he is dying, of the way societies, or national imagined communities, live and die by the extent to which they are able to provide basic necessities for their citizens" ("Life Support"). After a heart attack, the protagonist identifies his body and its internal organs as inseparable from the technical interfaces of modern development. Here, Hamid returns to his earlier novelistic investments in electricity:

> When you regain consciousness, you have become a kind of cyborg, part man, part machine. Electrodes connect your chest to a beeping computer terminal mounted on a rack, and a pair of transparent tubes channel oxygen from a nearby metal tank to your nostrils and fluids from a plastic pouch into your bloodstream through a needle taped to your wrist. […] You understand, though, that for the moment this apparatus and you are inseparable. (183)

Like in *Moth Smoke*, the climax of *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* suggests how life and death are conditioned and apportioned by access to working electrical infrastructure. As Rubenstein puts it, "the protagonist and the nation are being kept alive,

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[26] Despite this privileged and private fantasy for the few, water infrastructure in Pakistan at the national level faces ecological and socioeconomic challenges, challenges made all the more difficult by the disproportionate use of water by the wealthy who would live in such communities. Among the challenges the protagonist recognizes in this kind of private water use for the housing development is the fact that "the aquifer below the city is plummeting and becoming more contaminated every year, poisonous chemicals and biological toxins seeping into like adulterants into a heroin junkie's collapsing vein"(164-5). The solution would involve "a plan to draw water from canals intended for agricultural use, fiercely contested water itself laden with pesticide and fertilizer runoff" (165). Years later, the effects of such a solution are even more dire than the protagonist had anticipated: "You hear reports that the water table continues to drop, the thirst of many millions driving bore after steel bore deeper and deeper into the aquifer, to fill countless leaky pipes and seepy, unlined channels, phenomena with which you are intimately familiar and from which you have profited, but which are now contributing in places to a noticeable desiccation of the soil, to a transformation of moist, fertile, hybrid mud into cracked, parched, pure land" (200-1).

just barely, by electricity. If the grid fails—and it does fail, on a daily basis—Pakistan fails, and so do 'you'" ("Life Support"). If the "object of the novel's satire is the capitalist, neoliberal notion of the self that is predicated on an overweening self of control and ultimate agency," as Angelia Poon has argued (140), this total reliance on infrastructural technologies shows how such notions of individual control and agency are misguided. Undermining the sense of a completely autonomous individual whose rise is the consequence of his actions and his actions alone, Hamid rewrites the self of the self-help book as always constituted by various connections and relationships that are at once social, economic, and technological. The protagonist, as Poon claims, is "always already plugged into multiple communities" (140), and not the least, I would add, always already plugged into infrastructural technologies.

As the protagonist understands his reliance on machines to keep him alive, he comes to recognize how completely his body is innervated by infrastructural networks. Life—his and all of modern society's—is dependent upon infrastructure. This realization comes as a shocking revelation: "To be a man whose life requires being plugged into machines, multiple machines, in your case interfaces electrical, gaseous, and liquid, is to experience the shock of an unseen network suddenly made physical, as a fly experiences a cobweb" (183). The "unseen network" of infrastructures that he exploited for personal profit and upon which his entire socioeconomic rise depended are now, in this moment, made painfully visible. The protagonist continues,

> The inanimate strands that cling to your precariously still-animate form themselves connect to other strands, to the hospital's power system, its backup generator, its information technology infrastructure, the unit that produces oxygen, the people who refill and circulate the tanks, the department that

> replenishes medications, the trucks that deliver them, the factories at which they are manufactured, the mines where requisite raw materials emerge, and on and on, from your body, into your room, across the building, and out the doors to the world beyond, mirroring in stark exterior reality preexisting and mercifully unconsidered systems within, the veins and nerves and sinews and lymph nodes without which there is no you. (183-4)[27]

This description lends itself to Mahmutovic's blunt assessment that in the novel "[c]haracters are treated as infrastructure, as cables and pipes" (75). The self is not an individual agent, but a node in interlocking networks of machines, technologies, and labor. "Inanimate strands" of these networks are precisely what allows "you" to be "still animate," to live at all. Of course, as we have seen in Hamid's attention to the bifurcations of power through infrastructure, not everyone is apportioned equal access to these interlocking networks. In both *Moth Smoke* and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, infrastructure produces sharp socioeconomic divides, impelling the downward and upward trajectories of each novel's protagonist and the classes in which they find themselves. If the protagonist here is kept alive only because of his privileged access to working infrastructures that sustain the hospital, it is clear those without access to such infrastructures are kept socially and economically dead.

### The Digital Passage: Magic, Migration, and Smartphone Infrastructures in *Exit West*

If Hamid is carefully attuned to these particular infrastructural divides of Pakistan, he is also well aware of global digital divides. *Exit West*, according to Naydan, closely

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[27] The closer the protagonist comes to death, the more he recognizes how infrastructure mediates and exercises formal power and connectivity: "The city beyond [his room in the hospital] is an increasingly mythological space. It intrudes in the form of power and gas outages, traffic noises, and airborne particulates that cause you to wake wheezing in your bed. It can be glimpsed around curtains and through iron grilles. Television and radio also bring in some news of it, usually frightening, but then that has always been the case" (217).

"attends to changing realities of the digital divide—the notion that privileged individuals sustain access to digital technology that underprivileged individuals lack" (434). In the "technologically assisted future" of *Exit West*, as Claire Chambers declares, refugees "make use of technology in unexpected ways which appear to protect them, or at least hold at bay hostile larger forces," allowing Hamid to illustrate how the "real issue of migration is the gulf between the haves and the have-nots" (217). Whereas Hamid foregrounds the pervasive lack of material goods and basic amenities necessary for survival around the globe in the novel, as well as in the rest of his literary oeuvre, he bridges these gaps, according to Chambers, by granting refugees the use of various technological means: "when even the powerless have powerful technologies in their hands, things start to change" (217). Naydan reinforces Chambers's claim when she argues that the novel's portrayal of technological "devices show[s] that what was once a digital divide—a difference in the access that privileged and underprivileged individuals had to digital technology—diminishes as a result of twenty-first-century technology's ubiquity" (435). However, both Chambers and Naydan overstate the bridging of a digital gap through the sheer ubiquity of technologies such as smartphones in the novel. Although the novel does illustrate the ways that Saeed and Nadia, like other refugees, can wield smartphones as tools to reclaim power over their own mobility, [28] their use comes with a host of potential problems and difficulties.

[28] The pervasiveness of smartphone use in the novel matches their widespread use by refugees in reality. See Marie Gillespie, et al, "Syrian Refugees and the Digital Passage to Europe: Smartphone Infrastructures and Affordances."

Hamid makes clear the extent to which Nadia and Saeed are tethered to their smartphones: they were "always in possession of their phones. In their phones were antennas, and these antennas sniffed out an invisible world, as if by magic, a world that was all around them, and also nowhere, transporting them to places distant and near, and to places that had never been and would never be" (39). Like the "unseen network suddenly made physical" in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, the "invisible world" of telecommunications networks is made visible in Hamid's description. Smartphones possess a magical quality, resembling "wands wav[ing] in the city's air" in order to tap into "invisible" networks that connect users to other worlds, real or imaginary (39). Although Hamid's description renders smartphone connectivity as fantastical, they are obviously very real technologies. Hamid himself, during a Q&A session with PBS, comments on this particular connection between the magical and smartphone technologies: "most of us have a little black rectangle in our pocket [...]. And when we look at it, our consciousness goes far, far away from our bodies, like magically appearing somewhere else, looking at your phone, and suddenly you're reading about the moon or Mars or Antarctica" (PBS News Hour 2018).[29] Smartphones transform our relationship to space and time, allowing us to "suddenly" inhabit virtual elsewheres, including worlds beyond our own. Hamid emphasizes that the uncanny experience of movement and inhabitation through digital technologies—that to experience "reading about the moon or Mars or Antarctica" from the comfort of your living room, or wherever you might be

[29] Hamid's characterization here is reminiscent of Alexander Galloway's conceptualization of the interface "less as a surface" and more "as a doorway or window"—"a gateway that opens up and allows passage to some place beyond" (30).

physically— is akin to magic. In both cases—in the novel and in his interview—Hamid defamiliarizes what it means to use smartphone technologies, drawing attention to the enchanting and transformative capacities of their everyday technological use.

In the novel, Hamid characterizes his protagonists through specific idiosyncratic attachments to their phones. Nadia, for example, sees "no need to limit" the use of her phone because she enjoys the far-reaching forms of access it provides (41). Hamid renders Nadia's phone use in spatial terms: she rides "far out into the world on otherwise solitary, stationary nights" (41). Her forays into digital worlds provide "her company on long evenings, as it did countless young people in the city who were likewise stranded in their homes" (41). Although physically alone and unmoving in her small apartment, Nadia extends herself into virtual space through the affordances of her phone. Saeed, on the other hand, "resisted the pull of his phone" because he "found the antenna too powerful, the magic it summoned too mesmerizing" (39-40). Because his phone is like a drug whose addictive power over him he must battle, Saeed removes, hides, and restricts several applications found on most smartphones.[30]With his pared back phone, Saeed "could make phone calls. His phone could send messages. His phone could take pictures, identify celestial bodies, transform the city into a map while he drove. But that was it" (40). Hamid's description again generates a spatial understanding of the capacities of a

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[30] Because the novel represents him as more traditionally conservative than Nadia, Saeed's disciplined phone use also fits with his character, as if to suggest that smartphones in the novel do not function simply as a technological medium for accessing the internet, but rather that they also become a medium for literary character. "[P]ersonalities," Hamid suggests later in the novel, are like "illuminated screens" (186). Takeo Rivera offers a particularly rich reading of literary character and the digital mediation of screens in his book, *Model Minority Masochism: Performing the Cultural Politics of Asian American Masculinity*. See, in particular, his chapter, "Asians Never Stare into Your Eyes: Affective Flatness and the Techno-Orientalizaton of the Self in Tao Lin's *Taipei* and Tan Lin's *Insomnia and the Aunt*."

smartphone—its ability to respatialize the material city into a legible and navigable map, as well as its ability to reach and read the cosmos.

Although Saeed prefers the more pragmatic and utilitarian functions of his phone, like Nadia, he uses it at night when he is alone, enabling the function of his browser for an hour each night so he can "disappear[…] by the byways of the internet" (40). It is in these "byways" that he has "access to Nadia's separate existence," and he "became present without presence, and she did much the same to him" (40). According to Naydan, Hamid's concept of "being present without presence" through the use of smartphone technologies has a bimodal effect. On the one hand, it "has an allure" in that it allows Saeed and Nadia a "certain degree of freedom to communicate and to defy oppressive laws that in earlier moments in history may have functioned to snuff out their personal connection with one another" (Naydan 437). On the other hand, it creates split selves and largely isolated individuals, creating the sense of simultaneously living in two worlds, one virtual and one material, without being grounded in either. As a result, as Naydan points out, this condition of "being present without presence" resembles Sherry Turkle's "sense of being alone together" (Naydan 436): that is, the way the internet allows us to hide "from each other" via "networked life" (Turkle 1). That Saeed "disappear[s]" into the "byways of the internet" reinforces the notion that smartphones diminish physical and embodied forms of connection and affiliation, creating instead something more intangible, if not altogether spectral. With forms of connection come forms of disconnection and disembodiment.

Elsewhere in the novel, Hamid articulates clearly this spectralizing power of digital technology: “phones themselves have the innate power of distancing one from one’s physical surroundings” (185). This division of an embodied engagement with the material world and a spectralized engagement with online worlds carries important risks for collective well-being. For example, Hamid depicts how inhabitants of the virtual world often tend to overlook the harsh conditions of the everyday: “the city’s freewheeling virtual world stood in stark contrast to the day-to-day lives of most people” (42). While children “went to sleep unfed,” they could also “see on some small screen people in foreign lands preparing and consuming and even conducting food fights with feasts of such opulence that the very fact of their existence boggled the mind” (42). Lacking the nourishment of proper food, children in Saeed and Nadia’s native city are fed instead with images of “opulence” that only highlight the global divides between haves and have-nots. Passages such as this suggest that although smartphones create multiple platforms for interaction—the transmission and reception of messages and images, as well as the downloading and streaming of entertainment at the touch of a button—they do not offer solutions to the problems such as food shortages, inadequate shelter, and tribal or state violence faced by a significant proportion of the globe’s inhabitants. Instead, they offer fantasy worlds that ignore present realities. After all, “Online there was sex and security and plenty and glamour, while “On the street,” there is hunger, poverty, and threats of violence (42).

Part of the spectral quality of online activity, of being "present without presence," is also due to the perceived immateriality of the internet.[31] While the ubiquity of smartphones in contemporary society often causes its users to take for granted the diverse and diffuse reaches of the technology, their pervasiveness often also causes its users to overlook the material conditions necessary for their use in the first place. The internet after all requires a robust network of material technologies to function—to exist at all. Even a rudimentary understanding of the internet grounds it as a network of material and medial technologies. Some of the major material technical infrastructures that make the Internet possible include long-distance networks made mostly of fiber optic cables that carry data and which are connected at various internet exchange points (IEPs). Being able to access the internet as an individual user also requires specific material technologies such as modems and routers. In an earlier essay called "*Avatar* in Lahore," Hamid himself draws attention to these layered material technologies and networks that facilitate internet connection. In the essay, Hamid returns to live in Lahore and regards his "top priority" during the move to be "getting broadband," which he acquires through "a 1,999-rupee (roughly $23) monthly contract" (66-7). Because of this broadband contract, Hamid "flowed at 2 Mbps through a Pakistan Telecommunications Limited ADSL telephone line, down to Karachi, offshore to the SEA-ME-WE-3, SEA-ME-WE-4, and I-ME-WE,[32] a trio of optical fiber underwater cables that handle the bulk of data moving

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[31] Increasingly, interactions with digital systems today are defined by what Adrian Mackenzie characterizes as "wirelessness," a state or experience of being connected to multiple networks of wireless technologies in any given space or at any given time, while also feeling the indefinite sensations of things like blocked signals and weak connection.

[32] These names refer to Southeast Asia (SEA), the Middle East (ME) and Western Europe (WE), while I-ME-WE includes the Indian subcontinent (I).

between South Asia and the Middle East and Europe, and thence to any server or router [he] needed to access on the planet" (67).[33] Hamid draws attention to the high-capacity submarine communications cable systems that allow him to access the internet. The SEA-ME-WE-3 and SEA-ME-WE-4 cable systems span from Singapore to Germany and from Singapore to France, connecting many countries in between, and function as the primary internet backbone for its connected regions. Because of this trio of cables, Hamid is able to access any router or server "on the planet" and to enter the "cyber universe" (67). Hamid's connection to the "cyber universe" from Lahore allows his "Internet persona […] to live pretty much the same life it had lived when [his] physical existence was in London or New York" (67). His online public persona is part of his cosmopolitanism, but it depends upon a series of material cables that are often kept from view.

To draw attention to the multiple undersea cables connecting regions and nations is to illustrate how the world is interwoven with material technological networks. Nested within these technological networks are political and economic agendas that have determined and continue to determine the resources, labor, and relations necessary for shaping and controlling the distribution of signal traffic across global, national, and local

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[33] The critical concept of "signal traffic" proffered by media theorists Lisa Parks and Nicole Starosielski in *Signal Traffic: Critical Studies of Media Infrastructures,* is useful for exploring Hamid's unique attention to the material media networks that prefigure his ability to be a cosmopolitan in a "cyber universe." For Parks and Starosielski, "signal traffic demarcates a critical shift away from the analysis of screened content alone and toward an understanding of how content moves through the world and how this movement affects content's form" (1). Content in its contemporary digital forms, according to Parks and Starosielski, "are shaped in relation to the properties and locations of […] distribution systems"; "mediascapes would not exist without our current media infrastructures" (1). Sites such as the trio of undersea cables Hamid refers to in "*Avatar* in Lahore" are media infrastructures themselves—that is, "situated sociotechnical systems that are designed and configured to support the distribution of audiovisual signal traffic" (Parks, Starosielski 4). The second chapter of this book, an essay entitled "Fixed Flow: Undersea Cables as Media Infrastructure," even more clearly elaborates the "subterranean and subaquatic infrastructure[s]" that make possible the majority of Internet traffic (54).

scales. In other words, these systems point to how the dissemination of the internet is located within overlapping regimes of power. [34] Hamid exposes these political forms of technological control in another essay entitled "Don't Angry Me." The essay meditates on the Pakistani government's response to the American-made anti-Islam video *The Innocence of Muslims* posted on YouTube, focusing primarily on the state's concern with internet censorship and access. After requesting that YouTube make the film inaccessible from Pakistan—a request that was denied—"The state's reactions were immediately apparent," Hamid writes (71). Pakistan's government censored the film by blocking its URLs at national ISP levels: "YouTube was blocked. The Internet throttled to a crawl" (71). The state's online backlash included "in a scattergun attempt to block specific IP addresses that might link to the film, the erection of a national firewall that denied access to what seemed like half the Web" (72). Targeted internet filtering practices like this illuminate the reaches of state authority, revealing how the global use of internet and media is subject to local control. The state's intervention with the internet forces Hamid to realize how useless his technological devices are without properly working broadband. His "cable modem promptly died"; his "DSL link was barely alive, operating at a speed that brought to mind the 'boing boing' sound of an old dial-up connection"; his "WiMAX setup, normally the least fleet-footed of [the] three, the backup for [his] backup, dipped to about a quarter of its promised bandwidth" (72). Inasmuch as online access allows Hamid to "live pretty much the same life" in Pakistan as in New York or London, it also does

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[34] For more on how the material structures of the internet become mechanisms of control, and how their relative invisibility to an internet user generates notions of the internet's freedom, see Chun, *Control and Freedom*.

not guarantee such freedoms. Although digital screens can become portals to global elsewheres and can foster a level of virtual cosmopolitan mobility, their political and materiality can also screen out certain users and content from view and participation.

Like Hamid, Saeed and Nadia also face the state-sanctioned disconnection of telecommunications networks in the novel. After weeks of mounting tensions between the government and local militants in their city, the government intervenes digitally by halting means of online and mobile communication: "one day the signal to every mobile phone in the city simply vanished, turned off as if by flipping a switch. An announcement of the government's decision was made over television and radio, a temporary antiterrorism measure, it was said, but with no end date given. Internet connectivity was suspended as well" (57). Labelled a counterterrorism measure, the government's disabling of telecommunications and internet infrastructures demonstrates the state's power to intervene in the everyday social and economic activities and interactions provided by digital platforms. This digital securitization and censorship is juxtaposed throughout the novel with material forms of state control such as curfews and security checkpoints. Like the "sandbagged checkpoints and razor wire," as well as the "howitzers and infantry fighting vehicles and tanks" that occupy militarized checkpoints and barricades, the government's foreclosure of internet and mobile phone usage is an expression of their power, a way of prohibiting forms of mobility and social action.

Stripped of internet access and other properly functioning telecommunications devices, [35] the city's formal and informal communication networks emerge in the form of state-authorized and state-sanctioned radio and television on the one hand, and insurgent radio broadcasts and local gossip on the other. Local authorities broadcast that the civil strife "was going well," while a "pirate radio station" claimed that "the fall of the city was imminent" (73). The few international broadcasts that Saeed and Nadia are able to receive declare that the war was "going badly indeed" (73). However, the evaluation of the war as "going badly" only takes into consideration the war's tangible effects on Western countries from Western perspectives, most notably that those fleeing the region in hopes of political asylum were "adding to an unprecedented flow of migrants that was hitting the rich countries, who were building walls and fences and strengthening borders, but seemingly to an unsatisfactory effect" (73).

Unable to discern the truth about the state of the region's political violence, gossip circulates in Saeed and Nadia's city, and soon across the entire global South, about a potential magical means of escape out of civil turmoil and war: "Rumors had begun to circulate of doors that could take you elsewhere, often to places far away, well removed

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[35] In terms of the novel's plot, the measure stifles the protagonists' budding romance, leaving the new lovers unable to communicate. They resemble separated lovers of an eighteenth century romance, but updated for an online age: "Deprived of the portals to each other and to the world provided by their mobile phones, and confined to their apartments by the nighttime curfew, Nadia and Saeed, and countless others, felt marooned and alone and much more afraid" (57). "[W]ithout there mobile phones and access to the internet," Hamid writes, "there was no ready way for them to reestablish contact" (61). In an effort to connect with Nadia, Saeed tries from his advertising agency's phone to reach the landline of the insurance company where she works, but the "telephone company was struggling under the sudden load and also to repair infrastructure destroyed in the fighting, and so Saeed's office landline worked at best intermittently" (62).

from this death trap of a country" (72).[36] Without the virtual escapism of the internet, the city's inhabitants are forced to confront daily the violent realities of civil strife and therefore seek literal, physical escape from their region's "death trap." According to these rumors, the city's spatial boundaries have the potential to undergo transformation, becoming mysterious and magical portals to other regions of the globe. The city's residents, suffering from the daily violence of warring factions and the infrastructural destruction that comes as a consequence of such violence,[37] begin to look at doors differently, hoping they might become the magical portal that might whisk them away to safety. These magical doors become part of a collective fantasy of escape because other methods of leaving the country are increasingly untenable: "visas, which had long been near-impossible, were now truly impossible for non-wealthy people to secure, and journeys on passenger planes and ships were therefore out of the question, and the relative merits, or rather risks, of the various overland route were guessed at, and picked apart, again and again" (52-3). The magical doors are allegorical and, in Hamid's magical sense, they are the internet made physical. Like smartphones and the internet more broadly, these doors become an aspirational mode of mobility, generating new imaginative and spatial regimes for transnational connection.

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[36] Gossip, as an analog form of social media, produces a speculative discursive imaginary around the meaning, reality, and machinations of these doors: "Some people claimed to know people who knew people who had been through such doors. A normal door, they said, could become a special door, and it could happen without warning, to any door at all" (72).

[37] As the daily fighting increases, infrastructural access becomes harder to come by: "there was no grid electricity in their part of the city anymore, and no piped gas or water, municipal services having entirely broken down" (82).

These doors also resemble, but stand in juxtaposition to the realities of land and political borders, electrical grids, and other traditional state infrastructures. Unlike the "walls and fences and strengthen[ed] borders" of Western nation-states, these doors are not designed to keep people out. Rather, they facilitate movement. The doors in the novel "seem to function at the behest of the dispossessed and desperate," instead of those in power (Geidel, Stuelke 115). With traditional border control sites becoming largely ineffective, Western governments scramble to maintain the security of their nation-states: "the doors out, which is to say the doors to richer destinations, were heavily guarded, but the doors in, the doors from poorer places, were mostly left unsecured" (Hamid 106).[38] Dominant western powers come to recognize that the migratory flows outward cannot be completely contained, but they can be managed and secured. Like internet platforms and outposts, these doors exist as a global network, but become increasingly subject to the control of local authorities.

Inasmuch as these attempt to doors dissolve traditional boundary structures like political borders, they also destabilize the narrative structures of the novel itself. The narrative proper of Saeed and Nadia's romance is interspersed with narrative vignette of other refugees moving throughout the world through these magical doors. The magical doors do not only open new geographies, but they also produce new stories and new forms of human connection. Even more, the novel locates its own formal properties in

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[38] Michael Perfect draws upon Giorgio Agamben to think about how these doors and the proliferation of refugees they enable trouble the fundamental concept of the nation-state. For Agamben, the very existence of the concept of the refugee "radically calls into question the principles of the nation-state" ("We Refugees" 117). As Perfect argues, "Hamid's novel aligns with Agamben's point, suggesting that mass refugee movements represent a crisis not just for particular nations at particular moments, but for the very concept of nationhood itself" (192).

relation to these magical doors and the digital technologies they resemble. As a result, the magical doors and communications technologies operate as formal devices for the novel's embrace of global simultaneity. Hamid achieves a narrative global simultaneity with introductory phrases like "Meanwhile" and "At the same time" to transition his narrative to these migratory vignettes.[39] Importantly, he situates these vignettes within broader media networks, often marking the moment of characters' passage in relation to contemporary digital technologies. The novel's first vignette establishes this pattern clearly: "As Saeed's email was being downloaded from a server and read by his client, far away in Australia a pale-skinned woman was sleeping alone in the Sydney neighborhood of Surry Hills" (7). Marking global simultaneity through the dissemination and reception of an email, Hamid transports his readers elsewhere, for the novel's first instance of migration through the magical doors. Written messages and human subjects are transported instantaneously, "as if by magic," and the narrative interruption is smoothed over through Hamid's digitally-powered transition. Hamid describes the moment of migration as follows: the "room [was] bathed in the glow of [a] computer charger and wireless router, but the closed doorway was dark, darker than night, a rectangle of complete darkness—the heart of darkness. And out of this darkness, a man was emerging" (8). The colonial resonance and the literary allusion to Conrad here is obvious, if not a little on the nose. In contrast to the darkened doorway stands the

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[39] Hong refers to these scenes as "meanwhile scene[s]" (42). The "emplotment of meanwhile," she argues, "is narrative, but it offers an argument: because simultaneous events cannot be narrated/read simultaneously, the text orders the details and directs whether and how to alternate. Such choices are philosophical and political as well as artistic; they spur cognitive and affective responses in the reader, who apprehends the multiple scenes in relation to one another" (42-3).

illuminative capacities of a “computer charger and wireless router,” again positioning migration in relation to digital technologies.

The vignette itself is rife with tension. The reader, to this point not yet aware of the existence of magical doors, likely would view the scene as rather threatening: a man entering a home that is not his own, encountering a vulnerable woman asleep. Unlike the narrative perspective that allows us an intimate understanding of Saeed and Nadia, Hamid portrays this unnamed man from unknown origins as alien and unknowable—ultimately, as Other. Because Hamid emphasizes the contrast between the paleness of the woman in bed with the man who is “dark, with dark skin and dark, woolly hair” (8), Hamid forces his Western audiences[40] to confront their familiarity with received stereotypes of darkened Others threatening potential violence and rape against white women. Such stereotypes often come pre-loaded in Western media narratives surrounding refugees and immigrants. Hamid inverts the stereotype of white fear of dark-skinned intruders by revealing that the unnamed man feels himself to be the most vulnerable in this situation. The woman, the narrative makes clear, lives in a gentrified neighborhood in an alarmed home, while the unnamed man, desperately trying to avoid triggering the alarm system, is compared to “a man struggling in an alley, on the ground, late at night, [trying] to free himself of hands clenched around his throat” (8-9). In the man’s mounting desperation to find a means of escape from the bedroom, Hamid emphasizes the man’s deep-rooted awareness of his own extreme bodily precarity:

[40] In identifying the audience of Hamid’s novel, Hong offers the following assessment: “While Hamid’s readers could include refugees and certainly include readers in the Global South, most are relatively privileged—at least, living high enough on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs to be passing time with a novel” (42).

"Growing up in the not infrequently perilous circumstances in which he had grown up, he was aware of the fragility of his body. He knew how little it took to make a man into meat: the wrong blow, the wrong gunshot, the wrong flick of a blade, turn of a car, presence of microorganism in a handshake, a cough. He was aware that alone a person is almost nothing" (9). Many of the threats typically levied against immigrants in conservative Western media are here, but in reverse. Rather than being the perpetrator of such violence, the unnamed refugee has been and continues to be subjected to these kinds of deadly violence.

What's important in this vignette, and for the novel more broadly, is how Hamid positions this moment of magical migration in relation to already existing digital technologies, how he enlists their figuration of a global simultaneity as a formal and stylistic device for his own narrative structuring, and how he subverts the anti-immigration bias of and expectations typically promoted by popular Western media. Through these connections, Hamid stages a confrontation with the conditions of movement and the perceptions of that movement. If Hamid recognizes that governmental regimes respond to the presence of magical doors by increasing securitization, he also recognizes that the circulation of refugees involves the circulation of received narratives about refugees. Some might insist that in using these magical doors as a formal device Hamid instrumentalizing refugee experiences: to dramatize migration as a moment of magic passage risks enacting a kind of erasure of the experience of migration itself, its hardships, its duration, and its inevitable losses. There are in the novel, as Perfect states, "no barbed-wire fences being scaled by refugees as they hide from border guards; no

lorries crammed with human cargoes; no precariously overcrowded dinghies making their way across the Mediterranean" (193). Such experiences, although harrowingly real, are often sensationalized by mainstream media outlets and belong to the received narratives that dehumanize refugees. Images of "barbed-wire fences" and overburdened vehicles form part of the "spectacular" visual economies analyzed in the previous chapter. By avoiding the replication of such images, Hamid actively resists reductive representations of refugees. Hamid's choice to locate migration within a nexus of media technologies does not purposefully ignore the material conditions of migration. It is a choice that recognizes the unknowability of the individual and collective refugee experience.[41] It is a choice that, in Perfect's terms, belongs with Hamid's many attempts in the novel "to shift focus away from the notion of a single, identifiable geopolitical crisis and insists, instead, on acknowledging the countless individual human crises experienced by displaced people in the contemporary moment" (194).

Further, the experience of using these magical doors is not presented as seamless nor as inconsequential physically or emotionally for its users. The unnamed refugee in the first vignette, for example, experiences his emergence through the door "as though pulling himself up against gravity, or against the rush of a monstrous tide" (8),[42] his

[41] After all, it's not as if Hamid is naively unaware of the particular physical, psychological, and economic challenges facing refugees. Spaces of mobility populate his essays and his fiction. His attention to the material and political sites such as VISA offices and border security that enable or trouble his transnational movements shows that he is an author clearly interested in sites of connection, mobility, and transference, and suggests that he recognizes the transformative power and physical, psychological, and social violence of the particular migratory journeys of those less privileged than him.

[42] That he is described as moving "against the rush of a monstrous tide" is significant given that many dominant narratives about immigration rely on images of an "encroaching tide of refugee Others" (Hong 34).

exertions against which leave him "trembling and sliding to the floor like a newboarn foal" where he lay "spent" (9). Migrating through these doors is likened to a cycle of death and regeneration: "It was said in those days that the passage was both like dying and like being born" (104). When Nadia is the first to go through the door, Hamid describes the experience as "a kind of extinguishing as she entered the blackness and a gasping struggle as she fought to exit it, and she felt cold and bruised and damp as she lay on the floor of the room at the other side, trembling and too spent at first to stand" (104). Saeed too arrives "still weak" on the other side of the door (105). Clearly, traveling through these doors is not as painless as some critics like to portray. Hamid's depiction of moving through the doors speaks to the larger challenges of identity and ontological security many refugees face. Hamid's decision to locate the migrant experience in magical terms is less about ignoring the devastating realities many refugees experience, and is instead more about the fact that such narratives are scarcely representable on their own terms. In other words, rather than risking an overly reductive representation of the migrant experience reliant on typical sensational images that present refugees as a suffering homogenous mass, Hamid marks the digital passage of refugees in his novel as unknowable.

**"40 Meters and a Pipe": Constructions of Race, History, and Infrastructure**

If the novel is concerned with forms of movement that are enabled by digital pathways or foreclosed by governmental regimes, the novel is also invested in the outcomes and repercussions of such movement. The refugee journey is typically one imagined as an escape toward a better future, but Hamid complicates his protagonists'

exit to the West. After getting their bearings after traveling through one of the magical doors, Saeed and Nadia arrive on the island of Mykonos, the first explicitly identified place in the novel. The magical door transports them from, in narrative terms, the nameless allegorical land of their birth to a historically situated place. In Mykonos, they take up residence in a makeshift refugee camp, "with hundreds of tents and lean-tos and people of many colors and hues—many colors and hues but mostly falling within a band of brown that ranged from dark chocolate to milky tea" (106). This is the novel's first invocation of racial and ethnic diversity, as if to suggest that their transportation through space also marks their entrance into racial difference. Hamid portrays other refugees in the camp as "speaking in a cacophony that was the languages of the world" (106). This linguistic diversity of the refugee camp is, in Hamid's play with narrative point of view, imagined from the mechanical perspective of signal transmissions at a global scale: the camp's voices were "what one might hear if one were a communications satellite, or a spymaster tapping into a fiber-optic cable under the sea" (106). Here, Hamid reinforces the global forms of technical mediation that position the camp as a kind of refugee Babel, but that also surveil the refugee encampment. The camp in Mykonos is likened to a "trading post,"[43] a transient space for travelers to acquire their wares for a longer

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[43] Among the "first things" Saeed and Nadia acquire in Mykonos, in addition to food, water, and shelter, were "electrical power and local numbers for their phones"—all keys to survival in their new environment (107). For migrant smartphone users like Saeed and Nadia, accessing the internet becomes critical to survival, but depends much more upon a variety of public infrastructures and economies: "[s]martphone-mediated refugee mobilities are wrapped up in and shaped by a set of fragile sociotechnical, infrastructural assemblages" (Gillespie 4). Access to such infrastructural assemblages—"Wi-Fi hotspots, shops that sell SIM cards, or the physical offices of wire transfer services" (Latonero 3)—are intermittent and precarious for refugees on the move. In the novel, Saeed tries to call his father, who had decided to stay in their native city, but only receives an automated message indicating the call could not be completed and foreshadowing the eventual news of his death. Without a family of her own, Nadia opens various chat applications and social media platforms, thumbing messages to other migrants, "an acquaintance who had made it to

journey. Because the nights are cold, the tents are too small for living, and the days pass "full of waiting and false hopes, […] days of boredom" (113), Saeed and Nadia's dwelling there is only meant to be temporary before acquiring passage to a more suitable and sustainable living arrangement. The longer they are there, the more Mykonos comes to resemble their home city, the squalid conditions exacerbated by governmentally imposed spatial restrictions and a lack of access to working infrastructures. With diminishing funds, growing hunger, and increasing danger in the camps, Saeed and Nadia start to become more desperate, even contemplating "venturing through [a door] to the same place from which they had come" (115).

Eventually they secure passage through a secret unguarded magical door, and it transports them to a private residence in London. Compared to their public and precarious encampment in Mykonos, this London dwelling appears palatial to them, an effect enhanced by Hamid's descriptive prose: "[T]hey were in a house of some kind, surely a palace, with rooms upon rooms and marvels upon marvels, and taps that gushed water that was like spring water and was white with bubbles and felt soft, yes soft, to the touch" (123). The scene is one of abundance, an overflow of physical space and the conveniences of technological modernity. Hamid emphasizes these sensations in his description of Nadia's experience of her first warm shower in months, and he marks their transition into this new space as a kind of evolution and as a kind of movement into power. Before entering the shower, Nadia examines the effects their migratory journey

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Auckland and another who had reached Madrid," both of whom "replied right away" (108). Thereafter, Saeed and Nadia use their phones to get "caught up on the news, the tumult in the world, the state of their country, the various routes and destinations migrants were taking and recommending to each other, the tricks one could gainfully employ, the dangers, one needed at all costs to avoid" (108).

has had upon her body, which she compares to “the body of an animal, a savage” (125). She experiences the shower as a kind of rebirth and reentry into modern society:

> The water pressure in the shower was magnificent, striking her flesh with real force, and scouring her clean. The heat was superb too, and she turned it up as high as she could stand, the heat going all the way into her bones, chilled from months of outdoor cold, and the bathroom filled up with steam like a forest in the mountains, scented with pine and lavender from the soaps she had found, a kind of heaven, with towels so plush and fine that when she at last emerged she felt like a princess using them […]. (125)

The shower revitalizes Nadia, and she sees her body less as an “animal” or “savage” than as a “princess” enjoying the comforts of a privileged modern life. She sloughs off the detritus of migration, hoping to enter a new life marked by access and comfort. To Nadia, this shower “was for her not about frivolity”; rather, “it was about the essential, about being human, living as a human being, reminding oneself of what one was” (126). And yet, when she empties the drain, the modern networks of plumbing are deflated compared to her former grandiose vision: “watching the turbid water flow […] down the drain of the bathtub […] was disappointingly utilitarian” (126). This deflation is representative of the larger disappointments to come during their arrival in the West. The West in the novel, as Naydan contends, “never functions as the promised land that citizens of the East imagine it to be because of the interplay of problems involving technology, violence, and forced migration” (438).

Soon after, more migrants emerge from the magic door, and the dwelling comes to resemble the camp in Mykonos, rich with linguistic and ethnic diversity as it quickly is populated with individuals and families from Nigeria, Somalia, Myanmar, and Thailand. Saeed and Nadia claim a room, a better prospect than their previous tents and lean-tos,

for "[t]o have a room to themselves—four walls, a window, a door with a lock—seemed incredible good fortune" (124). Quickly, however, this "good fortune" is met by police, immigration service officers, and British soldiers, decked out "in full riot gear" and wielding "what appeared to be submachine guns" (127). In the name of British national security, militarized functionaries of the state intimidate and terrorize the squatters, but in this confrontation, "[a] sort of camaraderie evolved" amongst them: "being penned in [the house] made them into a grouping, a group" (128). Like the unhoused population who take over the Los Angeles Harbor Freeway in Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*, the shared precarity of the refugees becomes the basis of forming community. What's more, others join in solidarity, formalizing the standoff as a political protest: "other people gathered on the street, other dark- and medium- and even light-skinned people, bedraggled, like the people of the camps on Mykonos, and these people formed a crowd. They banged cooking pots with spoons and chanted in various languages and soon the police decided to withdraw" (128). This new collective comes to represent "something new in [Nadia's] mind, the birth of something new" (148). This "something new," according to Eli Jelly-Schapiro, is "the idea of a polity based on the exigencies of mutual survival, wherein difference is the source of the universal rather than its violent corollary" ("The World-Spanning Humanism of Mohsin Hamid").

Doors to dwellings like Saeed and Nadia's begin to appear all over London: "houses and parks and disused lots were being peopled in this way, some said by a million migrants, some said by twice that" (129). Local newspapers refer to the areas of the city populated by refugees as "the worst of the black holes in the fabric of the nation,"

where “legal residents were in a minority, and native-born ones vanishingly few” (129). Reinforced by ethno-nationalist ideologies, tensions rise in these contact-zones, with forms of xenophobic violence escalating. At one point, Saeed and Nadia’s street “was under attack by a nativist mob” that looks to Nadia’s eyes “like a strange and violent tribe” (134). By characterizing local xenophobic violence in this way—casting Anglo-European natives as a “strange and violent tribe”—Hamid reinscribes colonialist discourse in reverse.“[S]cenes of nativist backlash” (137) ramp up as conservative pundits and news anchors alike stoke the fires of cultural discord. Riots become more frequent with the increased “talk on the television” calling for efforts “to reclaim Britain for Britain,” an obvious reference to political rhetoric in recent years that pushed toward the Brexit vote of 2016, as well as to the campaign slogan for President Trump to “Make America Great Again” (135).

Whereas during the novel’s earlier instances of factional violence there were rumors circulating about securing means of escape through the sudden appearance of the magical doors, in these violent clashes in London, rumors only circulate about containment and imprisonment: “Rumors began to circulate of a tightening cordon being put in place, a cordon moving through those of London’s boroughs with fewer doors, and hence fewer new arrivals” (137). This “tightening cordon” is the product of rightwing backlash in which “nativist extremists” formed their own legions and makeshift militias “with a wink and a nod from the authorities” (135). Rumors online threaten even more violent retribution: “the social media chatter was of a coming night of shattered glass” (135). The growing rightwing and white supremacist nationalism supported by

government officials and authorities is likened to the rise of Nazism as Hamid makes painfully clear with this reference to Kristallnacht, or the "Night of Broken Glass," an anti-Jewish pogrom carried out on November 9th and 10th in 1938. That Hamid attributes these threats to the "chatter" found on "social media" points to the rise of neo-Nazi ideologies on common social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. The specter of Nazism and the reality of neo-Nazism haunts the novel in these moments, so much so that when Saeed and Nadia hear rumors about increasing restrictions against refugees, the echoes of Nazi Germany are hard to miss. These increased restrictions were being put in place as a way to criminalize refugees and to send "those unable to prove their legal residence to great holding camps that had been built in the city's greenbelt" (137). In the shadow of Nazism, these holding camps clearly resemble de facto concentration camps.

Eventually, the neighborhoods and boroughs of London most densely populated by refugees, including the areas of Kensington and Chelsea where Saeed and Nadia were living, plunge into darkness, the electricity having been "cut off by the authorities" (141). Mirroring the experience in Saeed and Nadia's native city in which the internet and telephone lines were disconnected, the British state exercises its political power by intervening in the technological power structures of the city, using its authority to control who has access to working infrastructures and who does not. Infrastructural technology and political violence seem to sustain one another in both the East and the West, a connection that blurs the "binaristic opposition [between East and West] that twenty-first century mass media aim to propagate and exploit" (Naydan 438). In Saeed's estimation, their plunge into darkness in London is even worse than the electrical failures of his

native city and during their temporary stay in Mykonos.[44] As Gheorghiu puts it, "The hell on earth which the two characters escaped has relocated to London," and, I would add, with a vengeance in its attendant forms of racist and xenophobic violence (91).

Like the stark class-based binaries of his previous novels—defined by possession of electricity and air conditioning in *Moth Smoke* and by access to potable water in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*—Hamid represents an infrastructural divide as splitting London into two halves in *Exit West.* The binary relies on racialized discourse; there is a "dark London" where the refugees and other poor live, and a "light London" where those with wealth, whiteness, and privilege live (146). Dark London not only is disconnected from the electricity grid, but is also removed from other forms of infrastructural access.[45] There is no public transportation and no municipal waste management. As Claire Chambers points out (218), this divide is reminiscent of Frantz Fanon's diagnosis of the colonial city as "cut in two," with the dominant half "brightly lit" and possessing "asphalt" and "garbage-cans," with the other half left "starved […] of light," lacking basic infrastructural provision (Fanon 29, 30). Or, put another way by Naydan, the

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[44] "Mykonos had not been well lit, but electricity had reached everywhere there were wires. In their own fled city, when the electricity had gone, it had gone for all. But in London there were parts as bright as ever, brighter than any place Saeed or Nadia had seen before, glowing up into the sky and reflecting down again from the clouds, and in contrast the city's dark swaths seemed darker, more significant, the way that blackness in the ocean suggests not less light from above, but a sudden drop-off in the depths below" (146).

[45] "From dark London, Saeed and Nadia wondered what life must be like in light London, where they imagined people dined in elegant restaurants and rode in shiny black cabs, or at least went to work in offices and shops and were free to journey about as they pleased. In dark London, rubbish accrued, uncollected, and underground stations were sealed. The trains kept running, skipping stops near Saeed and Nadia but felt as a rumble beneath their feet and heard at a low, powerful frequency, almost subsonic, like thunder or the detonation of a massive, distant bomb" (146). In this description, Hamid describes something even more than forms of uneven development. By comparing the train that refuses them transport as a "rumble" comparable to a "massive, distant bomb," Hamid aligns infrastructural inequity as a violent and deadly weapon wielded and launched by those who have access to these same infrastructures.

"outage retools the old binary between East and West into one that divides migrants who are predominately people of color from natives who are predominantly white. It also retools the digital divide: if have-nots can have digital devices in the twenty-first century as Hamid represents it, the government will rob them of electricity that allows them to power those devices" (441). Hamid translates the kinds of infrastructural binary distinctions found in his earlier fiction—between those who have access to working infrastructures and those who do not—into the discursive, political, and ideological categories of "natives" and "migrants." Access to working infrastructure is not only proof of belonging to—or being "native" to, in the novel's parlance— a Westernized modernity, but also proof of possessing power across its material, technological, social, political, and economic valences. A lack of access, however, indicates a kind of backwardness, statelessness, and powerlessness that is consistently racialized within the globalized purview of the novel.

After increasing violence between these two Londons climaxes in a catastrophe—a cinema full of refugees is burned to the ground, incinerating all those within—a cautious truce is made.[46] The utter violent spectacle causes the "natives and their forces [to step] back from the brink" and to rethink the new global regimes of mobility the doors have created (166).[47] As a consequence of this truce, officials begin the construction of a

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[46] Because this cinema massacre comes within the contexts of Nazism, it poses some similarities to Quentin Tarentino's 2009 film *Inglorious Basterds*, although the perpetrators and subjects of this violence are clearly reversed in Hamid's novel. The novel's fire also historically recalls, or rewrites, the Reichstag Fire, which was used as a pivotal political pretext for the establishment of Nazi Germany.

[47] The narrative perspective offers some conjecture as to why these London natives stop just short of outright genocide: "Perhaps they had decided they did not have it in them to do what would have needed to be done, to corral and bloody and where necessary slaughter the migrants, and had determined that some other way would have to be found. Perhaps they had grasped that the doors could not be closed, and new

megacity to house and to grant employment to the refugee population. The former detention centers and concentration camps in London's greenbelt are transformed into a "development called the London Halo, one of innumerable human halos and satellites and constellations springing up in the country and in the world" (169). Nasia Anam refers to these developments as "ersatz colonies of London," which implies a kind of "social contract that suggests citizenship" (432). On the surface, the construction of a "London Halo" is a humanitarian gesture on behalf of the British government, but it belies the structural forms of violence that continue to marginalize refugees. Notably, the refugee communities are still not welcomed to light London, indicating that the halt of governmentally authorized violence does not mean a radical reconfiguration of the city's social, racial, economic, and infrastructural geographies.

Saeed and Nadia become employed in these construction projects, "laboring away" in these worker camps that are encircled by security fences (169). "In exchange for their labor in clearing terrain and building infrastructure and assembling dwellings from prefabricated blocks," Hamid writes of this London Halo development, "migrants were promised forty meters and a pipe: a home on forty square meters of land and a connection to all the utilities of modernity" (169-170).[48] In this promise, Hamid reframes American history for a modern global context. "[F]orty meters and a pipe" is a clear

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doors would continue to open, and they had understood that the denial of coexistence would have required one party to cease to exist, and the extinguishing party too would have been transformed in the process, and too many native parents would not after have been able to look their children in the eye, to speak with head held high of what their generation had done. Or perhaps the sheer number of places where there were now doors had made it useless to fight in any one" (166).

[48] Physical space seems less important in this promised deal than the mainline connection to "all the utilities of modernity" because living quarters that are forty square meters in size are roughly less than the size of three average-sized parking spaces.

reference to “forty acres and a mule”—a form of reparations promised to those formerly enslaved in the U.S. South. The promise of “forty acres and a mule” was made in the closing stages of the U.S. Civil War, but was never actually fulfilled. The promise was a rhetorical refrain that, according to Shirley Hollis, had “best symbolized the dreams of freed blacks in the South and the goal of members of the abolitionist movement” (11). Reflective of an American idealization of land ownership deeply rooted in the nation’s colonial past, this promise illuminated possible pathways for economic freedom and independence for formerly enslaved peoples. These rhetorical promises of freedmen’s land ownership appeared as a threat to many Southern whites, who feared “that at the end of the Civil War land would be taken from the former masters and conveyed to the former slaves” (11). These promises took legislative form in the aftermath of the Civil War, but most of this legislation only provided obstacles for the apportioning of land and resources to freedmen and women, resulting in only a small portion of land reallocation.[49] As a result, many black laborers were thrust into positions of share tenancy in which their promised economic freedom and mobilities were severely reduced due to their lack of autonomy.

By invoking this history of American slavery and its aftermath, Hamid connects historical narratives of oppression, enslavement, and exploitation with the experience of refugees today. Hamid’s analogy, according to Fareda Banda, “points to the debt owed to

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[49] For example, the Southern Homestead Act of 1866 “provided only for the conveyance of land and not the house or necessary tools and implements needed to begin farming” (Hollis 12). Notably, this land was limited to lands that were “largely unfit for farming” altogether (13). Even more difficult was the fact that these contract claims needed to be filed and the land occupied in an extremely short amount of time, leaving many unable to access their allocated land before the window slammed shut (13).

both those who were enslaved and also migrants whose labour is used freely but for whom the rewards are few" and "shows the linkages between the dispossession of slavery and ongoing limits to life opportunities" for migrants (67).Through Hamid's transformation of the promise to "forty meters and a pipe," their labor is likened to the labor of the enslaved, situating them as enslaved to British authorities, and signals another kind of a deferred emancipation for Saeed and Nadia. Similar to white landowners in the American South during the Civil War, British nationalists had perceived the influx of refugees and their capacities to occupy private property as a critical threat. Although their genocidal drive was ultimately abetted, their promise of "forty meters and a pipe" suggests a tenuous at best relationship with the refugee laborers. After all, these work camps do not extinguish forms of ethnic violence, as there continues to be "nativist raid[s] that disabled machinery or destroyed dwelling units nearing completion" (177).

Native Londoners do "labor alongside migrants on the work sites," but these roles are often "as operators of heavy machinery" or as supervisors, a hierarchical labor position like that of a plantation overseer (177). White Londoners do not participate directly in manual labor, but rather they labor through forms of management or through technical prosthetics. Even more, a "time tax" heavily favors settled London residents; a portion of the income generated by refugee labor will go to "those who had been there for decades" (170).[50] Only black and brown bodies, it seems, are tasked with the hardship of

[50] According to Geidel and Stuelke, this time tax "resembles the US state department policy that forces refugees to pay back the 'travel loans' they have incurred during resettlement. Both real and fictional programs wipe away history and existing assessments of need to imagine refugees as indebted to the societies that accept them" (117).

physical labor and the consistent deferral of the just rewards for their work. Working on a road-building crew, Saeed is characterized through his subordinate position, experiencing his work alongside the "heaving and snorting building engine" as akin to being "an infantryman […] run[ning] alongside a tank" (177). Through this description, his actions are put in service of a violent technological empire, a kind of service that often involves, if not requires, death. Whereas Saeed works on road-building projects, Nadia "work[s] on a mostly female crew that laid pipe"—pipes that "soon would run the lifeblood and thoughts of the new city, all those things that connect people without them requiring to move" (182). Privileged Londoners don't have to move to have access to "all the utilities of modernity," but refugees like Saeed and Nadia labor to build it, to even have a hope of its forms of access. Through these worker camps, Hamid maps the collective, itinerant—if not also carceral—forms of labor involved in Western infrastructural development, emphasizing how exploited and dispossessed labor shapes, often invisibly, public works.[51] These migrant labors replay histories of racialized labor in sites of Western development. Representing infrastructural development from the perspective of labor in this way highlights the fact that those who build the material world around us are often barred from being able to use it in the same ways.

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[51] Hamid also remarks on the environmental effects of this racialized labor. In his work, Saeed feels "dwarfed" next to the "mechanized dinosaurs" that would "lift vast amounts of earth or roll flat hot strips of paving or churn concrete with the slow serenity of a masticating cow" (177). Similar to the image of "mechanized dinosaurs," Nadia's crew uses "a digging machine [that looks] like a wolf spider or praying mantis, with a wide stance but a pair of dangerous-looking appendages at its front, coming together in a crenallated scraper near where its mouth would have been" (181-2). Like the tank-like machines that rip up the earth, these animalistic machines "carve the trenches in the earth into which the pipe-layers would unfurl and unstack and lower and connect the pipes" (181-2).The violence of these descriptions also add an environmental element to infrastructural development, the ways in which these machines destroy the earth in additional to black and brown bodies.

Perhaps these are among the reasons that Saeed and Nadia decide to forego their place on the housing list and instead take a chance on another migratory move West to a new township called Marin.[52] Here, the protagonists complete their final migration west before they eventually part at the novel's end. Located north of San Francisco and Silicon Valley, Marin offers something different than Mykonos and London, namely, its lack of material infrastructures typical of a developed modern city and its lack of race-based violence and division. In the hilly climes of northern California, "the higher up the hills one went, the fewer services there were, but the better scenery" (194). Saeed and Nadia build a shanty made out of "a corrugated metal roof and discarded packing crate" and use natural sources of water for their drinking and washing: "a rainwater collector fashioned from synthetic fabric and a bucket" and from "dew collectors that fit inside plastic bottles like the filaments of upside-down lightbulbs" for their drinking and washing (194). In terms of online connectivity in Marin, "Wireless data signals were strong, and they secured a solar panel and battery set with a universal outlet, which accepted plugs from all around the world" (193-4).[53] The universal outlets of Marin's electrical system comes to represent the universal potential of the city itself, a site where other refugees can come and be accepted without fears of retributive violence from the "natives" of the region. Whereas in London extreme forms of violence between its native citizens and its

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[52] The text itself doesn't give a clear answer as to Nadia's motive to leave London, only suggesting in a detached tone that it was on a whim or "out of the blue" (188).

[53] Hamid's description of Nadia's travels from the relatively remote region Marin to the city of Sausalito for work recalls the spatialization of infrastructural development found in the early portions of *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*: "For work Nadia hiked down, first through other unpiped and unwired districts like their own, then through those where grid electricity had been installed, and then through those where roads and running water had reached, and from there she caught a ride on a bus or pickup truck to her place of employment, a food cooperative in a hastily built commercial zone outside Sausalito" (194).

incoming refugees had been common, in Marin there were "almost no natives" (194).[54] Shazia Sadaf refers to Hamid's representation of Marin as offering a "real glimpse of a collective future" (645), where, in Hamid's words, "plausible desirable futures began to emerge, unimaginable previously, but not unimaginable now" (217). It is an ostensibly post-national space where structural forces determined by racial difference and socioeconomic unevenness are diminished, if not dissolved.

**"Under the drone-crossed sky": Global Surveillance Technologies and the Novel**

Despite the promise of Marin, the conclusion of the novel's romance plot is not a traditionally happy one, ending with a love forever after. Instead, at the end of the novel, Hamid's protagonists part from one another. One night, shortly before they breakup, "one of the tiny drones that kept a watch on their district, part of a swarm, and not larger than a hummingbird, crashed into the transparent plastic flap that served as both door and window of their shanty" (205). Even in the rural region of Marin, small surveillance drones keep their watchful eye on the town's squatters. Seeing Saeed holding the "motionless iridescent body" of the drone, Nadia suggests that they "give it a burial," which they accordingly do and joke about offering it a prayer (205). In terms of the novel's romance plot, the scene acts a substitute for mourning the death of their relationship. But in terms of the novel's engagement with infrastructural technologies, it

[54] The full passage is worth noting here: "In Marin there were almost no natives, these people having died out or been exterminated long ago, and one would see them only occasionally, at impromptu trading posts […]. Tales were told at these places that people from all over now gathered to hear, for the tales of these natives felt appropriate to this time of migration, and gave listeners much-needed sustenance (197). For as much as critics celebrate the novel's eventual dissolution of ethnic nationalisms, they seem to miss the horrifying verb in this passage—"exterminated"—which obviously carries with it connotations of genocide and the Holocaust.

points to the continued presence of intrusive and potentially violent forms of technocratic power. After all, this tiny drone may have failed, but it had belonged to a whole “swarm” tasked with the surveillance of their district. Inasmuch as the novel finds a borderless movement through magical and technological means as potential models for a post-national future, the novel also insists that this global mobility is still subject to technological regimes of power, even if these technologies operate beyond the nation-state. The persistence of drone technologies in this imagined future, I believe, tempers a naïvely optimistic reading of the novel that regards the liberating possibilities of digital technologies as viable, if not inevitable. The novel marks a stark rise in securitization infrastructures that are mobilized in response to the increasing movements of people around the globe. Although the novel clearly is invested in the capacities of communications media and “magical” infrastructures for creating new heterogenous collectives beyond the nation, Hamid portrays drone technologies as just as ubiquitous on the global stage as smartphones and the internet, so much so that he even comes to include such surveillance technologies in the novel’s own forms.

Although the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, as a surveillance technology and as a military weapon is widespread at our contemporary global juncture, humanities scholarship, and literary criticism in particular, has lagged behind in recognizing the impact of drones on narrative form. Barbara Harlow’s final, but unfinished book project, *The Drone Imprint: Literature in the Age of UAVs*, was intended to begin filling in this critical lacuna with regard to drones. Her preliminary notes attempted to concatenate an interdisciplinary archive, taking together novels and human

rights reports, films and law cases, as texts to be close-read, in order to "elucidate both what drone warfare is doing to problems of literary and cultural representation and how literary modes are being redeployed in the understanding of the phenomenology of the drone" (59).[55]Andrea Brady and Nathan Hensley have also responded to the drone's imprint upon the literary, including its transformation of poetic and narrative form. Brady, for example, explores the effect of drones on "perspective and relation" in lyric poetry, recognizing an aesthetic development in the age of the drone and global war (117). Hensley, on the other hand, surveys how the mediating capacities of drones signal a particular "regime of figuration, a way of seeing and […] a modality of thought" that impact narrative form (229).[56]

In the case of *Exit West*, drones and other surveillance technologies occupy integral positions in the novel's technological mediascape. Security platforms, surveillance cameras, and drones permeate the novel, transforming space and washing their digitally panoptic gaze over Saeed and Nadia and other refugees. Similar to the ways in which the internet creates modes of "being present without presence, drones "high above in the darkening sky" (Hamid 88) enact surveillance and threaten attack in a

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[55] Harlow's use of the phrase, "phenomenology of the drone," is found in the title of Nasser Hussain's piece, "The Sound of Terror: Phenomenology of a Drone Strike." Hussain's essay examines "both how the world appears through the lens of a drone camera and the experience of the people on the ground." In accounting for these widely disproportionate experiences of drone technologies, Hussain articulates an ethics and politics of the drone as a filmic or cinematic medium and of the drone as a weapon of terror. Drone strike footage has "entered our culture as fantasy" but has also entered regions of the world as weapons that induce "psychological trauma."

[56] To think about the drone's impact on literary and artistic forms, perhaps surprisingly, participates in the long history of aesthetic modernisms. Paul Virilio has highlighted how the theater of war infiltrates the cinematic theater in the twentieth century, illustrating how the weapons and visual technologies share a common lineage: "weapons are not just tools of destruction, but also perception" (6). Aerial bombing and modernist cinematic techniques would be the precursors to this type of drone-shaped narrative form of the contemporary novel.

way that renders the national military as continually present through technology while not being physically present. Further, if the presence of magic doors changes relationships to space, proximity, and mobility, so too do drones, as they transform physical and psychic modes of inhabitation. For example, as Hamid narrates, because of drone surveillance and drone strikes, "One's relationship to windows now changed in the city. A window was the border through which death was most likely to come" (71).[57] In addition to the lethal capacity of drones, drones are, according to Andrea Brady, "a technology of carceral surveillance and punishment, and like the prison[,] they manufacture self-policing subjects" (118). Hamid draws our attention to the self-policing that occurs under the panoptic gaze of drones: "Because of the flying robots high above in the darkening sky, unseen but never far from people's minds in those days, Saeed walked with a slight hunch, as though cringing a tad at the thought of the bomb or missile one of them might at any moment dispatch. By contrast, because she wanted not to appear guilty, Nadia walked tall" (88). Hamid uses his protagonists' dichotomous actions in response to the all-encompassing threats of drone surveillance and attacks not only as a method of novelistic characterization—Nadia's boldness a contrastive trait to Saeed's anxiousness—but also to show how movement patterns in this region are carefully tracked and traced.

[57] In the titular essay from *Discontent and Its Civilizations*, Hamid reflects on the precariousness of the window in his daughter's new room in Lahore: "it occurred to us that our daughter's windows faced in the direction of a main road. A hundred yards away were offices, shops, banks. The kinds of places sometimes attacked in our city. I decided to ask an architect friend whether I ought to consider blast-resistant film for my daughter's windows. Despite four generations of my family having lived in the same place, this was a question none of us had ever posed before" (156).

Characterized as "unseen but never far from people's minds in those days," drones structure the reality of those they surveil. As Nassar Hussain articulates in his essay, "The Phenomenology of a Drone Strike," the "experience of drone strikes from the ground cannot be understood as a singular moment […]. Because the drone can surveil the area for hours at a time, and because each round of surveillance may or may not result in a strike, the fear and anxiety among civilians is diffuse and chronic." The pervasive threat of drones induces psychological trauma. They inflict "mass terror upon entire populations" (Chamayou 45). As such, drones induce greater fears than more traditional modern warfare crafts: to quote from the novel, "Even more than the fighter planes and the tanks, these robots, few though they were, and the drones overhead, were frightening, because they suggested an unstoppable efficiency, an inhuman power, and evoked the kind of dread that a small mammal feels before a predator of an altogether different order, like a rodent before a snake" (154). The "unstoppable efficiency" and "inhuman power" of drones mark it as a technology of asymmetric warfare. What's important is that no matter where Saeed and Nadia go, they can never escape drone surveillance: at all times, "they could be seen by the lenses peering down on their city from the sky and from space" (93). In their home city, moments of "partial calm" are consistently "broken by the activities of drones and aircraft that bombed from the heavens, these networked machines for the most part invisible" (86). In Mykonos, the racialized camp is subject to the surveillance of a "communications satellite" (106), and in London, there are "drones and helicopters and surveillance balloons [that prowl] overhead" the racialized regions of dark London (146). Even in Marin, their simple dwelling is infiltrated by a "swarm" of

tiny drones. In each case, Hamid shows how drones function as the "militarised prosthetics of empire" (Pugliese 214) and how they function according to "an algorithm of racial distinction" (Allinson 114).

Drones in the novel don't just infiltrate the characters' lives, however. They also come to infiltrate the novel's forms. One particular vignette in the novel foregrounds the mediating frames of surveillance technologies like drones. It is important to note that this particular vignette occurs before Saeed and Nadia use one of the magic doors themselves because the scene offers the reader a portentous glimpse into what fate might await them. The vignette follows a family—"a mother, father, daughter, son" who emerge "from the complete blackness" of one of the magical doors (90). Hamid narratively positions their movement through digital feeds of various cameras: "On a security camera the family could be seen blinking in the sterile artificial light and recovering from their crossing" (91).[58] "After a brief interlude" where the family is apparently off-screen—from security

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[58] Hamid had experimented earlier in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* with narrative techniques that foregrounded technological perspectives. For example, when he writes of the protagonist playing a game with his sister involving a local sewer, Hamid elevates the novel's perspective to a higher spatial and technological plane: "Viewing the scene from the lenses of an orbiting reconnaissance satellite, an observer would see two children behaving peculiarly. He or she would note that they display undue caution in approaching the sewer, as if it were not a trickle of excrement of varying viscosity but rather a gushing torrent" (27). Another passage in the novel insists again on this elevated and technologically mediated narrative perspective: "Atop the bank's skyscraping offices are blinking lights meant to ward off passing aircraft, lights that glow serenely, high above the city. Below, as seen through helipad security cameras, parts of the metropolis are in darkness, electricity shortages meaning that the illumination of entire areas is turned off on a rotating basis, usually but not always on the hour, and in these inky patches, at this late time, little can be seen, just the odd building with its own generator, the bright headlamp-lit artery of a main road, or, on a winding side street, so faint as possibly to be imagined, the red-tracer swerve of a lone motorcycle seeking to avoid some danger unknown" (173). In both of these passages, Hamid dilates the novel's point of view, adopting the mechanized vision of a "reconnaissance satellite" and "helipad security cameras" in order to attempt to capture the action of individuals below. Importantly, however, inasmuch as the technological gaze of these cameras assume control of the narrative, Hamid points out the limits to their ability to see clearly. After all, the "reconnaissance satellite" is unable to read the children as playing, and "little can be seen" in the darkened metropolis.

camera feeds and from the novel's narrative—"the family was picked up again by a second camera" (91). Although the narrative does not supply this family with dialogue, and although "the feed lacked audio input," as Hamid describes it, the feed "was of sufficient resolution that lip-reading software could identify their language as Tamil" (91). Surveilling software provides the novel's omniscience, lip-reading algorithms its identifying tags.

As the family gets their bearings and open another door to a beach in Dubai, "sunlight overwhelm[s] the sensitivity of the image sensor and the four figures seemed to become thinner, insubstantial, lost in an aura of whiteness" (91). The capacities of the recording device are destabilized by the light, and the family become spectral figures, "thinner" and "insubstantial." This spectralization is not incidental. As Hussain has argued, drone strike footage often appears as a "ghostly world in which the figures seem unalive, even before they are killed." The Tamil family, captured in the gaze of the surveilling technology, seem "unalive." The subjects on screen are, in other words, already captured or already dead in the eyes of the viewer, making them not entirely human. Furthermore, the family's "aura of whiteness" contrasts with the "complete blackness" from which they had emerged, and operates through the novel's binary forms of light and dark.

As the family steps into this new world, the novel multiplies its perspectival gaze, indicating that the family "could be seen at multiple angles" and "were at that moment simultaneously captured on three exterior surveillance feeds" (92). The family also become "visible in the camera feeds of various tourists' selfie-taking mobile phones"

(92). That the family can be seen in the cameras of “selfie-taking” tourists provides a useful reminder that phones are contemporary surveillance technologies in and of themselves. Their potential for global connection is also a potential for global hacking, tracking, and surveilling. As the vignette continues, Hamid heightens the trajectory of recording devices that capture them, concluding with “small quadcopter drone [which is] hovering fifty meters above them,” and which silently has them in its sights (92). Here we see what Roger Stahl calls “drone vision”— “a special kind of looking, one that is able to project a surveillant gaze while conspicuously prohibiting its own exposure” (663). Hamid accounts for the transmission of this drone vision to military personnel, as it is simultaneously “relaying its feed to a central monitoring station and also to two different security vehicles” (92). The camera angle of the drone is an overhead shot, and as Hussain contends in his account of drones and filmic techniques, “By definition, the overhead shot excludes the shot/reverse shot, the series of frontal angles and edits that make up face-to-face dialogue. With the overhead shot, there is no possibility of returning the gaze. The overhead shot neither invites nor permits participation in its visual economy. It is the filmic cognate of asymmetric war.”[59]

The affordances of the drone’s bird’s-eye view stem from a long history of imperialist frames that bifurcate the world into rightful citizens and policeable targets. In the novel, after the drone feed alerts security officers of the migrants presence and their first tentative forays into the Dubai sunlight, a pair of “uniformed men” (91) quickly and

[59] This failure of reciprocating the gaze, of course, precludes the type of ethics and ethical politics of Emmanuel Levinas and Judith Butler.

efficiently intervene. The family is "intercepted and led away, apparently bewildered, or overawed, for they held hands and did not resist or scatter or run" (92). Caught in this constellation of surveilling technologies, the migrant family are rendered as objects, as policeable targets. The security officers identify and locate the "enemy" in their midst through the labor of detection, demonstrating the intensive use of technologies that combine aerial video surveillance, facial recognition software, and cartographic tracking to police mobile bodies. Gregoire Chamayou reminds us that "the main objectives of […] continuous surveillance devices is not so much to tail individuals already known, but rather to spot the emergence of suspect elements based on their unusual behavior" (42). Because, as Chamayou has argued, the "political rationale that underlies" new global regimes of defense is "based on the preventative elimination of dangerous individuals," these officers become representative of the vast campaigns of extrajudiciary capture and execution that occur every day around the world. The Tamil family is subject to behavioral pattern analysis, and their behavior on screen apparently fits the profile of "dangerous migrant." The family, as Hamid shows them, are not dangerous terrorists, but that is not how the optical surveillance technologies perceive them. Hamid's rendering highlights the central irony of such securitization: the attempt to "secure" those who are already secure renders dangerous those who are the most vulnerable.

In this vignette, Hamid insists on bringing into focus not only the movement of a refugee family who has emigrated via magical doors, but also, and more resolutely I might add, the technologies of seeing and recording themselves. In this vignette, the novel acknowledges its own medial capacities, its own surveilling possibilities.

Technologies create new ways of seeing, and so the security footage and drone feed produce new points-of-view, new perspectives, and new possibilities for literary representation. Hamid illustrates the degree to which the world around us has become increasingly mediated through surveillance cameras and mobile phones, and as such, the digital vision of the various camera feeds becomes part of the novel's formal and aesthetic development. If drones radicalize a way of viewing, seeing, and being seen, Hamid's novel, through its propensity for recording images and scenes from multiple vantage points, achieves a similar aesthetic orientation.

In this, Hamid risks a potential complicity by reproducing and formalizing the voyeuristic surveilling capacities of the drone. However, his aesthetic replication of the drone's perspective does not enact the prosthetic violence of drones themselves. He redeploys the drone's recording techniques in order to show how human life exceeds the phenomenological bounds of the drone's camera. Whereas the surveillance of the drone merely sees the family as policeable targets, as migrant criminals, the novel focuses on the minutiae of the family's actions in a way that humanizes them. For example, Hamid describes the mother's anxious gaze with others in their new environment: "repeatedly making eye contact with the women she passed and then immediately glancing down" (92). Hamid also describes the daughter through what and how she sees the world around her: "staring at skydivers who were hurtling towards a nearby pier and pulling up at the last moment and landing at a sprint" (92-3). Although brief, these descriptions enlist the family as active participants in the scene's visual economy. The mother seeks connection, affiliation, with other women, while the daughter stares unflinchingly at skydivers who

clearly resemble missile projectiles. If Hamid's narrative perspectives risk replicating the violent function of drone surveillance, he ensures that the refugee subjects of this panoptic technology possess the capacity to look back, to return the gaze.

This is true of the novel on the whole. Rather than objects on a screen, the refugee communities, of which Saeed and Nadia are a part, are presented in their full human dimensions, deserving of the securities and provisions afforded to the global "haves" by infrastructure. Further, because the novel possesses a penchant for drawing attention to global simultaneity, to happenings going on elsewhere in a shared present, our very act of reading the novel becomes implicated in an attention economy that demands reckoning with the ways new technologies structure reality disproportionately around the globe. The novel, altogether, asks us to think about who we see and how we see them. It asks us to think about the role mediating technologies have in framing these ways of seeing others. And most importantly, it asks us to see beyond these frames.

# Coda

## "It will find a shape": Networked Forms and the Semiotics of Infrastructure

I want to close this dissertation by addressing briefly a preoccupation with meaning-making through infrastructure in two novels—Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and Tom McCarthy's *Satin Island*. I believe these novels will expand our understanding of how to "read infrastructurally." As novels caught up with symbols, ciphers, frames, and contexts that don't cohere, *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Satin Island* find in infrastructural networks the circulations of possible meanings, a material and medial circuitry connected to other sign systems. Reading these novels together, I believe, will help us think through and think further about the aesthetic and social forms of infrastructure and the literary. Let us recall that what Brian Larkin calls "the poetics of infrastructure" means "being alive to the formal dimensions of infrastructures, understanding what sort of semiotic objects they are, and determining how they address and constitute subjects" (329). Writers like Pynchon and McCarthy, I believe, are well attuned to this idea of the poetics of infrastructures.

Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* has been heralded for decades as *the* paradigmatic postmodern novel and one of the first major novels about postmodern media societies. As John Johnston has written, "The opening pages of *The Crying of Lot 49* assume a world interconnected – indeed, saturated – by mass communications media: the postal system, television, cinema, radio, magazines, Muzak, shopping malls, freeways, and automobiles" (38). At the beginning of the second chapter of Pynchon's novel, we begin to see this media—or infrastructural—saturation when Oedipa Maas

drives to the fictional city of San Narciso in Southern California, where she has been asked to execute the will of her late ex-lover Pierce. "Like many named places in California," Pynchon writes, San Narciso "was less an identifiable city than a grouping of concepts—census tracts, special purpose bond-issue districts, shopping nuclei, all overlaid with access roads to its own freeway" (13). Sprawling and radiating in multiple directions around absent centers, these freeways and access roads serve as material networks that operate through their connective power. They produce defined patterns for interconnection and exchange, patterns that, in formal terms, come to organize social, material, and aesthetic experience, and produce the very idea of a city. From Oedipa's vantage point on the interstate overpass—a location similar to Yamashita's Manzanar Murakami—the freeway's ability to forge a "grouping of concepts" into San Narciso below becomes foundational for her conceptualization of how other formal elements link up in larger and different formations throughout the novel, including the potential existence of a secret underground mail system, W.A.S.T.E., connected to the possible existence of an anarchic order known as Trystero.

From the freeway, she likens her vision of the city below to the first time she sees a circuit card in a transistor radio, a comparison that layers two media technologies that transform the experience of space and distance:

> The ordered swirl of houses and streets, from this high angle, sprang at her now with the same unexpected clarity as the circuit card had. Though she knew even less about radios than about Southern Californians, there were to both outward patterns a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of an intent to communicate. There'd seemed no limit to what the printed circuit could have told her […]; so in her first minute of San Narciso, a revelation also trembled just past the threshold of her understanding. […] she and the Chevy seemed parked at the centre of an

> odd, religious instant. As if, on some other frequency, […] words were being spoken. (14)

Pynchon layers her experience of the infrastructure of the freeway and the roads below with a previous experience with a transistor radio and its "hieroglyphic" circuit card, in order to elaborate a chain of association between these infrastructural technologies. Although familiar to us today, transistor radios and the elaborate freeway systems of Southern California—as we learned from Yamashita—were developed largely during the postwar era and would have been emblematic of how quickly the world was being transformed by infrastructural technological development. However, the historical development of these freeways, and specifically the forms of dispossession and displacement that arise from them, is less important for Pynchon, than is their mediation and potential signification. No wonder then that there is an air of mystery around their potential as conveyors of meaning for Oedipa, even if that meaning remains beyond her grasp, a revelation "trembl[ing] just past the threshold of her understanding."

The novel is ultimately about this bigger, but ungraspable meaning, some way of comprehending the world in its networked totality, that Oedipa seeks to uncover through infrastructural systems. We might even say that the forms and patterns of the circuit card and the freeways themselves come to resemble the form of the novel. Like the freeway system that connects places and people around a "grouping of concepts," and like a transistor radio that works through its "intent to communicate," the novel gives us a proliferation of networks that are always already interconnected in the process of facilitating greater forms of signification. It is by no coincidence that Oedipa's flashes of revelation often occur in infrastructural spaces. Roads, telecommunications technologies,

postal systems, waste services, and mass media networks are the locations where Oedipa experiences her paranoid revelations about the Trystero. Within these infrastructural spaces, Oedipa believes she can see what others have been taking for granted. In that regard, she is an "infrastructuralist," attempting to make visible the meaning of networks that are often overlooked. However—and this is the novel's main conceit—Oedipa's flashes of insight fail to coalesce into a meaningful whole; instead they point to the endless proliferation of semiotic possibilities that innervate the material and medial systems of the urban world.

While these formal systems fail to produce some grand vision or affirm Oedipa's widening conspiracy theories, these infrastructural systems become medial sites through and upon which to reveal the mediality of the novel form itself. The reader, like Oedipa, desires to decode the intersecting networks, but such a process is "like walking among matrices of a great digital computer, the zeroes and ones twinned above, hanging like balanced mobiles right and left, ahead, thick, maybe endless" (136). The signs we read, like the ones and zeroes of binary code, could be something or they could be nothing. Or put another way by Pynchon, "Behind the hieroglyphic streets there would either be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth" (136). Either the infrastructures in the novel possess a "transcendent meaning" to be unlocked and linked to vast conspiracies with deeply conflicted histories and uses, or they are just material infrastructures, just roads, bathrooms, and postal and sanitation services.

Pynchon's invocation of the world as a "great digital computer" inflected by algorithms and binary codes serves as a useful point to pivot to Tom McCarthy's novel

*Satin Island*. Many of McCarthy's novels attempt to think through contemporary issues in relation to infrastructure, but his 2015 novel offers some of his most sustained and focused attention to infrastructure in a digital age. The novel imagines the futility of meaning-making through material and medial networks from a position slightly different than Pynchon's Oedipa Maas. Whereas Oedipa is increasingly implicated in large scale conspiracy systems through quotidian encounters with the infrastructural networks of the everyday, trying to discover or uncover meaning, the corporate anthropologist narrator of *Satin Island*, cleverly and simply dubbed U., tries to give shape to the meaning of everything by formalizing it through infrastructure. The difference lies in the location of meaning. Oedipa tries to find it, while the narrator U. attempts to create it. Or as he himself puts it: "my job was to put meaning *in* the world, not take from it" (34).

Working for an unnamed corporation, U. is tasked with the impossible job of writing the "Great Report," a document that would simultaneously capture and produce the meaning of life in a contemporary age. The narrator envisions his anthropological work as akin to that of an infrastructural laborer: "I would picture myself like those men who go out and repair the roads, or check the points and switches on the railway tracks, or carry out a range of covert tasks that go unnoticed by the populace-at-large, but on which the latter's well-being, even survival, is dependent" (34). Although little to no writing of the "Great Report" happens in the novel, the narrator's main attempts are to find a form suitable to the task. His constant refrains to his boss about the status of the report are "it's finding its form" (39) and "it will find its shape" (63). The narrator looks to infrastructural networks as presenting formal patterns for his potential writing.

Analyzing traffic patterns, energy grids, digital information systems, and waste services, the narrator tries to find the forms most useful for encapsulating the infinite interconnections of the world. He seeks out in the patterns of quotidian objects and systems "some kind of infrastructural master-meaning" (28). Rather than trying to find meaning beyond these systems, he looks to their formal and aesthetic patterns as the meaning itself. For example, while watching a livestream video of a traffic jam unfolding in Lagos, U. identifies formal patterns created by "[c]hains of buses," merging cars, and the people in between them. Within these patterns he sees not only the basis of aesthetic creation—"The whole city's like a painting, painting itself as you watch"—but also the basis of life itself—"it looked like those helix-maps of DNA" (27). Traffic jams and other infrastructural systems provide for U. flashes of insight into the possible shapes and forms for creating the "Great Report."

As with Oedipa, however, U. is unable to wield these insights to produce a singular total report. Ultimately, like Pynchon, McCarthy derives a postmodern futility of meaning-making from the contingent and elusive semiotics of the material and medial world and its networks. The "Great Report," U. comes to realize, "was un-plottable, un-frameable, un-realizable: in short, and in whatever medium or media, *un-writeable*" (126). However, later, he recognizes the potential for a posthuman conception of the Great Report: "the truly terrifying thought wasn't that the Great Report might be un-writeable, but—quite the opposite—that it had *already been written*. Not by a person, but simply by a neutral and indifferent binary system: some auto-alphaing and auto-omegating script—that that's what it *was*. And that we, far from being its authors, or its

operators, or even its slaves were no more than actions and commands within its key-chains" (133-4). "But who could read it?," the narrator asks. "From what angle, vantage-point or platform could it be viewed, surveyed, interpreted? None, of course. Only another piece of software could do that" (134). U. ultimately gives up on completing the Great Report, because he realizes that any totalized account of the world would be unreadable in humanist terms: the large data sets and algorithmic processes that record and describe reality are meant to be both written and read by machines, not by humans.

On the cover of *Satin Island*, there is a list of crossed off subtitles that function as genre classifications. Among those crossed off are "A Report," "A Treatise," "A Manifesto," and "An Essay." Left unscathed is "A Novel." The novel, I have argued, is a communicative genre and aesthetic form up to the task of giving narrative shape to various networked infrastructures and their histories. It is itself a system, a network. If the world is networked by infrastructure, thick with technical layers and strata that speak to and beyond the idea of the human condition, writers like Joyce, Faulkner, Yamashita, and Hamid, as well as Pynchon and McCarthy, attempt to formalize these networked relations. They ask us to read novels differently—they ask us to read infrastructurally. In the time from Joyce to McCarthy, the status of the novel and of the novelist has continued to transform. Joyce was an artist-engineer, but elsewhere, as McCarthy has written, "if James Joyce were alive today he'd be working for Google" ("The Death of Writing"). The novel itself has become an imaginary counterpart to the technologies of infrastructure, an aesthetic vehicle or form that shapes and constrains what types of action, affiliation, communication, and even meaning are possible.

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