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Travel literature and the infrastructural unconscious

Critical approaches to travel writing have tended to overlook the mundane, everyday infrastructures at work in the background of mobile lives, from the roads and tunnels guiding human movement, to the networks of electric cables and pipelines channeling flows of energy and information. For many in the industrialized world, infrastructure has come to form a Lukácsian ‘second nature’ that remains invisible due to its sheer ubiquity; for this reason, the spaces and technologies that facilitate movement in travel narratives often go unnoticed.¹

In recent years, however, there have been signs of a growing interest in infrastructure as a framework for literary interpretation. Michael Rubenstein’s study of public utilities in literary modernism, for example, and his use of the term ‘infrastructuralism’ in particular, have brought literary form and material culture together in a novel way, inviting further examination of the relationship between fiction and socio-political questions of distribution and public works.² There are also implications for literary studies in Nigel Thrift’s characterization of infrastructure as a paratextual force, which although naturalized and rendered invisible over time, becomes tangible in moments of interruption, accident or failure.³ In moments when infrastructure becomes the object of focus in literature, critics have noted the appearance of self-conscious sites of mediation which situate the text within larger social and communicational assemblages.⁴ In this way, the literary intrusion of infrastructures that facilitate the process of travel writing – from the telecommunication lines necessary for sending out copy, to the national and institutional affiliations required for legal travel across borders – can expose the wider networks and uneven circuits within which literary practice is situated. The textual incursion of these hidden mechanisms as the return of the repressed ‘infrastructural unconscious’ might then admit the solidity of the objects, institutions, technologies and labour through which mobility (and, by extension, travel writing) is made possible.

This essay explores infrastructural readings of modernist travel texts in the interwar years, following major advances in transportation and communications technology. In this context it considers the points of intersection between interwar representations of infrastructure and modernist techniques of collage, shock and fragmentation, taking its cue from Walter Benjamin’s understanding of the radical possibilities of ‘structures that convey and connect’ – both in the formal sense of modernist methods of juxtaposition, and in their literal relation to the built structures and passageways extending outwards from the urban centre.⁵ By inscribing technologies of connection onto the textual landscape, modernist travel literature prompts a reevaluation of the underlying assumptions by which spaces are represented, as for example locations of otherness, nature and interiority. From an object-oriented perspective, such moments of connectivity problematize conceptions of the authentic or private ‘elsewhere’, and re-situate individual journeys within material and shared social worlds. The infrastructural unconscious as it emerges in modernist and post-romantic imaginaries, then, can be seen to offer new critical possibilities for reading travel narratives.

Theorizing infrastructure

As the driving circulatory and connective forces of modernity, infrastructures operate as complex assemblages, channeling flows of energy, goods, people and information across shrinking distances. The nineteenth century saw the development of a range of modern infrastructures, including the electric telegram, national postal services, advanced circulatory systems for water and sewage, the railway, the telephone, the automotive industry, and early aviation, among others.⁶ Yet the modern forms of mobility enabled by such technologies remain dependent on what Urry defines as interdependent, material and ‘immobile’ platforms: the ‘machine ensemble’ of a railway, for example, consists of the stationary assemblages of tracks, transmitters, garages and operating systems, as well as the socio-legal and financial infrastructures of government grants, national regulations, corporate sponsorships, permits and laws.⁷ These circuits would become increasingly global through the diffusion of modern technology, yet, as Bruno Latour points out, they have always been locally embedded:

Is a railroad local or global? Neither. It is local at all points, since you always find sleepers and railroad workers, and you have stations and automatic ticket machines scattered along the way. Yet it is global, since it takes you from Madrid to Berlin or from Brest to Vladivostok... There are continuous paths that lead from the local to the global... only so long as the branch lines are paid for.⁸

For Latour, global networks are comprised of a range of knots, fixtures and plug-in points, with access determined by local and economic factors. Latour’s reference to maintenance workers, moreover, underscores the continued requirement of living labour for securing mobility. Likewise for Urry and Anthony Elliott, ‘mobile lives’ depend on those lives that are relatively immobile – those who are in effect ‘immobilized by the mobility of others.’⁹ Understood in this way, mobility becomes contingent on a person’s networked access to infrastructure and documentation – or in Urry’s terms, ‘network capital’.¹⁰ Yet despite the determining impact of networks on human movement, Urry has identified a tendency for scholars to focus on ‘subjects interacting together’ at the expense of the ‘infrastructures of social life’.¹¹ Rather than defining a journey by the personal choices and desires of the traveller, Urry suggests we view mobility as a collective phenomenon that is dependent on vast and often intangible infrastructural systems. In the humanities, the dynamics of network capital have often been overshadowed by the privileging of subject-centred movements and cross-cultural encounters. This trend overlooks the importance of infrastructural processes to the production of travel texts as well as their presence in the text itself. In doing so, it risks neglecting the significance of numerous factors integral to the production of travel writing, such as linguistic and cultural resources, access to international publishing channels, literary agents, photographers and typists, support systems of hosts, drivers and tour-guides, and legal, economic and diplomatic structures of access.

If there is a tendency to privilege individual mobility over the mundane spaces of infrastructure, this partly reflects the latter’s entanglement within complex relations of power. The sheer banality of turning on a tap or a light switch attests to the normalization of the mechanisms by which everyday life is sustained in modern society. Infrastructures naturalize uneven geographies of power, rendering distant the sources of power or energy, and concealing the social relations that determine how and to where they are channeled. The geopolitical uses of infrastructure in relation to

state planning and surveillance have also been widely noted.¹² Interpretations of infrastructure as instruments of state power were foregrounded by Henri Lefebvre and Giles Deleuze, among others, who viewed these systems as essential to the top-down management and coordination of movement by the state.¹³ Such analyses often invoke the example of Baron Haussmann's renovation of Paris, in which new transport technologies enabled the reorganization of urban space in line with financial and military-logistical imperatives, while also instantiating new public spaces and codes of behavior. In Haussmann's Paris, sewage began to flow under the streets of the metropolis, gas and electric lamps extended working hours, and wide boulevards and thoroughfares linked the city to the increasingly interdependent matrix of the global economy.¹⁴ More recently, studies have situated the discussion of infrastructure and power within the context of the accelerating privatization of public utilities and energy sectors, moving towards an analysis of the neoliberal, corporate and globalizing forces that threaten to enclose the infrastructural 'commons'.¹⁵

One major aspect of the relation between infrastructure and urban regimes of power concerns its ability to shape representations of space. Thus Lefebvre has insisted that just as the state manages physical space by mapping, modifying and transforming the networks and circuits established within it, so it also influences social representations of space. Crucially, in the late 19th and early 20th century the city's networks of roads, tunnels and railroads, which led outwards to the nation and empire, became optic lenses through which both rural and colonial space could be imagined as a natural resource, commodity, or aesthetic landscape.¹⁶ From their earliest development, infrastructures have generated spatial meanings that transform nature and, in Heidegger's terms, 'enframe' the world.¹⁷

Literary infrastructures

The invisibility of infrastructures in travel writing allows for imaginary constructions of other spaces, for example as underdeveloped regions not yet 'civilized', or natural refuges for aesthetic (and sometimes touristic) enjoyment. The modernist imaginary might then be seen as an important corrective to colonial and romantic modes of observation, particularly as it thematizes urban life. In Maud Ellmann's *The Nets of Modernism* (2010), for example, the networked environment of urban modernity is read through the invasion of private homes by public utilities; these, Ellmann claims, create uncontrollable relations of dependency that threaten to 'reduce the human subject to a knot or intersection' within the webs of communication and capital.¹⁸ The response to this new urban condition in modernist aesthetics is manifest in conventions from the fragmented self to the negation of realist objectivity; at the same time, more overt celebrations of technologies like the automobile or train can be found in aesthetic movements such as Cubism, Futurism and Imagism. Infrastructures thus helped to fuel modernism's sense of combustive energy, as well the material networks, publishing circuits and cosmopolitan mobilities of modernist literary production.

Yet for many modernists writing after the First World War, who had witnessed the devastating consequences of imperialist rivalry and the destructive uses to which modern technology had been put, infrastructures came to symbolize a mechanistic and dehumanized modern existence. With the wartime nationalization of the railways in Britain and the use of telegraphic and radio technologies for state propaganda, mobility systems lost some of their futurist credibility as vehicles for

emancipation: no longer could the experiences of speed and time-space compression celebrated by a previous generation be detached from the atrocities of war.¹⁹ Within this context, Paul Fussell has identified a resurgence of post-romantic ‘escapism’ in the writings of interwar travellers such as D. H. Lawrence, Robert Byron, Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene.²⁰ In many of their works, postwar fears about the polluting and homogenizing forces of industry are translated into rejections of infrastructure along romanticist and vitalist lines. For Lawrence, the railways, coalmines and electric cables of Britain’s modern landscape were the products of an inhuman industrial system, which he felt had transformed the country into something ‘man-made’.²¹ In his writing, the technologies of speed so revered by earlier generations become channels of domination – symbolizing the mechanisms of war, bureaucracy and commerce to which only ‘primitive’ landscapes could provide an antidote. Hence at the beginning of *Sea and Sardinia*, Lawrence envisages sea travel as freedom from ‘the hemmed-in life – the horror of human tension, the absolute insanity of machine persistence. The agony which a train is to me’.²² In lyrical moments, Lawrence favours slower and traditional modes of passage, preferring ‘spontaneous’ bursts of movement to rigid or planned trajectories. Similarly, Greene and Ford Madox Ford expressed their antipathy of the state interference that inhibited spontaneous movement, protesting against the social infrastructures of passports, customs officials and border patrols and attempting to travel ‘off the map’.²³

The imaginative attempt to travel beyond what Lawrence called the ‘circuit of civilization’ is indicative of a post-romantic opposition to what might be termed ‘infrastructural modernity’: the condition shaping the contours of social life through new mobility networks and circuits of communication as they expanded across the globe.²⁴ As Fussell and David Farley have shown, it was during the ‘golden age’ of interwar travel that movement was in fact checked by the implementation of passports, visa regulations and other bureaucratic restrictions.²⁵ The desire for a space ‘outside’ infrastructural modernity thus found a new urgency. While some critics of travel writing have been content to explore the aesthetic or ethical potential of the desire for an escape, there has been less emphasis on the political implications of romantic dismissals of ‘unspontaneous’ forms of organization and public planning. In the interwar period, many writers who were pessimistic about socialist movements in Europe saw mass transport and public utilities not as revolutionary, utopian or democratic, but as symptomatic of a crass commercial ‘herd’ culture. In the work of individualists like Waugh and Lawrence, the spaces engendered by public transport are often the stage for class antagonisms and critique of the bland homogeneity of democracy and socialism. Yet, ironically, these negative associations are sometimes reversed in their travel writing. Despite claiming in *Waugh in Abyssinia* that ‘a main road in England is a foul and destructive thing, carrying the ravages of barbarism into a civilised land’, Waugh was supportive of the construction of roads in colonial Ethiopia, admiring the way they brought ‘order and fertility’ to the landscape.²⁶ Lawrence similarly set aside his disdain for British roads when admiring the Italians’ ability under Mussolini to chisel highways into the mountainsides. In this way, representations of infrastructure can serve specific, and sometimes reactionary, political agendas. Moreover, in their general tendency to privilege spontaneous or vitalistic forms of ‘flight’, such writers risk divorcing their authorial (and ‘private’) sense of mobility from the collective, institutional infrastructures of the postwar world. As I will demonstrate, however, the cracks and fissures of this process are exposed in modernist flashes of visibility. Such moments within travel texts work to

‘make visible the visible’, illuminating the infrastructural relations of power on which modern forms of mobility are predicated.²⁷

The infrastructural unconscious

Lawrence’s 1921 *Sea and Sardinia* begins with an exuberant celebration of kinesis at sea, in which the sense of ‘never-ending space as one moves in flight’ is contrasted with the ‘inertia’ of *terra firma*. Delighting in the motion of the sea and the fluid, inexhaustible sense of space that it offers (‘the motion of freedom’, 30), Lawrence contrasts the mapped and chartered nature of terrestrial space with the smooth, ‘unknowable’ realm of the oceanic. Here, a contrast between depth and surface is imagined through the distinction between boundless ‘elemental space’ and the ‘fixed’ surface layer of infrastructure – described in *Mornings in Mexico* as ‘the curious film which railroads, ships, motor-cars stretch over the surface of the whole earth’.²⁸ Significantly, the infrastructural coordination of space is viewed as subject to a narrow rationalism, with Lawrence preferring to embrace an ideal of spontaneous and chaotic movement amid the ‘waving, tremulous’ pulsations of the sea. This aesthetic is explicitly connected to his literary work, which rejects ‘hard, stupid fixity’ and directional purpose in favour of creative, perpetual flux.²⁹ As both style and personal philosophy, this aesthetic of mobility has inspired Deleuzian interpretations and numerous poststructuralist readings of language and identity in Lawrence’s work in recent years.³⁰

At the level of form, however, a conflict can be seen to emerge through the juxtaposition of lyrical moments of poetic flight with the encroachment of infrastructure; in this way, *Sea and Sardinia* stages a series of tensions between the ‘sea’ (as mobility-aesthetic) and ‘Sardinia’ (as postwar, infrastructuralized terrain). Lawrence’s representation of the ocean as a locus of ‘empty’, ‘humanless’ and natural space is severed from the social and technological realms in a self-consciously problematic way. It is interesting therefore that the critical approaches which focus on Lawrentian themes of movement, flow or ‘restlessness’ have neglected the fact that many of his imaginative reveries are in fact punctuated by moments of infrastructural awareness. On board the steamer, the soaring of the narrator’s poetic voice is abruptly grounded by the intrusion of the ship’s carpenter, who breaks the spell by relating his bitter experience of the war. Similarly celebratory or meditative moments in the text dissolve with the appearance of stewards, cooks, waiters, cleaners, engineers, officials and stationmasters, many of whom Lawrence irritably dismisses as ‘bluebottles’ and ‘mosquitoes’. This contributes to a highly unstable, almost schizophrenic narrative, which oscillates between euphoric contemplations of personal mobility and frustration with the mechanics of the journey itself. Similar discrepancies emerge between descriptions of breathtaking visuals from the windows of trains and buses, and the social antagonisms staged *within* the spaces of modern transport – the breaching of class compartments, the hostility of crew members and the international divisions between tourists, for example, constitute persistent sources of irritation for Lawrence throughout his journey. Enraged responses to the absence or failure of telegraph and postal services, transport and other modern conveniences and commodities are also often comically interposed between grand, romantic renunciations of modern trappings. When Lawrence stumbles upon a ‘public lavatory’ in the side-roads of Sorgano, he fumes ‘Why bother about privacy?’ (94):

‘I cursed the degenerate aborigines... the sordid villagers who had the baseness to squat their beastly human nastiness in this upland valley. All my praise of the long stocking-cap – you remember? – vanished from my mouth.’ (96)

Lawrence claims that his sense of privacy has been effaced by the sordid and ‘beastly’ spectacle of human waste: here, the absence of smooth-running public infrastructures beneath the ground’s surface – when this absence is felt – works to self-consciously undermine his earlier idealization of rural life.

The specifically political nature of many of these interruptions (the carpenter’s experience of the war mentioned above, for example) negates the liberating aesthetic possibilities of mobility by forcing the social context of a turbulent postwar Italy into view. In many ways, the travelogue stages the politics of encounter between a newly mobile, English-speaking creative class and those Southern Europeans ‘immobilized’ by the postwar economic and political climate. A Sardinian driver on the return stretch, for example, harasses Lawrence for information on passports:

When are we going to London? And are there many motor-cars in England?—many, many? In America too? Do they want men in America? I say no, they have unemployment out there: they are going to stop immigration in April... already the Italian government will give no more passports for America – to emigrants. No passports? then you can’t go? You can’t go, say I. (151)

In unresolved moments such as these, the spectre of immobility haunts celebrations of personal mobility. The subject of legal and financial infrastructure, in particular, provokes frequent arguments among passengers, and the fraught subject of the British exchange rate (which even occupies the final, deleted lines of the book³¹) operates as an uncomfortable reminder of national privilege, unsettling the author’s self-proclaimed identity as a ‘wandering soul’.³² In addition to the frequent currency conversions and references to the British Pound, allusions to British steel and coal on board the steamer also serve to undermine characterizations of Sardinia as ‘outside’ of western modernity, revealing it as a space already enmeshed within the web of postwar commodity markets. Ambivalent representations of technical infrastructures, commodity chains and financial flows, in this way, draw attention to the national and imperial undercurrents that interlink ostensibly distant spaces. The emphasis on fluidity and flight at the beginning of the journey can be seen to contribute to an ideological naturalization of mobility for Lawrence. Yet the irruption of an infrastructural unconscious throughout the text politicizes this sense of mobility, exposing the collective, socio-technical infrastructures on which it depends.

This politicizing function is further exemplified in Robert Byron’s *The Road to Oxiana*, a collage of fragments from a journey taken through Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan between 1933 and 1934. While ancient Byzantine and nomadic cultures may appear to constitute the book’s central preoccupation (and have certainly preoccupied its reviewers and critics), Byron’s narrative is further characterized throughout by its attentiveness to infrastructural development in the region. The landscapes of Persia and Mesopotamia are observed from the windows of cars and gas-fuelled lorries, buses and speedboats; scenes are interlaced by new telegraph wires, cables, canal systems and oil pipelines; and journeys are transformed by the rapid construction of new roads, bridges, tunnels and railways. The narrative sustains frequent disruptions from bureaucratic obstacles, technical difficulties and political insurgencies along the way, detailing frictions with customs officials, road

superintendents, policemen, escorts, guards and drivers, and the experience of arrests, charges of espionage, legal restrictions and impassable frontiers. The ‘collision’ between ‘momentum and immobility’ (terms used by Byron in the final lines of the travelogue) is enacted in the initial collage of snapshots detailing forced mobilities and immobile lives – from Jewish refugees fleeing Germany, to a Boer War veteran ‘shot in the legs’, a child screaming ‘I’m a motor-car’ and then howling with disappointment when the motorcar drives away, a political exile taken away by aeroplane against his will, and the suicide of a former servant on an English yacht (‘determined, if he could, to save enough money to take him to America’).³³

At the level of form, infrastructures function as interruptive gestures. On the way to Kabul, for example, Byron describes a peaceful scene of village life:

The valleys grew richer. Groves of walnuts stood about the villages, where Indian merchants in tight gray turbans were sitting in their shops. And then, like a blow in the face, came the Charikar iron bridge. (319)

Technical mishaps produce similar interruptions: on the final stretch, Byron narrates break-downs, collapsed bridges, lorries falling into rivers, faulty telephone lines and flooded roads, which attest to the sheer scale of the transformations taking place as well as to their inherent vulnerability. Such moments of dissonance, interspersed among lengthy descriptions of Islamic architecture, awaken us to this developmental frenzy within the contexts of domestic militarism, inter-regional competition and the geopolitics being played out between Britain, France, Germany and Russia.³⁴

Byron gestures more specifically to the colonial implications of infrastructural development, and the final description of Peshawar is worth quoting at length:

The tracks of middle Asia, the single telephone wire on its stunted wooden posts, give place to communications of Roman exuberance. Not one, but two graded roads wind up and down the length of the defile: the one of asphalt, as smooth as Piccadilly and flanked by low battlements; the other, its predecessor, abandoned to camels, but still such a highway as we had not seen since Damascus. Intertwined with these comes a third and larger thoroughfare, a railway, leading to the head of the pass and soon to extend beyond it, glinting from tunnel to tunnel, whose black mouths, framed in pylons of red masonry, recede into the savage grey distance. Roads and railway are embanked on shelves of hewn stone linking mountain to mountain; iron viaducts carry them across the valleys and each other. Sheaves of telephone wires fastened to metal posts by gleaming white insulators... and milestones proclaiming, at intervals of thirty yards, that the distance... has decreased. (329-30)

Here, Byron imaginatively fuses the infrastructures shaping the Central Asian landscape with the roads of an older empire, constructing literal as well as metaphorical linkages to British interests, as in ‘smooth as Piccadilly’. Significantly, this description ends with the conclusion that ‘if the English must be bothered to defend India, it shall be with a minimal of personal inconvenience... It was the spectacle of common sense that thrilled us’ (330). By transforming this mundane scene into a spectacle, Byron presents everyday roads, pylons and telephone cables as part of the emerging skeleton of a new and ‘convenient’ British empire. More specifically, Byron’s infrastructural imaginary throughout *The Road to Oxiana* evokes

the murky involvement of the British in Middle Eastern petropolitics. One of the most illuminating symbols in this context is the Mosul oil pipeline, which Byron observes cutting through the Arabian landscape with ‘coolie lines’ stationed alongside it (36). Throughout his trip Byron is plagued by reports of the hapless ‘Charcoal-Burners’, whose frequent breakdowns haunts the narrative with connotations of Britain’s fuel-dependency on the region. In the interwar years, the acquisition of concessions in the Middle East became a major foreign policy priority for Britain, with domestic austerity calling for the more ‘indirect’ and inexpensive establishment of Arab administrations in protectorates that could secure British interests. By documenting the encroachment of these new infrastructures of extraction, Byron illuminates the material processes by which a new collaborative empire was to be both implemented and imagined.

As Daniel Headrick has shown, nineteenth-century infrastructural technologies became essential to both the penetration and governance of colonial space in the consolidation phase of Empire.³⁵ This fact was recognized as early as 1904 by Halford Mackinder, who viewed Britain’s imperial dominance as a consequence of its naval technology and ‘mobility of power’, while also anticipating the influence of Russia in Central Asia as a result of its railways.³⁶ Although Mackinder characterized military-logistical infrastructures like the railway as agents of colonial ‘hard’ power, they can also be seen to channel more insidious forms of structural economic inequality. As Hardt and Negri show in *Empire*, while railroads worked to consolidate domestic industrial economies, they also served as vehicles for colonial planning which subordinated economically weaker countries to the interests of capital (for example by ensuring these economies remained export-oriented).³⁷ The ‘structural violence’³⁸ of unequal transactions, treaties and tariffs that characterized global trade was further supported by the implementation of a range of social, financial and legal institutions. Hence, while technologies like the railway were often highly visible – either celebrated for their ability to spread European modernity and to ‘shrink’ the globe – they in fact comprised only a small part of a complex of economic and socio-technical assemblages, which retained their ability to channel power and shape interactions in covert ways. After the zenith of the British Empire, the project of cognitively ‘mapping’ infrastructural channels of power became increasingly difficult. Scott Cohen has shown how in contrast to the immediately recognizable blocks of colour of European colonial maps, the complex and barely recognizable lines of the telegraph map, which connected nodes throughout the empire, served to integrate different spheres of influence and establish ‘routes, trajectories and networks for commerce and transport.’³⁹ Forming a new ‘anatomy’ of empire, the spaces within this vast network became largely abstract, and the panoramic, imperial map of the segmented globe made way for an intricate, spatially- and temporally-interrelated network by which myriad private investors could manage their interests.

It is this complex and interconnected system symbolized by the telegraph map that is vividly captured in texts like *Sea and Sardinia* and *The Road to Oxiana*. Despite the romantic vestiges of popular escapist or exoticist narratives, they draw attention to the interlinked urban systems and circuits structuring new experiences of mobility. Moreover, they convey these experiences in ways that self-consciously incorporate the infrastructures of cultural production, from institutional structures of access to revenues of network capital. Byron, for instance, observes the appearance of new walls and physical enclosures surrounding Persepolis and, in the same sentence, notes the subtler ‘code of academic malice controlled from Chicago’ (188). Here, he

refers elusively to the monopolization of publishable photographs by Chicago's Oriental Institute, raising larger questions about the powerful infrastructures of intellectual property. In this way, infrastructural imaginaries can be seen to critically illuminate not only the uneven relations of power that determine physical mobility, but also the institutional logics by which cultural works become available for circulation.

Conclusion

Infrastructures constitute sites at which literary and material cultures collide: they determine modes of travel and, at the same time, they have a profound impact on the representation of travel experience. Infrastructures in travel literature can stage interruptions that problematize constructions of 'other spaces' – mapping the circulations between home and abroad, and unsettling romantic aesthetics of nature, flow and privacy with material sites of technology, control and collective labour. Movement becomes contingent on an assemblage of drivers, engineers, technicians, logistical staff and maintenance workers, inviting us to critically examine the mobility of travel writers (as part of what Tim Cresswell calls the 'kinetic elite') and to formulate broader and more inclusive models of agency.⁴⁰ While representations of travel as personal or spiritual 'quests' can promote an aesthetics of spontaneity, flexibility, and creativity, this tends to marginalize the wider social infrastructure sustaining the cultural and knowledge economies within which these interactions take place. The ethical implications of infrastructural readings thus reach beyond the subject of the gaze, to include the unseen processes, institutions and social relations that enable one to 'look' in the first place.

In a more constructive sense, infrastructures as hermeneutic frameworks can emphasize literature's opposition to privatizing logics and enclosures, lending urgency to contemporary debates over the cultural commons and the open circulation of ideas. Moving from text to territory, literary infrastructures can play a part in the construction of new political imaginaries that take into account the significance of the roads, tunnels and wires connecting urban circulatory systems to the wider global sphere.⁴¹ In the face of increasingly abstract patterns of control, an infrastructural politics of materiality also serves to check exaggerated notions of ethereality or dematerialization.⁴² In this way, the solid spaces of literary infrastructure construct a Latourian map of the uneven and locally embedded places where the global is assembled, restoring the agency of the immobile through what Latour has termed the 'participatory reconstruction of the collective'.⁴³ As such, infrastructural readings of travel texts bring travel writing studies in line with recent developments in object-oriented ontology and new materialism. Future studies, along these lines, might examine the aesthetics of infrastructure across different spaces and historical conjectures; the intersections between infrastructural technologies and print cultures; or the impact of digital infrastructures on mobile textual practice. Against a background of material mobilities, such approaches engage with the points of intersection between imaginative geographies and the networked infrastructures of material worlds.

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¹ Georg Lukács, *Theory of the Novel: a Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971), p. 64.

² Michael Rubenstein, *Public Works: Infrastructure, Irish Modernism, and the Postcolonial* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

³ Nigel Thrift, 'Movement-space: the changing domain of thinking resulting from the development of new kinds of spatial awareness', *Economy and Society* 33, 4, Nov 2004, 584-5.

⁴ Bruce Robbins, 'The Smell of Infrastructure: Notes toward an Archive', *boundary 2* 34, 1, Spring 2007; Robbins, 'Infrastructure as Political Unconscious', *Minnesota Review* 70, Spring/Summer 2008; Kate Marshall, *Corridor: Media Architectures in American Fiction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

⁵ Walter Benjamin notes a 'remarkable propensity for structures that convey and connect' in Paris; 'this connecting or mediating function has a literal and spatial as well as a figurative and stylistic bearing.' *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 125.

⁶ John Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 13-14. See also Urry (2000); Sheller and Urry (2006); Elliott and Urry (2010); Cresswell (2010).

⁷ Urry, *Mobilities*, 52-4.

- ⁸ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 117.
- ⁹ Elliott and Urry, *Mobile Lives* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 4.
- ¹⁰ They also distinguish between cosmopolitan mobility and the ‘forced mobility’ of migrant workers. Elliott and Urry, 10-11.
- ¹¹ Urry, *Mobilities*, 12.
- ¹² Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Paul Virilio, *Negative Horizon* (London: Continuum, 2006), 48.
- ¹³ Henri Lefebvre, ‘Space and the State’, *State, Space, World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 224. Deleuze and Guattari view the power of the state as the power to subordinate ‘fluids’ to paths and lines, guiding movement along conduits, pipes and embankments to prevent turbulence: *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2003), 362-3.
- ¹⁴ Swyngedouw and Kaika, ‘Fetishizing the Modern City: The Phantasmagoria of Urban Technological Networks’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Volume 24.1, March 2000.
- ¹⁵ Graham and Marvin, *Splintering Urbanism* (London: Routledge, 2001). Building on Rancière, Slavoj Žižek warns of the tendency under neoliberalism to perpetuate enclosures and privatize the cultural, ecological and infrastructural commons: ‘How to Begin at the Beginning’, *NLR* 57, May-June 2009.
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- ¹⁷ Martin Heidegger, ‘The Question Concerning Technology’, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1977), 318.
- ¹⁸ Maud Ellmann, *The Nets of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.
- ¹⁹ Matthew Beaumont and Michael Freeman, *The Railway and Modernity: Time, Space, and The Machine Ensemble* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), 35.
- ²⁰ Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). See also Carr (2002) and Farley (2010).
- ²¹ D. H. Lawrence, *Late Essays and Articles: Volume 2*, ed. James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 292.
- ²² Lawrence, *Sea and Sardinia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 30.
- ²³ Graham Greene, *Journey without Maps* (London: Vintage, 2002); Ford Madox Ford, *Great Trade Route* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1937).
- ²⁴ *Sea and Sardinia*, 9.
- ²⁵ Fussell, *Abroad*; David Farley, *Modernist Travel Writing: Intellectuals Abroad* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010).
- ²⁶ Evelyn Waugh, *Waugh in Abyssinia* (LSU Press, 2007), 243.
- ²⁷ Michel Foucault, *La Philosophie analytique de la politique* III (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 540-41.
- ²⁸ Lawrence, *Mornings in Mexico* (London: Martin Secker, 1930), 175.
- ²⁹ ‘If anything is detestable, it is hard, stupid, fixity, that doesn’t know how to flicker and waver and be alive.’ Lawrence, *Sketches of Etruscan Places* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 288.
- ³⁰ See Michelucci (2002); Chaudhuri (2003); Roberts (2004); Oh (2007); Hyde and Ingersole (2010); Peat (2011); see also Masschelein, ‘Rip the veil of the old vision across, and walk across the rent: reading D.H. Lawrence with Deleuze and Guattari’, in *Modernism and theory: a critical debate*. London: Routledge, 2008.
- ³¹ ‘Tomorrow, no doubt, they will be thinking of the *cambio* and the sad financial plight of Italy. But tonight they were warm Southern souls, and loveable... I wish to god Merlin would cast that generous spell over them for good.’ Lawrence, *SS* 305.
- ³² Lawrence complains about the exchange rate: ‘to an Italian I am a perfected abstraction, England-coal-exchange’ *SS* 51; ‘Am I always to have the exchange flung in my teeth, as if I were a personal thief’ *SS* 176.
- ³³ Robert Byron, *The Road to Oxiana* (London: Penguin, 2007), 18.
- ³⁴ The Afghans ‘know well enough that the way to keep the Russians at arm’s-length is to keep their own country peaceable, and that the best means of doing this are telegraphs and roads.’ *RO* 294.
- ³⁵ Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).
- ³⁶ Halford Mackinder, ‘The Geographical Pivot of History’, *The Geographical Journal* 4, xxiii, April 1904, 433.
- ³⁷ Hardt and Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).
- ³⁸ Drawing on Étienne Balibar, Žižek defines the ‘structural violence’ of the global economy as the systemic creation of excluded and dispensable individuals: Žižek, *Violence* (London: Profile, 2008).

³⁹ Scott Cohen, 'Get Out! Empire migration and human traffic in *Lord Jim*', *A Forum on Fiction*, 36, 3, Summer 2003, 378.

⁴⁰ Tim Cresswell, 'Towards a politics of mobility', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28, 1, 2010.

⁴¹ Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2012).

⁴² Peter Schaefer, 'Dematerialized Infrastructures: On the Ethereal Origins of Local Area Networks', *Amodern 2: Network Archeology*, online. On the contradictions of 'liquid' models of modernity and informational societies, see Thomas Sutherland, 'Liquid Networks and the Metaphysics of Flux: Ontologies of Flow in an Age of Speed and Mobility', *Theory, Culture & Society*, April 2013, 16.

⁴³ Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 141-2.