Introduction: Dreaming of Infrastructure

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BAGHDAD, BANDA ACEH, BEIRUT, DETROIT, DHAKA, HARARE, New Orleans. In these times chronicling the devastation and annihilation of cities—through capital flight, natural disaster, slum eviction, and war—I gravitate to stories about restoring ruined cities. Halfway through *Slaughterhouse Five*, Kurt Vonnegut's novel about the firebombing of Dresden, we find an eccentric scene. After surviving Dresden's conflagration, Billy Pilgrim, optician and ex-GI, escapes traumatic memories by becoming "unstuck in time" (93). He journeys with the Tralfamadorians, creatures from outer space who teach him to time-switch so that he can move fluidly through his own private and public histories. Finding a war movie intolerable, Pilgrim imagines it in reverse: "American planes, full of holes and wounded men and corpses took off backwards from an airfield in England. Over France, a few German fighter planes flew at them backwards, sucked bullets and shell fragments from some of the planes and crewmen." Pilgrim changes space by changing time. German guns suck bomb fragments from wounded American airmen as "the formation flew backwards over a German city that was in flames. The bombers opened their bomb bay doors, exerted a miraculous magnetism which shrunk the fires, gathered them into cylindrical steel containers, and lifted the containers into the bellies of the planes" (93–94). How can we shelter or care for, how can we nurture, the ruined city in the belly of the text?[1]

In *Beirut Blues* (*Barid Beirut*, or "The Mail from Beirut") Hanan al-Shaykh invents a heroine who also longs to perfect a war-torn city. In a Beirut shredded by the civil war of the 1970s and 1980s and the 1982 Israeli bombing, the heroine watches as her city falls apart:

> From the roof of the Azariyya building I saw buildings collapsing like dominoes. The ones that resisted seemed to be waiting their turn, observing the

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> splendid collapse of those around them; it was as if they preserved within them the memory of the past in the color of their paint, the tiles, the electricity cables and the billboards.

How can this collapse be "splendid"? Perhaps because Asmahan, the narrator, sees much of Beirut through the transforming lens of simile. "An advertisement for a film surviving as a reminder of the city in the days when it used to swallow lights and spit them out like a fire-breathing dragon. The remains of a neon arrow pointing to Aazar coffee. The collapsing buildings like spotted leopards crashing to the ground" (266). Vonnegut's Pilgrim restores the German city by reversing the flow of time as it pours into space; Asmahan substitutes creaturely metaphors for the dematerializing space around her. In her similes the city regains breath and animality. Turning destroyed things into near personae becomes al-Shaykh's repeated technique. "I didn't want Beirut to change so much that we no longer recognized it. Its skies were being transformed by the colored leaflets the Israelis dropped, dancing in the air, instead of paper airplanes and clouds. But were they Israeli planes dropping leaflets from the sky, or 'flights of birds striking us with stones of baked clay' as if we were Ethiopians threatening Mecca in the Qur'an?" (75). In this fantasia the Israelis become protectors of Mecca while the Lebanese become African aliens. Throw in a few images and the source of danger switches, as if war were child's play. At the same time these images carry a heavy cargo of myth as planes turn into archaic birds bearing the weight of war—something hard to lift in one's prose.

For al-Shaykh, Beirut's ruins have the sweetness of a beehive, while for her heroine the shelter of the book—of writing as metaphor—takes the place of lost city shelter. Instead of accepting the city as ruin, the author masses metaphors to create a locus of resistance: "I was like a bee, discovering the honeycomb city with you. I sat facing the sea, the hookahs bubbling around me, and found I was not distracted by the images of devastation and dead bodies the way I used to be" (82). The topos of healing the ruined or wounded city has a wide-ranging semiotics, as if all holes in the infrastructure may be honeyed for the writer. If we were to invent a metropoetics, a set of algorithms for mapping the literature of the city, this would be one place to begin. In restoring the ruined city, Asmahan uses metaphor to remake the city as both shelter and economic flow. As landmarks and citizens disappear beneath the rubble, this tragic mobility of space suggests the stirring of a politics. Power ceases to be hidden and emerges in all its ugliness and dominance. If "autonomous spaces conceal power," in the ruined city a raw will to power leaks out everywhere; it becomes visible (Massey 67).

Of course, a ruined city can also become a no-man's-land or *terra nullius*, a site that is never repaired.[2] Even worse, in developing nations (and in New Orleans, for that matter) repairing damaged cities offers opportunities for new forms of exploitation and colonization. As Naomi Klein explains in "The Rise of Disaster Capitalism," twenty to twenty-five percent of the World Bank's lending goes to "post-conflict" countries, where it is spent on jobs that exclude locals and pay foreign consultants "thousand-dollar-a-day salaries" and wildly inflated per diems (9). The ruined city joins a cycle of creative destruction that permits the most exploitative forms of capitalism to thrive.

This is business as usual. Developing nations' large-scale disasters keep enriching the West. Klein quotes Shalmali Guttal, a researcher based in Bangalore who works for Focus on the Global South, a group dedicated to regional and global policy analysis: "We used to have vulgar colonialism. Now we have sophisticated colonialism, and they call it 'reconstruction'" (9). In this rush toward disaster colonialism, shattered countries attract the World Bank because, deep in need, their governments agree to take orders from the

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West. "After a cataclysmic event, governments will usually do whatever it takes to get aid dollars," Klein says, even if this means taking on enormous debt and accepting privatization of state-run services (10). After the 2005 Indonesian tsunami, officials ignored the small fishing communities destroyed by the storm, "more than 80 percent of the wave's victims." Instead, the World Bank pushed for expansion of the tourism sector and of industrial fish farms. As for damaged infrastructure like roads and schools, bank documents warned that rebuilding them "may strain public finances"—so why not consider privatization? ("Yes," Klein comments, "they have only one idea.") Condoleezza Rice may have shocked the world by calling the 2005 tsunami "a wonderful opportunity," but read her lips: this storm paid "great dividends for us" (Klein 11). As coasts flattened by disaster become "open lands," as tsunamis become efficient means of clear-cutting urban and rural environs, disaster capitalism creates "the new *terra nullius*" (11, 9). Where do the displaced people go? If they are unable to work in agribusiness or tourist hotels, they head straight to the cities.

We publish this special issue on Cities in the midst of unsurpassed urban crises. A spate of underurbanized cities like Detroit, Ivanovo, Leipzig, and Sinpo—cities depopulated and scarred by deindustrialization—remain stuck in joblessness and decay. Baghdad, Beirut, Grozny, and Mogadishu have been maimed by the mass killings of sectarian violence and the carnage of intra- and international war. Because of desertification, Kampala, a city designed for ten thousand residents, now has a population of 1.5 million, while Dodoma, Tanzania's new capital, has an influx of a thousand people from desert regions each month (Madeley). Hundreds of cities suffer from overurbanization —ascending metropolitan populations driven into poverty by descending economies. These cities blossom with immigrants while their economies wither, unable to support volatile population growth.

According to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, by 2025 Jakarta could have 24.9 million people, Dhaka 25 million, greater Shanghai 27 million, and Mumbai 33 million (*Asia* 63). As Mike Davis warns in *Planet of Slums*, "[N]o one knows whether such gigantic concentrations of poverty are biologically or ecologically sustainable." In the developing world's megacities (with populations of more than 8 million), hypercities (with at least 20 million), and conurbations (where multiple city regions merge), we encounter the new avatars of the city in ruins (5).

To establish a phenomenology for thinking about these urban multitudes, we must take up the project of mapping cities where Raymond Williams breaks off in *The Country and the City*, his grand treatise on poverty, property, and the spread of British cities supported by empire and the cycles of capital. His readings of the changing metropolis are impeccably formal and passionately Marxist. That is, Williams looks at the city from a secure point of view. "I have stood in many cities and felt this pulse: in the physical difference of Stockholm and Florence, Paris and Milan: this identifiable and moving quality: the centre, the activity, the light" (5). With his pulse tuned to the city as chaos, as impediment to class progress, as labor's cradle, and as a powerful "second nature," Williams traces the economic turns that allowed the propertied and mercantile rich to profit from the bounty of Britain's countryside and to feed on its growing empire. He summons this famous passage from *Dombey and Son*: "The earth was made for Dombey and Son to trade in, and the sun and moon were made to give them light. Rivers and seas were formed to float their ships . . . stars and planets circled in their orbits, to preserve inviolate a system of which they were the centre." For Williams, Dickens's irony about nineteenth-century metropolitan commerce is qualified "by the other kinds of physical life and confidence in which men are making their own worlds, carrying them

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about with them through the noise and the crowding" of the London streets. Dickens describes both a system of confident exploitation and a power to choose the new shape of social and physical environments—not just in London but around the world (161).

By the mid–nineteenth century, once the British countryside could no longer feed the masses working in industrializing cities, "distant lands" became the equivalent of "country," allowing Williams's binary to persist (280). But by the second half of the twentieth century the fate of Third World metropolitan regions exceeded their role as a "mode of production" for the overly developed world. In fact, by the time Williams writes *The Country and the City*, in 1973, urban crises in Western cities seem minor compared with "the deeper crises of Calcutta or Manila or a hundred other cities across Asia and Africa and Latin America." Here "a displaced and formerly rural population" drifts "towards the centres of a money economy which is directed by interests very far from their own" (287). There is no longer a secure epistemological ground for thinking about the dispersive chaos of cities. While Williams can still invoke labor as an organizing category in 1973, by 1994 Giovanni Arrighi suggests that entire regional labor forces have been severed from the grid:

> [T]he current revival of a self-regulating market . . . has already issued unbearable verdicts. Entire communities, countries, even continents, as in the case of sub-Saharan Africa, have been declared "redundant," superfluous to the changing economy of capital accumulation on a world scale . . . the unplugging of these "redundant" communities and locales from the world supply system has triggered innumerable, mostly violent feuds over . . . the appropriation of resources that were made absolutely scarce by the unplugging. (330)

In the last ten years the disconnect between rich, hypernetworked metropolises with extranational influence, like New York, London, and Tokyo (Saskia Sassen's "global cities"), and the impoverished city regions supporting them has become even more abrupt.

In *Planet of Slums* Davis expands our sense of the "deeper crises" that plague Bangalore, Beijing, Bogotá, and Buenos Aires (or Cairo, Caracas, and Chittagong, to name just a few of Williams's "hundred other cities"). Although the contemporary growth of East Asian cities still depends on establishing a quasi-classical relation between expanding production zones and urban migration, city populations in most parts of the developing world surge without the powerful engines of export and manufacture that have helped drive China's, Korea's, and Taiwan's economies (and without China's influx of foreign capital). "The size of a city's economy . . . often bears surprisingly little relationship to its population's size, and vice versa" (Davis 12–13). By 1910 London was seven times larger than it was in 1800, but Dhaka, Kinshasa, and Lagos have grown forty times larger since 1950, and the per capita income among the poor in these cities continues to plummet (2). The economies of these urban districts are so patchy that high unemployment rates create a "wage puzzle"; real wages have become so depressed that economists cannot understand—cannot create a formula to explain—how people survive.

To analyze the literature emerging from quasi-colonized, overpopulated, densely inhabited cities, we must go beyond the usual suspects: theorists like Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, or even Henri Lefebvre, who have taught us so much about European and American alienation, crowding, flânerie, and absolute space. Instead, we need another cache of ideas, including Achille Mbembe's concept of "superfluity" (describing the wealth created and the workers thrown away or depleted by the gold mines that crisscross Johannesburg) and Dipesh Chakrabarty's epistemic insistence on "European provincialism." But where Williams offers a literary history spanning several centuries and Mbembe and Chakra-

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barty add key concepts to a new metropolitan arsenal, I want to propose a new practicum for looking at city literature, including (1) the fact of overurbanization, (2) the predicament of decaying or absent infrastructures, (3) the unevenness of shelter (which, along with food, energy, health care, and water make up the mythos and ethos of the nurturing city), and (4) the importance of inventing counterpublics, or communal alternatives to the official, bureaucratized polis. My goal is to produce a brief taxonomy or metropoetics that will enable us to rethink the urban imaginary in the light of contemporary urban crises.[3]

While these categories may be no better than the wage puzzle in capturing the literary traces of colonial and postcolonial urban degradation, elements missing from this metropoetics flourish in the essays gathered in this special issue. These essays remap the urban imaginary across wide historical and geographic spectra, beginning with Andreas Huyssen's recovery of European urban miniatures as modernist literary forms and ending with Sylvia Molloy's evocations of the structural traces of Argentina's disappeared. In between we find essays plotting the literary and historical praxis of Accra, Atlanta, Beijing, Benghazi, Bucharest, Buenos Aires, Cape Town, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Lima, London, Manila, Mexico City, Nairobi, New Orleans, New York, Oakland, Paris, Ramallah, Rio de Janeiro, Saint Petersburg, Shanghai, Sydney, and Venice. In pursuit of constants for rereading these and other cities, the category terms that follow are meant not to be exhaustive but to initiate strategies for rethinking the city. These strategies will be limited in scope, tentative, and in search of expansion by others—but must also be deeply responsive to the extrabourgeois city as a failed yet creative space.

Overurbanization

In Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born,* the protagonist is an upright man without a name: both a cipher and an everyman among the Ghanaian masses. He lives in Accra and works in a railroad office, but his family hovers a paycheck away from subsistence living. They will never own luxury goods because this man refuses to join the culture of bribery bubbling in every stairwell. Nevertheless, in his underfunded, overpopulated world, he still has access to public services. In the local latrine he finds a rare measure of privacy. He leaps toward the cleanest can he can find, only to encounter the scat of the encroaching multitudes. Among "the row of cans encrusted with old shit,"

> he is careful, in letting down his trousers, not to let the cuffs fall into the urine grooves in front. . . . Squatting up there, he lets the air from below blow a cooling draft against his buttocks, and he looks at the crowded wall opposite, with the ceiling the wall is still a dazzling white where there are no webs to hide the paint. The color does not really change until about the level of the adult anus. There the wall is thickly streaked with an organic brown, each smear seeking to avoid older smears, until the dabs have gone all round the wall. (105)

Though he has the latrine to himself, the masses press in. Their urine streams from the floor grooves and creeps up his trouser cuffs; their feces command nose and eye. His freedom has contracted to a tiny question: which shitting machine should he use? His community is also predetermined. Each man who was here before him left a gift or remainder, a part-body stuck to the wall.

How is it possible to dramatize the unbearable densification of bodies in overurbanized cities? Some tactics for describing a city's overcrowding are expected: lists of endless dependent clauses; the disappearance of punctuation, suggesting the evisceration of landmarks; parallel constructions that mix squalor and lyricism; images of bodily invasion and of interpenetrating consciousnesses.

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Writers have also captured the squalor of overurbanization through noise, crowds, and the fecal massing of open latrines or the accumulation of garbage.

Writing in 1968, Armah mobilizes this symbolism of waste. Men accumulate around his hero as brown dabs or smears. The latrine condenses a legend of overcrowding in images (allegorical and mimetic) to convey a sense of claustrophobic densification; other people are always present as ineradicable traces or smelly remains. "There are places where, it seems, men have bent down to find an unused spot to use, and in a few incredible places, men seemed to have jumped quite high and then to have accomplished the downward stroke." Worthy of Fluxus, the latrine becomes a performance palace:

> There must have been people who did not just forget to bring their paper, but who also did not bother to drop their loads, for the wall has marks that are not mere afterpieces, but large chunks of various shit. The man's eyes seek refuge above the brown, at shoulder level. No brown smears here, only occasional scribblings in pencil mostly the government color. A small drawing of sex in an impossible Indian position, with the careful lettering:
>
> Vagina Sweet
>
> But just to the right of this there is something the man has seen before without noticing its companion:
>
> Money Sweet Pass All (105–06)

This is not some Freudian coinage where one's shit returns as gold. Instead, Armah connects the conditions of the latrine to an economic sweetness gone missing. This money has passed to Europe with the colonizers and to high-ranking Ghanaians through graft. When the gold is gone, only shit (and writing) remains. In this bleak comedy Armah connects his own writing to overurbanization, defecation rights, and Ghana's financial system. On the wall the protagonist finds other tracings: "contrey broke" (on reading this, he "drops his load"), "you broke not so?" (106). Economic crisis and fecal matter come together in a constellation of misery and derision in which Armah dramatizes the difficulty and absurdity of living in a cityscape brimming with people the economy cannot support. The protagonist's fate is local, particular to Accra, and yet his narrative stretches to encompass the lives of global millions besieged by everyday life in developing cities.

Overurbanization can be defined as urbanization without industrialization, as the fate of cities that grow without the benefit of a supporting economy and without the jobs and services the West associates with the metropolis. Thus, Lagos's largest slum, Ajegunle, "exemplifies . . . overcrowding coupled with extreme peripherality. In 1972 Ajegunle contained 90,000 people on 8 square kilometers of swampy land; today 1.5 million people reside on an only slightly larger surface area, and they spend a hellish average of three hours each day commuting to their workplaces" (Davis 93–94).[4]

In contrast, many of Mumbai's poor live in the heart of the city. Pavement dwellers (once counted among the poorest of the poor) may have jobs but settle on streets or sidewalks because they cannot afford dwellings close to their place of work. When people are so massed together, violent conflicts about space may break out at any moment. In Suketu Mehta's *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found*, the racket in parking spaces and competition for heating oil create conflicts, even among the well-to-do. And yet in Mehta's finale Mumbai's abysmal density turns to sublime euphoria in the swaggery cop-out of the mathematical sublime. Mehta's prose swoops from accuracy to aura; it suggests one mind's stance against excess:

> Bombay itself is reaching its own extremity: 23 million people by 2015. The city's population, which would halve, actually doubles. Walking alongside every person in the throng

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> on the street today will be one more person tomorrow. . . .
>
> One blue-bright Bombay morning, in the middle of the masses on the street, I have a vision: that all these individuals, each with his or her own favorite song and hairstyle, each tormented by an exclusive demon, form but the discrete cells of one gigantic organism. . . . Each person is . . . no more important than . . . any other of the 6 billion components of the organism. It is a terrifying image. It makes me feel crushed, it eliminates my sense of myself, but it is ultimately comforting because it is such a lovely vision of belonging. All these ill-assorted people walking toward the giant clock on Churchgate: They are me; they are my body and my flesh. The crowd *is* the self, 14 million avatars of it, 14 million celebrations. I will not merge into them; I have elaborated myself into them. And if I understand them well, they will all merge back into me, and the crowd will become the self, one, many-splendored. (538–40)

How does one end a book about an unending city? I have associated Mehta's finale with the mathematical sublime, a rhetorical turn in which the mind, overwhelmed by number, uses evidence of its own unifying perception to amalgamate the overwhelming many into the heroic one. But we must be careful not to use these handy Enlightenment terms to finesse our readings of megacities. Mehta is also trying to capture the ways that overurbanization is the source of both economic dysfunction and communal structure. In the chapter on "powertoni," or "power of attorney," Mehta asks a Muslim woman (a member of a collective fighting for water rights and latrines) if she would prefer to live in a decent apartment instead of the open-guttered slum she now inhabits. "Yes, there was a building planned nearby to resettle the slum dwellers. But people from her neighborhood wouldn't move there. 'There's too much aloneness. A person can die behind the closed doors of a flat and no one will know. Here,' she observed with satisfaction, 'there are a lot of people'" (55). Mehta overwrites and projects the crowd's egotistical splendor to assert that if we think of Mumbai's masses or slums as excrescence, if we think of its throngs as mere tragedy, we forget that people form rich communities even in (perhaps especially in) hostile surroundings. These crowds connect to their social geography even when that geography shelters heap upon heap of intimates.

Infrastructure

My premise is that our intellectual apparatus, like the wage puzzle, is inadequate for describing the pleasures and pounding of most urban lives, or the fact that many city dwellers survive despite all odds. How can our ethical and imaginative engagements with others around the world be worked into our scholarly infrastructures? How do we create taxonomies for cities and citizens that are at once off the grid and overly taxonomized? What is it like to be stuck, night and day, dreaming of infrastructure?[5]

José Saramago's bold experimental novel *Blindness* seems to be about disability, but its main concern is how to survive in a city lacking infrastructure. *Infra* means beneath, below, or inferior to, while *infrastructure* represents the equipment, facilities, services, and supporting structures needed for a city's or region's functioning. Airports; communication systems; computer grids; highways; gas, electric, and water systems; mass transit; public toilets; sewers; streets; waste management: infrastructure may be taken for granted in global cities (unless it breaks down) but represents each city's "fixed capital," its "measure of social wealth" (Lefebvre 345).[6]

In *Blindness* a city of bourgeois Europeans (most of them able-bodied and financially secure) is struck by a highly contagious disease that blinds each resident instantly. Like the high white wall of Armah's latrine, this disease's colors mimic the shades legislating empire; its subjects see nothing but whiteness.

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"He tried to imagine what the place must look like, for him it was all white, luminous, resplendent, he had no way of knowing whether the walls and ground were white and he came to the absurd conclusion that the light and whiteness there were giving off the awful stench." Once again we encounter a man desperately in need of a latrine. "When he could hold back no longer, he was finally able to take down his trousers and crouch over the open latrine. The stench choked him. He had the impression of having stepped on some soft pulp, the excrement of someone who had missed the hole of the latrine or who had decided to relieve himself without any consideration for others" (92).

Saramago invites us into yet another city where it is impossible to move without bumping into other people's bodily wastes. He reproduces Third World conditions by turning a European city in the overly developed world into an overurbanized favela or slum. No one has a job because without a system for the blind to communicate the banking system shuts down, as well as all sources of water, fuel, transportation, and food. Filled with trash and wrecked cars, thoroughfares disappear.

> We shall go mad with horror, he thought. Then he tried to clean himself but there was no paper. He ran his hand over the wall behind him, where he expected to find the rolls of toilet paper or nails, where in the absence of anything better, any old scraps of paper had been stuck up. Nothing. He felt unhappy, disconsolate, more unfortunate than he could bear, crushed there, protecting his trousers which were brushing against that disgusting floor, blind, blind, blind, and, unable to control himself, he began to weep quietly. Fumbling, he took a few steps and bumped into the opposite wall. (92)

For Armah, and now for Saramago, the rights to the city include defecation rights. *Blindness* follows a rough poetic justice: its citizens are swept into a static underdevelopment that mimics Third World conditions. Davis argues that many of the faults in postcolonial infrastructures can be traced to the colonial past: "European empires generally refused to provide modern sanitation and water infrastructures in native neighborhoods, preferring instead to use racial zoning and *cordons sanitaires* to segregate garrisons and white suburbs from epidemic disease; postcolonial regimes from Accra to Hanoi thus inherited huge sanitation deficits that few regimes have been prepared to aggressively remedy" (139). The statistics are staggering. In 2006 WaterAid and Oxfam released a report explaining. "There are over a billion people living without access to clean, safe water and 2.6 billion people have nowhere to go to the toilet. . . . This leads to the inevitable spread of water-related diseases which claim the lives of 6,000 children every day" ("Public"). In *Blindness* the streets fill with disease-infested corpses, and dogs move indiscriminately between bodies and feces, chowing down.

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. Instead, infrastructure's role in literature is unpredictable and varied. First, in many poems and novels these organizing structures are present but barely visible—you have to dig to find them or watch for them as reality effects, as the unthought known. The contemplative moment when Nick Caraway watches ash-covered men shoveling coal dust in *The Great Gatsby* is rare (Fitzgerald 15); elsewhere in the novel, the commodities that suckle on "the green breast of the new world" are made out of dreams alone (121).

Second, in novels like *Blindness* or *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, infrastructure registers in its absence as dysfunction, nonpresence, decay. Third, we find a series of texts set in slums or urban peripheral zones

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where the least powerful characters seize the most powerful infrastructures and convert them into informal economies or aesthetic resources. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* begins with his own brand of installation art when 1,369 light bulbs gleam in a New York subbasement, the power that makes them shine pilfered from the grid. In Patrick Chamoiseau's *Texaco* survival depends on what one can find in the dump or siphon from official structures supporting Martinique's Fort-de-France. In *Virtual Light*, by William Gibson, the earthquake-damaged Bay Bridge ceases to be a transportation zone and becomes a massive squatter settlement. Finally, in Karen Te Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* a homeless man conducts traffic from an overpass in the Los Angeles freeway system; he makes cacophony into symphony:

> Manzanar concentrated on a noise that sounded like the mix of an elephant and the wail of a whale, concentrating until it moaned through the downtown canyons, shuddered past the on-ramps and echoed up and down the one-ten. . . . This was *The Hour of the Trucks* . . . appropriate if one were to compare the beastly size of semis, garbage trucks, moving vans, and concrete mixers to the largest monsters of the animal kingdom—living and extinct, all rumbling ponderously along the freeway. (119)

Changing freeway grumblings into a scherzo for primordial beasts, Manzanar re-creates the map of LA and sends the traffic blundering toward La Brea's tar pits. His orchestral hyperbole confirms Stephen Cairns's sense that the job of representing cities is "challenging within the overspilling, turbulent milieu of contemporary extended urban regions." But for Cairns and theorists like Fredric Jameson, we find an antidote in deconstructive mapmaking. Maps create zones for praxis and help us "regain a capacity to act and struggle which is at present neutralized by our spatial as well as our social confusion." Cairns argues that postmodernism's goal must be to invent global and local maps that are cognitive and activist and that reflect the disorder of both spatial and social scales (198). Manzanar achieves this by making the freeway a homeless man's play station (later hundreds of LA citizens seize his director's wand and make infrastructure sing). But Cairns also echoes Homi Bhabha's hesitation about the dangerous reductiveness of any subject- or Enlightenment-based map. For the literary or cultural critic, one alternative would be to follow Manzanar's lead and chart literature's hushed or symphonic stories of people's massed relations to infrastructure—where it takes you, who uses it, who takes care of it, who lives near it, and who is forced to live under or do without it. And when infrastructure disappears, drifting toward invisibility in many city texts, we should remember to read this absence as a taking for granted of infrastructural privilege.

Shelter; or, The Nurturing City

In *Strangers in the House* Raja Shehadeh recounts his father's return to Jaffa, the father's native city, two decades after Palestinians were evicted and Jaffa claimed by Israel. In Shehadeh's richest memories of childhood, his parents turned away from their resident city, Ramallah, to the coastal lights of Jaffa—an illuminated city on the horizon, a solace in exile. When Shehadeh's father returns with a Jewish friend to Jaffa for the first time in decades, he delights in its houses and landmarks even though Jaffa's once bustling streets seem forlorn and empty. And then his friend directs the elder Shehadeh's gaze north, toward the shining lights of a nearby city.

> "That is Tel Aviv," he proudly pointed out.
>
> It was at this point that my father must have realized that the glittering lights to which his eyes have been riveted for all these years were not the lights of Jaffa but those of Tel Aviv. For as the sun set, Jaffa lapsed into

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> slumber and darkness. It was Tel Aviv that glowed with the glitter of the night-lights. (63)

The vision-city that blessed his last twenty years is gone, and Aziz Shehadeh becomes a "halted traveler" (Hartman 39–41). He is like Wordsworth charging through France only to discover that "*we had crossed the Alps*." But for Wordsworth "Imagination," that "unfathered vapour," springs from the mind's abyss, offering solace (6.591–95). For Aziz Shehadeh there is only the abyss.

Exile creates houses made out of strangeness. For the sake of those displaced from country to city, or from place to place in the same city, we must recognize that for all theory's talk of urban individualism, alienation, and economic flows, the city is above all a place that gives shelter. It must be nurturing for its inhabitants to survive. In 1987 the United Nations General Assembly endorsed a resolution supporting global strategies to provide "shelter for all" by the year 2000. "The Assembly recognized that adequate and secure shelter is a basic human right and is vital for the fulfillment of human aspirations." In a 1993 resolution the Assembly decreed that "every woman, man and child has the right to a secure place to live in peace and dignity"—a resolution designed to stop evictions and homelessness (Rahman 273).

According to Jane Jacobs, it is a city's obligation to make us feel safe. "The bedrock attribute of a successful city district is that a person must feel personally safe and secure on the street among all these strangers. He must not feel automatically menaced by them" (30). But what kind of environment creates sufficient safety, and who decides? Thousands of citizens have not been permitted to return to regions of New Orleans that were impoverished before the 2005 hurricane. The city says these houses are uninhabitable—filled with mold and decay. Those in exile have filed suits claiming the privilege of resettlement. If the city has the right to consider a citizen's quality of life, citizens should have the right of return, as well as assistance in restoring their dwellings without discrimination or Disneyfication. But how does one adjudicate between these claims? Who defines what is livable?[7]

In *Baumgartner's Bombay*, by Anita Desai, a German Jew permanently exiled to India lives a meager life in a rented apartment brimming with cats. The odor repels his guests, who finally refuse to visit, but Baumgartner "had not thought of it as a repellent, unfit for the acts of life. Rather, it was to him a kind of fertilizer, with a fertilizing action upon human behavior. At least, it helped him to be comfortable, to survive, live, enjoy companionship." Reflecting Baumgartner's passivity, this pile of verbs still radiates energy. "He felt his cats glide around his feet, wind themselves about his legs, heard their murmurs of recrimination, welcome, questioning, communicating" (148). *Baumgartner's Bombay* is a novel dedicated not only to character development, not only to exploring the Asian geography of the Holocaust, but also to testing the kinds of shelter available to Indians and Jews in exile. Outside Baumgartner's dwelling, pavement dwellers wash pots in the thick gutter water. As one mother squats on the pavement, the "child with the pot-belly of malnutrition and the light hair that stood up in twists, was beside her, sucking something brown and slippery in its hand. The flies crawled over the lip . . ." (144). To live in cat fertilizer, to eat from the gutter: which is preferable? What options does a city provide?[8] When Baumgartner lives in Calcutta, just before Partition, "beggars, cattle, stray dogs and vendors" squat in and around Baumgartner's building. "There were always rows of supine bodies covered with white sheets so that they had the appearance of corpses in their shrouds but were only people lying in rows outside the house and its once gracious, now decayed portico—those who slept in the day were labourers who worked on night shifts, and those who slept at night

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were families that lived in the cracks and crevices of the building like so many rats, or lice, but came out for a little air after dark" (174). Baumgartner's prejudices flicker through Desai's prose, but the contest for dwelling space drives her novel, just as it drives the ecosystems of over-and underdeveloped cities. Seen in this light, contests over shelter may be more central to novels and poetry than are romance and the marriage plot, which are, after all, variations on such spatial contests.

Why should a focus on shelter (a general rather than a place-specific human need) be part of a scholarly apparatus aimed at cities? Because in overurbanized cities cycles of spontaneous settlement, slum eviction, and *bastee*-busting have become the norm for millions of people; in many cities to be urban is to be unhoused. In Chamoiseau's *Texaco* squatter eviction becomes an official sport: "They unnailed the tin sheets, laughing like dumb beasts, and threw them down the hill. One of them, taken by a sudden whim, exhibited his thing and began to piss on what he had broken. . . . The worst was that they were all laughing . . . the police captain and another pink piece of filth, delegated by the prefect" (306). And yet Marie-Sophie, Chamoiseau's squatter heroine, describes her neighbors' perseverance: "As soon as the following night, we rebuilt with what was left, full (Ti-Cirique would say) of the persistence of Sisyphus and invincibility of the Phoenix. Our hutches (rebuilt thirty-twelvetimes) resembled insane mosaics" (335). As cities continue to unhouse their least powerful citizens, such rebuilding may, indeed, become the epic act of the twenty-first century. We learn from a city planner who shares Marie-Sophie's vision in *Texaco* that "in a few years, *more than half of humanity will face, under similar conditions, what she calls City*" (368).

Counterpublics: A Parable

In the violent summer of 1947 ten million refugees crowded the roads crossing India and Pakistan: the largest displacement in human history. Nek Chand, a young man of twenty-three, fled West Punjab with his family; he settled in Gardaspar, Karnal, Panipat, and then Faridabad. In 1951, as a workman in the highway department, he migrated once again, this time to Jawaharlal Nehru's visionary, embryonic city of Chandigarh—a new provincial capital designed by the French architect Le Corbusier that was still under construction. Chandigarh is a modernist city that some critics find short on vision—orthogonal, soulless, controversial in its westernizing maze. Le Corbusier designed abstract, gridded cement buildings with swatches of greensward between, a novelty in a country where cities teem, overflowing with people and objects. Traditionally, photographers have to remove donkeys, vendors, and other signs of life in order to capture the high-modernist sweep of Le Corbusier's buildings.[9]

In 1958, long after the violence and displacements of Partition, Chand retreated deep into the forest around Chandigarh and began to construct a secret city. To make his own urban throngs, Chand used thrown-away bicycle parts as base and potsherds and broken bangles as ornament. The resulting creatures are delightful in their oddity and scale. A soldier's ceramic navel reads "made in India": words factory-etched on a broken piece of pottery. Porcelain-covered monkeys ride the roofs of buildings, and rows of skinny elephants scoop the air with their trunks. Women's hair and glassy saris are made from thousands of broken bracelets; a crockery man dons a helmet that reads "OLD *Smuggle Finest* SCOTCH WHISKEY" while musicians play instruments of copper tubing and heavy stone birds hum over their heads. An artificial waterfall cascades thirty-three feet, an aerial system of drainage for rainwater. Chand has created a playful relation between this highly decorated secret city and Le Corbusier's geometrical one. Le Corbusier's orthogonal lines reappear in rows of stone

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people whose homogeneous identities still do not efface the sweet variations in their countenances. While Le Corbusier's city is severely rhythmic in its dislocations of the modern, Chand's surplus city hails back to the vigor of village life but deploys modern tactics of urban construction.

The huge scale of Chand's secret may seem remarkable, but he was foreman of road building by day, with almost two hundred workers under his command. "I know my trade," Chand has said. "I know how to erect a wall, how long it takes. I know how to fit the water pipes and install pumps . . . how to draw an electrical diagram" (Lespinasse 130). Hidden in the forest, invisible to official eyes, Chand worked at night, illuminating his squatter's surroundings with burning piles of scavenged tires. But what is most remarkable about Chand's unofficial creation is that, once discovered, it became part of the official capital city. In 1976 Chandigarh's government offered Chand full-time employment to expand this playful space, now known as the Rock Garden. While skirmishes about its official status continued and some sections were closed or bulldozed, this once secret city has become part of the public life of Chandigarh.[10]

In *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*, Rosalyn Deutsche argues that power comes from one's ability to define public space. All urban space is conflictual, since the myth of "a unified public realm" simply echoes every dominant culture's concept of what a public must be (403). For groups with lesser power to be able to establish their own public realms, we must work to recognize "a range of publics, including those that may be in conflict with, or critical of, the dominant public realm: what Nancy Fraser has called 'subaltern counter publics'" (Bridge and Watson, Introduction 339).[11]

The border where Chand acquired public rights for his surplus city becomes one site for making this conflictual space legible. Against the enervating, empty structures of Chandigarh's public sphere, Chand created the Rock Garden as a rich alternative made out of the thrown-away everyday. By threading the wreck of Partition into his work (just when Nehru was trying to efface it, to make India fully modern), Chand gathered up whatever had been "scattered and forsaken, making waste into the substrate of his creative efforts . . . honoring the excluded, and clearing a place at the common table of his poetry for the handicapped and the Untouchables" (Lespinasse 131). Before the official city of Chandigarh adopted this surplus city, Chand devoted eighteen years to his geopoetical adventure. As Philippe Lespinasse comments, "[S]urely collecting refuse couldn't upset anybody, and the very uselessness of the statues would protect them from the designs of the envious" (128–29). Multiple dynamics made the Rock Garden's survival possible. First, the sequestered forest around the new capital gave Chand access to land and shelter. Second, he possessed ample knowledge about how to create infrastructure. Third, as a survivor of Partition, he felt compelled to create a spatial countermythology to salve his obsession with lost space; the work of healing ruined cities seemed paramount, as it does to Vonnegut and al-Shaykh, at this essay's beginning. Fourth, once his project became an official part of Chandigarh's map, Chand gained access to legitimizing public rights and a useable status as the creator of a secret city that has remained public yet resistant. Finally, to maintain this stature, Chand gathered the ability to endure ongoing spatial contests.

These spatial contests dominate cities that are made into literature. We greet another resistant counterpublic in Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* when an assortment of homeless people create a community between two colossal truck wrecks blocking a crowded freeway. In Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* revolutionaries thread their way from city to jungle and back again, while in *Texaco* the heroine, Marie-Sophie, establishes a permanent squatter settlement with the help of a renegade city

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planner. This is one of the urban imaginary's tasks: to give body and voice to the multiplying subaltern publics that struggle to transform the spatial politics of cities.[12]

Let me give a final example of the odd ways that counterpublics make their way into "text." In a poem from Mohja Kahf's *E-Mails from Scheherazad*, "The Cherries," Kahf creates a Syrian American visionary who longs to return to (and be nurtured by) Syria:

> The mosques would hold and rock me in
> their arches
> The synagogues would lay blessings on my
> shoulders like a shawl
> . . . . . .
> I am sure Damascus would puff on a nargileh
> and laugh a deep laugh like a granduncle
> Aleppo would croon for me
> like a handsome blue-eyed muezzin
> . . . . . .
> Homs would set oval platters before me
> of stuffed eggplants spilling over with
> almonds
> . . . . . .
>
> Hatreds based on class and sect would
> disappear,
> along with political prisons and electric
> torture-prods,
> and no one would be afraid to be seen talking
> to each other
> or listening to poetry about Syria
> (This is my poem and I can do what I want
> with the world in it)

This speaker commands her political power by personifying Syrian cities and through use of the auxiliary or helping verb *would*, making space for subjunctive fantasies. But Kahf reminds us that her poetry is also a weapon. It could have severe repercussions in Syria: its power to strike fear in Damascus or Homs could provoke repressive measures, even torture, from the government. This is because "The Cherries" offers its listeners, in miniature, a subaltern public sphere for world shaping, a place where the city itself might be reimagined.

Metropoetics: *PMLA*'s Special Issue on Cities

Just as Aristotle's *Poetics* systematized the structure and flow of Greek tragedy, so a poetics of infrastructure, or a metropoetics, should describe the flow of literature as it pours into and out of the life of cities.[13] But how could there possibly be a poetics for entities as large, chaotic, historically differentiated, and geographically various as world cities? The doyen of spatial theory, Henri Lefebvre, deems such a project irrelevant. He denies the possibility of any working connection between "mental or literary 'places'" and space "of a purely political and social kind" (288–89). For Lefebvre cultural texts can do little to assess the contradictions of place, since, as "discourse," literary productions are simply Cartesian grids—topoi removed from lived social space. But Lefebvre also despairs of the gigantism of the social geographer's task:

> How many maps . . . might be needed to deal exhaustively with a given space, to code and decode all its meanings and contents? It is doubtful whether a finite number can ever be given in answer to this sort of question. What we are most likely confronted with here is a sort of instant infinity, a situation reminiscent of a Mondrian painting. It is not only the codes [and] the maps' legend . . . that are liable to change, but also the objects represented, the lens through which they are viewed, and the scale used. The idea that a small number of maps or even a single . . . map might be sufficient can only apply in a specialized area of study whose own self-affirmation depends on isolation from its context. (85–86)

Despite Lefebvre's protest, here literature has an advantage. The intertwining of codes; the habit of overdetermination; the multiple mapping that accompanies condensation and displacement; the layering that comes with the use of compound plots, points of view, tonality, atmosphere, and meter; and the dense range of figurative speech: each plaited literary device gives the weird, defamiliarizing

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treatment of cities a space-mapping advantage Lefebvre overlooks. The essays in *PMLA*'s Cities issue explore just this tangled complexity and add crucial terms to an urban imaginary.

1. It must be diachronic.

Huyssen reminds us that metropolitan literary forms are never synchronic; the urban miniature is a beautifully constricted trace of modern alienation and a regional response to the speedup of European modernization. In Huyssen's analysis the miniatures of Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, and Franz Kafka both record and construct a new register for perceiving space and time. In her essay revisiting the problem of method in Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, Katherine Arens describes *Stadtwollen* as the will to make a city. She unearths another Benjamin: not the genial, mournful collector but a theorist of method interested in the city as the central nineteenth-century artifact, a site where the built environment creates a subconscious or "logic of transformation" that generates new forms of knowing and intending.

Mary Bly and Mimi Yiu focus on Ben Jonson's *Epicoene* as a local event responding to seventeenth-century London's class and space conflicts. For Bly the liberties around Whitefriars provided well-to-do theatergoers with the opportunity to tour—and inhabit vicariously—a seamy side of a London quite different from their everyday space. In contrast, Yiu draws a map that fits imperfectly with the contours of Bly's map of lowlife tourism. Instead of emphasizing the physical space of performance, she explores the upper-class city region where theatergoers live. For Yiu *Epicoene* is finally about the hollowness of urban roles, the holes in citizens' identities at the moment of England's Great Rebuilding—another era of speeded-up urbanization, another diachronic intervention.[14]

2. It must be polymorphously perverse in mapping both space and time.

Exploring urban modernisms, Peter Kalliney describes unexpected continuities between the white progenitors of British modernism and late colonial intellectuals. Kalliney traces the ways in which late colonial or postcolonial writers played a central role in reinventing metropolitan modernism after World War II. Institutions and actors (the BBC, Faber and Faber, T. S. Eliot, and Stephen Spender) sponsored now canonical West Indian writers during the 1940s and 1950s: a complex urban and literary dialogue scholars miss when they focus on these writers' anticolonial nationalism.

In describing archipelagic structures in Ezra Pound's Venetian cantos, Jennifer Scappettone textures the tension between Pound's celebration of Venice as the "fascist city of man" and a canalized, amphibious lagoon city that is hollowly historical and liquidly allusive. For Pound Venice is both atmosphere and political center, an archipelago and a negative arpeggio. In Scappettone's work on Venice and in William Schaefer's essay on art deco Shanghai, space and time are stretched, elasticized, and shredded. For Schaefer the Shanghai of the 1930s emerges as the center of Chinese modernity even as it drifts toward the periphery of global modernity. Shanghai is simultaneously modernist and an ancient urban space "paved with shadows." Photographs and fictions tell the story of the present's past.

3. It must explore questions of citizenship.

Grounding their essays in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, and Rio de Janeiro, Vicky Unruh, Silvia R. Tandeciarz, and Marta Peixoto contemplate the wide differentials in the arts of citizenship. Unruh focuses on *Muerte súbita*, a play by Sabina Berman set in a cracked art deco building in Mexico City. Its ruins represent the city's refusal to nurture its citizens as well as Mexico City's layered, contested histories. While for Unruh recognizing the histories of the urban ruin becomes a precondition for imagining change, Tandeciarz describes memorials in Buenos Aires as transformed sites for citizenship. Three

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Argentine memorials capture disparate recollections of state terror and the death squads that threatened Argentina from 1976 to 1983. By examining the tensions between monuments and countermonuments, Tandeciarz argues that the ideals and memories enacted in architecture can instruct city dwellers in the practice of citizenship. Shifting to Rio de Janeiro, Marta Peixoto asks whether Brazilian filmmakers can bear witness to social crisis without deploying clichéd representations of poverty. Watching popular films with political undercurrents, she argues that bourgeois spectators are treated to vacuous stereotypes of Rio's impoverished favelas. Peixoto details an urban, political cinema, with smaller audiences, that counters these stereotypes and gives voice and particularity to the favela.

4. It must think about loss and pollution.

For John Blair Gamber, Gerald Vizenor's *Dead Voices* is a treatise on how to think about Native American praxis in the metropolis. Vizenor's urban Indians re-create Oakland, California, as Native milieu. Here garbage and waste become inseparable from praxis and creativity. Vizenor's characters construct subaltern counterpublics in the wanaki game, a competition of chance where human beings take on animal voices and shift shapes, opening the city to new pollutants, new voices. Eric Gary Anderson examines narratives focused on the child murders that took place in Atlanta from 1979 to 1981. When children's bodies are thrown into the Chattahoochee River or abandoned in empty lots and police are slow to respond, African American writers take up this cause. Anderson redefines the city's environment as ecosocial. For authors like Tayari Jones, the architectural skeletons of Atlanta's looming development suggest the bones of murdered children and these children's statelessness in a city that fails to notice their deaths. In the midst of Cape Town's similarly expansive construction, Heidi Grunebaum traces the fate of human bones in a city that refuses to memorialize the burial sites of former slaves. In cahoots with corporate builders, city officials expunge slave histories from construction sites and insist on relocating dememorialized bodies to hollow museums that reenact the history of displacement while making sacred bodies "mere bones."

5. It may be utopian.

In pursuit of utopia Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi analyzes the allegorizing drive that has turned Jerusalem into the "ground zero of the Hebrew imagination." While examining the dangers of a city turned into poetry, Ezrahi celebrates a newly utopian urban poetry where Israeli poets imagine a Jerusalem in which love is physical and embodied (instead of territorial) and *The Song of Songs* can be simply a song. In his essay on cities as libraries, Tony Vidler explores a Paris made newly readable in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by Sébastien Mercier and Charles Nodier. If the Western city can be read like a book and books are now virtual, how do city dwellers read themselves in the twenty-first century?

6. It once had walls.

In *Homer and the Sacred City* Stephen Scully says that "no single feature contributes more to the definition of a Homeric city than its city wall. For Homer, the polis is essentially a spatial and architectural entity, that place which nurtures, by enclosing, civilization with its prize of women and children. . . . 'In building the wall I citied Troy,' as Poseidon phrases it" (47–48). Although polis and city wall were once synonymous, in her conclusion to this special issue Sylvia Molloy redefines city walls and reminds us how far we have come from Homer's idyll. Returning to Buenos Aires, she finds "the walls of the city, literally papered with silhouettes. Every available surface, or so it seemed, was covered with black outlines of human forms on thick white paper, marked with persons' names and the dates of their disappearance." This is dystopian, yes, but also an altar to trauma.

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And yet Molloy also traces the utopian spirit of her second novel, *El común olvido*, where she captures "the chatter of a city"—the beautiful nonsense of other people's urbanity.

In these essays as well as the articles gathered under Correspondents at Large, our scholarly infrastructures expand. But we still need more equipment to address the inequities and creativities of the literatures of developing cities. Western theorists and critics have done a fine job developing a dialectic to describe the overly developed metropolis. But we also need a metropoetics that remaps the intricate structures at play in non-Western overurbanized city regions: spaces that seem to have failed but remain profoundly resourceful and inventive—refusing (in every sense) to solve the West's wage puzzle. These cities' lacks, their zeroes, reproduce a staggering sublime. As the architect Rem Koolhaas says, "In Lagos there is no choice, but there are countless ways to articulate the condition of no choice" (Ouroussoff).

I want to thank Marianne Hirsch for her important contributions to the Cities issue, as well as Nasia Anam, Ross Chambers, Marjorie Levinson, Christi Merrill, Josh Miller, Sid Smith, Valerie Traub, and Jennifer Wenzel for thoughtful interventions that helped shape this introduction.

Notes

1. In Vonnegut's scene of reverse gestation, the ruined polis heals when the chemicals that harmed it return to earth. These bombs are "shipped back to the United States of America, where factories were operating night and day, dismantling the cylinders, separating the dangerous contents into minerals" and nestling them in the earth: a tender reversal that can only be achieved by cinematic peripety (94).

2. Cities may also be repaired at great expense, only to be outmoded before completion, as in Sebald's description of the absurd fortifications built to defend Antwerp in the nineteenth century (16–18).

3. For Alter "Flaubert's breakthrough in the representation of the urban realm was to perceive the modern metropolis" as locus of powerful stimuli and as a "spatial reality so vast and inchoately kinetic that it defied taxonomies and thematic definition" (20). While agreeing with Alter's (and Flaubert's) prognosis, I suggest that the growing densification cries out for literary taxonomies that will help us see the variety of extrabourgeois urban patterns and creativity.

4. Wallerstein corroborates Davis on the growth of cities: "The deruralization of the world is on a fast upward curve. It has occurred continuously over five hundred years, but has accelerated most dramatically since 1945." But Wallerstein argues that the political and market savvy of the lower strata of cities will grow. Although large numbers of adults there are unemployed, they derive incomes from the informal economy, and "the real alternatives available to workers located in the barrios and favelas of the world-system mean that they are in a position to demand reasonable wage levels in order to enter the formal wage economy. The net result of all this is a serious pressure on profit levels that will increase over time" (60). Wallerstein does not see the end of underfunded cities, but he does predict that overurbanization will foster the failure of American empire, while Davis focuses on the population pressures and infrastructural absences that are likely to mitigate that failure. Davis attributes city densification and the slump in slum dwellers' economies to policies of privatization sponsored by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

5. Christi Merrill helped me formulate these questions.

6. Lefebvre insists that Marx's theorems about fixed capital should describe more than the "equipment, premises, and raw materials of a given enterprise" and become a measure of the infrastructural wealth of cities and towns (345).

7. Davis and Rem Koolhaas see these built environments differently. Describing the conditions of overurbanized cities, Davis argues that "the cities of the future, rather than being made out of glass and steel as envisioned by earlier generations of urbanists, are instead largely constructed out of crude brick, straw, recycled plastic, cement blocks, and scrap wood. Instead of cities of light soaring toward heaven, much of the twenty-first-century urban world squats in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement, and decay" (19). In his study of Lagos, Koolhaas identifies these new cities of straw but explains that districts of Lagos, "now a maze of informal markets and slum congestion," have nevertheless "devised their own court systems and electricity and water utilities." Koolhaas condemns the Nigerian government's plan to stop illegal street trade and make the city more disciplined. "Koolhaas realized that what seems like chaos to outsiders is a complex and highly organized social organism. His analysis suggests that a democratic, informal urban planning model could be combined with aggressive plan-

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ning to lift Lagos out of poverty without destroying the spontaneous freedom of daily urban life" (Ouroussoff).

8. Hogan admires Desai's sympathy for Baumgartner but argues that the novelist re-creates the "dehumanizing characterization of non-White people and . . . denigration of their culture" that we find in colonizing texts like *Heart of Darkness* (45). I suggest that Desai is cannier; her novel struggles with setting as a source of dehumanization and mourns the unevenness of urban shelter in Europe and Asia.

9. See Prakash on visitors' preference for Chand's tactile Rock Garden over Le Corbusier's abstract capitol (71). But also see Le Corbusier's own photographs of Chandigarh that include village workers (Prakash 84–85) and his drawings that try to merge village and city life (103).

10. As Lespinasse comments, "What other artist in the world has started out illegally only to become an official, government-paid artist?" (130). But see also Dubey et al. on the problems with official Chandigarh. Seventeen villages were bulldozed to make room for this city. The district made no provision for housing the thirty thousand workers who came to build Chandigarh. Their improvised huts became Chandigarh's first slum, a district that is still expanding.

11. Schaffer and Smith would supplement the concept of "formal networks" with "informal meshworks" in which "self-organized, fluid, and ever-mobile cyberworlds and spontaneous actions . . . grow in unplanned or unexpected directions around human rights activism." But they add that in the field of human rights "networks and meshworks intersect . . . in ways both mutually supportive and unpredictably contentious" (8).

12. In *The Fall of Public Man* Sennett maps the death of the public sphere and the birth of the inaccessible private sphere: a binary devolving over centuries. Instead of talking politics in the coffeehouse, "private man" makes his home a refuge from the "unsanitary," crowding public life. Instead of an exchange of public opinions, entire neighborhoods capitulate to the homogeneity of the domestic. But Sennett's categories—public/private, civic/domestic—are not the proper binaries for thinking about overurbanized cities. Instead, we need to contrast official city life with subaltern public spheres and with the secret city that offers another space of resistance.

13. I have been tracing a metropoetics that lacks Aristotle's organic morphology but suggests instead a strategy for understanding the history and phenomenology of cities through acts of cultural and literary making, or *poēsis*.

14. The concept of diachrony must in turn be complicated by the history making of nonsynchronous time, as well as of bizarre temporal sequences like Billy Pilgrim's reverse telos.

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