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Infrastructuring Consciousness: North American Surrealism's  
Non-reproduction of the Fossil Infrastructural Status Quo

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## Abstract

Fossil fuels and the infrastructures they proliferate offer the promise of stability, ease of movement, and a sense of political belonging to the future. However, the resurgence of poets, writers, and artists working within surrealism in the US's post-war period – an era in which fossil fuel relations deepened – suggests that fossil infrastructural life is intense, oneiric, and traumatic. Using surrealist insight that traces the past lives of infrastructure, these surrealist texts excavate histories of violence and exploitation that hegemonic fossil infrastructural imaginaries obfuscate. In turn, they refuse to reproduce the racial, colonial, and animal configurations and violences that fossil infrastructure enables and repeats. Nonetheless, their selective valorisation of fossil infrastructure's reproductive capability mean that they often reclaim the autonomy and creative power fossil fuels hold. This tension between non-reproduction and textual/artistic reproduction reframes the priorities of alternative energy futures toward reparation and the means of self-representation for groups marginalised by infrastructural development.

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**Introduction: the Case for Surrealist Interventions into  
Infrastructure**

On March 26<sup>th</sup> 2024, the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore collapsed, after a 289m cargo ship slammed into it in the early hours of the morning. The iconic bridge crosses over Baltimore's harbour area and the Patapsco river, relieving traffic congestion from other crossings further downstream. The bridge, designed for motorised transport and built in the 1970s, has been vital for Maryland commuters and for those travelling between Washington DC and New York city (Treisman, 2024: para. 13-17). Its collapse prompted then president Joe Biden to promise to cover the cost of repair, at an estimated cost of \$1.7 to \$1.9 billion (Witte, 2024: para. 1). Ten hours leading up to the crash, the ship's equipment had experienced two electrical blackouts; a loose cable proved to be the culprit, and one final blackout resulted in the crew losing control of the ship (Debusmann, 2024: para. 18). The crash ensued, with six dead in the aftermath (The Washington Post, 2024). The petroleum-fuelled ship, carrying miscellaneous cargo, was named the Dali.

The era of surrealist painter Salvador Dali's artistic output is well over, but for those surrealists who emerged in the post-war period of intensified fossil fuel use, this incident brings to mind the disparities between fossil infrastructural hegemony and surrealist interventions. Being countercultural thinkers, they often represented a reversal of this bridge collapse, with breakdown as liberating and functioning infrastructure as violent. Often members of minoritarian communities, post-war surrealist texts too bring to fore questions of reparation for those marginalised by infrastructural development, and not the reflexive repair of existing fossil infrastructure. The incident may be more literal than the representations of breakdown and collapse in post-war surrealist texts, but it invites the question: what happens when surrealism and fossil infrastructure collide? What alternative priorities, insights, and possibilities for reproducing otherwise emerge?

This project is an intervention in two fields of study yet to be united: post-war North American surrealism and the energy and infrastructure humanities. From an energy and infrastructure humanities perspective, the post-war period is salient for this project as it tracks the relationships emerging between surrealism and interventions in energy discourses. It is in this era that petroleum becomes the hegemony, building on the affects of futurity, modernity, and civilisational progress that had been part of the narrative of coal, and the latter's power to fuel spectacular electric lighting displays, facilitate long factory days, and transport commodities, people, and livestock by rail. Coal and oil's energy intensity meant that by 1955, 90.8% of energy inputs into US industry were made up of these two fossil fuels (Diamanti cited in Wenzel, 2017). As coal and petroleum relations intensified in the post-war period, surrealist groups and artists in the US found themselves in a world increasingly reliant on what Jennifer Wenzel calls 'fossil infrastructure', 'which here names not only infrastructure that processes, circulates, or depends on fossil fuels but also infrastructure that is archaic, obsolete, and otherwise tethered to the past, standing as an obstacle to transition' (Wenzel, 2022: 153). This project researches and analyses these post-war surrealist movements, at once offering novel readings of the texts analysed and inquiring how they can contribute to discourses of transition, infrastructural and textual reproduction, and reparation.

Scholarship on post-war 'oil culture' or 'petroculture' has provided insight into fossil infrastructure's cultural and social transformations, with an increase in car dependency signifying an ideological move towards entrepreneurship, the nuclear family, privatism, and white middle-class hegemony. For instance, Matthew Huber has convincingly tied oil-reliant infrastructures to an entrepreneurial life that involves using tarmac roads, driving a petroleum car to

work in office blocks or shop in megastores powered by coal-dependent electricity, as well as ideal of domestic life in which oil permeates every aspect, from heating, appliances, medications, food, clothes, and a vast array of other kinds of commodities (Huber, 2014). He calls this historic and cultural movement 'petro-privatism' (ibid.: 306). Petroleum and petrochemicals made possible the ideal image of post-war American life that lives on in the popular imagination, and which Huber helpfully defines within the scope of hegemonic American values that crystallised in the context of the Cold War, including individualism, entrepreneurship, freedom, and the nuclear family (ibid.). This thesis builds on Huber's analysis by researching how insurgent surrealist groups' poetry, art, and political writing and their entanglements and rejections of petro-privatism.

Other scholars have shown how petro-privatism can manifest as corporate propaganda, proliferating the claim that petroleum is a timeless resource rather than an energy source that emerges from a specific moment in history. In the post-war era, it is at this oil-abundant moment that energy corporations begin to use their vast resources to promote the narrative that oil is timeless, able to transcend the limitations of history and politics. For instance, Ross Barrett's research into oil extraction in Pithole Creek, Pennsylvania demonstrates how corporations rewrote the history of oil as both a civilising force for progress and subterranean prehistoric material, a gesture he calls 'petro-primitivist' (Barrett, 2014). Barrett focuses in on the Drake Memorial, a monument commissioned by the American company Standard Oil, which depicts a nude male oil driller. He analyses the monument as an example of emerging prescriptions of American masculinity that is primitive and aggressive, but also reinvigorating, vital, virile, and progress-driven: much like imaginaries of oil during this period (ibid.: 55). He also turns to the Sinclair Oil Company's display of animatronic dinosaurs at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair to

demonstrate how companies conveyed oil's prehistory and universality, as well as its capacity to power machines for the public's entertainment and education (ibid.: 59). Following on from Barrett and others' research, much of this thesis explores how corporations shape public imaginaries of fossil infrastructure, particularly in grandiose public displays at popularly attended World's Fairs in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco. As the subsequent chapters of this thesis demonstrate, it was in these cities that surrealists emerged with art and texts that demonstrated some level of antagonism to corporate imaginaries and its masculinism, refusing to reproduce their claim that fossil infrastructure is timeless or progress-driven, instead repositioning it within specific capitalist and colonialist relations.

Elsewhere, scholarship has centred its analysis on how petroleum and car dependence have shaped and reinforced class, gender, and racial hierarchies, such as Sarah Frohardt-Lane's research into automobility during times of rubber shortage due to the Second World War. She notes how adverts and newspapers encouraged women to walk as their need for driving was seen as lesser; they did so by tying pedestrianism to patriarchally prescribed feminine beauty standards and fitness (Frohardt-Lane, 2014: 101-102). Further, Sheena Wilson's concept of 'petrosexual' relations reveals how petroleum-based products in industries that promote feminine ideals of beauty and domesticity enforce rigid notions of womanhood within the context of the post-war 'age of oil' (Wilson, 2014: 248). While useful in understanding how fossil infrastructure hardens and reinforces gender hierarchy, a surrealist intervention is incisive here: as chapter 1 demonstrates, analysis of Kay Sage's art invites discussion of how modes of acceptable femininity – in particular, proscribed motherhood – are repeated through fossil infrastructure's mechanisms, enveloping female bodies into the

reproductive machinery of fossil capitalism. At stake here is not just how fossil fuels shape or harden constructions of femininity, but how fossil infrastructure produces and reproduces the conditions for female bodies to be instrumentalised as reproductive machinery. This supplements recent scholarship on the ‘embrace’ of the ‘toxic combination of climate denial, racism, and misogyny’ by new authoritarian movements, which Cara Daggett’s term ‘petro-masculinity’ describes (Daggett, 2018: 25).

Frohardt-Lane also writes how hostility to African American drivers - paired with near universal depictions of car owners as white - furthered public transit’s racialisation and undesirable status (Frohardt-Lane, 2014.: 93). This resulted in car-sharing (rather than public transit or walking) being favoured as means of rubber and gasoline preservation for white men, who refused to compromise the autonomy, status, privacy, and independence cars facilitated (ibid.). More than mere exclusion, however, scholarship on race and infrastructure has more recently researched how histories of chain gangs and slave labour can inform readings of literary texts and of roads (Zieger, 2022) and electricity grids (Gerson, 2022), reframing infrastructure not as promise but as threat and unfreedom. As such, scholarship has tended to focus on racial and minoritarian exclusion and disconnection, those ‘marginalized communities consigned to inhabit a state of intimate disconnect—a form of life that entails living in close proximity to infrastructure while at the same time disconnected (or excluded) from its circulatory systems’ (Wenzel, 2022: 159). Where surrealist texts intervene – as will be seen in chapters 2 and 5 of this thesis, discussing Afro-surrealism and indigenous surrealism respectively – is in their fantasies of connection and surplus, which are nonetheless mediated through recognition of dispossession and

marginalisation. It is through this ambivalent mode that surrealist texts offer a proscriptive shape to reparative infrastructure for racial minorities.

This project is part of an expanding field of research that looks towards fiction, art, and poetry to intervene in fossil infrastructural imaginaries, interrogating the mechanisms fossil infrastructures facilitate, the relationships they reproduce, and the priorities that underlie their installation. In particular, this thesis takes inspiration from scholars who acknowledge fossil infrastructure's creative and textually reproductive capabilities, such as Hannah Musiol's reading of *Sundown*, a bildungsroman from the perspective of a half-Osage Oklahoma native at the turn of the century. She argues that the novel contains ambivalence to oil extraction despite the way the narrative uncovers the failed promises of material wealth and indigenisation. '[D]espite ideological resistance to oil,' Musiol argues, it nevertheless 'intensified aesthetic experimentation across genres and media, experimentation we often associate with the domain of high, rather than energy, culture' (Musiol, 2014: 131). For *Sundown*'s protagonist Chal, 'petroleum seems to have the vitality – the force, flow, and direction – that [he] dreams of with envy yet can never achieve' (ibid.: 136). As energy-intensive petro-aesthetics created a sense of sublime and spectacle in our own world, fictional worlds too revered oil's creative potential, even in writing perspectives that recognise and record its extractive and colonial violence. This thesis extends Musiol's argument by analysing fossil infrastructure more broadly (not just oil itself), arguing that surrealist groups' relationships to textual and creative reproduction lead to a selective valorisation of the fossil infrastructure that enable it, uncovering the productive tensions between reproduction and non-reproduction in surrealist texts.

Similarly, Stephanie LeMenager in her book *Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century* analyses a range of North American fiction and non-fiction media – from novels, films, internet blogs, exhibits, documentaries, magazines, photographs, and more – to convey the sense that oil is a life-force that supports all modern media that constitute culture, in her words, ‘the everything of oil’ (LeMenager, 2014: 11). As such, our relationship to oil is necessarily turbulent: ‘Every chapter of this book tries out (essayist) our investments, my investments, in a profoundly unsustainable and charismatic energy system. This is a short cultural history of, essentially, destructive attachment, bad love’ (ibid.). Both collective and personal, public and domestic, LeMenager helpfully recognises how oil cuts through all aspects of life and our emotional responses to it, and how it acts as a simultaneously destructive and charismatic entity that shapes our lives. LeMenager argues that the non-fiction media she excavates (often from archives) help create regional communities that remember eco-loss and oil spills that otherwise risk being swept away by corporate entities, and that fiction can highlight the way in which corporate narratives are fictions in themselves (ibid.: 167). Remaining cognizant of ecological harm and being armed against corporate narratives are always useful, resisting seduction by the same techno-utopian, greenwashing corporate narratives in new clothing when it comes to discourses regarding the future of energy and infrastructure.

This project intervenes in this discourse by suggesting that fiction and art’s strengths – and for this project, post-war surrealist fiction and art in particular - lie in their energy-intensive aesthetic strategies that convey the ambivalences of living in a fossil fuelled socio-economic system. This, in tandem with post-war surrealism’s acceptance of irrational ontologies as valid alternative ways of perceiving the world, create insightful spaces to explore fossil infrastructure as

both violent to marginalised groups and life-giving to insurgent ones. This project similarly builds on Lemenager's creation of communities, with surrealist groups and artists printing art, poetry, and fiction to create and circulate solidarity against the fossil infrastructural status quo. It is precisely these tensions between fossil infrastructures' capacity for art and reproduction, as well as brutality and exploitation, that post-war surrealism finds its most productive insights into reparation and repair. Fiction, art, and their circulation provide multifaceted and creative spaces to process and register the ambivalence, loss, excitement, sublime, and spectacle of fossil infrastructure. For surrealists and their insurgent politics, these circulatory spaces were vital for solidarity and resistance against fossil infrastructural hegemony, as well as foregrounding alternative priorities for future transition.

### Methodologies and frameworks

'Infrastructure' is a key term for this thesis, contributing to scholarship that rejects the notion that infrastructures are no more than a hum in the background, but formations whose significations and materialisations are visible, vast, and tangible. The collaborative work *The Promise of Infrastructure* demonstrates how infrastructures such as 'roads and water pipes, electricity lines and ports, oil pipelines and sewage systems, are dense social, material, aesthetic and political formations' whose access often forms a sense of political belonging (Appel, Anand, and Gupta, 2018: 3). This in turn gives 'power' its dual meaning as infrastructural access as well as political agency (Wenzel, 2017: 3). As these works illuminate, the legwork of the pre-fix 'infra' is important here: it demonstrates

how infrastructures form political subjectivity and agency in ways that are deeply relational and hierarchical, much more so than previously popular terms, such as 'network' or 'system', imply (Carse, 2019: 27). It is from these initial discussions that literary scholars whose heuristic and focal point was previously oil or oil culture have turned to infrastructures to understand how they create political, social, material, and aesthetic 'forms of life' and make legible fossil fuels' circulatory and mediating role, due to infrastructure's "undeniable materiality" (Wenzel, 2022: 156). Where oil so often escapes representation, fossil infrastructures form a more coherent 'narrative grammar' (ibid.: 154) from which we can understand fossil infrastructure's 'positionality within a set of colonial/capitalist relations' (Johnson and Nemser, 2022: 5).

As such, this project is a part of an evolution in infrastructure humanities scholarship that reads fossil infrastructures and their imaginaries, considering texts that are not always (though sometimes) explicitly about sites of oil or coal extraction, the fossil fuel industry, or people's encounters with oil or coal in their crude form. Rather, it is the affects, traumas, life pathways, subjectivities, and hierarchies made possible by the energy-intensive and extensive use of fossil fuels in the post-war period that primarily concern this thesis. In particular, this project invests in an understanding of fossil infrastructural world-building in the United States as *not just* structured by the intensification of petroleum extraction and culture in the post-war period, but in large part by the Westwardly expanding project of settler colonialism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Settler colonialism's extractive policies and mechanisms make coal, copper, and steel just as relevant to consider and analyse as petroleum. Each of these materials are relevant to the energy-intensive infrastructure that characterises the fossil fuelled and settler colonially structured world of midcentury America onwards, and as

such post-war surrealist texts often engage with these materials just as much as they do with petroleum-fuelled cars and petroleum-derived asphalt.

The expansion of literary interventions into the infrastructure humanities is indebted to media studies in terms of methods, offering understanding of how political forms materialise into infrastructure. For instance, Darin Barney's 'Infrastructure and the Form of Politics' has inspired this thesis to consider how 'the imposed reproduction of settler colonial political economies, resistance to this imposition, and adaptation to its perceived benefits—all take the material form of infrastructure' and that '[c]olonialism and white supremacy are political forms that happen as infrastructure' (Barney, 2021: 231; 228). Where oil pipelines have understandably taken the focus as 'invasive infrastructure' for indigenous communities (Spice, 2018), given political resistance to them in recent years, this thesis considers more broadly how the partitioning of space for the development of railroads, highways, electrification, suburbs, and food infrastructure (particularly meat infrastructure) are the materialisation into infrastructure of settler colonialism and white supremacy. This thesis' primary research aim is to reveal how post-war surrealist texts inflect these materialisations.

As Darin Barney writes above, these materialisations into infrastructure are an 'imposed reproduction', highlighting infrastructure's reproductive capability. This refers not only to the repetitive form of infrastructure, such as Brian Larkin's example of infrastructural projects which are 'copies, funded and constructed so that cities or nations can take part in a contemporaneous modernity by repeating infrastructural projects from elsewhere to participate in a common visual and conceptual paradigm of what it means to be modern' (Larkin, 2013: 333). This reproductive capacity also refers to infrastructures' repetitive mechanisms over

time, reproducing again and again the social, economic and political conditions they facilitate. This characteristic reproductive capability of infrastructure can broaden into abstraction, with Marina Vishmidt writing that ‘time is an infrastructure’ and that ‘infrastructure is that which repeats’ (Vishmidt, 2017: 265). Holding in mind more material formations, understanding this reproductive capacity is vital in seeing how infrastructure produces and reproduces settler colonial conditions. As the editors of *Broken relations: infrastructure, aesthetics, and critique* write,

Infrastructures make specific forms of coexistence possible, or they prohibit them – an ability that highlights infrastructure’s role in the (re-)production of those societal and global asymmetries that manifest themselves in everyday forms of racism, sexism, class structure, and, consequently, inequality. (Beck et. al, 2022: 9-10).

These reproductive mechanisms are salient to post-war surrealist texts in two ways. The first is that repetition is an aesthetic strategy that has its lineages from interwar surrealism, whose practitioners sought insight into the compulsive mechanisms of the unconscious to re-experience trauma and repeat behaviours associated with reliving that trauma, such as in cases of shell shock (see Foster, 1993). These repetitive forms find salience for post-war surrealist texts engaging with fossil infrastructures’ continual reproduction of violence and inequitable relationships, offering insight into the traumatic aspects of fossil infrastructural development and its continual structuring force. This manifests in the repetitively ecocidal and patriarchally coercive world-building of Kay Sage’s paintings in chapter 1 of this thesis; the resurfacing of coerced labour in coal mining in Ralph

Ellison's *Invisible Man*, explored in chapter 2; the continued marginalisation and casualisation of animal death as explored by Chicago Surrealist Group founding member Franklin Rosemont's poetry in chapter 3; the continual structuring force of settler colonialism in the West in surrealist Lawrence Ferlinghetti's poetry in chapter 4; and the continual dispossession and deprivation of the Apsáalooke tribe as it resonates in Wendy Red Star's photography in chapter 5. Post-war surrealism's interest in repetition and trauma make it incisive in discussing fossil infrastructures' reproductive capability, interrogating fossil infrastructural imaginaries that promise newness, futurity, modernity, and escape from old forms.

The second way reproduction is salient to post-war surrealism is in its political commitments to resisting the status quo. Surrealists saw themselves as occupying a position of radical alterity, rejecting hierarchies with an often insurgent fervour. The Chicago Surrealist Group were among the most passionate in their political writings, urging readers in

Rejecting, totally, the political, theological, literary, philosophical and academic assumptions which hinge our society to the withered refrigerator of civilization (and which are, in any case, rooted in stupidity and class interest), and insisting, moreover, on our own irresistible emotional autonomy, we find it essential to *affirm* [...] *absolute revolt*. (CSG, 1996: 10).

While not all post-war surrealists spoke in the rhetoric of revolt, what unites the post-war surrealists covered in this thesis is that they all, to some extent, engage in non-reproduction of the status quo. Here I borrow from Lee Edelman's thinking in *No Future*, in which 'reproductive futurism' forms the basis of all hegemonic

politics (Edelman, 2004: 2). For Edelman, it is the phantasmagorical figure of 'the Child' in which people invest their notions of the future; he then posits that it is this figure and reproductive futurism's 'ideological limit on discourse' that prevents queerness from emerging as a radically alternative position and offering an escape from the reproduction of the heteronormative status quo (ibid.: 2). This thesis uses Edelman's term 'reproductive futurism' to describe instead the way people invest infrastructural imaginaries with a futurity that is reproduced via fossil infrastructure, and which has a similar ideologically limiting effect on discourse. In turn, this thesis presents surrealist interventions as a queer (in the sense of radically alternative) and ideologically expansive politics of non-reproduction of the status quo of settler colonialism and white supremacy. 'Non-reproduction', while not a term that Edelman uses, is a key term for this thesis that is indebted to *No Future's* politics and which finds salience in its interventions into infrastructure's reproductive capability.

Wenzel's definition of fossil infrastructure, cited earlier, aids this thesis in its framing of the tension between reproduction and non-reproduction in surrealist texts. In this definition, she includes infrastructures indebted to oil wealth and investment, including fiction (ibid.: 170). In turn, she elaborates how fiction itself operates infrastructurally: for instance, she points to intertextuality and motifs as ways in which texts pivot away or towards literary conventions and traditions, such as China Miéville's decision to specify in his short story 'Covehithe' that a birdcall is "not a nightingale", a bird which appears in the work of many in the classic canon such as Ovid, Milton, Shelley, and Coleridge (ibid.: 164). Wenzel describes these motifs' inclusion or exclusion as 'infrastructural frameworks for composition and interpretation: they are pathways (or parameters, grooves) that order the ground for the circulation of meaning' (ibid.).

Using this idea, this thesis pays particular attention to representations of fossil infrastructures in surrealist texts, and it will also consider surrealist texts as infrastructure in two senses: the first is in their avant-garde aesthetic strategies, which form pathways away from the limited thinking of fossil infrastructure; in other words, surrealist texts provide infrastructure for alternative modes of consciousness. The second is in their material circulation, proliferating non-reproductive politics via print culture and its reproductive mechanisms. This focus is indebted to the ethnographic turn to infrastructure, which, to borrow from Lisa Parks and Nicole Starosielski, marks ‘a critical shift away from the analysis of screened content alone and toward an understanding of how content moves through the world and how this movement affects content’s form’ (Parks and Starosielski, 2015: 1). While not as pollutive as the mass reproduction which characterises fossil capitalism, this selective valorisation of some forms of reproduction (particularly literary, artistic, and poetic, which facilitate self-representation for marginalised groups) nonetheless reorganises priorities in future infrastructural worlds. As subsequent chapters of this thesis will show, post-war surrealists’ self-envelopment into their own agential ‘reproductive futurism’, as made manifest by the print and literary cultures they participated in, is a politically incisive gesture that demands space and creative autonomy for marginalised groups in the future.

This thesis’ understanding of infrastructure and its temporalities is similarly indebted to affect theory, understanding the installation of fossil infrastructural imaginaries not as merely the materialisation of logistical processes, but as an interplay between materiality, sensation, and agitations towards particular modes of thinking. Scholars in infrastructure humanities have previously written on the way infrastructure agitates, enervates, and creates an ambient environment that

produces a sense of embodiment within a particular time and culture. Brian Larkin describes how 'Infrastructures create a sensing of modernity, a process by which the body, as much as the mind, apprehends what it is to be modern, mutable, and progressive' (Larkin, 2013: 337). As such, a field dedicated to 'affective infrastructure' has emerged, in which it is argued that 'The specific temporalities of infrastructure systems – expectation, repetition, decay, repair, maintenance, and everydayness – are generative of specific kinds of affects, such as despair, frustration, or hope (Ramakrishnan et al., 2021a)' (Bosworth, 2023: 56). Some have cautioned against the 'affective turn' in humanities, such as Eugenie Brinkema's warning that affect risks being misunderstood as a place in which 'something immediate and automatic and resistant takes place out of language' and that affect gives the false impression that it 'obliterate[s] the problem of form and representation' (Brinkema, 2014: xiv). However, this thesis bypasses this problem by reincorporating infrastructural affect into the politics of representation, taking on Kai Bosworth's suggestion to 'understand these [affects] as not mere bodily affections, but affects that index transformations in power' (Bosworth, 2023: 56). Considering both the affects of hegemonic infrastructural systems and the usurpation of affective power by marginalised groups in post-war surrealist texts, this project highlights how surrealist texts instrumentalise affect in the fight for power over the means of self-representation and a place in modernity and the future. Consequently, affect becomes a useful term for this thesis to describe how fossil infrastructure's evocation of sensations and feelings (hope, belonging, despair, homeliness, futurity) are reproduced in surrealist texts and the fight for the means of self-representation.

Lastly, this thesis is further indebted to queer theory in its methodology of what Eve Sedgwick calls 'paranoid' and 'reparative' readings (Sedgwick, 1997:

27). Reparation is a key term for this thesis as it researches how post-war surrealist texts compare to and juxtapose fossil infrastructural hegemony. Most of the post-war surrealists included in this thesis are minoritarian or have demonstrated allyship to minorities in their political activism and writing, and as such demonstrate awareness in their art and political writing of the ways in which fossil infrastructure dispossesses, marginalises, excludes, and enacts violence against minoritarian communities, including non-human life. This thesis therefore reads the surrealist texts covered in this thesis in a 'paranoid' way, drawing out how they represent and reproduce fossil infrastructural relations. As the thesis' next section will discuss, post-war surrealism is difficult to define, but these paranoid readings are incited by post-war surrealist methodology of adopting anti-rationalist insight that excavates the former lives and relationships of technological objects and infrastructural systems. Post-war surrealism is defined, in part, by this paranoid disposition that unearths and recognises histories of exploitation and dispossession.

However, as Sedgwick writes in her advocacy for reparative reading, there are epistemological limits to such paranoid readings. For instance, Sedgwick's conversation with HIV activist scholar Cindy Patton notes, "suppose we were sure [...] that the lives of Africans and African Americans were worthless in the eyes of the United States; gay men and drug users are held cheap where they aren't actively hated [...] - what would we know then that we don't already know?" (Patton quoted in Sedgwick, 1997: 3-4). By contrast, as Sedgwick writes, 'The desire of a reparative impulse [...] is additive and accretive', contributing new forms of knowledge (ibid.: 27-28). The post-war surrealist's disposition may be paranoid, which welcomes paranoid readings of their texts, but it is this project's findings that their texts sometimes have such reparative impulses in their moments of non-

reproduction of the fossil infrastructural status quo, and that these reparative impulses are also part of what defines surrealism in the post-war era. As well as the paranoid, this project finds focus in reparative readings of its chosen texts to uncover how post-war surrealist interventions contribute new knowledge to discourses of transition and the designing of future infrastructural worlds. As such, for post-war surrealism and this project, reparative readings slip into the more material concerns of reparation: this could be, for instance, financial restitution or the repossession of stolen land. 'Reparation' here takes on the meaning of providing the infrastructure for sustained pathways of minoritarian life and self-representation, which may involve such reclamations even if post-war surrealists do not always explicitly demand them.

The methodologies outlined serve this thesis in maintaining a tight focus on key concerns around reproduction and reparation, but they also risk flattening the texts analysed into the infrastructure humanities fold. It is not this thesis' intention to ventriloquise the writers and artists covered and say that their art is 'about' infrastructure, or that they solely or even consciously respond to fossil infrastructural contexts. Surrealism's dissociative methods and liberatory impulses resist such monosemy, and as Anahid Nersessian writes in *The Calamity Form*, recognising the 'autonomy of aesthetic objects from the obligation of making sense of the world' allows the literary critic to move through texts without 'solv[ing] them' (Nersessian, 2020: 10, 15). This thesis recognises that like the Romantic poets that concern *The Calamity Form*, surrealist poets and artists 'are as limited as any other cultural producers—and any other historical persons—in their ability to challenge or subvert the status quo', particularly when 'the ambiguity and imprecision of the aesthetic object meet capital's phantasmagoria' (ibid.: 13, 11). This thesis' method of reading surrealist texts does not 'solve' or decode them, nor

does it present a neat solution to questions of reparation and transition that arise. Neither does this method of reading erase other hermeneutic possibilities for the texts which this thesis has chosen to read through fossil infrastructural contexts, but which also inflect love and loneliness on an interpersonal as well as infrastructural register. With such a tight focus on historical infrastructural contexts, these ambiguities and imprecisions sometimes elide consideration. Nonetheless, the hermeneutic pathways forged by this thesis' historicist approach has the advantage of meeting the aesthetic object within an imaginary of the point and conditions of its own production. This methodology is in itself imperfect and imprecise – as Nersessian argues, 'poetry and perfect historical knowledge do not mix' (ibid.: 23) – but it allows the thesis to think through surrealist art's materiality in historical fossil infrastructural contexts, and recognise surrealist art's reproduction in this period as genuine attempts at infrastructuring counterhegemonic and reparative thinking in inequitable conditions and from the vantage point of a revelatory paranoia.

### What is 'post-war surrealism'?

Post-war surrealism is a term I devised for this thesis to describe a partially united movement of surrealist writers, artists, poets, and activists in the United States after the Second World War. This movement is expansive both geographically and temporally, with surrealist groups and writers remaining active from East coast to West coast and from the midcentury to the 1990s and 2000s. Their diffuse nature is perhaps part of the reason why the term has not previously been used, but each surrealist covered in this thesis is united by their

indebtedness to previous surrealists' thought and ideological aims. Part of this project's work in uncovering this unity is to create a chronologically presented corpus of North American surrealism, starting with surrealist painter Kay Sage in the 1940s and 50s and ending with surrealist photographer Wendy Red Star in the 2000s and 2010s, the latter of whom stands outside the post-war period, but whose work is shaped and informed by concerns of post-war surrealists before her. The subjects of in-between chapters saw their height of textual proliferation in the 1950s and 1960s, and all fiction and poetry analysed is from this period; the focus on midcentury contexts consequently makes 'post-war' a useful descriptor. Creating this corpus has been generative in describing an artistic and literary movement whose members' differences have in the past overshadowed their unity, as well as uncovering how surrealist texts register the conditions of the midcentury onwards. This distinguishes this project from research that explores how the European surrealists of the 1920s responded to technology and industry, of which there is already a wealth of literature.

In this project, I distinguish between 'post-war surrealism' and 'interwar surrealism', with the latter describing a fragmented movement of artists, writers, thinkers, and avant-garde experimenters centred in Paris but expanding outwards to Europe more broadly in the 1920s and 30s. While interwar surrealists were not a unified, harmonious group (Salvador Dali and others' expulsions, as well as the Bretonian/Bataille split, evidence this), they nonetheless magnetised around common ideological aims. For instance, they employed avant-garde strategies and methods to disrupt and subvert the formalism, rationality, and teleological projects that seemed to characterise much of modernism (Paterson, 2018: 360). They similarly established their unique interventions in the Zeitgeist of psychoanalytic thinking, as they became fascinated with notions of unconscious but

wholeheartedly rejected Freud's conservative calls to sublimate unconscious drives for the benefit of 'civilization' (see: Freud, [1929] 2005). Instead, they sought to liberate unconscious expression through 'psychic automation', a kind of unedited and automatic form of textual creation, as well as exploring the spiritual revelations that can arise from dissociative experiences (Paterson, 2018: 362-4). Some of the post-war surrealists in this thesis experimented with psychic automation, including the Chicago Surrealist Group, though most didn't. Nonetheless, post-war surrealists' commitment to anti-rationalist modes of thought and liberated consciousness were very much indebted to these experiments and have informed their textual creations. Although not 'post-war', Wendy Red Star similarly continues this tradition into the twenty-first century.

Lineages of interwar surrealism, such as anti-rationalist thought, are what unite the corpus of post-war surrealism this project has created. For interwar surrealists, anti-rationalist thought could be explored via disassociation and trance, but it was also mediated through an occult relationship to objects and technologies. As Abigail Susik's research shows, the invention of the telephone, telegraph, and typewriter allowed for communication between remote, disembodied entities, inspiring a surrealist spiritualism that sought to reach out to lost consciousnesses and the dead (Susik, 2016: 253). The belief that technologies could communicate with entities long dead informed surrealists' politics: concerned with the re-emergence and repetition of the past, interwar surrealists refused to see technologies as neutral, voiceless objects, fetishised and disconnected from social and labour relations. As Katharine Conley's research shows, prominent interwar surrealist André Breton was an avid collector of objects, and inspired by automatic trances in his Parisian apartment in the 1920s, advocated for an anti-rationalist insight that could sense objects' former lives

(Conley, 2017: 263). Conley describes how he and other surrealists sensed 'memories [in the objects] akin to the dream traces human beings carry in their unconscious minds' (ibid.). It is primarily this mode of sensing and experiencing technologies and objects that is the most significant holdover from interwar surrealism to post-war surrealism. Part of this thesis' aim is to research how post-war surrealist texts applied this Bretonian anti-rationalist insight into the technologies and infrastructures of their own era, and the interventions into the fossil infrastructural status quo that arise from this insight.

While specific historical and technological contexts informed interwar surrealists' methodologies, scholars of this period of surrealism nonetheless highlight that their strategies, political impulses, and legacies extend well beyond the interwar period. The Second World War produced diasporas of surrealism's practitioners, some of whom travelled across the Atlantic in the 1940s and spread its influence to the United States (including André Breton himself, though he moved back to Europe after the war ended). One such surrealist is the subject of this thesis' first chapter, Kay Sage, who was born in New York but lived for a number of years in France and Italy. She returned to New York to escape Italian fascism, and provided funds and a sense of community for other artists fleeing Europe. From there, surrealism's influence spread across the United States: surrealist groups, publishers, and their overlapping artists, poets, and writers established themselves as important voices amongst the Beat Generation, the countercultural movements of the 1960s and '70s, and postmodern thinkers (Kolocotroni, 2018: 3-4). Despite scholarship recognising this far-reaching influence, no corpus had yet been established, and in comparison to interwar surrealism, scholarship on North American post-war surrealism is scant.

Partly, the relatively scant scholarship on post-war surrealism can be attributed to surrealism's increasingly vague definition as its forms and influence transversed and transformed across the United States. In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in the post-war period and surrealism's role, though scholars tend to frame surrealists' importance through their contribution to larger countercultural and union organising, resituating surrealism as an activist and political movement. For instance, the collection *Radical Dreams: Surrealism, Counterculture, Resistance* (published in 2022) notes in its introduction notes how popular definitions of surrealism 'as a mere buzzword for "bizarre, "dream-like," or "nightmarish"' have obscured its political commitments (Susik & King, 2022: 6). However, the issue of definition and specificity remains unaddressed. What is surrealism in this era? Is it a movement, a genre, a commitment to countercultural politics, a set of aesthetic strategies, a particular artistic method, a community (or communities)?

Turning to surrealists themselves can be frustrating for those wanting formal signifiers to identify surrealist texts. Instead, surrealists provide vague, playful definitions, though not without purpose. In *Black, Brown, & Beige: Surrealist Writings from Africa and the Diaspora*, co-editor and Chicago Surrealist Group founder Franklin Rosemont writes in the introduction, with a clear aim of inclusion of previously underrepresented black surrealists, that the anthology includes works from 'individuals who, though neither adherents of the Surrealist movement nor formally allied with it, have nonetheless proved by their exemplary attitude and activity – as poets, writers, artists, and activist – that they have fully qualified as objectively surrealist' (Rosemont and Kelley, 2009: 2). What these qualifications are remains mysterious.

Given surrealism's relationship with objectivity and rationality, this statement reads as facetious, privileging inclusion over gatekeeping and feeling over formality. What the co-editors admit here is that some artists have been included because they *feel* surrealist in attitude and/or politics, and that formal elements do not serve to qualify whether an artist or work is surreal. This latter point is necessary from the perspective of the avant-garde, in which resistance to reification and commodification requires constantly transforming aesthetic practices. The introduction continues: 'Surrealism has always resisted the effort of critics to confine it to *any* static definition. Surrealists themselves have always preferred to speak of Surrealism in terms of dynamics, dialectics, goals, and struggles' (ibid.: 2-3 [emphasis original]). Rather than laying down a set of formal strategies, surrealists form open-ended communities of liberated expression that resists the constraints of commodification. Czech surrealist painter Toyen would define surrealism as 'a community of ethical views' in the 1950s (Toyen quoted in Rosemont, 1998: 81), while many decades later, surrealist poet Jayne Cortez would note in a 2005 talk at Loyola University in Chicago that 'Surrealists, even those who haven't met before, always tend to recognize each other' (Cortez quoted in Rosemont, 2009: 3). Community, an ethics of resistance to the status quo, and constant aesthetic transformation are therefore key components that help identify surrealist texts in the absence of formal similarities.

Part of this project's aim, then, is to demonstrate the specific ways post-war surrealism draws from interwar surrealist thought – including anti-rationalist thinking, sensing the former lives of objects, a preoccupation with trauma and repetition - all-the-while recognising the multiple surrealisms that emerge from its diffusion across the United States, with limited consistency when it comes to formal elements. This multiplicity is exemplified in the term 'Afro-surrealism', a

term that becomes relevant in chapter 2 of this thesis, and which emerges from surrealist influence on African American authors of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1930s. Afro-surrealism distinguishes itself from other surrealisms by taking inspiration from modes of seeing that Latin American surrealists promoted in their approaches to art when surrealism made waves there in the interwar period. D. Scott Miller's 'Call it Afro-Surreal' manifesto begins with a quote by Frida Kahlo: "I'm not a surrealist. I just paint what I see" (quoted in Miller, 2009: para. 1). These Latin American legacies resonated with African American writers and creators whose subjectivity within daily American life felt viscerally tied to surrealist preoccupations with repetitive trauma and dissociative states. Where other US surrealists tended to blur the boundary between wakefulness and sleep in their works to access dissociative ways of thinking, for Afro-surrealists, it was the reality of being fully awake and dissociated in a surreal, racially violent world that describes their experiences.

Moving into the twenty-first century, the language of 'staying woke' became an important rallying cry for African Americans and allies in the cause of racial justice to not give into propagandic forces which try to erase the experiences that lead to social consciousness, particularly in relation to race. We can trace this lineage back to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), the earliest example D. Scott Miller cites as an Afro-surreal text is his manifesto. In this novel, dream imagery and the boundary between sleep and wakefulness do feature; however, the unnamed protagonist makes clear at a crucial moment of racial humiliation and trauma that he 'kn[ew] [he] wasn't dreaming' (Ellison, [1952] 2016: 416). Afro-surrealism in the US context works with different kinds of racialised subjectivity and psychological landscapes that distinguish it from other North American surrealists. Nonetheless, the fact that 'surreal' has found relevance through

different decades to describe African American experience is a credit to the term's charisma and polyvalent potential. In Ellison's introduction to *Invisible Man*, he writes that the process of its creation was 'far more disjointed than [it] sounds [...], such was the inner-outer subjective-objective process, pied rind and surreal heart' (ibid.: xxxv-xxxvi). Even if consciousness is a politically important tool for demanding racial justice, Afro-surrealism's interplay of inner and outer realities ('rind' and 'heart'), as well as its trauma-centred aesthetic, conveyed the emotional turbulence required to relay African American experiences.

Nonetheless, dreams and dream ontologies remain relevant for Afro-surrealists: Scott's manifesto calls for ways in which art can 'clear the murk of the collective unconsciousness as it manifests in these dreams called culture' (Miller, 2009: para. 22). For surrealists, art is about revelation and clarity of emotion but the nebulous nature of culture, the self, and dreams make it an ambivalent and polyvalent process. Even if the different surrealisms cannot be convincingly constellated through preoccupations with dreams or the unconscious, (nor can they rely on set aesthetic strategies or tropes due to their avant-garde legacies and politics of inclusion), there are still some key priorities that make the term meaningful. The privileging of emotional responses at unconscious and conscious levels makes surrealism a sensibility more than a genre or movement; it is a mode of sensing and reacting to the world that magnetises a range of political interests that run counter to various hegemonies.

Finally, this thesis posits that a reframing of the term 'surrealism' towards excess and surplus, rather than around dreams and the unconscious, is where it is most politically and infrastructurally useful. Franklin Rosemont writes that 'Surrealism - an *open* realism - signifies *more* reality, and an expanded awareness

of reality, including aspects and elements of the real that are ordinarily overlooked' (Rosemont and Kelley, 2009: 3 [emphasis original]). It is this focus on excess that ties the surreal to the Afro-surreal, also; in his definition of Afro-surrealism, Johnathan Eburne writes that it is not defined by a dominant culture it resists, but that it manifests as 'the embodied, damaged, *surplus* of this dominant culture' (Eburne, 2022: 154 [emphasis mine]). It is from this vantage of surplus that Wendy Red Star's indigenous surrealism makes its interventions too, with 'surplus' denoting the surplus of fossil infrastructural reality as it dispossesses her tribe; the colonial designation of a 'surplus' population that justified to colonisers the tribe's dispossession; and fossil infrastructure's surplus effects and affects, which structure the tribe's relationship to fossil infrastructure and fossil fuel extraction on the Crow Reservation.

This heuristic of 'excess' and 'surplus' provides an opportunity to reframe post-war surrealism, indigenous surrealism, and Afro-surrealism as registering the surplus of fossil infrastructural hegemony, as well as its obfuscations of social, labour, and non-human relationships, aspects which are 'ordinarily overlooked' in hegemonic thinking. It is from this vantage that we can see how surrealist interventions in fossil infrastructural contexts are usefully holistic: these surrealisms do not define themselves in opposition only, but also in terms of the ongoing surplus of fossil infrastructure (including their hegemony and affects), and this surplus' traumatic effects. Shifting focus away from surrealism as representations of the unconscious to surrealism as representations of surplus opens up opportunities to explore how post-war surrealist convey re-embodiment and reparation through textual proliferation and community, recognising mutual experiences of ambivalence in fossil infrastructural contexts.

## Inclusions and exclusions

This thesis presents a roughly chronologically presented corpus of post-war surrealism, though this chronology is rendered imperfect by subjects whose textual production spans many decades. The chapters also move from East coast to West, providing a (by no means complete) topography of surrealist artists in the United States and creating a narrative of surrealism's diffusion, starting in New York in the 1930s and 1940s and making its way to Chicago and San Francisco in the 1950s and 1960s. Artists and writers in these metropolitan areas continued to create and write into the 1990s and 2000s, creating a long tail of post-war surrealism. As the thesis' penultimate chapter will show, this long tail continued to have influence into the twenty-first century, with Montana-based photographer Wendy Red Star employing surrealist aesthetics in the 2000s and 2010s.

All chapters except the penultimate focus on artists and writers in metropolitan areas, including New York, Chicago, and San Francisco. This is not to suggest that surrealism did not have influence outside major cities, however. The reality is that surrealism's influence was widespread in North America, with diverse practitioners each with their own local variations and inflections. The decision to focus on metropolitan areas was two-fold; firstly, they are dense loci of fossil infrastructure and sites of grandiose public displays of fossil infrastructural imaginaries. Each city cited above hosted multiple World's Fairs, which are large-scale and massively popular exhibitions that featured displays of projected or idealised future cities, technological advances, and presented narratives of civilisational progress. Notably, General Electric and General Motors, two

monopoly companies by the midcentury, funded many of the Fairs' displays and lighting. These Fairs provide crucial insight into fossil infrastructural imaginaries and were huge cultural phenomena, in turn modelling a hegemony that intersects and contrasts surrealist texts and imaginaries. Secondly, it was in metropolises that post-war surrealists tended to find each other, and these communities generated print and exhibition cultures that spotlighted and proliferated surrealist texts. This proliferative quality is vital to this thesis and its examinations of both fossil infrastructural proliferation and surrealist textual proliferation.

The exception to this metropolitan focus is chapter 5's Wendy Red Star, whose artwork features representations of her tribe's reservation in Montana. This inclusion provides a perspective that is usefully non-metropolitan, recentring focus onto sites of fossil fuel extraction and settler colonial marginalisation and dispossession. Her inclusion allows the project to stand outside of post-war surrealism both temporally and geographically, allowing critical insight into previous surrealists' limitations in terms of their consideration of Native perspectives. Where post-war surrealists were concerned with the non-reproduction of settler colonial infrastructure, Wendy Red Star provides a more incisive and detailed response, all-the-while utilising surrealist techniques to convey tensions between reproduction and non-reproduction.

This project has mostly analysed literary works, including poetry, prose, and political writing, paying particular attention to print cultures and their proliferative mechanisms. This focus has allowed the thesis to place the Chicago Surrealist Group's Black Swan Press and San Francisco surrealist Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights Publishing within a framework of countercultural infrastructure, both in the proliferation of reading materials and the forging of pathways towards

counterhegemonic thought within surrealist texts' content. Post-war surrealism's print cultures are only a fraction of the movement's textual output, however, with painting, photography, performance art, music, dance, film, and TV all serving as media for the proliferation of surrealist ideas. This thesis has tried to honour this diversity of media output by analysing painting and photography in chapters 1 and 5. The paintings and photos analysed in these chapters convey similar concerns to the literary texts this thesis analyses, including fossil infrastructural world-building, reproduction via fossil infrastructure and non-reproduction of the status quo, and reparative infrastructure.

There are necessary limitations of this thesis' proposed corpus, with many post-war surrealists excluded. Of particular note are the Afro-surrealist writers, artists, and musicians emerging from the Harlem Renaissance, including Henry Dumas and Sun Ra, whose works engage with New York's fossil infrastructural hegemony in distinct ways to Ralph Ellison, who is chapter 3's focus. There are doubtless other musicians, writers, and poets that emerged from this movement that would have been familiar with Ellison's sentiment, if not the phrase itself, 'Harlem is nowhere', conveying the dispossession and infrastructural limitations of this predominantly African American New York neighbourhood. How might they configure reparative infrastructure compared to Ellison? What are their representations of fossil infrastructure and its intersection into African American subjectivity like? Analysis of Dumas', Sun Ra's, and others' works would be a welcome extension to this project's findings, and for which this thesis has provided a theoretical framework.

Lastly, there are post-war surrealists published under Black Swan Press and City Lights that were not included in this thesis because of their limited

surviving output, their overlap with other surrealist groups which resulted in their work containing a weaker focus on the specific metropolitan contexts that concern this thesis, or because the majority of their work was published under a non-surrealist press. Examples include the Chicago Surrealist Group's Jayne Cortez, who spent relatively little time in Chicago and was less included or involved in Black Swan Press than other members; San Francisco's Nancy Peters, who co-owned City Lights Publishing and bookstore alongside Lawrence Ferlinghetti, but who was published under Black Swan Press and other publications; and Nancy Peters' husband, surrealist poet Philip Lamantia, who edited for Black Swan Press. Peters' and Lamantia's dual contributions to the Chicago and San Francisco meant that their poetry felt less incisive into the specific material metropolitan contexts than other post-war surrealists in this thesis. Nonetheless, they are both vital contributors to post-war surrealism's diffusion in the United States, hence meriting their mention here. Including those whose work was proliferated by independent surrealist presses and galleries allows this project to focus on these specifically surrealist reproductive mechanisms, and therefore track the intersections of post-war surrealism, reproduction, non-reproduction, and fossil infrastructure.

#### Thesis overview chapter by chapter

Chapter 1 begins in New York, with the desolate and post-industrial landscapes of Kay Sage. New York is a logical start point for a corpus of post-war surrealism, as the city served as a refuge for artists and writers fleeing European fascism. Kay Sage herself, though New York-born, lived most of her life in France

and Italy, returning to her city of birth in 1939. She used her substantial inherited wealth to fund other surrealists making the journey across the Atlantic, creating a community of self-exiled surrealists. Her connection to European interwar surrealism is therefore much more direct and intimate than the post-war surrealists of later chapters; this comes across in her paintings' aesthetics, conveying oneiric landscapes reminiscent of the work of Dali, her husband Yves Tanguy, and Giorgio de Chirico. Nonetheless, as chapter 1 argues, her style may be strongly influenced by the aesthetics of European interwar surrealist painters, but her paintings often take on the form of New York's smoggy, vertical, and isolating cityscape. As such, her work represents a bridge between interwar and post-war surrealisms, taking aesthetic influence from the former but engaging with fossil infrastructural intensification of the post-war era. As chapter 1 shows, her work's juxtaposition with New York's 1939 'World of Tomorrow' World's Fair reveals the former's non-reproduction of fossil infrastructural promises and affects, revealing in its stead ecocide, animal death, masculinism, and coerced motherhood. Nonetheless, there are moments of selective valorisation of reproduction in her work; it is these moments that offer reparative insight.

In chapter 2, we remain in New York but look with more specificity towards Harlem, as we turn to Ralph Ellison's 1952 novel *Invisible Man*. Though disputable, D. Scott Miller, author of the manifesto 'Call it Afro-Surreal!', singles out *Invisible Man* as the earliest Afro-surrealist novel, citing Ellison's claim in the novel's introduction that it contains a 'surreal heart' (Ellison, [1952] 2016: xxxvi). Regardless of whether it is the earliest, *Invisible Man* exemplifies Afro-surrealist intervention into fossil infrastructural imaginaries, conveying both the non-reproduction of their promises and the simultaneous adoption of their affects. Paralleling the novel itself, the chapter begins and ends with the eponymous

invisible man's subterranean and brightly illuminated retreat. This affecting image – both in the novel itself and in photographic promotional material for the novel's release – orients the chapter's analysis of the novel's complex relationship between visibility and representation in the context of a white supremacist society that wields fossil infrastructure and its narrativisation of civilisational progress to construct and reproduce racist characterisations. With attention to Harlem's historical context of African Americans being excluded and stealing from New York's coal-powered electricity grid, as well as the novel's repeated references to coal and coal labourers of the post-emancipation era, this chapter discusses the proscriptive shape of reparative race relations presented by the novel's engagement with fossil infrastructural contexts.

By chapter 3, we turn to surrealism in Chicago, and the formation of the Chicago Surrealist Group in the early 1960s. An insurgent group of activists, organisers, poets, political theorists, and visual artists, the Group's impressive output under their own Black Swan Press make them impossible to ignore in a corpus of post-war surrealism. Chapter 3 uses original archival research of the Group's extensive publications to show how their political writing and poetry – in the latter case, particularly that of founding member Franklin Rosemont – intervened into Chicago's history of meat production, paying attention to representations of reproductive settler colonial infrastructure that continues to have structuring force in the marginalisation of animal lives and casualisation of mass animal death. In turn, the chapter assesses the Group's politics and poetics of a kaleidoscopic animal vitality, understanding Black Swan Press as a proliferative, reparative, and reproductive mechanism to resist the fossil infrastructural, meat-producing, and settler colonial status quo.

In chapter 4, the thesis turns to surrealism in San Francisco, and its proliferation via City Lights Publishing and bookstore. Since the 1950s, surrealism had been influential on both the Beat Generation and the San Francisco Renaissance, with members entering trances and dissociative states during their writing process, much like their surrealist predecessors. At the centre of this moment of surrealist revival was City Lights, whose owner, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, used his own collection of surrealist poetry (titled *Pictures of the Gone World*) to launch the still-running Pocket Poets Series. Understanding Ferlinghetti as a vital figure of surrealist and countercultural textual reproduction, the chapter analyses his poetry and its interventions into the specifics of reproductive settler colonial infrastructure in the 'West', and particularly the way in which San Francisco was founded through the privatisation and sale of numerous lots of land and water. The chapter contrasts his poetry's configurations of settler colonial identity with those of San Francisco's 1915 World's Fair, the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, magnifying Ferlinghetti's non-reproduction of the latter's configurations. Through a (not entirely unproblematic) indigenous solidarity, Ferlinghetti's poetry criticises a settler colonial infrastructural imaginary of white proliferation as exemplified at the World's Fair and through the myth of Manifest Destiny, foregrounding instead settler colonialism's death-producing infrastructure for indigenous groups.

Ferlinghetti's more extinctionist view of indigenous life is usefully countered by chapter 5's focus on Apsáalooke surrealist photographer Wendy Red Star. The Apsáalooke (also known as the Crow) currently reside on their much-reduced land in southern Montana, a key site of copper and coal extraction. The presence of both of these materials is what served as justification for the US government to displace the Apsáalooke of their land, and which made the electrification of the United States possible. Red Star's brightly illuminated and lively aesthetics

intervene into these dispossessive and extractive contexts, reclaiming fossil infrastructural affects of belonging to the future and to the realm of culture rather than nature. Her representations of the Crow Reservation are the non-reproduction of colonial designations of extinction, offering instead reproductions of serial images that foreground and prioritise sustained pathways to Apsáalooke life, spirituality, and cultural practice. Of particular import are her contributions to discourses of transition and reparation, spotlighting settler colonial infrastructure's reproduction of neglectful and destitute conditions on the Reservation. This chapter provides much-needed indigenous perspectives to intervene into post-war surrealist texts' engagements with settler colonial infrastructure, nonetheless highlighting Red Star's continuation of post-war surrealist concerns such as repetitive trauma, surplus, and reparation. As a later surrealist, producing work in the 2000s until the present, this chapter provides a point of entry into contemporary transition discourse, to which the conclusion turns.

## **Chapter 1 - Kay Sage's Negation of Fossil Infrastructural Imaginaries**

To create a coherent narrative of post-war surrealist art and literature, as it intervenes into discourses of non-reproduction and infrastructure, we begin in 1930s New York city. The reasoning for this starting point is twofold: firstly, this is the era of surrealism's migration to North America from Europe, and secondly this era manifests an extension and intensification of the ideologies and imaginaries that underpinned fossil infrastructural development, as made manifest by public and grandiose displays of fossil-fuelled architecture, transportation, roadways, and electrification. The convergence of these two streams of surrealist migration and public celebration of fossil infrastructural intensification is best exemplified by the year 1939, as it was this year that surrealist painter and poet Kay Sage escaped fascist Italy to New York, and that the 'World of Tomorrow' World's Fair held in Queens, New York city envisioned a near-future saturated by fossil fuels. In the World's Fair's exhibitions, the reproduction and expansion of fossil fuel relations promised life and social mobility to middle-class white American families. By contrast, in Kay Sage's work, it is this very same reproduction that is ecocidal and restricting to both animals and humans. At this early stage of surrealist establishment in North America, already there are interventions into fossil infrastructure and its reproduction of the specific social and political configurations that prioritise the white middle-class family ideal.

This chapter interprets Kay Sage's work in a novel way. Previous scholarship has read her work as a response to the Italian fascism she was forced to flee (Miller, 2022); a response to frustration, sadness, and grief in her personal life, including the gradual loss of her eyesight and early death of her husband, fellow surrealist painter Yves Tanguy (Conley, 2021); an expression of 'loyalty' to the surrealist community she helped migrate to New York, as well as her own depressive tendencies towards isolation and loneliness (Suther, 1997); or as an

extension of the French and Italian surrealist art traditions (Suther, 1986). As the bulk of existing scholarship focuses on biographical details, the scale of her work's intervention has been minimised; these interpretations run the risk of reducing the lonely verticality of her painted cityscapes to representations of her own depressive mental state, or a response to her deteriorating physical and mental health towards the end of her life. However, as this chapter will demonstrate, her paintings are simultaneously interventions into the very publicly displayed fossil infrastructural imaginaries of her era. This chapter also extends her work beyond the remit of French and Italian contexts and art traditions, arguing that her work engages with the context of midcentury North American fossil infrastructure and its ecocidal expansion as much as it does with the death-producing ideology of European fascism. While Sage is in many ways a bridging point between the European surrealist tradition and the post-war North American surrealists that subsequent chapters of this thesis engage with, there are new avenues of critical exploration to be found in placing her, as this chapter does, as a key initial figure in the thesis' corpus of North American surrealism.

What emerges, then, when we compare Sage's characteristically desolate cityscapes with the simultaneous emergence of futuristic imaginaries that promise expansion and proliferation for white American families? How does Sage's work engage with the overt infrastructural promise of expansion and life and the implicit promise of isolation from racialised and non-human others? And what are the repercussions for autonomy – particularly women's bodily autonomy – in an infrastructural system that masks its instrumentalisation of white women's bodies as sites of racial reproduction with rhetoric of freedom, democracy, and futurity? Lastly, what do the alternative forms of reproduction that emerge in her work

(particularly artistic reproduction) tell us about alternative or reparative infrastructure?

### Lonely verticality: Sage's representations of New York city

New York city has significance for both Sage and for surrealism, being the city of her birth and later a refuge for surrealist artist and writers in the mid-twentieth century. This is due in part because a diaspora of surrealists from Europe made the transatlantic journey to North America's East coast to escape increasing fascist violence in the 1930s and 1940s. Of particular note is André Breton, co-founder and prominent theorist of the interwar surrealist movement based in Paris, who fled to New York city in 1941 following censorship of his writings by the Vichy government. In 1942, Breton co-organised what the *Newsweek* paper identified as the 'biggest all-surrealist show ever seen in the United States' (Various, 1942: 76), an exhibition titled *First Papers of Surrealism*. Although he returned to Paris shortly after WWII in 1946, his influence in the United States would spread beyond New York; the Chicago Surrealist Group have attributed Breton – who they later travelled to Paris to meet – as a major inspiration and influence on their work and political praxis (see chapter 3). From there, surrealism would even spread to the West coast, with a substantial surrealist literary movement in midcentury San Francisco that survived through communities formed around independent printing and book-selling (see chapter 4). As this chapter will explore, New York served as a highly visible and popular site of proliferation of fossil infrastructure's liberal imaginaries, yet it is also served as a refuge and point of contact for surrealism to extend its outreach to towns and cities

across the United States, mutating into political and artistic works with their own local inflections and fixations. This tension between the non-reproduction of a deleterious status quo and the reproduction of counterhegemonic surrealist art and media is one that also will be felt in the works of North American surrealists in subsequent chapters. This productive tension, in which expansion and reproduction are selectively valorised, provides insight into the proscriptive form of reparative infrastructure (i.e., what reparative infrastructure should look like and prioritise).

A seminal exhibition for North American surrealism, *First Papers of Surrealism* is best known for Marcel Duchamp's 'mile of string' twine installation, and has captured the attention of scholars of surrealism (see: Vick, 2008 and Hopkins, 2016). Of more interest to North American surrealism were the paintings of Kay Sage, which were featured at the exhibition. Born in New York, her move back represented a return to the unfamiliar, as she had previously lived most of her life in Europe. Leaving behind a husband in Italy, she arrived with her new French husband and surrealist painter Yves Tanguy in 1939, having met in Paris in 1938, and the two joined a community of international surrealists operating in New York. The *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibition would not be the first or last time her work would gain attention in New York's various galleries, including the Pierre Matisse Gallery, Julien Levy Gallery, and most recently, the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Her work's continued success and proliferation in institutes of New York metropolitan pride similarly betrays a tension between her commitment to non-reproduction of the city's infrastructural status quo and the reproduction of her work as counterhegemonic force.

Sage's relationship to Europe and her escape from European fascism are undeniably rendered in her work. Scholars have productively read her architectural and lifeless paintings as mournful interrogations of fascist architecture, whose geometric stylings aimed to proliferate fascist notions of order and authoritarianism (see: Miller, 2022). Miller convincingly ties Sage's disillusion with fascism to her eventual disavowal of former friend Ezra Pound, as he became increasingly open about his anti-Semitic beliefs and celebrations of Mussolini (ibid.: 62). However, these are not the only contexts that inform Sage's work, and her intense, oneiric, and mournful representations of New York suggest dialogue with the city's infrastructural contexts. For instance, the structuring force of Sage's 1940 painting *Danger, Construction Ahead* (figure 1) is more New York – with its characteristic verticality, numerous bridges, and impressive skyscrapers – than it is Mussolini's Third Rome. How might we read the painting's sharpness, barrenness, and inhuman scale in the context of the fossil fuel hegemony that has made New York the city it is?



Figure 1 – *Danger, Construction Ahead*, Kay Sage, 1940 (© Yale University Art Gallery).

Sage's work emerges at a moment when exhibitions publicised near future models for the city, emphasising grandeur, spectacular electric lighting, efficiency (through grid patterns and expressways), democracy, and liberation. The 1939 World's Fair held in Queens, New York was one such large-scale and popular expression of hegemonic fossil infrastructural imaginaries. Similar to previous World's Fairs, curators installed large electricity towers, electricity fountains, organised evening light shows, and constructed tall, pointed buildings as part of their imagining of 'the World of Tomorrow', which served as the fair's overarching title. While methods of extraction or energy sources were not made explicit, the role of fossil fuels was implicit in building and sustaining these energy-intensive

infrastructures. For instance, the monopoly private energy company General Electric were a key funder for these installations, relying on coal to generate the electricity for the fair's impressive lighting. The 130,000 miniature lights needed for the fair's City of Light diorama attest to the energy-intensive aesthetics, made possible by coal, that both the public and General Electric hoped to develop further (Nye, 1992: 372).

As David Nye argues, this pageantry extended many of the values of previous World's Fairs: it promoted intensive artificial electricity as evidence of white ingenuity, creativity, and enlightenment in contrast to the unelectrified, dark, unenlightened societies of non-white communities (including African Americans in the South) (ibid.: 36). The Fair also exploited an affect of infrastructural development and access - a sense of belonging to the future - to orient the fair's primary demographic of white middle-class Americans' perspective forwards rather than backwards. This forward gaze served to obscure historical contingencies of infrastructural development that are difficult, tense, or which create inequality. This includes, but is not limited to, the ongoing disparities in access to electricity structured by wealth inequality (and due to electricity's installation by private companies); coerced African American labour in coal mining and road construction; animal violence and displacement; and increased segregation of space into privatised spheres of commerce and home away from inner cities, further exacerbating race and class disparities. Nonetheless, these electrified visions of New York sparked a new movement of commercial painters who began painting the city and its dazzling lighting from a high up perspective (ibid.: 76-77), contributing to its iconic image as a bustling, lively, spectacular metropolis.

Rather than concede to the shiny new visions of ‘the World of Tomorrow’, Sage’s paintings do not engage in the racist and hierarchical pageantry that constitute the World’s Fairs and their inauguration of a white supremacist vision of electrified modernity. While the structures in her paintings retain the characteristic verticality that evokes New York, there is no charismatic lighting, which creates an atmosphere of oppression and bleakness. The imposing structures in *Danger, Construction Ahead* have neither charm and nor the Fair’s enlightened aesthetic, leaving behind threatening, sharp, and isolated structures that suggest cold masculinist grandeur in place of electric lighting’s liveliness and warmth. The scale of the painting’s bridge is inhuman and impractical, too, with a notable absence of people or vehicles. James H. Miller has noted some similarities between *Danger, Construction Ahead* and Italian futurist Antonio Sant’Elia’s architectural drawings, in particular his *Città Nuova* [New City] (figure 2). Architectural historian Esther da Costa Meyer wrote of Sant’Elia’s buildings that they were ‘impenetrable structures [that] are more like mountains to be scaled than buildings to be entered. [...] Gone also are human beings, dwarfed in absentia by these sinister masses’ (da Coster Meyer, 1995: 61). Sage’s buildings are similarly impenetrable, lacking doors or windows, emphasising instead a masculinist infrastructural priority of durability and displays of domination that is part of fossil infrastructural world-building. Read from an infrastructural humanities perspective, the painting therefore interrogates whether the grand scale of energy-intensive fossil infrastructures serve human relationships, and exposes how they materialise an ideology that exacerbates alienation and disconnection.

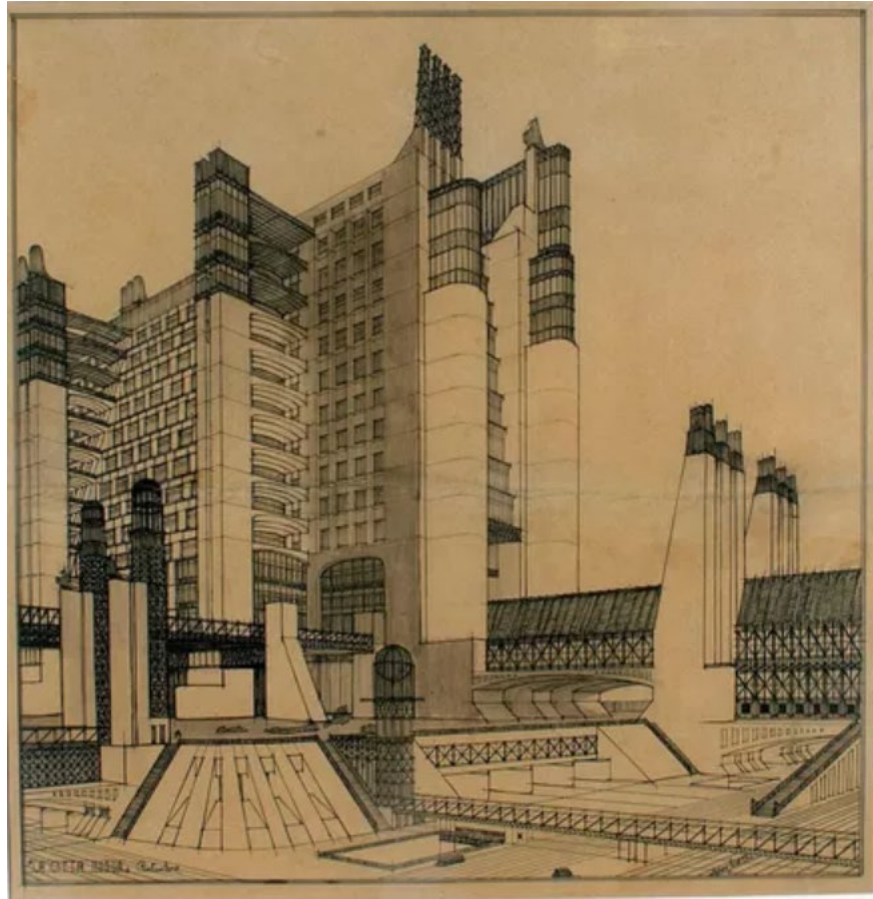


Figure 2 - *Città Nuova*, Antonio Sant'Elia (© Pinacoteca Civica di Como).

Whereas Miller attributes the sharp-tipped buildings as exaggerations of Sant'Elia's sloped, inhuman buildings, they also reference the structures in the 'World of Tomorrow' World's Fair, many of which were similarly needle-like (figure 3). However, where these structures provide a sense of order, solidity, and security, Sage opts for metal draping that is more haphazard and imprecisely placed. This aesthetic choice intervenes in fossil infrastructural imaginaries' fantasy of domination over nature by representing structures that do not seem to bend to humans' will, and which precariously slope downward of their own accord. Whether in the process of development or decay, these structures' precarious aesthetic brings questions of maintenance to the fore and which have only proven

more relevant over time. As Stephan Graham notes on his article on metropolitan verticality, issues of precarity and maintenance (which contravene liberal politics and imaginaries) can quickly turn visions of dreamy loftiness into the isolating structures Sage represents:

While power outages never featured in the imaginings of the modernist architects who postulated life in vertical towers thrust up into the 'light and air' and away from the urban ground, the fragilities of contemporary power grids can quickly turn vertical living into vertical isolation. (Graham, 2014: 257).

Contrary to hegemonic imaginaries, Sage's representation of fragile verticality casts doubt over the long-term viability of infrastructures that at once celebrate a hierarchical separation from nature and non-white races and rely on maintenance and care to be sustained. In other words, if isolation and hierarchy are fundamental parts of the motivation for building these infrastructures, why believe that there will be systems of care in place to maintain them?



Figure 3 – 1939 New York World's Fair's 'World of Tomorrow' exhibition in Flushing Meadows, Queens (© CORBIS).

*Danger, Construction Ahead* brings to the fore questions of care and maintenance that are implicated in both the forward-looking trajectory of infrastructural imaginaries and the backward-looking perspective that arises from representations of infrastructure that is no longer functional. In Sage's painting, this non-functionality is implicit in the sagging metal, lack of entry points, and notable lack of electricity; these culminate in representations of infrastructure that can no longer serve its purpose, which is, as Marina Vishmidt argues, to repeat. She writes, 'The repetition is normalised into everyday routine, and when it stops functioning, an aperture is cut into its artifice – through which history and power relations can be seen' (Vishmidt, 2017: 265). Sage's non-functionality is a non-repetition (or non-reproduction) of the social and political configurations fossil

infrastructural world-building facilitates. This process of disrupting repeated infrastructural processes provides an opportunity to reveal the hierarchical, masculinist, and ecocidal relations that arise from their repetition, and how infrastructure reproduces these very relations in its repetitive form.

Where ecocritical poetics and thought have tended to emphasise horizontal relationships to foster greater ecological intimacy, Sage's vertical structures - painted from a wide, distant perspective - further unveils historical relations of power and infrastructure. In particular, it illuminates how the liberal ideology that underpins fossil infrastructural development re-deploys Enlightenment principles that separate humans from nature as part of humanity's evolution into modernity. These principles were evident from the 1939 New York World's Fair, where a display from the fair's City of Light diorama claimed that:

New York with its proud singing skyline of stone and steel is the wonder city of the modern world. London, Berlin, Paris, Moscow and Rome seem like strange earth-bound cities of an older age when compared to this. (quoted in Nye, 1992: 373).

Freed from the confines of 'earth', the City of Light diorama puts forward an imaginary that situates New York and its humming (or 'singing') energy-abundance as progressive and futuristic. Nye captures this uncoupling of nature and urban infrastructures as positive and awe-inspiring through Leo Marx's concept of 'the technological sublime'. For Nye, this expression describes the transition from the Romantic understanding of 'sublime' that valorised the humbling and inspiring scale of 'natural spaces' (in the sense of broadly, but perhaps not entirely, uncoupled from human technology) towards one that finds awe in newly

aestheticised urban spaces due to artificial lighting (ibid.: 59). Instead of understanding nature as an awe-inspiring agent, this sense of wonder is redirected towards human control over electricity, understood to be a powerful, dangerous, and lively. In the quote above, it is electricity that imbues otherwise lifeless stone and steel with a singing and lively force; it is what animates the city in an act of God-like life-giving. It is the 'pride' in being able to manipulate and dominate this natural force, rather than this force itself, that fossil infrastructural imaginaries celebrate. This affect was successful not just in the grandiose displays of World's Fairs; Ezra Pound, arriving in New York and seeing the city's bright lighting, declared that 'we have pulled down the stars to our will' (Pound quoted in Kenner, 1975: 5), compounding the seemingly cosmological power embodied by fossil infrastructural development.

This separation of urbanity and nature obscured the relationship between infrastructural development and extraction that binds the former to earth-derived materials. By stripping her structures of lighting, Sage's paintings foreground the structures' materiality and refuse to reanimate them with electricity, drawing attention to methods of extraction that result in violence and death for ecosystems. In *Danger, Construction Ahead*, the copious metal structures stand amidst a barren wasteland, stretching beyond the painting's field of vision and made all the more vast by the bridge's exaggerated length. Although the structures stand tall and distant from the barren ground beneath, speaking to the fossil infrastructural priority of separation and distance from earth-bound limitations, their height is exaggerated by the hollowed-out and empty landscape below.

This emphasis on verticality mimics New York's characteristic skyscrapers, but it also calls attention to the relationship between a petromodernity that builds

upwards and its reliance on subterranean resources, such as steel, oil, and coal, to sustain these developments. Returning to Graham's article, he notes how the elevator evolved concomitantly with skyscrapers, and how it was innovations in cabling in mine shafts – as well as electricity's installation - that permitted elevation to be an integral part of metropolitan development (Graham, 2014: 243). With this context in mind, the painting highlights how this sense of cosmological power is in fact dependent on, rather than separate from, the earth and its exploitation. Without an electric force to infuse the structures with life, accompanied by a visibly hollowed out subterranean landscape below, the materials remain legible as dead, extracted matter. Sage therefore reinscribes the erosive and deadly consequences of extraction that are obscured in grandiose displays of fossil infrastructural animation and liveliness.

Sage emphasises this sense of flattening or levelling out of life with a brushstroke technique that creates a smooth, even effect, with very little texture from the paintbrush translating to the canvas (Chadwick, 1985: 166). Where smoothness and ease of movement are key affects of fossil fuel modernity, Sage appropriates these qualities to instead suggest erasure of life. In her francophone poetry, Sage shows sensitivity and awareness of the effect fossil infrastructural developments have on urban animal life. In 'L'Autre Côté' ('The Other Side'), the poem begins with the narrator wondering about the motivations of a squirrel crossing a road: 'vanité ? Curiosité ? / Ou le simple besoin de voyager ?' ('Vanity? Curiosity? / Or the simple need to travel?') (Sage, 1957: 43). This moment of playful and inquisitive animal-watching is emphasised by the buoyant internal rhyming of the /e/ sound in 'vanité', 'curiosité', and 'voyager', mimicking the squirrel's hopping as it moves and ascribing diverse thought and emotion to its actions. However in the next stanza, this playful tone shifts to more brooding and

morbid as the inevitability of the squirrel's fate as roadkill comes to the fore: 'une chose est sûre / y finira sous une voiture / bel et bien une confiture' ('one thing is certain / he will end up under a car / once and for all a smudge') (ibid.). This visceral image of the dead body of the flattened out squirrel is subtly replicated in Sage's lifeless painting *Danger, Construction Ahead* through its smooth and smudged brush work.

As Matthew Calarco has written, the 'hyperautomobility' of fossil infrastructural systems has sanctioned and normalised roadkill, in which animals are 'routinely sacrificed in the service of the established social order of mobility' (Calarco, 2023: 36). To make this argument, he borrows Judith Butler's term 'grievability', and its absence in the case of animals within fossil infrastructural systems. Butler writes that 'Without grievability, there is no life, or, rather, there is something living that is other than life. Instead, "there is a life that will never have been lived," sustained by no regard, no testimony, and ungrieved when lost' (Butler, 2009: 15). This can be seen in fossil infrastructural imaginaries which elide grief for loss of animal life. Reinstating grievability has become useful praxis in the context of animal rights in a hyperautomobile world; Matthew Calarco notes how rituals that involve picking up roadkill and moving it off the road is a form of grieving that presses pause on the mundane flow of petrocapiatist life (Calarco, 2023: 59). Sage's poem is a similar kind of ritual that reinstates grievability for animals, in that it anticipates and inscribes this moment of pause by imagining the squirrel's death before it inevitably happens. As such, it grieves not just the life of the squirrel, but the squirrel's life of freedom and mobility that petrocapiatist infrastructure precludes. The poem's rhyming structure of ABCC, DDDD, CCCC in the original French grants it a sense of inevitable repetition and stasis. Configuring

Butler's notion of un-grievability in reverse, this life of paralysis is grievable because there is a life that could have been lived.

Though dead animal bodies and methods of extraction are not explicitly shown in Sage's paintings, they are aspects that nonetheless haunt the images in the aftermath of their erasure from hegemonic imaginaries. The structures' metal draping, for instance, gives insight into Sage's methodology as a surrealist painter: it suggests concealment. Due to the metal's sloping, it suggests this concealment is in the process of being revealed. Using surrealist methodology that uses art to represent the repressed, Sage exposes the violence and isolation that underpin fossil infrastructural development, and which are otherwise obscured in hegemonic imaginaries. This is an interesting contrast to other forms of revelation more conventional in, for instance, social realism, which focuses on heroic struggle against oppressive forces (Morson, 1979: 122). The New York Sage depicts is structurally familiar to viewers, but with a quality that feels off; the atmosphere is oneiric, with the feeling that the paintings uncover something eerie and unsettling. In *Danger, Construction Ahead*, infrastructural connection is exposed as hierarchical separation, and construction as violence; but the painting also visually represents concealment to show the ways in which hegemonic imaginaries displace these problematics from view. New York becomes defamiliarised and hollowed out to the viewer, stripping back beneath hegemonic imaginaries and their obfuscations to aspects which are more material and fundamental to fossil infrastructural world-building.

Where the imaginaries of the 1939 World's Fair offer visions of boundless, futuristic expansion, Sage's barren wasteland is an exercise in non-reproduction. It does so by refusing to reproduce the affects of liveliness and futurity embedded in

fossil infrastructural imaginaries of her era. This marks Sage's non-participation in what Lee Edelman has called 'reproductive futurism', an ideology that privileges compulsory heterosexuality and its emphasis on biological reproduction, as embodied in the phantasmic figure of 'the Child'. This term has useful application for the infrastructure humanities and its interventions into hope, promise, and futurity which underlie infrastructural reproduction and development. For Edelman, non-reproductive queer sexuality has the potential to 'uptur[n] our foundational faith in the reproduction of futurity' (Edelman, 2004: 17); for Sage, non-reproduction of the affect of futurity similarly upturns the faith in fossil infrastructural imaginaries to engineer a lively future. In its stead is infrastructure that reproduces ecocide and masculinist loneliness.

### *Tomorrow is Never and non-reproductive futurity*

In *Tomorrow is Never* (figure 4), a title that has thematic resonance with Edelman's seminal book of non-reproductive queer theory *No Future*, we see Sage painting similarly unelectrified, vertical buildings made with semi-processed materials and internally obscured by draping. Like *Danger, Construction Ahead*, the painting draws attention to the act of construction with scaffolding that surrounds each building, and endows it with the same mournful and deathly feeling. The wood scaffolding feels noticeably undeveloped in contrast to the 'singing' skyline of 'stone and steel' described in the City of Light exhibition; Sage represents structures that are even more stripped back, and which can be productively read as looking backwards through stages of infrastructural development. This directly contravenes the forward-looking optimism of

infrastructural discourse of her time, and instead draws attention to the various kinds and scales of extraction that are a part of fossil infrastructural development. Knowing that Sage's family became wealthy from timber extraction, and with no electric lighting or other materials to enliven or constitute the buildings' exteriors, the wood stands out as dead, extracted matter. The title and the painting's dead components both refuse the ideology of reproductive futurism that underpins fossil infrastructural development, instead criticising it as death-producing rather than life-giving.



Figure 4 – *Tomorrow is Never*, Kay Sage, 1955 (© 2024 Artists Rights Society, New York).

The hazy, dark smog ties these infrastructural developments – in particular their proliferation and scale, as each structure is repeated almost identically – to an increasing reliance on fossil fuel combustion to bring to the fore its pollutive

effects. In an era where fossil fuel extraction and combustion are deepening but simultaneously obscured by fossil infrastructural imaginaries, this attention to materiality makes visible the lineages of extractivism that are both historically contiguous and ecologically devastating. The title bears similarity to Edelman's *No Future*, but is more directly in dialogue with the contemporaneous 1939 World's Fair title 'the World of Tomorrow'. In its negation and rejection of this title, the painting refuses the Fair's optimistic futurity to mourn those whose tomorrow is unrealised due to fossil infrastructural development's violence. For Sage, it is politically important to expose how the reproductive mechanisms of fossil infrastructure (i.e., the repeated developments of the same lonely, deathly structures) are non-reproductive for those it violently excludes and eliminates.

Like *Danger, Construction Ahead, Tomorrow is Never* evokes New York's verticality, though its framing obscures the city's characteristic density in favour of portraying the buildings as solitary and segregated. The bustling streets that would have connected the buildings to one another are obscured by both the perspective and the smog. Where fossil infrastructural imaginaries emphasise circulation and free movement, Sage's structures are isolated and static. In the General Motors-funded 'City of Tomorrow' futurama as part of the 1939 World's Fair, fair-goers saw a projected model of 1960 New York (figure 5), replete with expansive expressways made possible by petroleum-derived synthetic asphalt. This era of oil abundance made promises of mobility and autonomy through greater road space and reduced traffic congestion (despite increased private car ownership, which especially grew after rubber shortages ended post-war). These ideas were emphasised by the exhibit's electrically automated rotating seating that subconsciously connected these developments to circulation and easy movement

(Nye, 1992: 368). In the voiceover which accompanied the panorama, the narrator explains:

The history of American roads is the history of our civilization as it marched westward from the Atlantic to the Pacific - roadways forging ever onward through mountain, desert and forest barriers, leaving in their wake great thriving cities, industrial centers and prosperous farms. [...] Since the beginning of civilization transportation has been the key to Man's progress - his prosperity - his happiness. (voiceover transliterated into General Motors pamphlet in the collection of Joan Saab; quoted Saab, 2007: 202).

The voiceover ties together, in triumphant terms, road building, the settler colonialism of westward expansionism, and the consequent ecological desolation Sage depicts as wasteland in *Danger, Construction Ahead*. This ecological foregrounding is part of *Tomorrow is Never's* composition, too: where the futurama depicts a diagonal and downwards birds-eye view of interconnected roads and expressways, Sage adopts an elevated, horizontal perspective so that low-hanging smog obscures this powerful affect of interconnection and progression. The painting's subsequent emphasis on verticality suggests again hierarchy and masculinity, but with the added conveyance that those at the top avoid the worst of fossil fuels' pollutive effects. This interrogates the futurama's rhetoric of universal happiness and prosperity thanks to fossil infrastructures; as David Nye notes, the futurama glosses over much of the reality of living in New York city: 'slums inhabited by ethnic minorities', 'poor neighbourhoods of run-down single-family homes', 'traffic jams', 'unsightly factories', 'polluted streams', 'smog' and

general 'industrial blight' that intensified in this period (Nye, 1992: 372). Sage's method of exposing and revealing these adverse effects – particularly for minoritarian communities, who cannot escape the smog – demonstrates a political commitment to the non-reproduction of fossil infrastructure that produces and reproduces these inequalities.



Figure 5 - 'City of Tomorrow' Futurama, 1939 New York World Fair (photo by Richard Garrison [Geddes, 1940: 240]).

The fantasy of escape from these adverse effects played out subtly in the futurama's projection that new expressways would allow for areas of housing away from inner cities and their ecological, social, and economic issues. This would in fact become a reality in 1947 with the building of New York's first characteristically post-war suburb, Levittown. Motivations for building these suburbs were often

racial; the expression 'white flight' captured the desire white middle-class American families had to live away from the more racially diverse metropolitan centres, something that historian Nicholas Dagen Bloom has exposed as a deliberate 'choice rather than destiny' (Bloom, 2023), but has been convincingly shrouded in the language of 'rights' and 'freedoms' (Kruse, 2007: 7). At the core of white flight is not just racial segregation, but the construction of space and infrastructure that facilitates a particular model of white nuclear family life. This is evident both in the deliberate exclusion of African American families from buying Levittown properties and the resultant integrationist rhetoric, advocating for the desire to "raise our famil[ies] and enjoy life" (Myer quoted in Wolfinger, 2012: 431). That white flight is motivated by notions of racial hierarchy, and also funded and promoted by private companies and beneficiaries of oil capitalism (e.g., General Motors), is represented by Sage through her solitary structures. Rather than interconnection and ease of movement, *Tomorrow is Never* laments the increasingly segregated and privatised spaces that emerge from this era of fossil infrastructural development.

White flight, and its concomitant valorisation of the white nuclear family, demonstrates how Edelman's reproductive futurism converges with the reproductive futurism of fossil infrastructural imaginaries. In both contexts, the white American 'endorse[s] as the meaning of politics itself the reproductive futurism that perpetuates as reality a fantasy frame intended to secure the survival of the social' (Edelman, 2004: 14). For Edelman, this fantasy frame takes the form of the imaginary figure of 'the Child' (ibid.); for Sage, this imaginary figure of futurity is the city's infrastructure. Its roadways, its electricity grid, and its pathways for the repetition of life's activities materialise this fantasy frame of futurity. Sage reveals the white supremacist and settler colonial infrastructural base that conveys

this futurity to be an intensification and continuation of fossil infrastructure's social elements: its racial hierarchy, its privileging of isolated structures that parallel the isolation of the white nuclear family, and its erasure of life deemed ungrivable.

Sage's use of draping recalls how hegemonic infrastructural imaginaries attempt to conceal these motivations and inequalities; through revelation and representations of landscapes that are at once representative of the psychological and the material, Sage wields surrealist methodology to counteract the hierarchical liberal world-building whose imaginaries elide these problematics. Her adoption of surrealism's often oneiric, desolate, and stripped-back aesthetics provide a useful visual language that contrast fossil infrastructures' bright visual displays and hopeful, future-oriented affects. In the midst of oil and coal abundance, Sage chooses starkness and smog. Where fossil infrastructure promises extension and reproduction of the social and political relations it facilitates, Sage's paintings demonstrate that the cost of this is non-reproduction of pathways for minoritarian life.

#### Sage's Infrastructural occultism and subjectivity

Sage's aesthetics are irreducible to one meaning or political commitment, and more than just 'about' infrastructure. However, when compared to contemporary hegemonic imaginaries, her aesthetics provide a useful contrast that invites a paranoid reading of histories of infrastructure. This paranoid disposition is indebted in part to the community of surrealists that found each other in New York during this period, with Sage sending over money and resources for members of

the surrealist diaspora to make the transatlantic journey to New York. The most immediate reference to her surrealist peers are the draped cloth-like figures inside each of the scaffolded structures. Whitney Chadwick reads these as a direct reference to Giorgio di Chirico's 1941 painting *The Torment of the Poet*, which depicts a phantom draped in cloth and which Sage owned and later donated to Yale University Art Gallery (Chadwick, 1985: 168). The surrealist preoccupation with the 'occult' - unseen lives and deaths which manifest as supernatural phenomena, such as communication with ghosts - generated the anti-rationalist mode of perception championed by Breton. By collecting disparate objects and ephemera, Breton promoted a relationship to objects that involved perceiving past their immediate materiality and sensing traces of their 'former lives':

The collection André Breton left behind at his death in 1966 was unified by ghostliness, surrealism's hauntedness, which grew out of the early experiments with automatic trances in Breton's apartment in 1922–23 and was later embodied in the surrealist propensity to see qualities of life in things, that, having been used and handled, were believed to have led former lives. (Conley, 2017: 263).

Sage's ghostly structures invite a similar mode of perception in which fossil infrastructural materials have a past life of being extracted, processed, and used for building. Just as Breton sees traces of human interaction in objects, Sage represents through ghostliness the human lives exploited and lost in service of these processes; they draw to mind the use of newly emancipated former slaves in the destitute conditions of the Kanawha coal mines, which directly fuelled New York's infrastructural development (Zallen, 2019: 225-226) or the death of copper

and coal miners across the Northern Pacific Railroad route due to dangerous conditions, whose mined materials made electrification of the East coast possible (ibid.: 257-258). Sage invites viewers to access these memories through these ghostly traces at the same moment that hegemonic imaginaries attempt to repress them.

The result is Sage's oneiric atmospheres, recalling the 'memories akin to the dream traces human beings carry in their unconscious minds' (Conley, 2017: 263). This interplay of material and human/psychological that has been at the forefront of surrealist practice since Breton is easy to lose: either in the affect-driven future-oriented inaugurations of fossil-fuelled modernity that seeks to erase these ghostly traces, or in retrospectives of surrealist artists that dematerialise their works, seeing them as purely representative of psychological spaces. This is already happening with contemporary readings of *Tomorrow is Never*, which is (at the time of writing in August 2023) on display in New York's iconic Metropolitan Museum of Art. What is striking about its accompanying informational plaque is that it interprets the overall tone of isolation as a mirroring of Sage's personal experiences of grief and loneliness following the death of her husband (figure 6). Presumably, this is because normative readings will focus on relatable human-centred themes, resulting in a more accessible interpretation to a lay audience. This anthropocentric bias can be felt further by critics' and curators' intuition to understand surrealist paintings first and foremost as psychological landscapes from the mind of an individual, or representations of private dream worlds whose form and content that only the dreamer can understand.

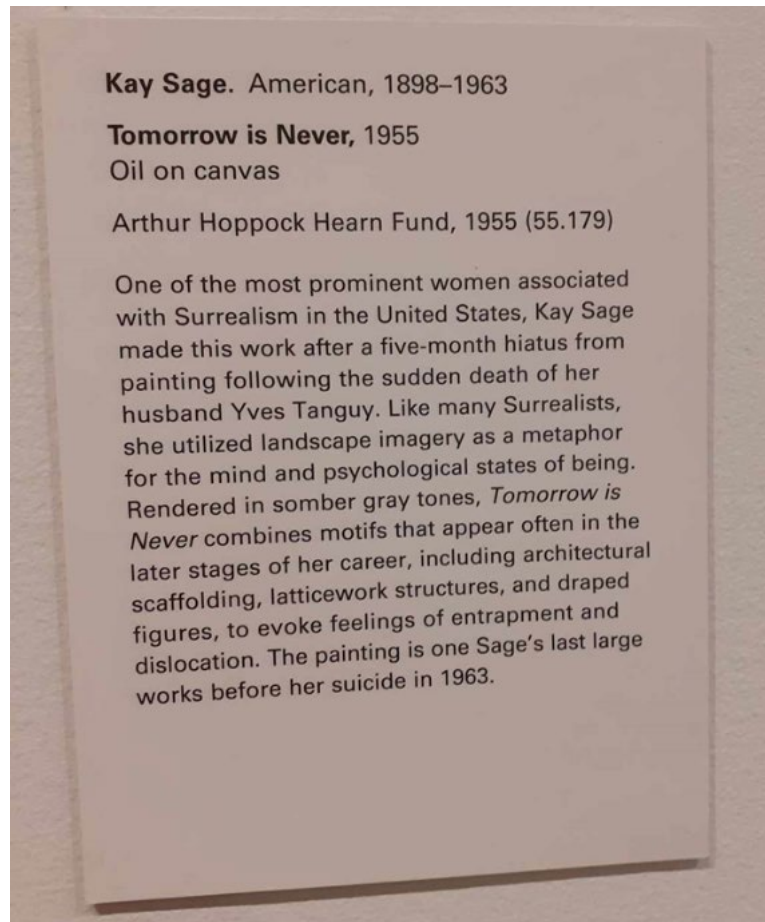


Figure 6 –Informational plaque describing *Tomorrow is Never* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City (photograph taken by author in August, 2023).

But as Max Haiven has recently shown, dreaming – whether in the sense of sleep-dreaming or daydreaming – are bilaterally social: in one direction, dreams are structured by material social realities, and in the other, artists, writers, and activists share dreams to structure a collective imagination that has the potential to resist hegemonic norms and assumptions. As Haiven explains:

While dreams are far from a pure realm of imaginative freedom, they do defy the conventional “reality principle” that governs our experience and interpretation of waking life and, as such, can awaken powerful imaginative challenges to the

status quo. But this potential is only realized when the dream is shared, when, through language or symbolic or artistic expression, it becomes a common reference point for worldly matters held in common. (Haiven, 2023: 42).

When we distance ourselves from an Enlightenment-legacy understanding of dreams as ‘largely meaningless noise produced by the unproductive brain at rest’ (ibid.: 41), whose feeling is structured entirely by internal emotional worlds, we can see how dream sharing intervenes in ‘worldly matters held in common.’ This includes a world increasingly shaped by fossil fuel extraction and use. As Jack J. Spector argues, it was the interwar European surrealists who established dream interpretation and sharing as a methodology and transformed it into a collective political register, hoping to create a ‘vision of an egalitarian community of “liberated egos”’ (Spector, 1989: 294). It is this methodology that Sage, her husband, and her community of New York surrealists participate in when representing psychological landscapes and dreamscapes. To put forward a monosemic understanding of Sage’s paintings as oneiric representations of personal grief misses these more political, collective, and material insights. To see these precarious, smoggy, isolated structures and to reduce them to Sage’s internal sadness minimises the scale of her thinking, and the scale that her paintings invites viewers to consider.

While liberty and egalitarianism underpinned the surrealist methodology of dream sharing, Haiven is careful to note that dreams, because they are structured by material experiences, are not ‘a pure realm of imaginative freedom’ (Haiven, 2023: 42), even if they can produce radically different understandings and sensibilities. We have seen this in Sage’s work whose aesthetic focus on isolation

and entrapment produces a counterhegemonic understanding of fossil infrastructures as limiting and hierarchical. And while it is unproductive to read Sage's work solely from her personal perspective, it still engages with the kinds of subjectivity infrastructures shape and enforce. What also comes across in her work are the ways infrastructures shape human subjectivity as similarly limited, constrained, and voided. For instance, her 1950 painting *Small Portrait* (figure 7) depicts the shape of a human head, with pushed or tied back hair similar to Sage's. But instead of a face, neck, and shoulders, there is gridding, metal hinges and supports, and cloth similar in colour and texture to the draping material seen across her oeuvre. The overlapping facial gridding recalls New York's grid street structure, replicated by other cities in line with modernist reasoning that it facilitated forms of state legibility and control (see: Scott, 2020). The muted brown-grey tones evoke materials such as steel, stone, concrete, and asphalt. These sombre tones, alongside the lack of recognisable facial features such as eyes, mouth, or nose, cohere to her work's overarching oneiric quality. Rather than the happy, liberated, prosperous beneficiary of fossil infrastructural access, Sage depicts a subject structured by inhuman, confining gridding and voided of organic tissue. The result is a constrained, potentially even automatised individual whose relationship to organic materials is severed, and whose agency, clarity of vision and choice, and identity are all voided.



Figure 7 – *Small Portrait*, Kay Sage, 1950 (© The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center).

The idea that fossil infrastructures may confine or limit bodies and identities is in stark contrast to their ideological underpinnings, which seek to liberate humanity from the constraints of the natural world, the drudgery of physical labour, and bodily limitations. The motivation is so that subjects may participate in political, social, and economic life more freely (see: Anand, Gupta, Akhil, 2018). Part of the fossil infrastructural promise is to create this liberated, autonomous, free-moving subject. For instance, the 1939 World Fair's 'Democracity' exhibition (a portmanteau of 'democracy' and 'city') depicted a projected city in the year 2039 of concentrically divided areas of business, commerce, and residence, which

would be connected through the use of automobiles, mass transit, and telephones. As Joan Saab's research shows, the exhibition closely wove its vision to the fair's various commercial exhibitions that spotlighted new car models, which 'implicitly linked their utopian vision of the democratic city of the future to consumer capitalism by demonstrating the social usefulness of these goods in transforming the world of tomorrow into a more user-friendly place' (Saab, 2007: 199). The development of road, car, and segregated inner city and suburban infrastructures are therefore closely tied to the engineering of capitalist-consumerist subjects whose participation in the free market was an index of civilisation, individual freedom, and democracy.

Sage's painting interrogates this vision's clarity and material reality, with a face devoid of sensing organs and draping cloth which connotes concealment. Using a coherent aesthetic across her paintings, some of which are many years apart, similarly speaks to the post-war cultural emphasis on conformity and homogenisation, all-the-while valorising individual autonomy and freedom. Strict notions of conformity were in part due to escalating Cold War tensions and the desire to root out communist dissidents and sympathisers from American social and political life, termed more broadly as 'McCarthyism' after the fervent anti-Communist senator of the same name. But the homogenisation of space and infrastructure is also part of the story of fossil infrastructural development. As Robin B. Williams' research notes, the availability and global trade of petroleum products led to the development of synthetic asphalt, which in turn eroded the individual character of towns and cities around the world. He notes:

The pervasive adoption of synthetic asphalt across the world [...] resulted in a homogenization of street character, as the highly individualistic pavement identity of each city—defined for so long by local responses to the materials available through global trade—sought the benefits of this most eminently modern material. (Williams, 2022: 220).

He notes, for instance, the brief prevalence of oyster shells as street paving in the American South due to local abundance (ibid.: 211). However, by the early twentieth century the global trade of petroleum products meant localities could produce their own synthetic asphalt, rather than relying on natural asphalt from (primarily) Trinidad (ibid.: 219-220). Asphalt won out over local materials because of its lack of porosity and low-cost maintenance; the same reasoning applies to the other industrial materials portrayed in *Small Portrait*, including steel, whose production (especially at scale) relies on coal-mining. Without reference to New York's characteristic skyscrapers, *Small Portrait* works as commentary on any metropolitan city whose homogenisation of character can in large part be attributed to fossil infrastructural development and its privileging of low-cost, low-maintenance, non-porous materials. This trending towards economic efficiency, and its deprioritising of care and maintenance, contributes towards the portrait's coldness and eeriness; swallowed up are heterogeneous street identity and human identity, converging towards homogenisation as fossil fuel relations deepen at both local and global scales.

*Small Portrait* is a nightmarish depiction of a fossil infrastructural subject and yet it is not without ambivalence or beauty; notably, although it does not convey a strong visual gender, the hair – similar in style and colour to Sage's own

– brings the painting back into the realm of human beauty. Further, there is ambivalence (as well as gender ambivalence) in the gesture of combining organic tissue (hair) with fossil infrastructural materials and formations. The blonde hair on the head's right side contrast the coppery tones on the left, the latter hinting at electric cabling reliant on copper (and in turn, the human brain's use of electricity to function). This confluence of organic and industrial material might helpfully be conceived of in terms of the cyborg, a figure that Donna Haraway has used to reconfigure the binary opposition of nature and culture. Haraway in turn interrogates narratives of nature that deny women agency and their status as social subjects (Haraway, 1991: 135). In Haraway's view, in the cyborg world:

Nature and culture are reworked; the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other. The relationships for forming wholes from parts, including those of polarity and hierarchical domination, are at issue in the cyborg world. (ibid.: 151).

*Small Portrait* may convey a voiding of identity, but its incorporation of fossil infrastructural materiality has the potential to resist appropriation or domination by reinscribing the female body away from the 'nature' that has been exploited and into the realm of culture, occupying both positions. For Haraway the political potential of this reconfiguration is the affirmation of agency, or in her words, 'to disperse the coherence of gender without losing the power of agency' (ibid.: 135). There is in Sage's *Small Portrait* a similar impulse: the self-portrait is an act of self-construction, and there are powerful affects in choosing petromodern aesthetics. They connote power, durability, intensity, modernity, and futurity; in other words,

they suggest Sage herself is modern, metropolitan subject, someone whose space in the world (and equally, in the world of tomorrow) should be prioritised.

This subjectivity may be at times bleak and restrained, but it is equally unsurprising that future-oriented aesthetics would find home in art with liberatory impulses for groups who have been historically marginalised. Sage's unpublished memoir gives further insight into her experiences as a female painter, who had to escape a traditional Italian husband (and all his and his family's incumbent expectations of prolific motherhood) to pursue her career as an artist. Relieved that she had avoided pregnancy during this marriage, she writes that 'perhaps my subconscious warned me that the only children I could adequately bring into the world would be paint on canvas' (Sage, 1955: 149). Sage reinscribes an alternative identity to motherhood, accessible to women, by conceiving of her paintings as her creations. Forced pregnancy and motherhood is just one of the ways that, as Sadie Plant writes in her account of the gendered history of coding, 'women have functioned as "an infrastructure"' in the 'use, consumption and circulation of their sexualised bodies' (Plant, 1998: 36). On the one hand, *Small Portrait* attests to these patriarchal positionings in its own depiction of a female body melded into machinery materials; the fossil infrastructural world-building that Sage engages with, too, is engineered along the lines of reproductive futurism. The 'City of Tomorrow's expressways and increased privatisation – made possible by settler colonial methods of extraction and installation - are infrastructure for the sustainment and proliferation of white nuclear family life. *Small Portrait* demonstrates how women's bodies become instrumentalised as reproductive machinery in this system.

Simultaneously, in its construction, *Small Portrait* celebrates the agential power in having the means to self-represent and self-construct. Its oneiric quality, in line with surrealist political methodologies of dreaming that Haiven describes, disrupts taken-for-granted ontologies and assumptions. Sage's infrastructural subjectivity is one that laments homogeneity, conformity, and instrumentalisation, but it nonetheless celebrates autonomy, durability, and modernity in its adoption of petromodern affects. The painting encapsulates the interesting tension in post-war surrealist texts between the expression and revelation of a repressed, violent petromodernity and the empowerment of marginalised groups through fossil infrastructural affects of power, agency, modernity, and futurity. Caught between contiguous forms of violence and extraction and the sanitised rhetoric of futurity arising from fossil infrastructural development, Sage registers these familiar affects to redirect infrastructural politics towards marginalised subjectivity. Her austere, sombre, isolated paintings intervene into the kinds of subjectivity these infrastructures prioritise and privilege; but neither will she be left in the past, where there is little more than coerced forms of acceptable femininity. Like other post-war surrealists, Sage asserts through her work a sense of belonging in the world of tomorrow, and a sense of deserving the same promise of autonomy and agency. In this way, she deftly straddles the line between criticism and appropriation (for the means of empowerment) of the fossil infrastructural developments that are the objects of her paintings. It is this oscillation between damage and repair that characterises her work as a post-war surrealist, representing on canvas 'the damaged, embodied surplus of the dominant culture' of patriarchal petromodernity (Eburne, 2022: 154).

## Non-reproductive reproduction in *The Answer is No*

Sage's interventions into non-reproduction are similarly ambivalent. The above quotation from her unpublished memoir ('the only children I could adequately bring into this world would be paint on canvas') sees her gendered role redefined as that of a mother to that of an artist, transforming the phantasmic figure of 'the Child' in Edelman's writing into the figure of the canvas, serving as 'the meaning of politics itself' and a political order in which this figure is 'the image of the future' (Edelman, 2004: 14; 3). This has application for the infrastructure humanities in which infrastructures 'create a sensing of modernity' that implicates notions of progress and futurity (Larkin, 2014: 337). As Brian Larkin writes, this is due to infrastructure's embeddedness in Enlightenment ideology:

Infrastructure has its conceptual roots in the Enlightenment idea of a world in movement and open to change where the free circulation of goods, ideas, and people created the possibility of progress (Mattelart 1996, 2000). This mode of thought is why the provision of infrastructures is so intimately caught up with the sense of shaping modern society and realizing the future. (ibid.: 332).

Analysis of Sage's work from the perspective of infrastructural reproduction supplements this idea by positing that infrastructure's conceptual roots in the Enlightenment extends out to the sustainment and proliferation of isolated white families, what Matthew Huber has usefully termed 'petro-privatism' (Huber, 2014: 306). Her interventions into non-reproduction have both literal and symbolic resonance: her refusal to be instrumentalised into reproductive machinery is

evident in her escape from her conservative Italian husband and in-laws, but it is also evident in her artwork in which non-reproduction is mediated through a surrealist insight that does not see the mechanisms of fossil infrastructural world-building as anything other than ecocidal.

Yet, the liberatory impulse that Larkin describes – the ‘free circulation of [...] ideas’ - is present in Sage’s work. In her 1958 painting *The Answer is No*, she substitutes in place of her characteristic cityscapes a series of easels and canvases, which repeat and extend beyond view to give the impression of a metropolis (figure 8). The title sustains Sage’s orientation towards negation; though it is not explicit, this could be negation in the sense of non-participation in the biological reproduction that is expected of her and for which there is infrastructure. This is one way in which her work continues to be non-reproductive. Conversely, there is something whimsical and fantastical about the reproduction of these easels and canvases. Unlike the isolated and lonely structures in her previous paintings, shrouded in smog, the empty easels allow visual access to a (mostly) blue sky, as well as suggesting potential for new artistic creation. Their proliferation, alongside the differently toned canvases, take on the quality of a chaotic art studio, giving the painting a distinctly playful tone in its representation of expansion; it also suggests the easels are infrastructure for art production. In this fantasy metropolis, in which easels substitute for buildings, there is clarity, lightness, density, and a heterogenous chaos that contrasts the isolation, homogeneity, conformity, and bleakness of her previous work.



Figure 8 – *The Answer is No*, Kay Sage, 1958 (© Estate of Kay Sage / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York).

It is in this celebration of the reproductive capabilities of art that Sage finds distinction from Edelman's position. For Edelman, non-reproductive politics involves conceptualising 'the space outside the framework within which politics as we know appears and so outside the conflict of visions that share as their pre-supposition that the body politic must survive' (Edelman, 2004: 3). By contrast, for Sage, reproduction (in an artistic sense) has political import: it proliferates a politics of non-reproduction of the fossil infrastructural imaginaries of her era. Further, proliferation of her artistic work has material repercussions, as it sustains her survival as an autonomous artist as opposed to a machinic body, plugged into fossil infrastructural systems and their privileging of the proliferation of white families. Sage appropriates the aesthetics of expansion and proliferation, as well as petro-modernity and futurity, to prioritise her autonomy as an artist and a

woman in her fantasy of a modern future. *The Answer is No* provides a portrait of an infrastructural world in which painting and creative expression are prioritised over fossil infrastructures' depersonalising and homogenising mechanisms.

What emerges from this reading, then, is a non-reproductive reproduction. This reproduction is non-reproductive in the sense that it refuses to reproduce the ideologies and imaginaries that underpin fossil infrastructural development. It is similarly non-reproductive in that it does not allow the fantasy of white proliferation to elide acknowledgement of the ecocidal mechanisms that result in the material and symbolic non-reproduction for marginalised groups (i.e., eradication from both the material world and from media). However, it is nonetheless reproductive in the sense that it selectively valorises certain forms of reproduction, particularly those forms that bestow creative autonomy, bodily autonomy, and a sense of political belonging to a future whose infrastructure reproduces these (rather than the current) social and political configurations. Sage's work may not suggest material alternatives to the fossil infrastructural imaginaries she refuses, but her non-reproductive reproduction presents a new set of priorities to consider when thinking through reparative infrastructural futures. In its sustainment of pathways for life and circulation of ideas, future infrastructure must provide the means for counterhegemonic art to proliferate, and for marginalised people to have autonomy as creative subjects.

It is this tension between non-reproduction and reproduction that characterises post-war North American surrealist intervention into infrastructure. It is this reproductive form that allows surrealist artists to create and diffuse infrastructure for alternative forms of consciousness that constitute the basis of their politics of non-reproduction; this is a throughline that can be seen through

each of the post-war surrealists analysed in this thesis. And it is precisely this tension that will characterise the invisible man's relationship to infrastructure and minoritarian experience in Ralph Ellison's landmark novel, to which this thesis now turns.

**Chapter 2 - Invisibility and Non-reproduction: Ralph Ellison's  
Infrastructural Subjectivity**

In Ralph Ellison's 1952 novel *Invisible Man*, in the prologue, readers encounter an evocative image: the novel's protagonist is sitting in his subterranean dwelling, underneath the bustle of New York city, starkly illuminated by dozens of lights. The image's impact is evidenced by a series of photos that accompanied *Invisible Man*'s publication, which replicated this scene (figure 9). Although much brighter and electrified than Kay Sage's New York and her version of metropolitan subjectivity, explored in the previous chapter, there are similar interventions into vertical space and fossil infrastructural reproduction that make their comparison productive. This scene and the book's photographic promotional material in particular examine intersections of fossil infrastructure and race that, similar to Sage, interrogate New York's history of white-coded pageantry and the violence that constituted the city's development. What kinds of subjectivity emerge from these intersections? What do its non-reproductions (and simultaneously its reproductions) of the material and cultural conditions of fossil infrastructure reveal about Ellison's proscriptive shape of reparative race relations?

This chapter deviates from a wealth of previous scholarship on Ellison and infrastructure, the latter of which reads the protagonist subterranean dwelling as a response to racially exclusionary suburbanisation and urban renewal, what Myka Tucker-Abramson terms the 'creative destruction of urban space' (Tucker-Abramson, 2019: 35); within the context of electricity siphoning and the configuration of electricity as a 'slave' labourer, with its attendant racial implications (Gerson, 2022); or the figuration of a literal 'urban underworld' in which African Americans lived in poor quality underground slums, and Ellison's ultimately conservative response to it (Heise, 2011). Instead, this chapter reads Ellison's novel as characteristically post-war surrealist in its representations of the return of repressed fossil infrastructural relations, allowing for incisive commentary

on fossil infrastructure's reproductive capacity (its ability to return and repeat white supremacist conditions) as well as inscribing non-reproductive forms in its (albeit ambivalent) valorisation of opacity and invisibility. This chapter argues that by drawing together racial lineages of fossil fuel extraction and African American subjectivity in the fossil fuelled 'World of Tomorrow', the novel negotiates futurity for the racialised others excluded from hegemonic fossil infrastructural imaginaries.

Spectacularisation of racial violence via electricity in *Invisible Man*

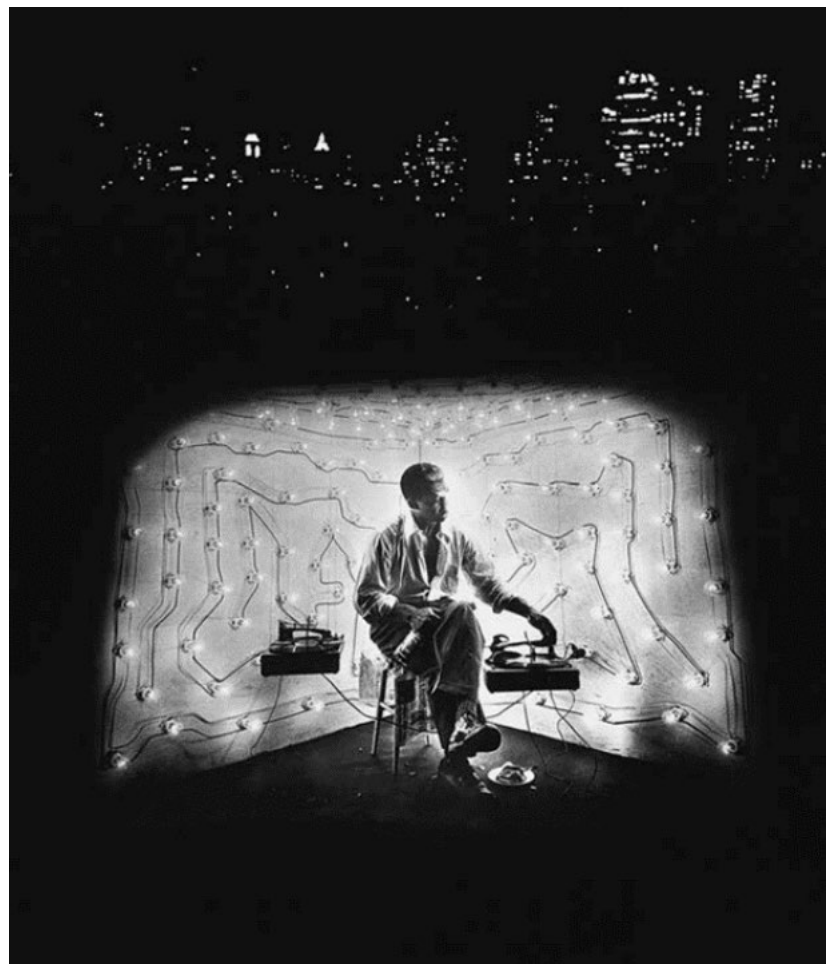


Figure 9 - 'Invisible Man Retreat', Gordon Parks, 1952 (© Gordon Parks Foundation).

This snapshot of an African American man, brightly lit underground, stealing electricity from New York's electrical grid, has a visual, affective power that is reminiscent of the World's Fairs discussed in the previous chapter. Yet it is distinct, because it depicts literal and spectacular empowerment of a member of a disenfranchised and marginalised group, usurping what Nye calls 'the technological sublime' towards black representation and subjectivity (Nye, 1992: 59). This group is marginalised in the multiple senses: exclusion from political office; exclusion from affordable housing; fewer means to self-represent in the face of racist caricatures; but also in the sense of access to electricity; and in the sense of being used as coerced labour in the building of fossil infrastructural worlds. 'Invisible Man Retreat' and its bright illumination are distinct from the World's Fairs' use of electric lighting, which propagated narratives of white supremacy and technological progress. Instead, this image of empowered subterranean living both exposes and attempts to remedy these realities and histories, reproducing the affects of brightness and enlightenment without reproducing these affects' use in propagating racial hierarchy.

This image of ambivalent subterranean empowerment and illumination finds its non-reproductive power in its non-participation in visible and public modes of racial violence, elsewhere spectacularised by electric lighting. For instance, in the novel's famous opening scene, the invisible man is forced to fight other African American men in a battle royal. The event is organised by 'the town's leading white citizens', whose decision-making gives insight into white supremacist structuring (ibid.). Sage Gerson writes how this scene 'symbolically links US nation-building' with constructions of race and gender defined by the white

organisers' gaze (Gerson, 2022: 130). Her example is the setting up of a blonde-haired, blue-eyed dancer for the young African American men to stare at, reinforcing the stereotypical roles of black aggressive, bestial sexuality and objectified sensuous white femininity (ibid.: 129). While Gerson's article explores the connections between 'electricity slaves', electric technology and white supremacy, and electricity theft in the novel, there is less about the role of electricity in this scene in particular or the relationship between coal and electricity (ibid.). It is here that analysing the legacy of World's Fairs provides a context in which to understand electricity's role in intensifying and spectacularising race and gender constructions, and the interrelated petrocultural forms of violence against racialised and non-human others that permeate the novel.

Even before the fighting begins, electric lighting serves to spotlight and fetishise the young black bodies: they emerge from the venue's elevator and into the brightly lit room 'shining with anticipatory sweat', much to the excitement of the 'big shot' organisers (ibid.: 18). These glistening bodies are at one point referred to in terms of their shine alone, with the protagonist recalling, 'Suddenly I heard the school superintendent, who had told me to come, yell, "Bring up the shines, gentlemen! Bring up the little shines!"' (ibid.). 'Shine' is polyvalent reference here, referring at once to a 'generic nickname' given to African American shoe shiners, the name of an 'epic figure in African American folklore' who shovelled coal on the Titanic and warned of the approaching iceberg, and to 'skin dark enough to literally "shine"' (Turner, 2001: 879). Layered in this word are relationships of labour, fossil fuels, and the fetishisation and spectacularisation of black bodies, recalled and intensified in *Invisible Man's* opening scene and its use of electric lighting.

Just as World's Fairs and electrically lit stage productions celebrated white-coded creativity – the ability to cast light in a controlled and tractable way – so too is the stage set, and the lighting engineered, to provide 'a visible correlative for the ideology of progress' and in turn, 'a social Darwinist ideology of racial superiority' (Nye, 1992: 35-36). The organisers reduce the African American men as mere reflections of the lighting that can be manipulated for the purposes of entertainment and reinforcement of racial superiority for a white audience. The result is a spectacle in which the organisers can revel in embodying the progress and civility that are staged to be absent in the African American men.

Once the fighting begins, the protagonist gives visceral, embodied details of bleeding from 'both nose and mouth, the blood spattering upon my chest', shining all the more brightly amidst 'a swirl of lights' (Ellison, 2016: 23). The lighting serves two purposes here: it spectacularises violence against black bodies for the benefit of a white elite audience, but it also renders all the more visible the bodily harm white supremacist structures enact. Blindfolded for the majority of the fight, the protagonist notes only being able to see 'Streaks of blue light' which 'filled the black world behind the blindfold' (ibid.: 22), contrasting the 'warmly lighted floors' that characterised the venue upon entering (ibid.: 18). This turn from comfort and warmth to starkness and cool-toned lighting acts as a revelation of electric lighting's embeddedness in forms of racial violence and spectacle that complicate the invisible man's relationship between being seen and unseen. To be illuminated in an electrified context is to make visible infrastructures of white supremacist violence against visibly black bodies; in other words, the novel demonstrates how electric lighting facilitates the white supremacist gaze. While other scholars have read the protagonist's invisibility as a form of 'passing' and self-diminishment in a normative white world (Hardin, 2004) or a condition that conveys marginalisation

and absence from normative concerns (i.e. 'social invisibility') (Whitehead, 2009), read in light of electrification's history, his invisibility is simultaneously a refutation of the white supremacist gaze that constructs black bodies through electrified illumination and its affects of a spectacularised, white-coded modernity.

After the fighting ends, electricity is further wielded towards humiliation and harm as the white men throw coins on a rug; it is electrified, shocking the men who touch it. The invisible man recalls: 'A hot, violent force tore through my body' (ibid.: 26). Stripping electricity down to a 'force', the novel reconfigures electricity as a potentially violent tool and encourages a backwards-looking perspective that tracks electricity from its undeveloped form to the violent weapon it has become in this context. Gerson has provided insightful research into how this scene and others throughout the novel relate to a broader context of white supremacists who weaponise electric technologies against African Americans. She notes for instance how the electric chair, electric fences, and tasers are part of a larger carceral and eugenic system that disproportionately punishes, imprisons, and kills African Americans (Gerson, 2022: 130). The shock the invisible man experiences is akin to a taser, a weapon that was invented by a NASA scientist after reading a fictional novel entitled *Tom Swift and His Electric Rifle*. Evoking the adventurous connotations of Mark Twain's titles, the novel details the escapades of gallivanting young colonialist Tom Swift, as he subjugates the natives and wildlife with his electric rifle; it was this fictional weapon that provided the inspiration for the taser (ibid.). What this scene recalls in invoking these legacies of electrified racial violence is that electrification arose out of a spectacular inauguration of electrified modernity that is racially exclusive *and also* a white supremacist fantasy of violent subjugation over black bodies and animals.

The white supremacist collapsing of human/animal categories, in service of racist tropes that animalise black people, is evoked in this scene too. The invisible man writes how the electrocution ‘sh[ook] me like a wet rat’ (Ellison, 2016: 26), emphasising the humiliating and dehumanising aspect to this violence. But even further, this simile demonstrates how this violence serves to consolidate strict racial categories of human/vermin, civilised/uncivilised, and clean/dirty. As Lisa Sarasohn writes in her cultural and social history of vermin, “‘Civilized’ societies have viewed other peoples, both inside and outside their borders, as being a type of vermin— the ultimate other’, a strategy which ‘creates boundaries between “us” and “them,” a necessary condition for contempt and conquest’ (Sarasohn, 2021: 2). Despite fossil infrastructural developments that created the filthy conditions in which rats thrive, (i.e., the desolation of natural habitats and the proliferation of rubbish), vermin ‘were thought to destroy the integrity of the body or home,’ and concerns for ‘personal and domestic hygiene’ drove the professionalisation of extermination services in rapidly urbanising places (ibid.: 4-5). Electrification appeared at the same moment as a symbol of cleanliness (see Buell, 2014), providing what 1930s advertising pamphlets described as a ‘clean, well-lighted hearth’ (quoted in Nye, 1992: 238). The narrative these pamphlets promoted was that electricity provided a clean, safe alternative to kerosene lamps, but what it obscured is that it reinforced the boundary between clean, desirable domestic space and abject, disruptive others who needed to be cast out. This boundary was reinforced by newspapers who produced content that zeroed in on stories of poor living conditions in African American neighbourhoods and in turn associated blackness with rats:

A New York Times headline in 1964 announced, “Boy with Rat Bites Found Dead in a Tenement Flat in Brooklyn.” The boy’s mother is described as unwed and on welfare, details that conjure up images of race and neglect, particularly when the newspaper mentions three other incidents of rat bites in the African American neighborhoods of Coney Island (1959), Brooklyn (1962), and Harlem (1963). (Sarasohn, 2021: 204).

These boundary constructions could manifest as legally sanctioned violence in the form of the electric chair, another context in which electricity’s cleansing power was not advertised but nonetheless implied. Jurgen Martschukat demonstrates how Schulyer S. Wheeler – late 19<sup>th</sup>-century electricity expert, involved in testing electrocution against animals – promoted electrocution as a ‘clean’ ‘precise’, and ‘silent’ form of execution (Martschukat, 2002: 916). His research further suggests that the electric chair’s appeal in the US was due to its sense of ‘sublime’, in the sense that it wielded extraordinary power that humans could control (very similar to David Nye’s term ‘technological sublime’) (ibid.). A quote from Wheeler reveals how intimately bound this form of violence was to the sorts of affects that characterised the experience of electrified metropolises:

There is apparently no reason why this mysterious agent which now unites the whole civilized world by nerves of keen intelligence, which illuminates every enterprising city, which already propels trains of cars and promises to heat them, which has added to life in apparently inexhaustible variety, should not also be employed to take it away. (quoted in ibid.: 914).

Just as electrified street cars and vibrant street lighting bestowed a sense of liveliness to cities, electricity also provided ever more efficient and spectacular means of extermination of unwanted life: unwanted because uncivilised, unclean, unintelligent, and utterly separate from the sublime world of electrified modernity. For the electric chair's advocates, death by electrocution was a poetic and righteous method to enforce these violence exclusions. The invisible man's simile of being shaken and shocked like a wet rat is laden with these histories: animal testing, extermination, dehumanisation of African Americans, incarceration, and legal execution that are all just beneath the surface of electrification's story, and its installation in the increasingly fossil fuel-dependent world of post-war America.

The invisible man's electrically illuminated subterranean hole represents a usurpation of this violent force wielded against him, reincorporating black subjectivity into the modernity and civilisation that electrification signifies, all-the-while rejecting the white supremacist logic that justifies electrified modes of racial violence. Nonetheless, the subterranean component – one that by the narrative's end, allows the invisible man to embrace his invisibility – is simultaneously a refusal to be seen and shaped by the white supremacist wielding of electric lighting. Understood in this context, the subterranean hole is both reproductive and non-reproductive: it reproduces the electrifying affects of modernity and civilisation to envelop African American subjectivity into these significations. However, it does so without reproducing the conditions of the white supremacist gaze, which priorly in the novel had been intensified by the tractability of electric lighting and its use in the spectacularisation of violence against black bodies. It is in this tension between reproduction and non-reproduction that the novel registers non-participation and invisibility, all-the-while enveloping African American subjectivity into conceptualisations of futurity, as bestowed by infrastructural access.

## Opacity, impossibility, and fossil infrastructural development

It is during the novel's engagements with fossil fuel extraction that it advances its interventions into non-reproduction, interrogating fossil infrastructural promises of mobility and freedom by instead tracing the lineages of fossil infrastructural installation back to coerced labour and incarceration that are repressed in hegemonic imaginaries. In consequence, the novel explores opacity and impossibility of African American experience as emancipatory modes of non-reproduction of the white supremacist, fossil-fuelled status quo. This reading of Ellison's novel distinguishes it from previous scholarship in its explicit exploration of the relationship between electricity and fossil fuels. Previous scholarship reads Ellison's electrified scenes in an aesthetic sense (as 'shock-based aesthetic strategies') (Tucker-Abramson, 2019: 28) or from the perspective of a midcentury metropolitan subject who sees the grid as apparatus which is plugged into, divorced from legacies of mining and extraction that make the grid possible (Gerson, 2022).

However, the relationship between electricity and fossil fuels is explicit in the novel, as exemplified in the invisible man's description of his pain in this extensive opening scene. He writes that 'It was as though I had rolled through a bed of hot coals' (ibid.: 28) and 'My back felt as though it had been beaten with wires' (ibid.). The former simile makes visible the relationship between electricity and the way it is powered with coal. Heat, combustion, and light coalesce as violent force; the pain of being whipped by electric wires recalls the violence of slavery. From the outset of this scene, the comparison to the violence of slavery finds resonance throughout. Initially, the invisible man is invited to the battle royal

because he believes he is giving a speech about the benefits about educating African Americans. In anticipation, the invisible man 'visualizes himself' as 'a potential Booker T. Washington', a figure most well remembered for his speeches on racial uplift in the post-emancipation era (Ellison, [1952] 2016: 17). But Washington's biography is more complex: a former slave, he became a coal miner soon after his emancipation, facing coercive and unsafe conditions. As such, the imagery of being burned by coals and whipped by wires recalls Washington's life, and the use of coerced black labour in coal-mining, many of whom, like him, were newly emancipated slaves. Washington is best known as an orator and educator, but in the period immediately after his emancipation from slavery in 1865, he worked in the destitute conditions of the Kanawha coal mines. Miners were locked into sleeping cabins overnight to prevent escape attempts, and Washington wrote of the terror of working in the darkness of the mines themselves:

Work in the coal-mine I always dreaded. One reason for this was that any one who worked in a coal-mine was always unclean, at least while at work, and it was a very hard job to get one's skin clean after the day's work was over. [...] [A]nd all, of course, was in the blackest darkness. I do not believe that one ever experiences any where else such darkness as he does in a coal-mine. [...] [A]dd to the horror of being lost, sometimes my light would go out, and then, if I did not happen to have a match, I would wander about in the darkness until by chance I found someone to give me a light. (Washington quoted in Maury, 1873: 19).

Where imaginaries of electrified modernity tended to focus on a vivacious brightness, autonomy, security, movement, cleanliness, and the interrelated

freedom from the haze of fossil fuel combustion, the invisible man's evocation of Washington's lesser known biography as coal miner resurfaces African American experiences of precarity, darkness, dirtiness, and dependence. These images of pain - being whipped by wires, burned by coals – recount and layer historical experiences of racial violence in relation to slavery, post-emancipation coal mining, and their role in developing electrical grids and fuelling electricity. The resulting effect in the novel is that although these experiences are not explicitly recalled or described, they appear as traces, akin to the 'dream traces' of objects that preoccupied Breton and his surrealist contemporaries, what Katherine Conley calls 'surrealism's hauntedness' (Conley, 2017: 263). Not visible on the surface, these objects' former lives, retained in and sensed through the aura of objects (or in this case, technologies), bestow an anti-rationalist and occultist insight. In *Invisible Man*, this insight brings to the surface forms of violence and subjugation that have been obscured or repressed in service of promoting narratives of progressive civilisation.

As the invisible man develops this Bretonian surrealist insight, the former life of coal - and its implications in exploitative race and labour relations – increasingly meets the city and novel's surfaces. Coal was integral to New York's development: coal that Washington mined from the Kanawha River Valley went directly to the city to be used in various processes. For instance, it was converted into coal oil which illuminated 24-hour factories, bourgeois homes, street lighting, and department stores (Zallen, 2019: 227). The invisible man is yet to arrive in New York by this opening scene; in another gesture of temporal layering, the allusions to Washington, coal, and electricity anticipate the invisible man's move to the city and the reproduction of these dynamics of race, infrastructure, and violence. Initially, the invisible man is struck by the contrastingly egalitarian

atmosphere to his Southern hometown, where the battle royal was held. Arriving in Harlem for the first time, he comments:

I had never seen so many black people against a background of brick buildings, neon signs, plate glass and roaring traffic [...]. They were everywhere. So many, moving along with so much tension and noise that I wasn't sure whether they were about to celebrate a holiday or join in a street fight. (Ellison, [1952] 2016: 154).

At first, the city appears to be a place that facilitates the movement of black people and where easy integration into the thrum of city noises, traffic, and everyday life seems possible. The neon signs add a sense of visual noise and diversity that juxtaposes the cold, blue lights used in the battle royal and the soft warm lights that served as a comforting facade to the violence further into the building. Upon seeing this, the invisible man's 'courage returned' (ibid.); but he nonetheless senses that the atmosphere is not one of unadulterated celebration, and that black people's presence and visibility is held in tension. Not fully certain or conscious of what this tension is, the lurking of repressed psychic content pervades this description, and foreshadows the restraints to liberation that the invisible man later uncovers.

Very quickly, these feelings of courage and optimism pass, and the invisible man's life in New York starts to bear the markings of one entangled in the problematics of race and infrastructure. Having found an opportunity to fulfil his aspirations as a Booker T. Washington-style orator, he begins to make public speeches on behalf of a Civil Rights organisation called the Brotherhood. At a Brotherhood soirée, the protagonist hears an assessment of him behind his back

that claims he is not 'black enough' for the role (ibid.: 291). It is here that even amongst those seeking liberation for African Americans, the protagonist continues to be treated as resource, his blackness fetishised:

We were up very high; street lamps and traffic cut patterns in the night below. So she doesn't think I'm black enough. What does she want, a black-face comedian? [...] Maybe she wants me to sweat coal tar, ink, shoe polish, graphite. What was I, a man or a natural resource? (ibid.: 291-292).

In terms of the scene's construction, the lofty setting introduced here serves to exaggerate the protagonist's degradation that comes narratively after it. But like Sage, it is productive to read this verticality as a result of historic, material conditions and racial positionings rather than pure projection of inner emotional experience. The high-up buildings, the street lighting, and the patterns of traffic are all made possible by fossil fuel extraction and subterranean black labour. In order to build upwards, there is a necessary hollowing out that occurs beneath the surface.

Embedded in the invisible man's experience here is the historical reality of black exploitation, and comes to him as an image of himself sweating various industrial resources: coal tar, ink, graphite, etc. The ghostly trace of a belaboured, sweating individual recalls these legacies of coerced labour that constructed the city itself; the city is not configured here as backdrop, but as a set of relations that continues to have structuring power. This temporal layering allows the novel to contextualise his experience of racism within a broader white supremacist infrastructure. This is one that relegates African Americans to the realm of the

subterranean and excludes them as beneficiaries of the developments that arise from their labour. This contributes to invisible man's feeling as he arrives at the building that it was 'as though I were here, and yet not here' (ibid.: 290); his sense of belonging was undermined well before the derogatory comment about his blackness, and well before the timeline of the novel itself.

The invisible man's experiences parallel those of Harlem's youth, as documented by Ellison in the 1940s. In his essay 'Harlem is Nowhere', a title reminiscent of Kay Sage's negative titles in chapter 1, Ellison explains the title's origin:

The [Harlem] phrase "I'm nowhere" expresses the feeling borne in upon many Negroes that they have no stable, recognized place in society. One's identity drifts in a capricious reality in which even the most commonly held assumptions are questionable. One "is" literally, but one is nowhere; one wanders dazed in a ghetto maze, a "displaced person" of American democracy. (Ellison, [1948] 1964: 57).

The invisible man's out-of-time experiences characterise African American movement through midcentury metropolitan space, complicating fossil infrastructural promises of egalitarian citizenry through liberated participation in social, economic, and political life. That infrastructural development has been limiting or restraining in the sense of being implemented through white supremacist terms of racial designation (particularly in terms of labour, and who labours where) is further evidence of the complex harm, both material and psychological, that underpins the Afro-surrealist narrativisation of post-war life. New York's electrified affects of liveliness and verticality, its dependence on

subterranean black labour, its relationship to factory work and industry, and its place in US cultural memory as a site of mass emigration and, in turn, a symbol of liberty and new beginnings make it a conducive setting to explore these relationships. The novel recontextualises the city's interconnectivity not in terms of efficiency and ease but as a site constituted by interwoven legacies of violence, emphasising the continuation of white supremacist reasoning in shaping social and racial designations but also physical positionings and orientations in space.

At the novel's end, the invisible man's mobility is further limited: he is forced to hide in a coal chute in order to escape an erupting race riot overground. It is here that the novel most directly recalls Washington's recount as a coal miner; the invisible man writes in a way that is very reminiscent of Washington finding himself lost in complete darkness in the coal mines:

Fine bits of dirt showered down as they [the rioters] stamped upon the lid and for a moment I sent coal sliding in wild surprise, looking up, up through black space to where for a second the dim light of a match sank through a circle of holes in the steel. Then I thought, This is the way it's always been, only now I know it [...]. Here it was as though the riot was gone and I felt the tug of sleep, seemed to move out upon black water.

It's a kind of death without hanging, I thought, a death alive. [...] I moved off over the black water, floating, sighing... sleeping invisibly' (ibid.: 547).

Much like the earlier analogy to coal tar, ink, graphite, and shoe polish, the invisible man's blackness merges with the 'black space' of the coal chute (made

so by the darkness and the blackness of the coal itself) and imagery of black water to invoke the reduction to resource, a treatment he has consistently received throughout the novel. The 'wild surprise' mimics Washington's 'horror' of sudden cascading in darkness; their experiences are mirrored by white supremacist coercion into subterranean space. Their two life stories seem to be mimicking one another, in a way that demonstrates the impossibility of escaping historic racial positionings. This is expressed in the invisible man's revelation that 'This is the way it's always been, only now I know it'. Washington's material engagement with the building of New York infrastructure leaves traces that inform the invisible man's experience of the city; the materiality of the city's infrastructure retains these traces and become perceptible to the invisible man through his continual racialised treatment as infrastructural resource.

As a consequence he undergoes a kind of 'death alive', the imagery of flowing water and floating away giving the impression of losing a sense of self. Further, in order to provide a brief source of light in the darkness, he burns what remains on his person: documents pertaining to his life and identity, including his high school diploma, a slip of paper that contained his Brotherhood name, and an anonymous letter which he received earlier in the novel, imploring: '*Do not go too fast. [...] They do not want you to go too fast and will cut you down if you do*' (ibid.: 369). Shedding his identity and becoming once more invisible, there is a liberatory impulse in these gestures: he burns the letter that suggests he impedes his movement, and the sibilance of 'sighing... sleeping invisibly' is as peaceful as it is resigning. While invisibility connotes marginalisation, lack of resource and access to care, it is also invested with the ability to evade being seen, designated, and positioned within white supremacist infrastructural imaginaries.

But this mobility is necessarily limited. The tranquillity of the underground chute in contrast to the violence and chaos of the overground race riot further convey these tensions between being visible and mobile within white supremacist visual economies on the one hand, and invisible and immobile on the other. In Rachael Squire and Klaus Dodds' article on subterranean geopolitics, they note how 'These are spaces resistant to visual and physical colonisation, often characterised as spaces of "stubborn fixity, omnipresent darkness, features that retard rather than enable mobility" (Carroll 2015, 11)' (Squire and Dodds, 2020: 9). *'Do not go too fast'* may be read as the novel's discursive contributions regarding the advancement of civil rights – and the backlash that follows even moderate advocacy – but it also speaks to the novel's preoccupation with a black subject visibly or invisibly moving through metropolitan space, and its restraints, its tensions, and its intersections with material infrastructural history. To be seen in a fossil infrastructural city as a black person means being seen as resource; to not be seen is to evade this perception. But to what extent is this emancipatory?

Here, Katherine McKittrick's notion of opacity (recalling Edouard Glissant's 'right to opacity') is useful: practicing opacity means reserving the right to be unknowable and therefore more difficult to consume and exploit (McKittrick, 2021: 7). However, she warns that 'Opacity is not freedom; it is a terrible working through of racist visual economies that simultaneously accumulate and dispossess black people' (ibid.). This sense of liberation that opacity affords is always restrained by a history that makes opacity a necessary form of opposition to white supremacist constructions and representations of blackness. This complicated relationship between visibility and invisibility in the novel – as mediated through spectacles of electrification and the often invisible, subterranean labour it relied on – conveys the impossibility of liberated black subjectivity in a fossil-fuelled modernity.

This impossibility finds resonance in recent black studies scholarship that has used the term 'Afro-Pessimism' to acknowledge how 'the entire world's semantic field [...] is structured by anti-Black solidarity' (Wilderson, 2010: 58) and in turn, 'think Blackness and agency together in an ethical manner' (ibid.: 143). Shifting focus from 'an inherent black *incapability*' to 'an imposed black *incapacity*', the turn to Afro-Pessimism has facilitated an account of black suffering that offers no immediate recourse, consolation, or transcendence from this positionality (Sexton, 2016: 5). As Jared Sexton writes,

A simple enough term for withstanding the ugliness of the world—and learning from it—might be *suffering* and Afro-Pessimism is, among other things, an attempt to formulate an account of such suffering, to establish the rules of its grammar, "to think again about the position of the ex-slave," as Bryan Wagner puts it in his *Disturbing the Peace*, "without recourse to the consolation of transcendence" (Wagner 2009: 2). The difficulty has to do with the special force that the consolation of transcendence—be it cultural, economic, geographical, historical, political, psychological, sexual, social or symbolic—brings to bear on the activity of thinking, no less of speaking and writing, about those whose transcendence is foreclosed in and for the modern world. (Sexton, 2016: 4).

The invisible man's subterranean retreat is a spatial metaphor for this foreclosed transcendence, both in its reminiscence of the figure of the ex-slave (Booker T. Washington) and the impossibility or imposed incapacity to think, organise, or move beyond this positionality. In the novel's articulation of the 'the rules of [suffering's] grammar', that is to say, how suffering is structured and given social and linguistic legitimacy, the novel builds an ethics of black agency that

recognises its own limits and restraints within the hegemonic structuring of a fossil infrastructural world.

The novel's rejection of 'the aspirations of the collective pronoun we' (Wilderson, 2010: 143), embodied by the lone figure in 'Invisible Man Retreat', sees it slotting in easily into an Afro-Pessimist canon. But as Afro-Pessimist theorists write, this does not preclude the novel from contributing to energising discourses of black solidarity. Understanding *Invisible Man* as a work of Afro-Pessimism demonstrates its value in helping to 'delineate the spatial and temporal borders of anti-blackness, to delimit the "bad news" of black life, to fix its precise scope and scale, to find an edge beyond or before which true living unfolds', and as such 'to resist that centrifugal force that overwhelms us [black subjects] like fear or exhausts us like fatigue' (Sexton, 2016: 7). The recognition of impossibility in *Invisible Man* has a similarly energising and resistant force, as represented by the siphoned electricity that brightly illuminates the subterranean hole.

Further, representing impossibility or (in Afro-Pessimist terms) imposed incapacity – rather than or supplemental to the oft-touted usefulness of literature in imaginative restructuring – can act as a powerful tool in counter-hegemonic discourse. Like opacity, its power derives from an (albeit restrained) reclamation of agency by refusing to represent the possibility of liberation within the status quo, and insisting instead on working through visual economies of race and spectacle and towards material reparation. In indigenous studies, scholars have recognised the importance of representing the impossible in advancing repatriation claims: 'in this way "the impossible" is a counter-hegemonic attempt to re-democratise control over [Native Americans'] representations and remains' (Johnson, 2005: 61). The coal chute operates as a 'black space' or void into which the invisible man's

possible lives seep, burn, or drift away. Although able to find respite from his white tormentors above ground, the question of 'black space' in sense of accommodating blackness is not resolved by the novel's conclusion. Impossibility is mobilised as counter-hegemonic discourse and serves to resist the proclamations of enablement and possibility that fossil infrastructural imaginaries promote.

The novel expresses these tensions between dispossession and solidarity, also a tension between looking backwards and looking forwards, in a non-linear chronological narrative ordering that subverts the conventions of a typical *Bildungsroman*. Where the genre tends to narrate the 'forming' (*Bildung*) of its protagonist via the novel form (*roman*), the invisible man by the novel's end is formless, having drifted off upon the black water, with key documents establishing his identity and relationships to others burned. The prologue shows readers in advance that the invisible man's sense of peace or liberation following his past life experiences are already restrained and structured by violence and dispossession. The effect is that while the story remains in the structure of a *Bildungsroman* – and calls for an empathetic insight into an individual's life story – it can describe white supremacist violence as non-isolated, contiguous experiences for African Americans that is built-in to fossil infrastructural development. It intervenes in a genre that has generally been understood as a 'literary vehicle for the meritocratic myth' and a 'primary source of hope for self-realisation' by the non-reproduction of its eager futurity (Lyons, 2023: 48, 50).

Consequently, the novel does not reproduce the fossil infrastructural fantasy of free movement, social mobility, and democratic citizenry, representing instead opacity, non-linearity, and impossibility. Previous scholarship has read the

protagonist's subterranean retreat away from the riots as fundamentally conservative and individualist, a rejection of the radical left-wing Civil Rights contingent (as represented in the novel by the Brotherhood) and an expression of Ellison's desire to 'unlink the connections that had been soldered in the period between a deleterious urban environment, black pathology, and collective unrest' (Heise, 2011: 156). However, read in light of contexts of subterranean extraction and Afro-Pessimism, the protagonist's retreat becomes a resistant and energised form of black solidarity in its thinking through of the racial configurations of space and labour that fossil infrastructure reproduces.

'Call it Afro-Surreal': Excess, reparation, and electrified affects of racial empowerment

*Invisible Man's* Afro-Pessimism is one mechanism through which it mediates black solidarity; another is its Afro-surrealism, a particular modality of surrealism that sees Bretonian anti-rationalism converge with the social and material concerns of writers of the Harlem Renaissance. While Myka Tucker-Abramson has read *Invisible Man* as a surrealist novel, particularly its 'shock[ing]' aesthetic strategies which include 'a fascination with the marvelous, the uncanny, the repetition compulsion, and the return of the repressed' (Tucker-Abramson, 2019: 27), no scholarship (as of writing) has placed it within Afro-surrealism more specifically. These strategies are certainly present in the novel, as seen with the return of repressed relations of subterranean labour in previous sections of this chapter. However, the novel's interventions into race and infrastructure are best understood within Afro-surrealist means of subversion, particularly that of excess.

For instance, the novel turns to excess by its narrative endpoint; where previously the subterranean retreat is shrouded in darkness, by the end, it is vibrantly illuminated beyond the point of necessity. The invisible man writes,

My hole is warm and full of light. Yes, *full* of light. I doubt if there is a brighter spot in all New York than this hole of mine, and I do not exclude Broadway. Or the Empire State Building on a photographer's dream night. (Ellison, [1952] 2016: 6).

Sage Gerson notes how this act of 'siphoning and sabotage' 'disrupts uneven infrastructural flows and reconducts and extends them' (Gerson, 2022: 135); in light of the invisible man's experiences of injustice, theft operates here a justifiable form of reparation. But I'd to extend this discussion further by suggesting this illumination is excessive, and by exploring how that excess intervenes into discourses of blackness, modernity, and fossil fuels. Material reparation is at the core of this scene as Gerson suggests, but what do the aesthetics of a vibrantly illuminated black character help us imagine when we design alternative infrastructural futures? What is being subverted and what is being extended in these representations of excess?

More than the logical conclusion of dispossession and injustice, there is a surreal quality to this scene that firmly places *Invisible Man* as one of the first Afro-surreal novels, as identified in D. Scott Miller's 2009 manifesto: 'Call it Afro-Surreal'. The novel's preoccupation with the past lives of the materiality of things – an anti-rationalist mode of seeing as promoted by Breton – is one aspect in which the novel continues the legacy of interwar surrealism. But as surrealism travelled to New York and hybridised with the aesthetics of black writers from the Harlem

renaissance, Afro-surrealism emerged with its own reactions and genuflections to African American conditions and subjectivity under what Miller calls 'Straight-White-Male-Western Civilization' (Miller, 2009: para. 13). Missing here is the fossil fuel element which forms a bulk of this thesis' preoccupation, perhaps demonstrating that energy and infrastructure, even in 2009, remained a 'not-said' or 'not-seen' critical framework, with categories such as race, gender, sexuality, and geopolitical identity within a binary of East vs West taking precedence (Wenzel, 2017 [2014]: 11). However, given the associations between fossil fuels and progressive civilisation, this sense of built materiality that forms infrastructure is nonetheless implied in Miller's designation. And as Miller writes, excess – especially material excess – is a key Afro-surrealist strategy: 'Afro-surrealists use excess as the only legitimate means of subversion' (Miller, 2009: para. 24). Understanding the invisible man's illuminated hole not just as theft, but an extravagant theft, creating a 'brighter spot [... than] Broadway [...] or the Empire State building', is a form of excess that has its own political impulses. It suggests that material reparation is only one part of picture here: what is also needed is a reparation of subjectivity that has been eroded, undermined, and excluded in liberal imaginings of electrified modernity.

Adopting this bright aesthetic – reinforced in Gordon Park's photograph adaptation of this scene mentioned earlier, titled 'Invisible Man Retreat' (figure 8) - the invisible man siphons more than just electricity. He siphons the affects of electrified modernity itself; to return to Nye's term, he siphons this sense of 'the technological sublime' (Nye, 1992: 59). In the post-Romanticist era, the technological sublime was most commonly expressed through electrical light displays, partly because of electricity's potency - Thomas Edison infamously electrocuted an elephant in order to demonstrate the need for safety protocols

around electricity (Shukin, 2009: 150) - and because of its mystery: was it a force or an intelligence; organic or synthetic; connectivity between life processes or substance in itself (Nye, 1992: 156)? The fact 'man' had conquered it and used it towards the supposed betterment of human society evoked feelings of pride, awe, humility, and self-aggrandisement all at once. As historian of US electrification Jeremy Zallen notes, electric lighting 'staged dreams of an automatic present and future, of a stable and predictable world' and 'a better future and an escape from the past' (Zallen, 2019: 260; 258). It was seen as a testament to human ingenuity that something so powerful and intractable could be wielded to build 'better' and more predictable worlds, hence both its significance as - and its use in illuminating - humanity's greatest achievements. Its affects lay in its visual excess, as seen in chapter 1 with World's Fairs, which wielded extravagant electric lighting to emphasise liveliness, verticality, and racial difference in its narrative of progress via fossil infrastructural world-building.

The invisible man's adoption of this visual excess is a form of subversion that redirects the technological sublime – typically reserved for the feats in city-building that fossil fuels make possible (like the Empire State building), and which fossil fuels illuminate through electric lighting - towards black survival, resourcefulness, and resilience in the face of systemic dispossession and marginalisation. Contrary to the forms of illumination that construct blackness earlier in his life, it is untainted by white supremacist structuring: he sits alone in his hole, with no spectators to instate their gaze, basking in the 'warm[th]' and 'bright[ness]' the lights afford. This is an extension of what the scholar bell hooks calls 'the subversive value of homeplace' for African Americans, which acts as 'a private space where we do not directly encounter white racist aggression' and 'a crucial site for organizing, for forming political solidarity' (hooks, 1990: 47). That

excessive lighting is so key to the invisible man's private subterranean retreat shows its political impulses towards subversion and solidarity against the white racist aggression of fossil infrastructural world-building.

Despite the surrealist preoccupation with the repetitions of history – the way Booker T. Washington, in part a representative of broader race/labour relations, haunts the novel – this representation of excessive lighting orients the novel towards new kind of empowered (even if limited) future. Like Kay Sage's 'Small Portrait' from chapter 1, it is a tentative, ambivalent, but nonetheless forthright assertion that political belonging to modernity – with its promises of liveliness, warmth, and safety - should be accessible to those who have historically been excluded from it. The aesthetics of excess reject the false scarcity that these exclusions create, and even further, they emphasise the direness of the situation to begin with: the desire for this exaggerated level of brightness and liveliness originates from a profound and deliberate deprivation, both materially and spiritually. In 'Invisible Man Retreat' we see our protagonist looking down, pensive, in a scene that contains visual reminders of dispossession and in turn represents a paradoxically constrained or mitigated form of freedom.

Excess operates not just at the level of energy-intensity, then, but at the level of repeated signifiers of ongoing conditions of constraint structured by spatial, labour, and racial positionings. Interwar surrealists practiced this form of repetitious excess, as it aligned with their interests in exploring and healing the unconscious. Using a broadly Freudian framework, in which unconscious drives and traumas manifest as physical symptoms, they diagnosed repetitions as compulsions, and in turn, compulsions as beautiful. As Hal Foster argues, 'surrealist practices might be seen as so many attempts, compulsively repeated, to

master trauma, to transform the anxious into the aesthetic, the uncanny into the marvelous' (Foster, 1993: 48). Where Foster has tended to emphasise the uncanniness of the return of repressed psychic content or trauma, it's productive in the case of *Invisible Man* to understand these repetitious returns of coerced labour and subterranean space as repressed historical content that is omitted from contemporary commercial narratives of metropolitan development. Understood in this way, the novel's use of repetitious excess contains a reparative impulse that exceeds the bounds of an individual's traumatic experience and towards a much larger material and spiritual wound.

This scene exemplifies this sense of mastery through repetition, as it is in this illuminated hole that the invisible man finds the space, time, and lighting needed to write his life's narrative, which forms the content of the novel itself. The lighting transforms black space (the void of the coal chute) into a new kind of black space: one which accommodates blackness. For the invisible man, this facilitates clarity of expression and vision: 'Before that I lived in the darkness into which I was chased, but now I see. I've illuminated the blackness of my invisibility—and vice versa' (Ellison, [1952] 2016: 13). He now occupies the dual state of being black and invisible, understanding the relationship between the two with greater clarity than before. This enablement of lighting to see, think, reflect, and write – especially for those cast into literal and metaphorical darkness, into subterranean depths – demonstrates what's at stake in alternative infrastructural futures.

*Invisible Man* may find its (albeit restrained) power in the continuation and reappropriation of fossil infrastructure, which may at first seem useless to infrastructural scholars searching for solutions in generating imaginative ideas for a post-carbon future. However, these insights into black subjectivity,

marginalisation, invisibility, and black space are useful because they orient infrastructural discourse towards addressing what is at stake for groups denied infrastructural access. For Ellison, this denial produces two obstacles: first in the physical incapacity to create art, and the second is the usurpation of energy for creative works towards reckoning with a world structured by anti-blackness. In 'Harlem is Nowhere', he describes a world for young people 'in which the major energy of the imagination goes not into creating works of art, but to overcome the frustrations of social discrimination' (Ellison, [1948] 1964: 55). Without electric lighting, the invisible man is denied in these two senses: he cannot see himself, and his energy is directed towards this denial rather than the creative endeavour that becomes the telling of his life story. He cannot see his own race, his own invisibility, nor the pages onto which he writes. He cannot describe the racial violence that constitutes the building of fossil infrastructural worlds, nor the intensity – conveyed through the extravagant electric lighting in his hole – of these experiences of dispossession and exclusion. Read from the perspective of fossil infrastructure, the novel uses repetitious excess as a reminder of dispossession, but also gestures towards the possibility of repair through mastery and creativity. It therefore asks readers to prioritise self-expression and self-representation for marginalised groups in the building of new futures, because this too is part of the process of reparation.

The novel's ambivalence, conveying simultaneous expressions of despairing dispossession and an excessively vibrant creativity, intervenes into an American writing tradition where ambivalence is denied to African American experience and characterisation. In 1953 essay 'Twentieth-Century Fiction and the Black Mask of Humanity', Ellison writes:

The essence of the word is its ambivalence, and in fiction it is never so effective and revealing as when both potentials are operating simultaneously, as when it mirrors both good and bad, as when it blows both hot and cold in the same breath. Thus it is unfortunate for the Negro that the most powerful formulations of modern American fictional words have been so slanted against him that when he approaches for a glimpse of himself he discovers an image drained of humanity. (Ellison, [1953] 2011: 86).

For Ellison, African American literature is itself an infrastructure that reformulates consciousness away from 'image[s] drained of humanity' towards a productive ambivalence, a black subjectivity that is not liberated but is nonetheless excessively, creatively, and ambivalently illuminated. Part of the project of reparative infrastructure is to facilitate the reproduction of literature that forms solidarity against anti-blackness and allows for ambivalent representations of African American experience. This places *Invisible Man* within a wider Afro-surrealist project to, in Miller's words, 'transform how we see things now, how we look at what happened then, and what we can expect to see in the future' and extends this transformation by engaging with infrastructural mechanisms of non-reproduction and reproduction (Miller, 2009: para. 15). For Ellison, to reproduce literary creativity excessively is both the non-reproduction of exclusionary fossil infrastructure and the reproduction of reparative infrastructure that re-energises black subjectivity and forms avenues for black solidarity.

Future expectations: how surrealist imaginaries of New York contribute to transition discourse

*Invisible Man* may not contain the hopeful self-realisation that underpins the *Bildungsroman* genre or the liberal-infrastructureal promise of the autonomous socio-economic participant. Yet as the illuminated protagonist demonstrates, there are gestures towards futurity, repair, and empowerment that orient the novel towards contributing to transition discourse. Surrealist imaginaries, by virtue of their concern for material and psychological repair, have at moments a future-facing orientation that places their interventions within fields of speculation, even as the imaginaries mediate historic material realities with present-tense sensing and perceiving. Miller's above proclamation – that Afro-surrealism transforms how we see the past, a transformation enacted via an anti-rationalist mode of perception that senses the past lives of infrastructure's materiality – suggests we can divine what to expect in the future. Given Ellison's emphasis on contiguous, repetitive forms of violence that constitute fossil infrastructureal world-building (violence that fossil infrastructure *reproduces* again and again), the novel acts as a warning that we can anticipate much of the same going forward.

In retrospect, there is something prophetic in both Kay Sage's (whose work is analysed in chapter 1) and Ellison's infrastructureal imaginaries: as post-carbon imaginaries have become more mainstream, commercialised, and urgent moving into the twenty-first century, the structural violences that constitute their installation remain the same. As seen in chapter 1, Sage's paintings – paired with her poem 'The Other Side', in which a squirrel is inevitably flattened into roadkill – depict a hollowing-out of habitat that is recreated for the installation of solar infrastructures.

Take, for instance, large-scale solar panel installations in the Mojave desert, as if deserts are not complex ecosystems which can be disrupted and displaced by these developments. (The reality is that they are – many vulnerable plant and animal species are dwindling in the Mojave due to habitat destruction to make way for solar panels [Lauer et. al., 2023: 1]). Meanwhile, promotional images adopt a birds-eye view that recreates the feelings of vastness, human ingenuity, and technocratic progress that were at the heart of the affect power of World's Fairs. Consider, too, how lithium mined for batteries used in different kinds of technology – including solar panels – relies on dangerous, coerced subterranean black labour, for instance in the Congo (Frankel, 2016). Partly this is an issue of technocracy: as Jordan Kinder writes,

conceptions of the coming energy transition remain largely shaped by economic and techno-scientific impulses, as if a cleaner source could – and indeed will – be seamlessly swapped for existing fossil fuel infrastructure and global populations will be largely unaffected (Kinder, 2016: 15).

This kind of fantasy is easy to unravel with a basic attention to continuing patterns of labour, dispossession, and habitat erosion in alternative infrastructural industries. But even more contentious is the idea of populations ever having been 'unaffected' at all, when affect is the driving force behind the realisation of infrastructural imaginaries. As Rhys Williams writes, 'The business-as-usual imaginary [...] should be understood as infrastructural desires—the desire of the current disposition to perpetuate itself' (Williams, 2019: 18). Surrealist imaginaries intervene by reckoning with this traumatic self-perpetuation and carving space to

express their own infrastructural desires: of material reparation in the first instance, but even further, of an autonomous subjectivity unbound from white supremacist visual economies.

Rhys Williams, who has intervened critically on solar infrastructural affects of lightness, cleanliness, and freedom from environmental responsibility, notes how solar infrastructural imaginaries rely on a kind of ‘amnesia’ of a ‘fresh start’. He asks, ‘do solar infrastructures present a genuinely new beginning, from “root to tip”, or are they merely a shiny surface, glossing over the rot within our utopian imaginary?’ (ibid: 14). Surrealist imaginaries show us that fossil infrastructural imaginaries worked in the exact same way, through subjects whose sensitivity to the past (albeit glimpsing, ephemeral, weaving in and out of perception like infrastructural processes themselves) and whose desire to be afforded a place in the future allow them to make counter-hegemonic demands. It is through this returning to the surface, even if at the level of the unconscious, manifesting through physical symptoms rather than conscious rationalisations, that surrealist interventions are the most impactful. Behind the gloss there is violence lurking, and it will continue to manifest without substantial material and psychological reparation.

Neither Sage nor Ellison depict post-carbon alternatives, and as such do not offer a definitive solution to entangling or unburdening racial and gendered subjectivity from the constructions and narratives of fossil infrastructural world-building. Nonetheless, theirs is a mode of seeing that informs the shape of - as much as it prioritises - reparation and autonomy. When it comes to considering energy futures, transitive or not, how much of private-public enterprise considers reparation in its imaginaries or its policies? How much of it falls into the same trap

of an eager futurity, using affects of brightness and liveliness, all-the-while relying on subterranean black labour? Or worse, how much of it consciously plays on its history of racial exclusion and traditional gender positionings, claiming continued fossil fuel use is necessary to avoid civilisational collapse and a regression into black-coded barbarity?

Consider Exxon's 2006 'Energy' commercial, in which, as Andreas Malm and the Zetkin Collective explain, it

[c]uts to images of a refinery and an oil derrick, the voice-over continuing: 'The fuels that produce CO<sub>2</sub> have freed us from a world of back-breaking labour', the last five words spoken over the image of the only black person to appear in the clip. She raises her arms high to strike a heavy pestle into a wooden mortar, presumably pounding cassava or some other African crop. A thatched hut can be seen in the background. This black woman represents the world from which fossil fuels have freed us, 'lighting up our lives'. (Malm, 2021: 35).

Notably, the commercial contrasts these images of African labour with glamorous shots of New York, including white, blonde-haired mothers playing with their children. This is a form of racial coding that also envelops in it a white supremacist fear of being 'outbred', also known as 'The Great Replacement', which is 'the idea that ethnically homogeneous populations in European nations are being "replaced" by people of non-European origin' (Ekman, 2022: 1127). This conspiracy results in a gendered proscription of motherhood that threatens the autonomy of cisgender women and others who are vulnerable to the loss of reproductive freedom. Perhaps it is paranoia to read how in the advert, 'A blonde girl blows on a

dandelion, scattering its seeds' and see a fascist desire for white procreation (encoded as well is the fantasy of continued fossil fuel use paired, somehow, with the proliferation of nature) (Malm, 2021: 35). But in light of New York's infrastructural history, is this really so incongruent?

This is the 'reproductive futurism' that Lee Edelman laments is the structuring force of all politics (Edelman, 2004: 14); and this is the ideology of fossil infrastructure, to facilitate and reproduce the conditions of white proliferation at the cost of racialised and non-human others. A surrealist eye, observing midcentury New York city as Sage and Ellison both do, helps us see these legacies of violence within the materiality of infrastructures themselves, rather than in the framework of a binary conception of an undesirable (primitive, restraining, black-coded) past versus a desirable (civilised, freeing, white-coded) future. In conveying infrastructure's role in reproducing the conditions of imposed minoritarian incapacity, surrealist texts provide a scope of vision that sees through the empty infrastructural promise of novelty in favour of a compulsive repetition of the same white supremacist, patriarchal, and ecocidal world-building. As part of their resistance to this world-building, they selectively valorise reproduction insofar as surrealist art and literary forms work towards infrastructuring a consciousness that refuses to internalise nor proliferate fossil infrastructures' promises.

Drawing together the constraints of movement, autonomy, and subjectivity – as well as the possibility of rendering repetitious compulsions into an aesthetics of beauty and mastery over trauma - surrealist infrastructural imaginaries are ones in which excess is simultaneously reparative and a reminder of a violent past. They are forward-looking but never forget the forms of violence that shape the present. They insist on building space that can accommodate the representation

and narrativisation of minoritarian experience within fossil infrastructural contexts. Surrealism's imaginaries may not be post-carbon, but they have relevance in post-carbon discourses in this reorientation of infrastructural priority. By looking at this period in particular, we can see how affect-driven technocratic solutions are and have always been. An analysis of Sage and Ellison's works supplements existing literature that infrastructural change is social as well as technical, but it does so with attentiveness to the possibilities of autonomous subjectivity that attend infrastructural access and to the impossibilities of this autonomy within current organisation and reproduction of race, labour, and gendered positions. It demands that any new infrastructural project repair rather than gloss over these problematics, or they will return, inevitably, to the surface.

While both Ellison and Sage represent New York, reinterpreted with a Bretonian surrealist insight into the reproduction of labour, race, gendered, and ecocidal relations, the thesis will now attend to surrealists operating in other North American metropolises. New York is the logical starting point for a corpus of post-war North American surrealism, due to the city's pivotal role in providing refuge to European and European-American surrealists escaping fascism (including André Breton himself for a brief period). Moving forward in time, Breton's influence would extend far beyond this East coast city, and by the 1960s his work would be taken up by a young group of writers, activists, and poets in Chicago, Illinois. This group, self-titled the Chicago Surrealist Group, and their interventions into reproduction, infrastructure, and the city's own specific histories and contexts of meat-packing are the subject of the following chapter.

### **Chapter 3 - Animal Rendering and Rewilding Infrastructure in the Chicago Surrealist Group's Publications**

When the Chicago Surrealist Group (hereafter CSG) began printing its political treatises and revolution-oriented poetry in the mid-1960s, they were inflecting, reimagining, and reacting to a world structured by fossil fuels. With the city of Chicago as their base – where they held events and exhibitions, organised politically with workers and students, and printed their own material - they were navigating (literally and poetically) a city where fossil fuels had accelerated and expanded mechanised meat-packing, making it by the nineteenth century ‘the world’s largest center of animal death’ (Zallen, 2016: 248). Known for its production of pork and lard, from the 1870s onwards, Chicago also saw a steep growth in beef packing, becoming a deadly place for cattle as well as pigs (Cronon, 1991: 234).

Although much of this animal rendering was to create lard oil from pigs – a product which facilitated the mass manufacturing of lard oil candles, employed in a mixture of domestic and industrial purposes – mineral alternatives for light fuel sources like oil-derived kerosene and coal gas did not decelerate animal death. Instead, moving into more intensive periods of fossil fuel exploitation, allowing for expanded transport from stockyard to city, ‘the deathscapes of Cincinnati and Chicago had never been busier, or deadlier for hogs’ (ibid.: 247). Pork production was so accelerated that it earned the city the moniker ‘Porkopolis’ (ibid.: 230). In light of this, how might we read the Chicago Surrealist Group’s presidential nomination, in collaboration with Students for a Democratic Society, of a pig named Pigasus at the turbulent and riot-bound 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention (King and Susik, 2022: 4)? Was it a gesture of mockery towards contemporary leadership, connoting incompetence: a city run by ‘pigs’ (a

derogatory term for police, employed by the CSG)? Could it also be a gesture towards animal liberation and leadership, that nominating a pig could offer a political voice to animals? Or lastly, is it a statement about how the city is ruled and structured, i.e., by the production of pork and lard?

Using Deborah Cowen's term 'expanded reproduction' to illuminate how meat infrastructures create, repeat, and spatially expand the conditions for animals to be killed and rendered, this chapter argues that CSG's engagements with animal death and animal liberation are also engagements with modes of reproduction and non-reproduction (Cowen, 2024: 301). With the same Bretonian-inspired surrealist insight of Kay Sage and Ralph Ellison (whose work is analysed in chapters 1 and 2 respectively), the CSG produces a counterhegemonic poetics that infrastructures consciousness away from the valorisation of expanded reproduction. In turn, the CSG advocates for an alternative, figurative (rather than material, mechanised) rendering of a heterogenous ensemble of animals.

This chapter distinguishes itself from previous scholarship on the CSG, relying extensively on original archival research, whose materials include the Group's political and poetic self-publications under their own Black Swan Press. Much has been written on the CSG's alliance and political cooperation with the International Workers of the World (IWW), a labour organisation whose pamphlets the group helped disseminate (Sakolsky, 2022); their work taking direct action in the form of humorous forms of cultural and labour-based sabotage, such as showing up to work with shovels cut in half following wage cuts (Susik, 2021: 196); their commitment to Black Power and the emancipatory struggles of African Americans (Eburne 2022); and their arms-length collaboration with the countercultural left, united by protest of US intervention in Vietnam and

antagonisms with the belligerent Chicago Police Department (King and Susik, 2022). By contrast, this chapter differs twofold: it firstly foregrounds the issue of animal liberation by reading the Group's publications in the context of Chicago's specific history of fossil fuel-accelerated animal death and expansive meat-packing infrastructure. Secondly, it reads Black Swan Press as a mechanism for textual reproduction and in turn, an infrastructure for radical consciousness and advocacy of heterogeneous animal life.

Further, the archival research that formed the basis of this chapter included analysing poetry that has limited accessibility, and therefore limited academic coverage. For instance, founding CSG member Franklin Rosemont's 1964 poetry collection *Morning of a machine gun: twenty poems & documents* forms the bulk of the textual evidence in this chapter, reorienting Rosemont's positionality in academic literature as not just a central figure in activist organising, but as a poet whose poetics inform the contours of the CSG's counterhegemonic and non-reproductive politics. While many CSG members were poets, Rosemont is exclusively analysed in this chapter due to his proliferative output and large body of surviving (albeit difficult to access) poetry, making him an ideal representative of the CSG's (textually) reproductive disposition. Due to *Morning of a machine gun: twenty poems & documents'* limited availability, having been accessed for this thesis via an archival trip to the Thomas J. Watson library in New York city, the poems from this collection that are analysed in this chapter have been appended to this thesis (see appendix).

The original material that informs this chapter's focus intersects with the CSG's commitments to student protest, Black Power, and workers' rights, and liberation from capitalism's violence and strictures. As the Group writes, the latter

affects animals acutely. In the Group's own words, their explicit aims were to substantiate 'a radical break with all stultifying and life-denying forms of social organization' and 'put an end to capitalism's cataclysmic reign of violence, liberate the Earth and its inhabitants from oppression, and bring about a truly free society' (CSG, 1996: xxi). However, what distinguishes the Group from other US leftists of this period is that these political preoccupations were formulated through a surrealist mode of poetic inquiry and expression that was at times associative, kaleidoscopic, and free-flowing, and at others, dissociative, oneiric, and violence-laden. Using methods inspired by the interwar surrealists - 'oneiric inquiry, trance states, erotic reveries, chance actions' (ibid.: xxii), forms of 'psychic automatism' - the CSG hoped to 'liberat[e] images of desire' (ibid.: xxi). This was a form of consciousness-expanding that was adjacent to countercultural participation in psychedelics and 'Eastern' religious practice, and had similar political motivations: to disentangle consciousness from the limiting and violent modes of existence under the dominant political system.

Where previous scholarship has emphasised this similarity, detailing collaboration (albeit uneasy) with other countercultural leftists, this chapter instead places the CSG within a corpus of post-war surrealists who intervene into processes of reproduction and non-reproduction. Consequently, analysis of the CSG in the new light of these contexts contributes to discourses of reparative infrastructure, as well as reading the Group's work in a novel way. Their Bretonian surrealist insight facilitates the everyday perception of Chicago's infrastructural history of animal exploitation, processing, and mass death, building resistance to these repetitive configurations and forming avenues of thought towards reparation for animals.

### Animal Rendering and the Disassembly Line in 'Landscape with Moveable Parts'

Without the history and legacies of animal exploitation and death to draw from, the poetry the CSG published can often seem random, formless, and chaotic, an effect exaggerated by surrealist methodologies that favoured trances, chance encounters with objects, and the confusion between the animate and the inanimate in order to develop anti-rationalist modes of vision and thought (Foster, 1993: 20). However, these methodologies have revelatory potential: in Hal Foster's analysis of interwar surrealism, surrealist art and writing revealed 'an uncanny reminder of the compulsion to repeat' (ibid.: 21). For the CSG, this 'compulsion to repeat' is less concerned with the psychoanalytic dynamic of an individual's trauma, but rather it manifests in the reproduction of violent conditions that fossil infrastructures enable. For instance, in the poetry of founding member Franklin Rosemont, the persistent imagery of murdered animals - revealed through objective chance encounters - directly recalls the legacies of violence that were required to lay Chicago's foundations, as well as the casualisation of animal death that would escalate as Chicago became the US's most industrious meat manufacturing city. Describing daily events and encounters in the city as sites of violent reproduction lends a surrealist insight that resists rationalist modes of production that exploit, dispossess, and accumulate.

In Rosemont's 1965 poem 'Landscape with Moveable Parts', published via the Group's own printing house Black Swan Press, the abstract imagery and Rosemont's diminished subjective perspective (starting lines with 'It' rather than 'I') lend the poem a disembodied feel and oneiric, seance-like tone. The poem is, for

the most part, a love poem, and does not continuously reference meat infrastructure; it is a polyvalent aesthetic object, whose dynamism is evoked in the poem's title. Due to the poem's narrator occupying an associational and disembodied position, however, there are moments of paranoia around domesticity, food preparation, and the disassembly line that make it a relevant text for this thesis to analyse, both as a post-war surrealist text whose paranoid disposition places it within a corpus of North American surrealism and as a text that replicates the mechanisms of expanded reproduction.

For instance, the second stanza begins: 'The morning opens like a knife in a melon / [...] and tears for itself an itinerary along the hemispheres / of flesh and blood' (Rosemont, 1968: 13). What begins as a mundane (if startling) domestic image - a melon being chopped up - transforms into a more sinister slicing into 'flesh and blood', which in itself forms a much vaster act of violence 'along [...] hemispheres'. The image recalls an act of butchery that makes the object being cut seem more flesh-and-blood animal than it does fruit, while the lateral movement along its hemispheres brings to mind the latitudinal movement of animals to Chicago to be butchered and the lateral movement of the animals through the city's disassembly lines. Read with the context of Chicago's history of meat production in mind, this everyday act of food preparation is represented by Rosemont as enmeshed with the movements and histories of violent meat infrastructure.

The melon's hemispheric cuts into its flesh, read as analogous to dead animal, parallels and makes visible the disassembly line, 'pioneered in Cincinnati but perfected in Chicago', in which livestock entered into a series of mechanised processes that rendered their bodies into products and usable byproducts

(Cronon, 1991: 226). The disassembly line started outside the city, however, in the stockyard: this was prairie land which had been moulded by settlers to accommodate efficient grazing crops for livestock, eradicating indigenous flora and fauna in the process (ibid.: 214). It was from this colonised prairie land that drovers moved animals East to West by rail in terrible conditions, stitching up the eyelids of 'obstreperous animals' to mitigate against disruption and complaint (ibid: 226). The animals would then arrive in Chicago and other settler cities to be rendered into parts, 'moving animals ever further in their passage from pulsing flesh to dead commodity' (ibid.: 211). The poem registers violent food infrastructure as it represents this lateral passage from East to West, as well as through the disassembly line itself, in the form of the laterally butchered melon. Consequently, violent food infrastructure resurfaces in this scene, deforming and texturing the poem's representation of a morning routine.

In this image of butchery, the poem layers domestic reproduction with the 'expanded reproduction' of fossil infrastructure, here evoking the Marxist meaning of reproduction that 'dispossess[es], extract[s], and accumulate[s]', to suggest their interconnectivity (LaDuke and Cowen, 2020; Cowen, 2024: 301). The movement of livestock by rail was an expansion made possible by extraction of wood and coal; as William Cronon argues, 'meat on the hoof became meat in a railroad car, as steam locomotives consumed the energy of wood and coal to preserve the energy in living flesh' (Cronon, 1991: 224). We see here not just the reduction of animals to dead commodity, but to the repeated extraction and logistical circulation of energy. The word 'itinerary', for instance, similarly gestures towards legacies of logistical development and planning that facilitated the disassembly line, from the homogenisation of prairie land to produce (and reproduce) the same crops, to the repeated mechanised processes of animal-

rendering in factories. That the morning ‘tears for itself’ this ‘itinerary’ reveals the violence that underpinned this process, and which continues to enact violence each day: the use of the present tense (‘the morning opens’) gives the sense that these diurnal violences bear the weight of these histories of extraction and dispossession. It is through the Chicago surrealists’ method of poetic practice, in which encounters with objects reveals a repeated compulsion antithetical to rationalist thought, that these lineages can become perceptible as repeated modes of expanded reproduction.

Rosemont employs here a Bretonian technique for surrealist insight, which is to perceive and recover the ghostly traces of an object’s history. The result is that the poem imbues the knife which opens the morning with an auratic quality: seeing past its immediate, empirical materiality, there is, as Walter Benjamin describes, a “‘forgotten human dimension’” (Benjamin cited in Foster, 1993: 195). In other words, there is a violent history of human-animal-food relationships that resurfaces in the process of sensing and poeticising this aura. Hal Foster explicitly relates this in psychoanalytic terms as ‘a return of the repressed’ (ibid.), and for the interwar surrealists that are the subjects of his analysis, these auras could take on different registers. One is natural, the ‘empathic moment of human connection to material things’; another is cultural and historical, ‘where “traces of the practiced hand”’ of artisanal objects can be sensed (ibid.: 195-196). In ‘Landscape with Moveable Parts’, these two registers converge, in which the ‘practiced hand’ of butchery finds resonance in the everyday hand of domestic food preparation. This then broadens out in a ‘strange web of space and time’ that aura reveals, clarifying the material, historical relationships between humans, animals, and food (ibid.: 194). While the interwar surrealist preoccupation with material-human relationships may not have been consciously aligned with ecological awareness,

this return of a lost human dimension has potential to reshift poetic and analytic focus towards the anthropocenic transformations across time and space. In the case of the CSG, this means the marrying of the specifics of Chicagoan meat infrastructure with a much broader fossil infrastructural system that accelerated, intensified, and produced the conditions for the reproduction of these relationships.

Further, as midcentury poets, artists, and activists, the CSG tend towards greater ecological awareness than their interwar counterparts. The interwar surrealist practitioners in the Bretonian school gave particular attention and focus to natural objects (twigs, mountain ranges), historic artisanal objects (what Foster calls the 'outmoded'), and childhood objects that recall the maternal body, adopting a psychoanalytic register that is decidedly more Oedipal, exploring the oscillation between paternal punishment and maternal plenitude (ibid.: 195-196; 193). However, as the Group's poetry registers deepening fossil fuel relations, it's concerned less with psychic Oedipal dramas and more with repressed ecological relationships (though sometimes these are interrelated). For instance, it is not just natural, artisanal, or childhood objects that Rosemont imbues with an auratic quality in 'Landscape with Moveable Parts', as the title betrays. Rather, the poetic narrator gains a sense of the landscape's aura itself, imagining the totality of Chicago as layered with the bloody histories that form its making.

Animals, in particular, pay the cost. In lines 69-76, the poem reads, 'The war in which the blood / settles like leaves / upon the trees / and the goats vanish into the lake / The puzzling venison of dawn / The drowning of swans / The mechanical sand evaporates the hours / In this coagulated island' (Rosemont, 1968: 14). The poem's imagery of places 'coagulated' with animal blood and

disappearing animals may not reference meat packing directly - it was cows and pigs that bore the brunt of this particular violence, rather than goats, deer, and swans – but it recalls a history in which animals are erased and killed, which is contiguous with the meat manufacturing infrastructure Chicagoans pioneered. As William Cronon writes, early on in the development of Chicago's foundations, biodiversity across the Illinois prairie lands was much reduced: in particular, buffalo and the wild grasses they fed on were systematically eradicated to make space for cattle and pigs, as well as 'tame' hay and corn to fatten them (Cronon, 1991: 247). The result was 'a newly partitioned ecosystem that was now managed toward new human ends' (ibid.); by 'new human ends', Cronon refers to Chicago's burgeoning place as the US's most prominent site of meat manufacturing. The poem therefore invites the consideration that death-producing infrastructure for animals *is also* settler colonial infrastructure in its eradication of life and partitioning of colonially claimed space to install meat infrastructure.

'Landscape with Moveable Parts' is both an exercise in sensing both the before and the process of this partitioning, and its resultant violence against animals. Constitutive of the poem's landscape are these bloodied and disappearing animal bodies, a form of remembering that delves further back from mid-nineteenth-century meat processing to the foundations of Chicago itself, in which the flattening of space and life across Illinois and beyond were deemed necessary. The sequencing of lines – each with groups of animals 'vanishing', dying, or transformed into a 'puzzling' new form of rendered meat, the latter hinting at obscured or fetishised meat commodity relations – organises this into a linear yet simultaneous and ongoing narrative. Each verb is in the present or present continuous tense, and the grammatically incomplete lines (especially 'the puzzling venison of dawn' and 'the drowning of swans') expand the poem's imagery

towards the non-specific and vast. In other words, asking where or when this animal death occurs, the poem gives the sense that it is happening everywhere, all the time. Where Cronon, for instance, focuses on the extinction of millions of buffalo – a narrative which importantly emphasises the loss of indigenous species as a part of expansive settler colonialism, (and implicitly draws attention to the destruction of indigenous peoples’ cultural and food practices) – the poem’s narrative focuses more generally on the deaths of heterogenous groups of animals. The resulting poetic subjectivity is one that is both situated in a past moment when there was mass animal death enacted on a vast scale – in a sense, that it was, in the establishment and in the process of mass meat manufacturing, infrastructured – and one that can see how this history is contiguous with continuing forms of ecological violence, in which animal marginalisation and loss of biodiversity persist.

While the imagery in Rosemont’s poem is non-specific, it is nonetheless informed by the Group’s sensitivity to animal lives and the particularly intensive methods of mistreatment and rendering that Chicagoan industry epitomised. ‘The mechanical sand’ which ‘evaporates the hours’ brings to mind Chicago’s meat-packing industry, both in reference to mechanised meat production and the new orientations of capitalist time that emerged from factory work. Workers, further exploited by capitalists’ new demands that workers be paid by the hour (rather than by the day), saw their free time shrink in comparison to pre-industrial models of the working week. This was particularly hard-going for those in Chicago’s meat-packing industry, in which mass production saw skilled artisanal butchers replaced by ‘unskilled’ precarious labour. Historian Ross Barrett, citing a 1903 interview with ‘a meat-packing veteran’, notes that ‘with the introduction of the eight-hour day and payment by the hour, [...] “butchers have worked by the hour and been driven

like slaves” (Barrett, 1987: 25). The image of ‘evaporat[ing] hours’ not only recalls the shortened lives of marginalised animals but also the stolen time of workers, something the Group rallied against in their calls for workplace sabotage, coordinated laziness, and utopian visions of a world in which idleness is celebrated. In describing his own poetic practice, Rosemont writes that he explores visions and imagery with ‘the sort of impassioned laziness of walking through forests, or peering into a kaleidoscope’ (Rosemont in Sorkin, 1968: 1), as a way to renounce the capitalist condition of existence in which ‘the human being exists only for the ends of production’ (CSG, 1992A). Rosemont’s poem therefore recovers the interrelated violences to animals and human workers alike, and the reproduction of these violent conditions through fossil fuel-accelerated meat-packing infrastructure.

And yet despite the vastness of these gestures – for instance, worker solidarity, for the surrealists, has always been an internationalist project, and not specific to Chicagoan meat-packing - these lines have moments of granularity, too. ‘This coagulated island’ may not immediately read as Chicago – since neither the city nor the state of Illinois are an island – but it is nonetheless difficult not to recall, when confronted with this imagery of animal death in bodies of water, of the Chicago River’s pollution problems due to mass meat manufacturing less than a century before the poem’s publication. As William Cronon details, ‘The stench that hung over the South Branch and the filthy ice harvested from it were clear signs of its pollution. Decaying organic matter [from industrial meat packing ...] was the chief water supply problem the city faced by midcentury’ (Cronon, 1991: 249). Merging real historical conditions with the poem’s dream-like imagery invites reconsideration of what is prioritised and produced in systems of meat-producing infrastructure. Reading the poem in light of this context, it becomes clear how it

reimagines a world in which capitalist production is prioritised not as generative or creating smooth flows of goods, but as 'coagulated', clogged, and stagnant. Rather than facilitating capitalist flows, Rosemont reimagines meat infrastructure (which is also settler colonial infrastructure) as saturated with reminiscences of various kinds of violence. The saturated landscapes suggest that these violences are constitutive of the foundations of Chicago itself.

These reminiscences persist throughout the poem, creating a narrative journey in which mundane, regular experiences are reconfigured through the extrasensory perception of these histories of violence. In lines 19-20, the narrator remembers a moment in the past: 'It was a Sunday children were playing / softly like a murdered bear' (Rosemont, 1968: 13). The poem connects the juxtaposing imagery of Sunday (a day of rest), the soft play of children, and a murdered animal through a simile; the result is a kind of doubling, in which one image serves as a facsimile of the other. The partitioning of space that Cronon describes – in which altered ecosystems serve human ends – is evidenced here, but it requires vision that can see beneath the immediate moment of apparent innocence and harmlessness. This desire to see beyond anthropogenic borders towards the foundational violences that constitute the present is evidenced in the poem's relative lack of punctuation, zero stanza breaks, as well as the decision to split 'playing' and 'softly' into two sequential lines. The latter further connects the juxtaposing imagery by representing both the children playing and the murdered bear as 'soft'.

The poem foregrounds this partitioning of space and its ecosystemic disruption, but it does so less with an eye for general anthropogenic disruption and more specifically resurfaces imagery of violence against indigenous life. In

Cronon's narrative of Chicago's development in his influential book *Nature's Metropolis*, he describes this partitioning as serving 'human ends', but the poem more accurately assesses this as serving settler colonial ends. Returning to the lines, 'The war in which the blood / settles like leaves / upon the trees', these draw from a reservoir of imagery of warring settlers and their genocidal actions against Native Americans, buffalo, and other forms of indigenous life. In these lines, indigenous life, in this case the trees' leaves, is replaced by blood. This blood, which 'settles', acts as a synecdoche for the totality of settler colonial violence. But even further, it demonstrates that the Chicagoan infrastructures that facilitate mass animal death were, to use Susan Star's phrase, 'built on an installed base' (Star, 1999: 382). In Star's example, she cites 'optical fibres' that 'run along old railroads' as an example (ibid.). However, newer scholarship proposes that what Freda Huson calls 'critical infrastructures' for indigenous communities broadens the scope of what 'counts' as infrastructure; these critical infrastructures include, for instance, berry bushes, which provide broad-reaching ecological connections and 'link people and berries to streams, salmon, and bears' (Johnson and Nemser, 2022: 1). The poem therefore exposes how settler colonial infrastructural projects are violently built on an installed base of ecological relations, eradicating not just individual animal lives – such as the murdered bear - but the critical infrastructures that sustain these lives and relations.

The choice of 'bear' in this line – while gesturing to indigenous life, as bears are native across North America – in tandem with the imagery of children playing has the additional function of associating murdered bears and teddy bears (the latter is often called a 'soft toy', and so the adverb 'softly' in this line further lends to this association of images). This association in turn invites consideration of animal representation in commodity form and its relationship to the rendering of

animal parts in commodity production. Here I borrow from Nicole Shukin's doubling of the term 'render' in the sense of both textual representation of animals (the 'mimetic act of making a copy') and the rendering of animal bodies into products and byproducts (the 'industrial boiling down and recycling of animal remains') (Shukin, 2009: 20). For mass-produced teddy bears, animal rendering is pertinent to both meanings: the teddy bear is a mimetic copy (though imperfect) of a bear, and it is also linked to the meat-packing industry directly and materially through the glue (made from animal waste products) which attaches its eyes, limbs, and/or additional ornamentation. It is also linked indirectly, as it was innovations in meat-packing that set the precedent for mass manufacturing in the United States. As Ross Barrett argues, 'The formation of a mass market for meat products pressed the packers to rationalize packinghouse work, creating in the process one of the earliest mass-production industries' (Barrett, 1987: 14). He goes on to contend that it was Chicagoan meat-packing giants Philip Armour and Gustavus Swift, and not Henry Ford, who historians 'have deprived [...] of their rightful title of mass-production pioneers' (ibid.: 20).

Understood in this context, the poem's association of a murdered bear and a teddy bear works against the latter's fetishism, bringing its rendering as toy into what Shukin calls 'the biopolitical chains of market life' (Shukin, 2009: 24). Rosemont's poetic rendering of the same animal – the bear – is a disruption of this mimetic copy, making visible its direct and indirect relationships to the violent reduction of animal bodies to capital. As Shukin writes,

If animal life is violently subject to capital, capital is inescapably contingent on animal life, such that disruptions in animal capital have the potential to percuss

through the biopolitical chains of market life. One task of the critic of animal capital, then, is to *make their contingency visible* (ibid.)

It is this biopolitical and associational approach of Rosemont's poem – resulting in the rematerialisation of occulted relations – that makes this contingency of animal and capital visible. The narrator's perception is that of irrational insight, which works against the 'rationalized' labour of the packinghouse industry.

There is also potential here, though Shukin does not discuss this explicitly, for poetry to intervene in an incisive way. Poetry is a rhythmic and beat-oriented medium, lending itself well to the 'percuss[ive]' potential of disruptions in animal capital that Shukin describes. That said, Rosemont's punctuationless and free-flowing style are a lot less punchy than a more typical revolutionary call, and the poem's overall tone is less rousing than one might expect from an anti-capitalist Group invested in animal rights and environmental justice. As the Group wrote, they wanted to write poetry that 'foment[s] rebellion' and 'provokes action' (CSG, 1996: xxii). However, the references to the meat-packing industry and disassembly line are implicit and muted, often manifesting in form rather than in content, an obscurity which reads as an inflection of commodity fetishism's prevalence. These references are difficult to see precisely because commodity fetishism obscures them; as a result, it requires work from the reader to surface them. The point is articulated, but it arguably impedes the poem's effectivity as a mechanism for 'foment[ing] rebellion'. Furthermore, the poetic narrator is soporific and drifting (in fact, barely present at all) in a way that feels counterproductive to incitement. However, what these lines do convey is the casualisation and repression of animal

violence in fossil infrastructural systems; and once repressed material resurfaces, even the muted can become explosive.

For Walter Benjamin, it was this resurfacing of repressed psychic material that granted surrealist practices their revolutionary explosivity: 'No one before these visionaries and augurs perceived how destitution - [...] enslaved and enslaving objects – can be suddenly transformed into revolutionary nihilism... They bring the immense force of "atmosphere" concealed in these things to the point of explosion' (Benjamin, 1978 [1929]: 181-182). Benjamin's rhetoric here, although not directly referenced in the Group's political writings, aligns closely with what they felt was the revolutionary potential of their poetry. In the introduction to Rosemont's *The morning of a machine gun: twenty poems & documents* where 'Landscape with Moveable Parts' was first published, he writes that he 'want[s] poetry that shrieks in the night, breaks glass, sets fires, and takes what it wants' (Rosemont, 1968: 7). Rejecting the repressed, civilised subject that complies with violent systems, Rosemont's revolutionary poet retrieves concealed or repressed exploitative forces in their poetic articulation of auratic objects. In this way, 'Landscape with Moveable Parts' intervenes into discourses of functioning infrastructure as mundane, naturalised, or invisible until broken down (Star, 1999: 382). Rather, when the poet liberates the object's auratic quality and exposes its history with broader infrastructural systems, it becomes volatile, explosive, and emancipated from capitalist repression and commodity fetishism. As the CSG explain, 'For us, poetry is itself *revolutionary praxis*', as it 'ignites desire, affirms negation, expands the possible, advances freedom, foments rebellion, provokes action as well as dreaming' (CSG, 1996: xxii). Rosemont's depersonalised poetic narrator – inhabiting a dream-space, dream-persona, or both – serves as a catalyst to unleash 'the social relations [...] that are occulted in the apparent

autonomy of the products of their labor' (Shukin, 2009: 14-15). This form of poetics is a vital 'surrational exploration' that provides, in the Group's view, 'the most effective ammunition in the arsenal of surrealist subversion' (CSG, 1996: xxii). As Benjamin identified of the interwar surrealists, the CSG characterised their poetics as productively explosive, a form of ammunition that is both revelatory and disruptive to rationalised labour and its attendant violences.

By centring violence and death, however, only one part of the poetry's revolutionary praxis has been fulfilled. Following the narrator's journey through visions of animal corpses and anthropocentric partitions of space doesn't seem to 'expand the possible' so much as it visualises limitations and failures; if anything, the notion of expansion itself is criticised in the poem's rejection of violent modes of expanded reproduction. Which 'desires' are 'ignite[d]' here? Which 'freedom[s]' are 'advance[d]'? The CSG value deprogramming from hegemonic ways of thinking as a liberation of the mind: as the Group's Paul Garon wrote in an essay for their own publication *Surrealist Insurrection*, 'one can hardly expect to be directed toward freedom by artists whose chosen path leads through the narrow tunnel constructed and maintained by bourgeois concepts' (CSG, 1970). The Group felt that revolutionary art could build an alternative infrastructure for counterhegemonic concepts to circulate, but there's little recognition that this in itself is an intensely alienating process. When everyday actions are haunted by exploited labour and dead animal bodies, the latter rendered into commodities which span so vastly it is impossible to see without surrational vision, it feels disturbingly absolute and unchangeable. This comes across in 'Landscape with Moveable Parts', in which the narrator is so disembodied and dissociated that they become a conduit for these visions rather than an identifiable person working through the violent imagery's distressing and unsettling effects. However, there

are ways in which the poem relays visions of expansion, liberation, and subjectivity for animals, projecting visions of kaleidoscopic vitality that serve as an antidote to the death and cruelty that the poem reveals.

'A passenger train of luxurious zoology': Rosemont's poetics of kaleidoscopic vitality

Aura is a key concept for surrealists, and thus far has been deployed to uncover histories of death. But encoded in the term is an energy and vitalism that blur the boundary between subject and object, giving it the power to reconstitute animals as subjects within a hegemonic infrastructural system that objectifies and commodifies them. In Hal Foster's analysis of the interwar surrealists, he observed that 'To perceive the aura of an object we look at, means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return' (Foster, 1993: 196). This has relevance to environmental and animal studies in which the absolute alterity of the animal other has been signified in their gaze, what Derrida has described as 'the abyssal limit of the human' onto which human desires, anxieties, and taxonomies are projected (Derrida, 2002 381). In contrast, Rosemont's 'Landscape with Moveable Parts', imbued with an auratic quality, is one that gazes back: in lines 27 and 28, the narrator details a vision of 'hundreds of dogs / and several trees arranged like an observatory' (Rosemont, 1968: 13). This vision of plenitude and animal life is conveyed not for the narrator's enjoyment – whose presence through the poem is subdued, with only one reference to 'I' throughout – but to convey an animal other as seeing. The image brings to mind the dogs socialising, resting, and enjoying the sights of the outside world as a human subject may in an observatory. This re-

subjectification is not only a generous gesture toward respecting the inner worlds of animal life, but a form of justice, rendering animals not as meat or as commodity, but as seeing, living subjects. It is also not an anthropomorphising gesture that eradicates animal alterity; the use of simile ('like an observatory') allows for differentiation that doesn't literally place the dogs within anthropogenic structures, like human housing. The result is an image of plenitude and life that does not rely on enablement by humans and in which subjectification is similar but distinct to that of humans.

Intervening in Derrida's description of Western philosophical thought around the animal gaze, Rosemont's auratic animals offer an alternative gaze that is centralised on their own vitality and subjectivity. Partly this forms a dialogue with Chicago's specific history of meat manufacturing, but it also speaks to Rosemont's regular encounters at Chicago's Lincoln Zoo, which inform his poetry's criticisms of animal confinement and celebrations of animal diversity and freedom. The dogs' gaze in 'Landscape with Moveable Parts' is in direct contrast to zoos, which as Berger describes,

cannot but disappoint. The public purpose of zoos is to offer visitors the opportunity of looking at animals. Yet nowhere in a zoo can a stranger encounter the look of an animal. At the most, the animal's gaze flickers and passes on. They look sideways. They look blindly beyond. They scan mechanically. They have been immunized to encounter, because nothing can any more occupy a *central* place in their attention (ibid.: 37).

In a reorientation of humans-observing-animals to animals who observe, the poem envisions a fantasy of an animal gaze that is freed from the confines and numbing theatricality of zoo life, as well as from the death-producing meat infrastructure that Chicago pioneered.

'Landscape with Moveable Parts' is part of much larger catalogue of Rosemont's poetry in which animal abundance and diversity form a constitutive part. As Rosemont details in the autobiographical section of *The morning of a machine gun*, regular zoo visits provided him and his wife and fellow co-founder of the CSG Penelope Rosemont with ambivalent encounters with diverse animal groups:

I live with my woman, Penelope, in the Lincoln Park area of Chicago, a few blocks from the zoo, where several times a week (though less in the winter) we visit the African porcupines, the timber wolves, the nilgai, the gazelles, the secretary bird, the penguins, the elephants, the bushbabies, the giraffes and the Giant Anteaters. The revolution will liberate these beasts who will collaborate in the reintegration of the waking dream-life of man. (Rosemont, 1968: 162).

Recognising their imprisonment and marginalisation, Rosemont sees the various species of animals encountered at the zoo as allies in the revolution against bourgeois conventions. The zoo is a source of poetic inspiration for Rosemont, with his poetry conveying imagery of confined animals, such as 'giraffes as lonely as flowers in a vase', emphasising their reduction to exotic ornaments and limited quality of life (ibid.: 41). In another poem, he writes that 'In jail the crocodiles slept in unopened envelopes', an image of both imprisonment and illegibility (ibid.: 27).

These poetic visions are explorations of the direct effects of zoos. As John Berger writes in *Why Look at Animals?*,

Zoos, realistic animal toys and the widespread commercial diffusion of animal imagery, all began as animals started to be withdrawn from daily life. [...] The zoos, with their theatrical decor for display, were in fact demonstrations of how animals had been *rendered* absolutely marginal. The realistic toys increased the demand for the new animal puppet: the urban pet. The reproduction of animals in images – as their biological reproduction in birth becomes a rarer and rarer sight – was competitively forced to make animals ever more exotic and remote. (Berger, 2009: 35-36, emphasis mine).

Here, 'rendering' becomes a key term again: Berger understands the zoo as a particular form of animal rendering – both in the sense of animal representation and the ways zoo life shape animals' physiology and biological reproduction - that becomes prevalent at a moment when animal life has been displaced and marginalised. Chicago has a richly diverse zoo not in spite of its history of animal displacement and meat-manufacturing, but because of it.

The effect is a fetishisation and bifurcation of exotic and 'charismatic' animals in contrast to meat-producing ones, the former 'more readily seen as worthy of care and attention' because of said charisma and yet paradoxically more at risk of extinction (Krause and Robinson, 2017: 314; Franck et. al., 2018). This impacts the popular imaginary of what constitutes an 'animal', with the mechanised slaughter of pigs and cows reducing their status to 'sub-animal', and zoo animals retaining their iconicity and status as 'animal'. This in turn provides an

effective screen for the eradication of indigenous animal life and the mechanised murder of uncharismatic cows and pigs that is more characteristic of Chicago's relationship to animals, because it is these conditions and relationships that are reproduced via the city's infrastructure.

Rosemont's reproduction of zoo animal iconicity in the quotation cited above threatens to slip into this bifurcation. But in his poetry, it becomes clear that his representation of animals – charismatic or uncharismatic - attempts to escape the commodification that both zoos and meat manufacturing reinforce. In Rosemont's poem 'First Memory of Africa', included in his *The morning of a machine gun* collection, he explores animal subjectivity in a way that resists the exoticisation and immunisation to encounter that Berger describes. Despite the poem title suggesting the visions conveyed take place in Africa, the various animals mentioned (kangaroos, sparrows, raccoons, lambs, crows) are from across the globe, perhaps a result of the automatist, free association methodology used; the globally interconnected movement and trafficking of animal species that accelerated in the mid-twentieth century; and also the desire to move away from exoticism for the purpose of aesthetic enticement, which a poetic depiction of solely African animals may invite.

As such, the narrator conveys a vision of raccoons, an animal native to the Americas, as 'high in the calcium trees / articulating the grammar of ladders and hands / no calliope no lumberjack's moustache' (Rosemont, 1968: 31). In contrast to the ornamental, lonely, and imprisoned animals Rosemont describes in other poems, 'First Memory of Africa' renders raccoons as sociable and free, communicating through their own distinctive 'grammar' that involves tree-climbing and hand movements, punning on the word 'articulate' which denotes both

linguistic expression and the ability to move joints (for instance knuckle joints in a hand). This gesture recalls the etymology of their name, coming from ‘the Algonquian Powhatan “*arakunem*... ‘one who scratches with its hands”’ (Grider, 2024: 1), as well as various Algonquian people across the North American continent who referred to raccoons by various names, all involving hands: “‘They pick up things”’, “‘they use hands as a tool”’, and “‘those with clever fingers”’ (ibid.: 1-2). This reference to the pre-settler colonial significance of their names celebrates their rendering before colonial partitioning (something that the poem’s title also gestures to), and recognises their dexterity, cleverness, and interiority. This is something that would become increasingly eroded as settlers established the fur trade, reducing the ‘raccoon’s ultimate and culturally significant role in the fur trade as a slaughtered and skinned animal, as the artifact “pelt”’ (ibid.: 2).

Resisting this colonial designation, the raccoons’ position high up in the calcium trees conveys their ease of movement and presents them as of a higher social standing than in hegemonic imaginings. The fantasy of them socialising and communing in calcium trees – the latter of which are native to South America rather than the Northern continent – further resists raccoon pelts’ symbolism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of North American frontierism’s successes and productivity. As Daniel Heath Justice explains, ‘white colonists had fully embraced the abundant indigenous raccoon as a [...] symbol of the masculinist American frontier, untouched by the corrupting urbanity and class hierarchies of the decadent European powers’ (Justice, 2021: 77). Rosemont’s poem exposes this colonial myth-making as a lie. The fantasy of the raccoons’ freedom is contingent on the absence of masculinist figures: the phrase ‘no lumberjack’s moustache’ highlights facial hair as a synecdoche for frontierist masculinity, while the lumberjack role alludes to the ecological destruction undertaken by this form of

labour that made urbanisation possible. Rosemont does not locate the “symbol... of rebel patriotism, rooted in an untamed and untameable land” in raccoon pelts but in the living, socialising, communing, and articulating animals (Girder, 2024: 4).

Furthermore, the absence of the ‘calliope’ in this line, a steam-powered travelling organ used to advertise circuses in the nineteenth century, also signifies freedom from noisy commercialism and degrading travelling conditions for animals facilitated by coal-powered steam engines from this period. The calliope received its name from one of the seven Greek muses, who is a ‘patron of epic poetry’ (Britannica, 2007: para. 1); as such the poem exposes the usurpation of classical aestheticism that underpins the naming of the calliope, and tracks its lineage in the degradation and marginalisation of animal lives. Here again we see the surrealist interplay of reproduction and non-reproduction: the reference to the calliope recalls the historic movement and exploitation of animals in commercial endeavours like the circus, but its absence and negation in the poem (‘no calliope’) acts as a fantasy that envisions freedom from them. This encapsulates the Group’s ethos around poetry, which, they state, ‘begins – inevitably – with a colossal inventory of *rejection*’ (CSG, 1996 [1967]: 20). It is from this initial point of rejection that non-reproduction is possible, and the fantasy of animal freedom is not just poetic rendering but ‘a situation in which poetry is realized in life itself’, an alternative mechanism of reproduction via poetry (Rosemont, 1968: 8).

Later in the poem, this imagery of animal freedom evolves into a ‘a passenger train of luxurious zoology / pigeons of glacial momentum and sleep’ (ibid.: 32). Here the diversity of the zoo is extracted from its strictures and reoriented into a fantasy of luxury and free passage for animal life. While the

image at first appears anthropomorphic, imagining various animals as boarding a train in a human-like fashion, the following line causes the reader to reconsider the train in more organic terms. Unlike the fast-paced transport that characterises the combustion-reliant, coal-powered train, such as the ones used to transport livestock to Chicago to be slaughtered, the image transmutes (in the lack of 'and' or other conjunction between the lines) into 'pigeons of glacial momentum', a much slower, colder, and organic image.

Further, the expression 'glacial movement', along with the train, similarly recall the movement of animals in Chicago's meat-processing history, with refrigerated train cars 'provid[ing] a mobile spatial to the distance between settler cities and the feed lots on the Plains' (Cowen, 2024: 305). It was the 'refrigerator car' that Chicagoan packers themselves attributed to their success: meat-packing company Swift and Company claimed in a brochure that it was "is one of the vehicles on which the packing industry has ridden to greatness" (Cronon, 1991: 234). Just as locomotives had facilitated the movement of livestock previously, the now-refrigerated train cars made 'transport more efficient and accumulation more expansive', as frozen meat was easier to move than live bodies (Cowen, 2024: 305). Reconfiguring the refrigerator car as one of 'glacial movement' recalls this legacy in order to reject it, prioritising slow-pacedness luxury and life over fast-paced accumulation and slaughter.

As such, 'train' takes on a much broader conception in the poem as a carriage that facilitates movement, community, and the bringing together of heterogenous life, emphasised by the diverse consonant sounds (/tr/, /ʒ/, /z/, /p/, /gl/, /m/) and vowel sounds (/eɪ/, /u/, /ə/, /i/) in both lines. The reference to sleep foregrounds the surrealist methodology of dreaming as a way to access a 'radical

imagination' that disrupts 'systems and structures of institutionalized power that appear to be the natural order of reality, such as settler colonialism' and, to add to this, its marginalisation and eradication of animal life (Haiven, 2023: 53). Just as Rosemont described the zoo animals as collaborators in the revolution against settler colonialism, in this poem, charismatic and uncharismatic animals alike are dreamers of an expansive, slow-paced, and accommodating space for them to move freely and luxuriously, liberating animals from the pressures of expanded reproduction.

Together, these refusals, collaborations, solidarities, and generousities form what James C. Scott has called 'infrapolitics', defined as 'low-level forms of resistance' that elide 'hegemonic incorporation' (Scott, 1990: 19). The CSG may not have organised mass freeing of animals out of zoos or shut down industrial meat manufacturing, but infrapolitics nonetheless facilitate 'social sites at which [larger-scale forms of] resistance can be nurtured and given meaning' (ibid.: 20). In the context of surrealism, it is these 'small acts of dignity, solidarity, compassion, and resistance [that] draw on and contribute to a kind of subterranean dream reservoir' (Haiven, 2023: 48); collective dreaming is both an act of radical reimagination and an expression of aspirations and gestures towards socio-political change. For the CSG, these small resistances have much larger conceptual impacts: part of the project of animal solidarity, and which manifests in Rosemont's poetry, is the enactment of a fundamental shift in human-animal relations which redefines the human subject as one that is less egocentric and more caring, compassionate, and nurturing. In one of the Group's publications, 'The Anteater's Umbrella', the pamphlet explains the intersections of human-animal liberation, noting,

If enslavement begins with men, it must end with the simultaneous liberation of men and animals from the yoke of commodity fetishism and narcissistic effusions. The brutal confinement of animals ultimately serves only to separate men and women from their own potentialities, and to make them victims of their own insidious barbarity. (CSG, 1971).

Animal rendering becomes not just about preserving non-human animal dignity, but a reimagining of the contours of human identity. What's striking about this passage is the acknowledgement that structural forces create cruel human subjects, to the extent that the Group refers to them as 'victims' rather than cognizant agents of animal exploitation. Part of the poetic-political project of the Group's work is to explore this subjectivity and liberate its 'potentialities', taking inspiration from 'the incandescent speed of cheetahs, the desperate prowling of leopards, the celestial fever of black swans, the immaculate laughter of seals, the absent-minded tumbling of marmosets, the cabalistic brooding of owls' (ibid.). This logic of liberation and wildness leads to a not entirely unproblematic valorisation of rewilding, to which the chapter now turns.

### The rewilded human: proliferative poetics of breakdown and decay

Implicit in the critique of partitioning of ecosystems for settler colonial ends is a critique of infrastructure, in the sense that waterways, wildlife passages, and organic food sources are increasingly understood as 'critical infrastructure' onto

which settler colonial infrastructure has been installed (Johnson and Nemser, 2022: 1). Rosemont's poetry is particularly sensitive to the impact on non-human animals, seeking to render them in a way that is free from egocentrism and commodity fetishism. It makes sense for the Chicago surrealists to centre these concerns, given Chicago's brutal history of animal mistreatment in the meat-packing industry. But elsewhere in his poetry, representations of fossil infrastructure emerge: in particular, asphalt roads and cars. Alongside these representations are fantasies of rewilding and decay. Embedded in this is a critique of the naturalised human subject in a fossil-fuelled society, but what kind of human subject emerges from these representations and fantasies? Are there openings for revitalisation and collectivisation in moments of infrastructural breakdown and decay? And does this 'wilderness' elide or reinforce the problematics of frontierism?

Rosemont's poetry often conveys a disembodied narrator, extrasensorily perceiving histories of violence, but within these moments there is sometimes a sense of a more grounded narrator, taking on the perspective of a city pedestrian. In the 1968 poem 'For Luis Buñuel', dedicated to the interwar surrealist and filmmaker, the opening lines introduce a strolling narrator whose eyes pass alongside the pavement: 'One notices nothing extraordinary along the curbstones merely / the bones of dogs long dead' (Rosemont, 1968: 37). Again we have legacies of animal death constituting the city's foundations, embedded in the curbstones. The imagery of dead dogs contrasts significantly with the observatory of hundreds of dogs in 'Landscape with Moveable Parts' in a way that emphasises the effect of these former lines as mournful and pensive. But the unextraordinary curbstone also intersects with Chicago's role (similar to New York) in hosting and proselytising modernist imaginaries of fossil-fuelled urban and suburban

development, most epitomised in the city's two major World's Fairs in 1893 and 1933. In the latter, similar to the World of Tomorrow World's Fair in New York just six years later in 1939, General Motors funded the flashiest exhibitions. These exploited affects of artificial lighting, vast scaling of roads and highways, and the excitement of new automobile models to create a narrative of progress and enlightenment. As Cheryl Ganz explains,

Ford's "Roads of the World" [at the Chicago 1933 World's Fair] replicated worldwide road construction from early civilizations to America's latest concrete highways, providing visitors with a four-minute ride in a new V-8 Ford. After touring the complex, fairgoers could relax at Ford's outdoor symphonic orchestra shell and gardens, which trailed along the picturesque lakeshore. Each evening a light show featuring roof-mounted searchlights produced an amazing light beam that pierced the heavens with a promise of bright prosperity, magnifying Ford's visibility and dominance. (Ganz, 2008: 82).

Engaging with this history, 'For Luis Buñuel' opens with a rejection of this forward-looking optimism. Focusing not on roads, nor cars, nor the linear narrative presented in hegemonic imaginaries, the narrator's gaze is firmly on the curbstone, sensing and remembering animal lives now 'long dead'. That there's 'nothing extraordinary' about this image is another gesture of rejection: where fairgoers were encouraged to be engulfed by these affects at World's Fairs, Rosemont's narrator refuses to be taken in by the shiny consumerism underpinning fossil fuel-reliant urban development.

The 'nothing extraordinary' line takes on the double role of this rejection of extraordinary affect and also downplaying the dogs' deaths, in turn emphasising the casualisation of animal death in hegemonic culture. In Matthew Calarco's discussion of 'hyperautomobility' (or, put another way, the energy-intensive, fast-paced mobility afforded by fossil infrastructures), he notes that animals are 'routinely sacrificed in the service of the established social order of mobility', a fact that demarcates the animal as an entity that is not 'grievable' (Calarco, 2023: 36). Where the eradication of animal life in the installation of fossil infrastructure (and meat infrastructure) is a clear example of the animal's status as 'not grievable', mass meat production further entrenches this designation. As Melissa Haynes writes, referencing Derrida, 'The reduction of animals to meat is secondary to an earlier disavowal: the bodies described as animal were already marked as beings that can be killed but not murdered (Derrida 1991)' (Haynes, 2017: 36-7). Rosemont's striking image of a curbside constituent of dog bones reinstates these animal lives as grievable by perceiving and testifying to their existence, all-the-while recognising that it is their status as not grievable – substantiated both by Chicago's privileging of hyperautomobility and mass meat production - that relegated them to these deaths.

Rosemont's narrator reinstates the animal as 'grievable', but 'For Luis Buñuel' also formulates a human subject through its narration that resists fossil infrastructural affects and is instead sensitive to the loss of animal life. In the poem, the human subject in these lines engages with the literary Modernist trope of the *flâneur*, a particular kind of wanderer and observer of an urban environment. For Modernist scholars,

The *flâneur* is the connoisseur of [the] city, a distanced observer upon whom nothing is lost and who is capable in turn of receiving and creatively transforming the stimuli of modern urban life through the distinction of his vision, in the dual sense both of his eye and sensibility. (Dick, 2018: 149).

Such leisurely perusal of the city streets has been justly criticised as a signifier of time afforded by class or of a masculine consumer of the urban environment, given the noun's masculine gender in the original French (ibid.). The sort of *flâneur* that the 1933 World's Fair cultivated certainly fits these criticisms: the leisure of street-walking is transformed into the thrill of driving a brand new automobile; environments were ornamented with different stimuli, including bright, colourful artificial lights and orchestral music; commodities like automobiles, white goods, and other kinds of inventions for the home were presented in a way that merged the public space of the city and the private space of the home, encouraging consumerism and conformity at every turn. The 1933 World's Fair exemplified this through its slogan: 'Science Finds, Industry Applies, Man Conforms' (Ganz, 2008: 3). However, a surrealist *flâneur* operates with a different sensibility: one of class and animal solidarity. They are therefore someone who can interrogate hegemonic infrastructural imaginaries through their own surreational vision, taking on a leisurely pace not to instil a sense of class distinction, but to oppose the fast-paced, death-producing hyperautomobility of fossil infrastructural systems. Much like Kay Sage's paintings and poem in chapter 1, there is non-reproduction of fossil infrastructural affects in Rosemont's poetry that provides infrastructure for solidarity against ecocide and animal death.

What distinguishes Rosemont from Sage, however, is how this non-reproduction often manifests in his poetry in celebratory representations of breakdown and decay. This celebratory form of resistance has the advantage of being more easily transmutable into solidarity and an overt desire for reparation. For instance, in a poem entitled 'Triplet', Rosemont's narrator details diversely coloured dogs in various stages of activity, and this is made possible due to road closures and broken down cars: 'the black dogs howl / the white dogs sleep / the yellow dogs are very alert / as if the road was closed / [...] because the cars are out of gas / [...] People are in the street / Wind leaves its pebbles on one's ears / Dandelions grow in the laughter of flat tires' (Rosemont, 1968: 39). Here the poem relays a fantasy of animal plenitude that is explicitly tied to infrastructural breakdown. Without gas to fuel the cars, the road becomes obsolete and is closed; people and dogs alike repopulate the streets, and they are able to hear the wind, inviting the sensation of being able to hear its white noise in the absence of car engines and gas being noisily exhausted. The fantasy of 'as if' - 'as if the road was closed' - creates imaginative space for alternative, intimate modes of sensation. For instance, the wind 'leaves its pebbles on one's ears', a metaphor for hearing it that creates the sense of a more intimate experience, as if feeling pebbles against the ear's skin.

This gentle imagery contrasts starkly with the kinds of thunderous and overwhelming stimuli that attended commercial imageries of urban space, such as the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, where 'Members of [the Fair's] commission wanted "sky-piercing piles of night-lit stone and steel that will thunder the message of this modern age"' (Ganz, 2008: 60). While tough to compete with the stimuli of World's Fairs, there is an intimacy in the poem that is rewarding; the image brings to mind the smoothness of wind erosion against stones, a much slower paced and smaller-

scale form of stimulus. As such, the poem reclaims the material space of the road – and with it, its affects of fast-paced, progressive civilisation - and envelops it into an imaginative space of slower ecological connection and a hopeful interspecies solidarity. As with previous post-war surrealists covered in this thesis, the interplay between non-reproduction (of functioning fossil infrastructure and its affects) and reproduction (of a hopeful scene of animal plenitude) foregrounds reparation as a key priority in imagining infrastructural futures.

Most celebratory of all in this poem is the metaphor of flat tires as ‘laughter’, relaying a sense of joy and community as the apparatuses of hyperautomobility break down. Using the general article ‘the’ (rather than a possessive one, e.g. ‘my’, ‘your’, or ‘our’), ‘the laughter of flat tires’ takes on a communal quality that also inscribes the tires themselves with the ability to laugh. Here, the sound of tires deflating is made analogous to the release of tension and air that accompanies laughter, an image that reframes breakdown as an opportunity to let go of some of the pressures that attend fossil infrastructural systems. Commercial imaginaries of automobility and oil have emphasised autonomy, free movement, leisure (through, for instance, the scenic reframing of the environment through windshields), and luxury; in Matthew Huber’s words, automobility and products reliant on petroleum were sold as instruments through which individuals could construct ‘their own privatized spaces of freedom’ (Huber, 2014: 304). Huber calls this ‘petro-privatism’, in which ‘individuals are propelled from private homes in private automobiles to privatized workplaces and consumption locations’ (ibid.: 306). In contrast, ‘Triplet’ offers release from hyperautomobility’s more stressful realities: traffic, smog, noise pollution, roadkill, and social isolation, all of which had exacerbated by the mid-century with the petro-privatist popularity of suburbs.

Huber notes, too, that while commercial rhetoric emphasised freedom, there is a contradiction in the way that companies did not pass up the opportunity to remind consumers how reliant on petroleum they were; in Huber's words, 'perilously' so (ibid.). While Huber's article focuses on the benefit to petroleum companies as deregulation and free-market ideology took hold, the discussion of the effects on the kind of human subject that emerges from petro-privatism is more implicit. Rosemont's poem brings this concern to the fore, releasing the human subject from the stresses and constraints of petro-privatism, and imagining a human subject freed from the grip of petroleum dependency through a fantasy of exhaustion that facilitates community and ecological intimacy.

With that exhaustion comes opportunities for renewal and revitalisation, connoted in the poem's image of dandelions growing out of the flat tires. The choice of flower speaks to the Group's inclinations towards wilderness as a form of surrealist subversion, and conveys a sense of tenacity and resilience that committing to counterhegemony takes. By the midcentury, dandelions had become flowers that were no longer popularly cultivated, and because of their easy proliferation and resilience (known for taking root in environments otherwise hostile to plant life, like cracks in pavements and concrete) had begun to be treated as weeds. As Cynthia O'Neill writes, this designation occurred concomitantly with 'the rise of agricultural farming, suburbs, and expansive lawns in parks', spaces in which uniformity and tractability were valued. As such, dandelions 'challenge sociocultural norms of uniformity and morality that the American lawn has represented since the postwar era' (O'Neill, 2024: 141-2).

Prolific, resilient, and difficult to eradicate (as a whole industry of dandelion-focused herbicides will attest), dandelions are ideal figures for representing a

hope-filled challenge to the fossil infrastructural status quo, threatening the pristine private lawns of petroleum-reliant suburbs with their wildness and intractability. But even further, and more materially, the dandelions provide a model of infrastructural alterity in the poem in which the breakdown of older conditions provides the base for alternative systems to emerge. Just as the poem reclaims the space of the closed road, here too the tires are reclaimed, 'making use of fissures and flaws to build the conditions for other worlds and forms of life to emerge' (Johnson and Nemser, 2022: 7).

'Wilderness' is not, as the discussion above risks implying, an unproblematic term or one that universally signifies subversion or critique. Wilderness is an ecopolitical term that has been criticised as an extension rather than subversion of frontierist logic. Most notably in William Cronon's 1996 article 'The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature', he interrogates the elevated place imaginaries of wilderness have in contemporary U.S. environmental politics. He notes, for instance, how proponents of wilderness extend frontierist logics, including the valorisation of 'virgin' land and of individualist (rather than communitarian) freedom, both 'especially cruel when seen from the perspective of the Indians who had once called that land home' (Cronon, 1996: 15). We must be wary, then, of wilderness's advocates: do they not fall into the fantasy of what Cronon calls 'frontier primitivism', in which the hunter-gatherer is modelled as the antidote to the civilisational use and extraction of resources (ibid.: 20)? How, if at all, does a project of rewilding express a desire for reparative infrastructure for animals, indigenous communities, and non-human life?

Rosemont's poetry, when it represents rewilding, intersects with these problematics. On the one hand, 'Triplet's discursive intervention into infrastructure is one that shapes human subjectivity away from conformity and consumerism towards an independent resilience and an openness to breakdown and rupture that can form the basis of new life worlds. This kind of subjectivity would develop further in Rosemont's later poetry, such as the poem 'Speed the Day', first published in 1990 and republished alongside an ecopolitical tract by the Group in 1992. In this poem, the rupture of plant life again forms in fossil infrastructures' fissures, and a newly emancipated human subject is fully realised. In lines 23-29, the narrator speaks: 'when the last parking lot in the world / is overgrown with redwoods / will my eyes ear nose and throat / rejoice to hear / those glorious wonderful / fresh-gulps-of-mountain-air / songs' (CSG, 1992A). These lines mark an interesting shift away from the imagery of 'Triplet', as it is parking lots rather than cars which are overtaken by wild plant life. Although a similar intervention into fossil infrastructural hegemony, the image of parking lots – and all of them in the world, no less – suggests a much broader scope in terms of the partitioning of space into private and consumerist spaces. Like the ideal American lawn, the parking lot represents conformity of space and a petroleum-reliant conception of 'the good life', as much as it materially facilitates car-owners to go shopping, drive to work, and to other private and commercial centres. The poem represents the lots' rupture as desirable, imagining it as an experience of exaltation and glory in contrast to hegemonic imaginaries, where such ruination would be part and parcel of a vision of apocalyptic doom. The poem achieves this in its repetition of /w/ sounds (in 'when', 'world', 'grown', 'will', and 'wonderful') which phonaesthetically grants the lines a sense of wonder and whimsy. As a result, the poem invites the reader to join in this euphoric fantasy of liberation from fossil infrastructural

hegemony. For Rosemont, wilderness is the interruption of expanded reproduction, and therefore the non-reproduction of a hegemony that dispossesses and marginalises indigenous life.

On the other hand, the poem often slips into a model of rewilded subjectivity that is indistinct from the frontier primitivist Cronon describes. The poem continues to convey a euphoric narrator, who is notably more embodied than in his previous work. Partly this is due to the possessive pronoun 'my' (where in previous poems this would have typically been 'one's'), but this effect is also achieved through the listing of body parts which each have a role in sensation and communication, granting the sense of a unitary body: 'eyes' for sight, 'ear' for sound, 'nose' for smell and 'throat' for speaking (or contextually in this poem, singing). This embodied narrator provides the reader with a more directly euphoric sense of the liberation from fossil infrastructural systems: freedom from pollution (allowing 'fresh-gulps-of-air'), from the domination of privatised and commercial spaces, and from hyperautomobility's negative ecological consequences (particularly towards animal life when considering Rosemont's wider body of work). But the possessive first person pronoun also has the potential to convey and valorise an individualist narrator, and the fantasy of roaming free in unpolluted land closely resembles the fantasy of the frontierist encountering 'virgin' lands, a way of seeing that renders indigenous life invisible.

There are moments where this individualism slips, however: similar to the style of Rosemont's previous poetry, the narrator lists these body parts in a way where each part is not partitioned by punctuation, producing a more open and receptive sense of the narrator's body. These body parts are not clearly segregated or segmented, but rather form a unitary whole whose boundaries are

permeable. Rosemont's generalised surrealist narrator had previously been more of a seer of various visions and fantasies, a gesture that has the potential to dematerialise and mute what Davide Panagia has called sensation's 'political life', i.e. the ability for sensation to disrupt 'partitions of the sensible', which under the liberal capitalist status quo is an imagining of the individual's body as contained and nonporous (Panagia, 2009: 6). By way of contrast, the lack of grammatical partitioning when representing the narrator's body taps into sensation's political life, in turn resisting the individualism that often attends the first-person possessive pronoun. Concurrently, this stronger sense of non-individualised embodiment conveys a narrator that is more explicitly capable of feeling the material benefits from these spaces overgrown with new life. In the poem's representation of the trees' reproduction, rewilded and ecologically sensitive forms of human subjectivity are also reproduced. The result is an alternative reproductive futurism that does not cater to settler colonial proliferation, but an expansive reproduction of life previously eradicated, rendered not grievable. It is here where the narrator's ecologically open body meets up against criticisms of wilderness as a fantasy of return to the rugged individualism of frontierism.

In the poem, wilderness is conveyed by the return of indigenous life, and more specifically, the redwood tree. The choice of tree similarly contributes to this sense of euphoria and exaltation that is arguably an extension of frontier primitivism: native to North America, some existing redwoods are incredibly old, upwards of two thousand or three thousand years, and stand taller than most buildings: the oldest in North America can be up to a hundred metres in height, and a 2015 study described them as 'the only species exceeding 90 m in height and 2000 years of age' (Sillett et. al, 2015: 181). This combination of ancientness and enormity grants this image of infrastructural rupture a magnificence and sense

of sublime; the reference to 'mountain-air songs' similarly situates the narrator in a high-up imaginary place where there is natural height, vastness, and grandeur.

This is another gesture that can be helpfully read in the context of hegemonic infrastructural imaginaries, such as those presented at World's Fairs. As David Nye has argued, these monopoly-backed commercial fossil infrastructural imaginaries made use of vastness in their representations of highways, height in their construction of urban buildings, and amplified these qualities with fossil-fuelled artificial lighting in order to give a sense of the 'technological sublime' (Nye, 1992: 59). This was a strategy of both of Chicago's World's Fairs, and they capitalised upon an already emerging phenomenon where the sublime's affective power had been appropriated and redirected towards human achievement and technological innovation (*ibid.*: 34). Given redwood trees' staggering height – meeting or surpassing that of skyscrapers – their takeover in the poem represents a reclamation of this sublime. While the scale here is much grander than the wind's pebbles in 'Triplet', there is a similar appeal to slow-pacedness (e.g. the slow overgrowing takeover of long-living trees) as a rewarding and intimate form of relation to the world. Both this reclamation of the sublime and this veneration of slow-paced relations form surrealist poetic strategies of rejection, in light of fossil infrastructural hegemony that prioritises fast-pacedness, isolation, and externalisation of non-human life.

Redwood trees are prime examples of this externalisation; they're a species whose population has been decreasing over the decades to the point of endangerment. Losing these trees has existential consequences: a decline in numbers has left North American forests – particularly in California – vulnerable to disease and has exacerbated the destructive impact of wildfires in the area (Metz

et. al., 2013: 1). Although redwoods were not classified as endangered under the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List until 2013 (Kelly, 2016: 361) – more than two decades after ‘Speed the Day’ was published – their inclusion in the poem highlights that their continued eradication is part of a much longer history of partitioning of space for the purposes of fossil infrastructural installation. This fantasy of rewilded parking lots, taken over by redwood trees, is therefore related to a fantasy of reinstallation of the ‘critical infrastructures’ Freda Huson described as pre-existing settler colonial infrastructure, connecting people to the means to reproduce the conditions for survival. What emerges here is a fundamentally different conception of infrastructure: rather than the facilitated circulation of people, goods, and ideas that underpins fossil infrastructures, emerging from a liberal political hegemony that prioritises the white American family, there is a repetition or proliferation here that sustains different forms of life. In the poem, it’s the last parking lot in the world that is overgrown; presumably the others have been, too, inviting an image of proliferating plant life. Here, proliferation is understood not as the infrastructural facilitation of capitalist flows of people and commodities, partitioned into private and commercial spheres, but as the continued survival of various – new and ancient - forms of life. Again, rupture is the basis through which this is possible; the redwoods’ reclamation of space necessarily breaks through privatised partitioning, instead creating a new commons in which their continued proliferation becomes possible.

Cronon has criticised such a focus on a single endangered species, whereby ‘those hoping to defend pristine wilderness have had to rely on a single endangered species like the spotted owl [or the redwood tree] to gain legal standing for their case-thereby making the full power of the sacred land inhere in a single numinous organism whose habitat then becomes the object of intense

debate about appropriate management and use' (Cronon, 1996: 18). He cites the anti-environmental wise-use movement successfully demonstrating the vulnerability of such strategies (ibid.). He further argues that the fantasy of wilderness has the strongest hold on those 'who have never themselves had to work the land to make a living' because the return to wilderness suggests returning to land untouched and unworked by human hand, erasing the relationships between the wood that makes housing and 'the forests in which trees grow and die' (ibid.: 16-17). When the poem indulges most in its frontierist primitivist fantasies, it feels most distant from the politics of use and management that Cronon justifiably brings to the fore here. However, because the poem registers both reproduction and non-reproduction, it does intercede meaningfully into questions of use and management, prioritising the proliferation of redwood trees over the expanded reproduction of fossil infrastructure. There is space in the poem's imaginary for something in between the 'virgin' lands of frontierism and the marginalising, flattening forces of concrete and asphalt, where use of the redwoods does not prevent their proliferation. While the poem does not always distinguish itself from the frontier primitivism Cronon rightfully criticises, its fantasy of proliferation of indigenous life in the rupture of settler colonial infrastructure makes its imaginary distinct from that of frontierism, in which the end goal is the expanded reproduction of settler infrastructure.

Later in 'Speed the Day', the redwoods' reclamation of space is explicitly tied to reclamation of commons through obsolescence. Part of the narrators' rejoicing comes when, alongside the overgrowth, 'god money government fatherland war profits police suburb jail clearcut pesticide steel-jawed trap / and all the other ugliest words in all languages / are obsolete at last' (Rosemont, 1992). Again the list of words here are not partitioned by commas or line breaks, relaying

the sense that these concepts are interconnected and part of a larger system of ecological violence. In the political tract that was published alongside 'Speed the Day', titled 'As Long as Tourists Replace Seers', the Group writes that,

The struggle for wilderness is inseparable from the struggle for a free society, which is inseparable from the struggle against racism, whiteness and imperialism, which is inseparable from the struggle for the liberation of women, which is inseparable from the struggle for sexual freedom, which is inseparable from the struggle to emancipate labor and abolish work, which is inseparable from the struggle against war, which is inseparable from the struggle to *live poetic lives* and, more generally, to do as we please. (CSG, 1992A).

What's at stake in these lines, then, is not just the lives of redwood trees, but of a human subject whose freedom is impeded by private-public enterprises, commercialism, governments, policing, and the organisation of space as structured by settler coloniality and fossil infrastructure. The repetition of the word 'inseparable' in this tract operates as rousing rhetoric and the affirmation of political conviction. But in this repetition, there is also a gesture of how to create repetitive, proliferating infrastructural forms that are emancipatory rather than settler colonial, and that produce a wild, loosely partitioned human subject rather than a labour-bound, entrepreneurial one. Part of this intervention comes from the proliferation of the Group's political writing, in which the circulation of surrealist writings and ideas became a counterhegemonic infrastructure of its own, meeting up against the fossil infrastructural status quo in unexpected ways.

## Infrastructure for surrealist print and community: seizing the means of reproduction

The means through which surrealist activity spread in Chicago was through its labour organisation, its stewardship of an art gallery which hosted surrealist exhibitions, and its own printing culture. While the gallery space seems to take precedence in CSG members' memory, with two galleries (Gallery Black Swan and Gallery Bugs Bunny) hosting surrealist events, their stewardship of both was relatively brief; having to rent the space meant that they were eventually taken over. Strangely, the former gallery later became a highly commercialised and unsurprisingly ephemeral Michael Jordan-themed restaurant (Selvam, 2020), while the latter fell out of the Group's stewardship after a dispute with its managers (CSG, 1970). But the Group also ran its own printing publication, Black Swan Press, which lasted significantly longer: until the late 1990s, pamphlets, treatises, group discussions, and poetry were circulated and even shipped internationally under the Black Swan Press sign. The mailing address was Solidarity bookshop, a meeting place for the Group as well as other radical groups from the 1960s and '70s. CSG member Ron Sakolsky gives insight into the surrealist community at this time in a 2008 pamphlet, *Gallery Bugs Bunny Revisited!*, written to promote a one-time event at the gallery where it relived its glory days under the CSG's auspices. In the pamphlet, under the subheading 'Surrealism in Chicago: A Short History', Ron Sakolsky narrates how a community emerged from these surrealist-operated spaces:

Announcing its presence wordlessly, with no sign – only a large picture of Bugs Bunny chomping on a carrot painted on its black front door – the one and only Gallery Bugs Bunny (at 524 Eugenie, at the corner of Mohawk) was not just an art gallery but a meeting-place for local radicals: surrealists, Black Panthers, Wobblies, Diggers, anarchists, SDSers [Students for a Democratic Society], you-name-it. The surrounding working class neighborhood was honey-combed with a free store and a lively assortment of cafes, bars, and junk shops. Solidarity Bookshop, an IWW [International Workers of the World] bookshop and notable hangout, was just a few blocks away. (Sakolsky, 2008).

Though Sakolsky is likely to gloss over difficulty or conflict in retrospect – especially in a pamphlet promoting an event that is inherently nostalgic and reminiscing in tone – the image presented here is of a community whose printing culture is closely tied to its idealised organisation of space. Rather than the fossil infrastructural ideals of isolated, privatised units of living and spending, the Group and their collaborators fostered a ‘honey-combed’ structure of walkable, communal hang-out spots, with free access to political reading materials and other forms of support and solidarity from communities of radicals.

This is the material counterpart to what the poetry under Black Swan Press strived for: the reconciliation of poetry and real life, or in the Group’s words, the ability to ‘*live poetic lives*’ (CSG, 1992A). Where Rosemont’s poetry concerned itself with the de-partitioning of space, with a particular emphasis on non-human animal lives, so too does the Group radically resist fossil infrastructural imaginaries that alienate subjects from non-human life and from communal living. The ‘honey-combed’ description connotes a beehive that signals admiration for non-human life

and its unique forms of proliferation and production; the image is that of worker bees, co-creating and spreading ideas, literature, and solidarity.

In a similar vein, as ever, animal imagery remained vital: the *Looney Tunes* cartoon character Bugs Bunny became the gallery's mascot, taking on an emblematic status to the Group. One publication describes the character as one of the '*greatest exceptions* in US culture' that inspired the Chicago surrealist movement (CSG, 1992A). Although their reasoning is not explicit in their writings, their reverence can be extrapolated from the character's well-known laid-back, trickster attitude, especially in the face of human aggression and authority as personified in Bugs' nemesis, the hunter Elmer Fudd. The Group played with the two characters' dynamics and incorporated them into their own struggles and conflicts, noting for instance having to separate themselves from the Gallery due to 'regressive tendencies on the part of the gallery's management' and, in a gesture that feels half-tongue-in-cheek and half-genuinely angry, renamed the space 'gallery elmer fudd' (CSG, 1970). The story of the spaces the CSG helped curate is one that conveys their precarity and instability; commercial precedence always loomed, and the economic arrangements of renting and ownership impeded a longer-term realisation of communitarian life. Their alignment with the non-human Bugs Bunny – even if an anthropomorphised, pop culture figure – emphasises these dynamics of power and marginalisation when it comes to the politics and partitioning of space in fossil infrastructural worlds.

In their poetry as well as in day-to-day life, the Group found themselves at odds with authority figures who they perceived as having disproportionate power over the city's infrastructure. This threat could be phantasmagorical: in Ron Sakolsky's telling of the opening day of a show exhibiting Franklin Rosemont's

work, they found the pavements outside and around the gallery ‘mysteriously torn up’ (Sakolsky, 2008). He continues, ‘no warning was given by the city, or explanation afterward – and they remained torn up for the duration of the show, making the place almost inaccessible’ (ibid.). No other published account of this incident exists, so it’s difficult to verify whether it happened or not; it’s even more difficult to ascertain whether this was deliberate sabotage by city authorities (synecdochally referred to as ‘the city’, heightening their perceived power) to curtail surrealist and radical political activity, which Sakolsky’s retelling subtly suggests.

True or not, what this narrative reveals is that the Group’s perception of institutional authority was that it was threatening and sabotaging at the level of infrastructure: it facilitated what was profitable and intervened (mysteriously and conspiratorially) to hinder what was not, i.e. the Group’s counterhegemonic activities. Frustrating as this could have been to the Group, especially Franklin Rosemont, whose show was impacted, his response was humorous and light-hearted: “‘Rock-climbers thought it was fine,” Franklin comments today’ (ibid.). On the one hand, the humour here serves to maintain morale against oppressive authorities; like the resilient dandelion in Rosemont’s poem ‘Triplet’, the show continued on, despite and through the pavement’s cracks. But on the other, it values an adaptable human subject, relying not on the infrastructural status quo, but on meeting the challenges of infrastructural decline that is inevitable in an economic system that fetishises newness and futurity, and therefore marginalises maintenance and care.

The Group saw moments of infrastructural rupture as opportunities for insight, as was the case in 1992 when the Chicago River flooded, causing mass

disruption throughout the city. In response, the Group made a pamphlet for distribution entitled 'A river's revenge!', which primarily presented the river as an agent of class retribution. For the purposes of the pamphlet, the river becomes a symbol of class revenge, something that serves the Group's political interests and which the river can neither confirm nor deny. What is more interesting is that the pamphlet continues the Group's legacy of striving to understand occulted infrastructural relations, writing that, 'With the power and lights out, the unruly river showed us how much of what affects our lives is dark and underground and hidden from view' (CSG, 1992B). Partly what the Group means here are the material infrastructures that when suddenly non-functioning, become visible. But even further, they also mean the labour relations that, firstly, made possible the instalment and operation of these very infrastructures, and secondly, which fossil infrastructure facilitates and repeats. As the Group explains, these labour relations are suddenly liberated when the infrastructural system breaks down, writing, 'Thanks to the flood, some 250,000 workers enjoyed at least one extra day off, with pay, and many of the homeless savored their finest meals in years (with refrigeration turned off, restaurant-owners found it cheaper to give food away than to pay for its removal)' (ibid.). Consequently, 'Momentarily freed of the stultifying routine of "making a living," people find themselves confronted with a rare opportunity to *live*' (ibid.).

Whether the river intended to or not, its rising excavated histories of labour relations that continue to have structuring force, and which had been deliberately obscured until this moment of flood. Just as occultation and revelation have been cornerstones of surrealist thought and exploration, the Group extends these concepts to infrastructure, writing that despite the darkness brought on by power cuts and 'the river's murky waters', 'The raging torrents [...] thus brought only

*clarification* in their wake' (ibid.). For the Group, infrastructural breakdown is not just the non-circulation of the material products of labour – in fact, these can be *more* freely distributed, as was the case for restaurants giving away food unable to be refrigerated - but the breakdown of particular capitalist relations of labour and sociality. This is why breakdown has such revelatory potential: as Marina Vishmidt writes, 'To say that infrastructure "repeats" means that it works to enable a set of activities, and it works because the preconditions of its effectivity are neither visible nor relevant: these jut out when the infrastructure breaks down or if an element is isolated from the whole' (Vishmidt, 2017: 266). Here, the preconditions of an exploited labour class, needed for infrastructure's effectivity, are made visible.

The river's personification in the pamphlet might not be a precise ecological intervention (in terms of exploring how recognising a river's subjectivity may lead to more ethical decision-making, releasing it from the burdens of exploitation and pollution). However, its personification works to stand in for a frustrated working class whose emancipation depends on ceasing this infrastructural repetition. As the Group writes, 'In the rising of the river we recognize the eruption and triumph of all that is forbidden, outlawed, suppressed by the enforcers of a racist, sexist, exploitative, militaristic and ecocidal Law 'n' Order' (CSG, 1992B). As such, the river becomes a site where non-reproduction of these relations provides opportunity for new fertile ground, with the pamphlet emphatically concluding, 'The majesty and fertility of the river is as irrepressible as the desire for freedom. / Dreamers of the world, dream like the flood!' (ibid.). Incorporating the flood into the collective, imaginative reservoir of surrealist dream imagery, we see how the river's non-reproduction becomes an alternative basis for imagining new infrastructural worlds that are nonetheless 'fertile' or reproductive. In this

imaginary, rupture signifies the breakdown of exploitative relations, relations that fossil infrastructure would otherwise externalise – and has continued to externalise in its imaginaries - through obfuscation. For the Group, this site of rewilded non-reproduction is reparative: their claims that ‘To defend the Marvelous today requires the absolute and unequivocal defense of wilderness’ and that ‘ecology will be revolutionary and surrealist or it will be nothing at all!’ resonate here (CSG, 1996: xxxi).

And yet, the Group did not give up on reproduction or proliferation altogether, nor did they abandon city life for the more wilderness-adjacent countercultural communes that cropped up during their period of activity and agitation. This discussion is not intended to be a call-out or suggestion of hypocrisy, but rather an evaluation of the role of proliferation in counterhegemonic discourses. As ‘A river’s revenge!’ highlighted, wilderness (as embodied by the raging torrents) is non-reproductive in the sense of ceasing fossil infrastructural relations, but it is still reproductive in other ways; it provides ‘fertile’ ground for new life. Equally, neither is literature entirely non-reproductive. Black Swan Press, for instance, was an enabler for the proliferation of surrealist ideas, poetry, and international solidarity.

Of the CSG’s repeat publications, most notable was the journal *Arsenal: Surrealist Subversion*, which started in 1970 and which saw Franklin Rosemont as editor, supported by an editorial board of other Group members: Penelope Rosemont, Paul Garon, Joseph Jablonski, as well as San Francisco-based surrealist poet Philip Lamantia. Despite a mostly local editorial board, they had collaborators from across the world. Announcing the journal in an early publication, the Group writes that, ‘The surrealist group in Chicago, in collaboration with

comrades in other cities in the US and in close communication with the entire international surrealist movement (Paris, Amsterdam, Buenos Aires, etc.) has begun publishing a periodical agitational news-poster, SURREALIST INSURRECTION' (CSG, 1968). With discussions ranging from the best methods to diffuse surrealist thought to rousing political rhetoric that strove for the 'total liberation of man' from capitalist exploitation, surrealists were most able to support each other through the communication lines of major US and international cities (ibid.). Since the interwar surrealists, surrealism's international outreach has been explicitly anti-imperialist: adopting Marxist logic, internationalism represented a denial of the categories of nationhood that fractured and distracted working classes from across the globe. This is of course distinct from the more neoliberal and neocolonial conception of internationalism in which global interconnection, both motivated by fossil fuel extraction and facilitated by fossil infrastructure, works to ensure the expanded, monopolised power of multinational corporations. So how does proliferation/reproduction work differently here? Is proliferation compatible with the priorities of wilderness and anti-imperialism that the CSG advocate for?

The way the Group talks about their publications offers an alternative mode of repetition and proliferation to fossil infrastructure. As Brian Larkin writes, part of the poetics of fossil infrastructure is that its repetition offers an embodied aesthetic experience or sensation - 'produc[ing] the ambient conditions of everyday life' - and part of its politics is how they operate as 'aesthetic vehicles' through which 'fantasies [of modernity, futurity] are transmitted and made emotionally real' (Larkin, 2013: 329, 333). Black Swan Press's publications offer a different mode of aesthetic vehicle, in which fantasies of the proliferation of non-human life reshape the modern human subject, as well as models of the future, into those that are rewilded. The result is an imaginary space that resembles pre-colonial

infrastructure in its disassembly of the settler colonial infrastructure that currently partitions and orients space. In this imaginary space is a new kind of ambience that is kaleidoscopically full of animal life, rather than the churn of car engines or the sound of tires against asphalt.

This is fundamentally different from the way fossil infrastructure repeats the activities it enables, or even further, to the way infrastructural projects are repeated and exported as copies around the globe. As Larkin writes, 'Many infrastructural projects are copies, funded and constructed so that cities or nations can take part in a contemporaneous modernity by repeating infrastructural projects from elsewhere to participate in a common visual and conceptual paradigm of what it means to be modern' (ibid.: 333). The global hegemony of automobility infrastructure (though more intensive in the United States) is one such example. Black Swan Press materials are directly opposed to these affects of modernity, rather than participating in them through its own proliferation of copies. Part of this is due to its much smaller scale; it's unclear how many copies of *Arsenal* were sold and posted, but not enough that it warranted regular printing. In the announcement for the journal, the Group writes that, 'SURREALIST INSURRECTION will appear frequently at irregular intervals, according to the sensitive zodiac of chance intersected by necessity' (CSG, 1968). Without the aim of making profits, the journal was essentially put together in members' free time and was therefore always subject to the precarity of chance.

Nonetheless, the use of the word 'necessity' here demonstrates that ultimately, there is power in reproduction, here meaning in the sense of textual mimesis (rather than the sense of biologically producing offspring). Consider the Black Swan logo (figure 10), used for publications printed under Black Swan Press

and for material promoting exhibitions at Gallery Black Swan. Immediately, it betrays a concern for representation of the non-human. Note that the logo is not a representation of a swan; it is a representation of a human casting a shadow with their arms and hands that bears similarity to a swan. Partly this choice of shadow speaks to the Group's concern for occulted relations; as we saw with Rosemont's poetry, surrealist vision makes perceptible the obscured suffering, death, and marginalisation of non-human animals that constitute fossil infrastructural development. But it is also a reminder of who has the means of reproduction when it comes to non-human representation. In other words, it asks readers to always think: who is casting the shadow? This deliberate framing foregrounds the power of both having the means of reproduction and making it visible, allowing interventions into otherwise naturalised or normalised hegemonic discourses. Part of the CSG's project through Black Swan Press was to provide the infrastructure for community, solidarity, and reproduction, all of which are vital to any counterhegemonic movement. The 'honey-combed' community spaces Sakolsky described in mid-century Chicago was facilitated by bookshops and the diffusion of surrealist literature; without these forms of repetition, the countercultural subject threatens to be enveloped into hegemonic flows, civilised into normative life that the CSG so ardently opposed.



Figure 10 – card advertising exhibition at Gallery Black Swan, featuring the Black Swan Press logo (photo taken by the author, accessed through the Watson Library Special Collections archive at Thomas J. Watson Library, New York).

Heterogenous life vs homogenous death: CSG's continued relevance in resisting expanded reproduction

Following Brian Larkin's assertion that infrastructures have a politics as well as a poetics, the CSG intervened on both fronts. Their poetics, as exemplified by Franklin Rosemont's poetry, were centred around the excavated histories of violence against non-human animals, indigenous life, and labourers that constituted Chicago's development from plains to metropolitan city. Enveloped in this revelation is a reckoning with both settler colonial infrastructure that accumulates, dispossesses, and partitions space to violent ends, as well as creating the conditions for these activities to be reproduced and expanded. One such example of settler colonial infrastructure is Chicago's meat-packing industry

and its attendant logistical apparatuses of transportation and disassembly, whose scale and intensity were facilitated by fossil fuels. The coal-powered trains that transported meat (which were later refrigerated to maximise accumulation) and machinery of mass production in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century anticipated and normalised the circulation of meat by petroleum-powered truck and the larger scale machinery of meat production today. Implicated in this is a particular notion of human subjectivity, one that is civilised through the obscuration and externalisation of these violences away from everyday life.

The Group's politics is therefore the reimagination of the human subject as one that can see these histories of violence (through the aura of objects), as well as a subject that is rewilded. In the case of the latter, this subject strives for a relationship to land and space that is closer to pre-colonial understanding, in which critical infrastructure of plants and waterways resist expanded reproduction through the proliferation of heterogenous life. This designation of 'critical infrastructure' is political in a way that contravenes even twenty-first-century political hegemony, with Donald Trump using the term during the COVID-19 pandemic to describe meat-manufacturing infrastructure, prohibiting their closure (Cowen, 2024: 304). Declaring them 'critical' thereby justified their continued output, 'work[ing] to protect infrastructures of expanded reproduction for corporations while sacrificing the social reproduction of essential workers' (ibid.). When considered in tandem with histories of labour in meat manufacturing, this is familiar and unsurprising. Trump's designation of 'critical' here is an extension of the fossil-fuelled settler colonial infrastructure that similarly led to worker exploitation and death (and as always, the continued loss of animal life). In the CSG's understanding, it is pre-colonial critical infrastructures that are understood as the material base onto which settler colonial infrastructure was installed,

prioritising their return through rupture in the facilitation of the rewilded human subject.

These politics are not without their own problematics; the implication that rewilding is a process of return to pre-colonial conception of space and infrastructure demonstrates a lack of awareness around issues of indigenous representation. As chapter 5 will discuss, the work of twenty-first-century surrealist Wendy Red Star of the Apsáalooke nation in Montana rejects colonial designations of 'primitiveness' and extinction in order to prioritise the Apsáalooke's political belonging to future infrastructural worlds. For subjects who were never fully considered 'civilised' by white supremacist normative thought, rewilding feels less like a radical breakthrough and more like a persistent refusal to provide infrastructural maintenance and care. This is especially egregious for communities whose relationship to the US government and public-private enterprise is characterised by genocidal neglect, evidenced by poor conditions, lower life expectancies, and broken contracts. The CSG's rejection of settler colonial infrastructure that dispossesses, valuing instead infrastructures that facilitate and proliferate heterogenous life, may be a gesture of solidarity towards indigenous peoples. Often this solidarity was explicit: as the Group would write, 'The Surrealist is, has always been, the companion and the accomplice of the Indian, the native, the aborigine' (CSG, 1992A). However, it is clear from their reformations of human subjectivity that they are writing from a position of white normativity that is inattentive to issues of indigenous identity and representation.

Where the CSG make their most effective interventions is in the realm of non-human animal representation and solidarity. As Animal Studies scholars have rightfully argued, representing animals is marred with problematics that make

interventions difficult. Their inability to self-represent at the level of text makes them easy to objectify. As Jed Mayer notes, 'Animals have provided humans with matter for a variety of discursive practices precisely because they are so passive: animals are good to think with *because* they don't talk back' (Mayer, 2010: 353). He continues: 'One might regard the text itself as a site of struggle, in which an animal is rendered into an object of representation. This objectification of the animal might be regarded as yet another expression of human dominion' (ibid.). As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the issue of animal 'rendering' Mayer touches on here is one that Nicole Shukin ties to the mechanised rendering of animal parts in commodity production, imbricating these violences (Shukin, 2009: 20). Where the CSG succeed is that they never talk for animals, but instead see them as collaborators in the fight against oppression. They achieve this in their mode of non-human animal representation which recognises their continued marginalisation in specific conditions (Chicago's industrial meat-packing) that extend, broaden, and repeat due to fossil infrastructure's enablement of expanded reproduction. In the CSG's writing and Rosemont's poetry, the surrealist dreamer and seer intervenes by inviting non-human animals to participate in collective imaginations of their emancipation from these accumulative and dispossessive forms of reproduction.

Today, expanded reproduction of industrial meat-producing infrastructure has devastating consequences for non-human animals, whose objectification extends beyond the limits of textual animal representation to the bio-engineering of animal bodies to maximise accumulation and efficiency. As Deborah Cowen explains, the 'logistical' animal is the animal 'refigured', not just in the conceptual sense of becoming commodity but in the physical sense of being reshaped to fit into transport and slaughter infrastructures:

For supply chain management, “the pig” is one stage of pork (as commodity) in the cycle of value realization. The logistical pig has been refigured as a life-form toward that end. In the corporate meat sector, every aspect of the cycle of life has been reorganized by supply chain management and its software so that the animal fits the system of motion. As one industry textbook explains, “Logistics not science is the underpinning of a successful breeding policy” (Knap 2012: 7972). This includes everything from ovulation synchronization for reproductive efficiency to the timing of insemination and the weaning of sows and cows to fit trucking schedules, themselves organized to maximize efficiency at processing facilities. Swine hips are standardized to fit the machines of slaughter. (Cowen, 2024: 304-305).

In light of this intensification of animal refiguration, returning to the CSG’s writings allows us to think through alternative modes of reproduction that liberate animal bodies and subjectivities from this cruel fate. For the CSG, infrastructures that proliferate heterogenous life are not inherently virtuous on that basis alone, but because they resist the repeated and continually intensifying homogenisation of animal life-forms that results from the logistical apparatuses that fossil infrastructure proliferates.

What emerges, then, is the importance of counterhegemonic proliferation, oriented *not* towards accumulation through dispossession, but through sustained modes of solidarity, reconfiguration, and reimagination. The material means of diffusion – be it honey-combed and de-commercialised hang-out spaces, a printing press, or coordinated exhibitions – were vital to the CSG’s survival into the 1980s and 1990s. As Ruth Gilmore contends, solidarity is not static, nor a given, it ‘needs

to be remade and remade and remade—it never just is’ (Gilmore, 2020). Where modern day cultural commentators often dismiss ‘the culture wars’ as a distraction from ‘real’ class issues, the CSG demonstrates that class, animal, and indigenous solidarity must be infrastructured, and members did this laying claim to the means of reproduction. In the CSG’s case, this did not do much to alter material conditions: animals continue to be refigured to fit supply chains, workers continue to be exploited and die in meat-processing plants, and indigenous peoples are still resisting the disruptive and dispossessive partitioning of space through the building of pipelines and the extension of other settler colonial infrastructures. Nonetheless, their infrapolitical interventions provided imaginative dream spaces to draw on, and to envision a future free from the cruelties of expanded reproduction, and in which proliferation signifies heterogenous life rather than homogenous death.

**Chapter 4 - City Lights Publishing: Infrastructure for Non-reproduction of the Status Quo**

Just as Black Swan Press in Chicago constituted a part of the city's counterhegemonic infrastructure, so too did San Francisco's City Lights independent bookstore and publishing house. Established in 1953, the bookstore became a refuge for the city's counterculture leftists, revolutionaries, radical poets, vagabonds, queers, and Beatniks. It was these communities of outcasts that propelled City Lights into the iconic status it still holds to this day. (As of writing, in 2025, the bookstore is still running, having survived the hardship of the COVID pandemic). And much like Black Swan Press, City Lights played a substantial role in diffusing surrealist poetry and literature. Already by the mid-1950s, the bookstore was publishing surrealist texts, from new translations of André Breton and Georges Bataille to San Francisco-based surrealist poets such as Philip Lamantia, Robert Duncan, Jack Spicer, as well as City Lights co-owners Nancy Peters and Lawrence Ferlinghetti (Browning, 2023: 120). By the mid-century, surrealism had already made its way out West.

These surrealists and outcasts formed a natural alliance: to one extent or another, they were socially and culturally demarcated from the sanitised imagery of the American nuclear family. The city had its history of hostilities to countercultural groups: as the work of James Mallery demonstrates, anti-vice campaigns of the early twentieth century, informed by white supremacist paranoia over 'race suicide', anti-immigrant sentiment, and traditionalist notions of gender, tried to remould the city into a bastion of bourgeois acceptability (Mallery, 2024). Further, scholars' research on San Francisco's two World's Fairs, the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition and 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition, exposes the ideologies of racial hierarchy, settler colonialism, and mass commodity production as foundational to the city's development (Markwyn, 2014; Shanken, 2016). It is from these contexts that surrealist interventions

emerge, disseminated by City Lights as it became a bookstore, publishing house, and a resilient business that stands to this day.

Scholarship on City Lights tends to emphasise its role in disseminating poetry and literature in the period of the San Francisco Renaissance, out of which Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Philip Lamantia, and Michael McClure arose as the new generation of poets. Many cite an evening in 1955 at a small art institute in the city, in which all the aforementioned poets performed readings, as the San Francisco Renaissance's inauguration (Davidson, 1989: 3). (Nancy Peters was absent from this poetry reading event, perhaps explaining in part her exclusion from the San Francisco Renaissance canon). Notably for literary historians, this was the first public reading of Ginsberg's definitive 'Howl', and it was his impassioned reading that prompted City Lights co-owner Lawrence Ferlinghetti to telegram Ginsberg an enthused offer of collaboration, leading to *Howl and Other Poems*' publication through City Lights as part of its Pocket Poets Series. When *Howl and Other Poems* faced accusations of obscenity, resulting in a trial in 1957 in which Ferlinghetti faced charges as a distributor, it was his defence that set the precedence of 'redeeming social importance' for free speech in publishing (Emblidge, 2005: 32). In the broader context of post-war cultural conformity, in which Red Scare hegemony wielded legal and social power to silence any and all interrogators of US nationalisms, Ferlinghetti's defence secured City Lights' legendary status as an ally to and proliferator of counterhegemonic literature.

While some scholars have explored intersections of Beatnik poetry and surrealism, such as Michael Davidson's recognition that Surrealism was 'one of the most pervasive traditions among San Francisco poets' (Davidson, 1989: 17) or

more recently, Joanna Pawlik's assessment of Ginsberg's and Kerouac's writing as part of a 'transnational' surrealist tradition (Pawlik, 2013: 107), neither have placed these surrealist influences within a broader context of literary production in the specific conditions of the San Francisco bay area. For Davidson, the Beats' adoption of surrealism lies in 'the[ir] revival of certain forms of romanticism (the ballad, vatic or rhapsodic rhetoric, surrealist juxtapositions, the cult of innocence, primitivism)' (Davidson, 1989: 32) and for Pawlik, the Beats were surrealist practitioners by their methods of writing, in which a lack of editing and trance-like states parallel the interwar surrealist methodology of 'psychic automatism' in art production (Pawlik, 2013: 102). According to Pawlik, it is through this methodology that Ginsberg and Kerouac access a 'revolutionary awakening' (particularly concerning the possibility of same-sex relationships) that emerges from surrealist practice and thought (ibid.: 100).

By contrast, this chapter asks how the San Francisco Renaissance, with its surrealist predilections, interacts with modes of production and non-reproduction, centring City Lights as a site of proliferation of surrealist poetics that interrogate hegemonic infrastructural imaginaries. These interventions are informed by San Francisco's own history of settler colonial installation, and its consequent genocides of Native life; property speculators' privatisation and partitioning of land; developments engineered by proponents of normative, white-coded, nuclear family ideals; and the city's role in reinforcing and propagating frontierist ideology as evidenced by displays in the 1915 World's Fair, better known as the Panama-Pacific International Exposition.

While City Lights published a range of interwar and postwar surrealists (listed at this chapter's beginning), this chapter centres Ferlinghetti's poetry, due to

his influence in shaping both the bookstore and publication aspects of City Lights and his own poetry's focus on San Francisco as a site of production and non-reproduction. Surrealist poets Philip Lamantia and Nancy Peters – the latter of which edited for City Lights in the 1970s, and eventually co-owned the store with Ferlinghetti into the '80s - are omitted due to overlap with the Chicago Surrealist Group, whose work is analysed in chapter 3. In the case of Peters, her collaboration with the Chicago Surrealist Group meant her work was more often published under Black Swan Press rather than City Lights publishing. Lamantia also worked with the Chicago Surrealist Group, editing for the Black Swan Press publication *Arsenal: Surrealist Subversion*. This choice to focus on Ferlinghetti sets this chapter's parameters firmly within San Franciscan contexts, exploring surrealism's specificity and inflections for those resisting the hegemonic infrastructural imaginaries of the West.

As such, this chapter analyses poems from two of Ferlinghetti's collections: *Pictures of a Gone World* (1955) and *Starting From San Francisco* (1967), the former of which launched the (still running) Pocket Poets Series of affordable paperbacks in the year of its publication. It treats the poems as proliferative forms of surrealist intervention into San Franciscan infrastructural imaginaries, in which the city (and by extension the state of California) operate as a site of investment for the fulfilment of the settler colonial fantasy of Western expansionism and white settler proliferation.

'Pale horse pale rider': Death-producing infrastructure in the frontierist West

Where the Chicago Surrealist Group sought to poeticise a de-partitioning of space built around meat-packing infrastructure, Ferlinghetti's poetic narrator similarly deploys unrhymed free verse that challenges the privatised partitioning of space that constituted the frontierist project as it expanded Westward to California, and its resultant development of San Francisco into a settler colonial city. In Ferlinghetti's poetry collection *Pictures of a Gone World*, the title anticipates its surrealist concerns with visions of a haunted past that become perceptible, through surrealist poetics, in the present. In one poem, titled 'Pale horse pale rider', Ferlinghetti uses tropes of Wild West literature and media to comment on the destructive and deathly nature of Western expansionism. The poem begins with the biblical image of a "Pale horse pale rider" / And the man on the horse / is Death', recalling the four horsemen of the Apocalypse from the book of Revelations (Ferlinghetti, 1995: 46). In the subsequent lines, Death travels 'Across the lone prairies / to Tombstone / where at the Bird Cage Theater / they are whooping it up / A deal with the Devil and / a soul is for sale' (ibid.). On the one hand, the reference to 'whooping' seems to recall illness or disease; this is substantiated too by the initial line of poem, which uses inverted commas to quote the title of a 1937 short story collection by Colorado author Katherine Anne Porter that details the horrors of the 1918 influenza pandemic. On the other, it is difficult to ignore the imagery of incarceration and financial contractual arrangement that defined the colonisation and partitioning of land in San Francisco, first by Spanish Christian colonists and then by United States capitalist pioneers.

Read as an intervention on frontierism, in which the deathly rider is a colonial figure as well as one of disease, the poem resurfaces the systems of death and incarceration that characterised Native peoples' experience of Western expansionism. This was a process that historian Mary P. Ryan terms 'coercive

urbanization' due to its punitive and carceral consequences for Native peoples, motivated by religious conversion to Christianity, the desire to replicate European spatial structures and ideals in the New World, and both's intertwining with notions of civilisation (Ryan, 2019: 105). She continues, 'Incarceration [...] led to demographic disaster for the natives, eviscerating the very population the padres sought to save. All the pious regimentation and spatial engineering of the Franciscans had a devastating effect on the Indians of San Francisco Bay' (Ryan, 2019: 105). Far from saving souls, they were losing them, 'to death, escape, and open rebellion' (ibid.: 108). Imagery of incarceration permeates Ferlinghetti's poem, particularly in its reference to 'Bird Cage Theater', a real theatre in Tombstone which provided entertainment for miners and settlers, and which stopped showing productions when the silver mines closed in 1892. The theatre's name, paired with its height of production during the town's mining era, recall these legacies of settler colonial incarceration.

The poem's reference to Bird Cage Theater and its emphasis on the theatre's carceral name also attend to the ways subjugation of Native peoples has been spectacularised for a white audience in the West. For instance, at the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition (hereafter PPIE), the first of San Francisco's two World's Fairs, organisers arranged the fairground so that narratives of white superiority over a subjugated Native population would emerge. Like the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, 'ethnic villages' made another appearance, with the aim of presenting non-white groups 'exotic, primitive others', 'still in need of the guiding hand of a civilizing nation' (Markwyn, 2019: 55). More centrally on the fairground was a statue entitled *The End of the Trail*, which 'depicted an Indian man slumped forward on the back of an exhausted pony. According to the exposition's Blue Book, "The drooping storm-beaten figure of the Indian on the

spent pony symbolizes the end of the race which was once a mighty people” (ibid.: 35).

By contrast, another statue, *The American Pioneer*, ‘showed an old frontiersman wielding an axe and rifle on the back of a prancing horse’ (ibid.: 35). In the guidebook for visitors, it ‘informed readers that the man “muse[d] on past days of hardship, when these implements and the log hut and stockade dimly indicated on the buffalo robe which forms his saddle housing, were his aids in subjugation of the wilderness”’ (ibid.: 35-36). As Markwyn argues, ‘Together these statues celebrated the ascendance of Anglo men in California and evoked the power of the pioneer myth in San Francisco’ (ibid.: 36). The juxtaposition of the pioneer’s prancing horse and the native’s exhausted pony create a dichotomy of life, vitality, and virility attributed to the former, and death, exhaustion, and extinction to the latter. The ‘whooping’ individuals in the poem’s Bird Cage Theater can therefore be read as the celebratory participants of a proliferative white hegemony, whose pride in frontierist ideology both sanitises violent subjugation and yet simultaneously presents it as spectacle.

Ferlinghetti’s pale rider, whose skin evokes white coloniality as much as it does the paling effects of influenza, serves as a counter to figure of the mounted American pioneer. Rather than offering a ‘guiding hand’, the figure brings death to all who cross him. The ‘lone prairies’ the rider crosses initially reads as a colonial conception of the New World as empty land for the taking: the ‘subjugation of the wilderness’ that was frontierism’s ethos. However, read with the reality of colonial destruction in mind, the prairies’ ‘lone[ness]’ speaks to its depopulation of both people and native fauna and flora as part of the Californian colonial project, with

herds of cattle driven north by the [colonial] expedition [which] trampled on the vegetation vital to the [Native] Ohlone diet. Soon thousands of cattle, horses, oxen, and plows were dislodging the soil and destroying the tender herbs that Ohlone women once gathered. Stripped of native grasses, the hillsides became overgrown with rugged chaparral. Contemporary estimates of the damage are staggering: an estimated 17 percent of the vegetation [...] soon became extinct. [...] Immense environmental change occurred in a nanosecond of natural history (Ryan, 2019: 111).

As a death-bringer, the pale rider evokes the apocalyptic extinction driven by colonial usurpation and management of land. Further, the poem's brevity, only thirteen lines and sixty-three words in total, conveys the fast-paced and immense level of environmental destruction wrought by settler colonialism in such a brief period of time. The effect of this brevity is that the ornated and elaborated narratives of civilising guidance – as represented by *The End of the Trail* and *The American Pioneer* statues, whose detailing softens the violence implicit in what they convey – are stripped back and laid bare. Bringing together Western tropes and surrealist insight into a repressed past, the poem unearths the realities of death and destruction at the hands of colonising pioneers, devoid of any sanitising, elaborate justifications of civilisation or guidance.

For the poem's pale rider, the journey across the plains ends in death also, but it is not the narrative endpoint. He travels to Tombstone, a reference to the mining boomtown in Arizona, which very quickly (within two years of establishment) 'became the leading silver camp in Arizona Territory and one of the most prosperous in the American West', 'attract[ing] capitalists who invested large sums of money to develop the mines' (Underhill, 2021: 11-12). Also known for the

infamous shoot-out at O.K. Corral, a gunfight that has since inspired many Wild West films, the reference to Tombstone evokes both rapid proliferation and sudden, violent death. As Lonnie Underhill's research of local newspaper reporting reveals, Tombstone's rapid proliferation of both people and capital cemented its prospects as a 'Future Great City':

Prospects for Tombstone were considered "bright with promise" [...]. Within a short time, the Southern Pacific Railroad would be completed to the East, and predictions were that within another year, a locomotive would bring its loads of freight up the San Pedro Valley, through clustering knobs of mineral hills in Tombstone, which many believed would be thriving with as many as "10,000 inhabitants." [...] An optimistic / reporter challenged, "Come up Tucsonites [sic] and view the Metropolis!" So great were Tombstone's prospects that even the dark clouds brought on by [...] gun violence in the streets failed to cast doubt about Tombstone's claim as Arizona's "Future Great City." (ibid.: 12-13).

As an industrious mining town, whose proliferative aspects were facilitated and accelerated by coal-reliant rail infrastructure, Tombstone represented a hegemonic fossil infrastructural ideal of expansion, 'bright[ness]', 'futura[ity]', connectivity, and the proliferation of white communities. News reports of gun violence did not puncture this image; the violence became subsumed and overshadowed by the town's promise of fossil infrastructural growth.

Ferlinghetti's reference to Tombstone rejects this history of bright prospects and futurity by heightening the town's relationship to death, recentring focus onto the town's name and its evocation of an inscribed monument for a grave. As such,

the town – stripped of its fossil infrastructural affects of brightness, futurity, and proliferation - becomes a place that is structured around death. In contrast to media reports of a vital and future-bringing Tombstone, Ferlinghetti encourages readers to understand ‘Tombstone’ as a name for a place that spatialises death and inscribes the land itself with death. It is here that the poem is at its most infrastructural; the poem makes visible how the colonial usurpation and reorganisation of land – including the taking and renaming of places - infrastructure death, so that it repeats. In other words, in Ferlinghetti’s understanding, ‘Tombstone’ as a place bears its name because of the death that constituted its creation, and because it is a place where that death will continue to be reproduced.

The poem’s final lines, in which the poem’s narrative is described as ‘another’ tale, gives the narrative a sense of repetition (Ferlinghetti, 1995: 46). In particular, this tale represents a particular mode of Western expansionism, ‘in which / out here on the left side of the world / still anything can happen / And does’ (ibid.). Here, the expansive space of New World possibility that California represents becomes a more sinister place, emphasised by its description as ‘the left side of the world’ (rather than the Western), evoking the literal Latin meaning of sinister as ‘the left side’. In this newly organised space, atrocities are built in to its foundations, where they are facilitated to repeat. This turn from expansive possibility – the conceptualisation of the New World as an opportunity for liberty and democracy to thrive – towards sinister, infrastructured death more closely articulates the realities of ‘coercive urbanization’ that constituted Native experiences.

Further, the poem operates as a condensed, microcosmic, and allegorical telling of settler colonial expansion at different points in Californian history. While the 'lone prairies' recall the destruction of Native species, the 'deal with the Devil' in which 'a soul is for sale' more closely allegorises the partitioning of land in San Francisco after being taken over by the United States from the Spanish monarchy in 1848. As San Francisco began to resemble an industrial city – with iron pipes for gasworks, paved asphalt roads, connecting bridges, street cars, and peripheral residential areas – the cost of its development needed to be subsidised. With a large population of vagrants and migratory labourers, attracted to the city by the Gold Rush, taxation proved difficult and unreliable, with 'paltry' results (Ryan, 2019: 266). As such, San Francisco has from its outset as an industrial city been one in which privatisation has reigned, both as a solution to an economically unreliable demos and as an enactment of the frontierist spirit. As Ryan argues, 'Without hesitation or concern for international law, but in the spirit of frontier-style municipal capitalism, the elected officials of San Francisco began to sell off the public land to pay off the city debts' (ibid.: 269). Ferlinghetti's image of a financial and contractual deal with the Devil can be read as an intervention into the frontierist spirit of privatising land. The classic Western trope of selling one's soul (turning something priorly uncommodifiable and sacred into something sellable) is reimagined as allegory for 'out here on the left side of the world' (Ferlinghetti, 1995: 46). The alliteration in these lines (the repetition of /d/ in 'deal with the Devil' and /s/ in 'sale of a soul') similarly give the poem's narrative a repetitive feel, and more specifically the /d/ sounds phonaesthetically resonate with the predominance of death in the poem, while the /s/ sounds give it a mournful sibilance. As such, the poem makes visible the connections between a frontierist spirit, its financialisation of the sacred, and the death that these infrastructure.

In turn, the poem intercedes into the settler's fantasy and self-perception as more human than those they subjugate, and whose civilising violence is justified and typified by direct subjugation through weaponry such as *The American Pioneer's* rifle and axe. As Marina Vishmidt argues, the category of 'the human' emerges in this context as one who is 'the bringer of infrastructure to a chaotic nature', recalling *The American Pioneer's* description as one who 'subjugat[es]' the wilderness (Vishmidt, 2022: 37). But as Vishmidt continues, it is property, not humanity, that emerges as a priority from this category of 'the human': it is here that 'infrastructure and property claims come into light at the same moment' (ibid.). In the lines about the Devil's purchase, the poem resurfaces and foregrounds the realities of indirect violences that attend privatisation, property contracts, and economic exchange. The settler is not a civilising force in Ferlinghetti's representation, but a collaborator in inhuman dealings, in which infrastructure serves to reproduce and reinforce claims to private property. As the poem's phrase 'another tale' suggests, the poem demonstrates how settler colonial infrastructure – including the creation of seats of municipal power, who partition land – facilitates and repeats ongoing violences. The lack of punctuation at the poem's end – with no full stop after the poem's final line, 'And does' - similarly denotes repetition and a lack of finality. As such, the poem understands settler colonialism as reproductive, but in a way that produces and reproduces property claims that decentre and devalue human life. This in turn punctures the settler colonial fantasy of being more human; for Ferlinghetti, it is an inhuman and death-producing prioritisation of property that characterises settler colonial relations.

The poem's opening line – a reference to Katherine Anne Porter's short story collection about the influenza pandemic of 1918, titled *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* – similarly draws attention to death-producing settler colonial infrastructure.

The short story collection reference in the opening line highlights the role of infectious disease in bringing death to its Native inhabitants, exacerbated by dense living conditions instated by Spanish colonists seeking to convert Natives to Christianity. As Mary Ryan writes, 'In 1795, a measles virus struck the vulnerable immune systems of California natives. Its deadly course accelerated in the densely packed, close quarters of the Mission, leaving three-quarters of the Indian children dead' (Ryan, 2019: 105). The poem's 'lone prairies' and 'whooping' figures speak to this devastation, as well as the reference to the pale horse, who in the Book of Revelations is one of the four horses ridden by the four horsemen of the Apocalypse: Famine, War, Conquest (sometimes read as pestilence), and Death.

While intervening in the mythology of the American pioneer, Ferlinghetti's use of Christian imagery here has the advantage of conveying Christian-colonial violence, but the disadvantage of inadequately articulating Native American pain. Despite these references to deadly diseases and devastated landscapes that gesture to Native American experiences of settler colonialism, any and all references to Native Americans are absent. The result is that Native American experiences are only ever present through absence; this is an effect that is exacerbated by the Christian imagery. There are problematics here of an assumed extinction that obscures Native experiences, and this is no more apparent than in the totalising death that the poem portrays. Native peoples seem to have been entirely eradicated; but this is not the reality, even in a settler colonial city such as San Francisco. As Ryan explains,

The Ohlone, in any case, did not disappear when the Spanish Empire lost its claim on North America in 1821. They had not become extinct. [...] Descendants of the

sixty tribelets that dominated the great estuary of the Pacific two hundred years ago can still be seen on the California landscape. They are reclaiming their names and languages, holding annual harvest ceremonies, recovering the remains of their ancestors for Indian reburial, and retrieving their history. (Ryan, 2019: 110-111).

'Tombstone' appears as a totalising place of death in the poem and a signifier of burial practice distinct from the Ohlone, who more typically would have buried the dead in shellmounds across the San Francisco Bay area, or used some form of cremation, be it the bodies of the deceased or burial materials such as ornaments and burial tools (Panich, 2015: 113). However, the reality is that Native Californians are conducting their own burial rites, as tribes continue acts of reclamation into the twenty-first century. As chapter 5 of this thesis will demonstrate in its analysis of the work of Apsáalooke artist Wendy Red Star, the inscription of Native tribes as 'extinct' has been weaponised by agents of settler colonialism to justify marginalisation, incarceration, and attempts at genocide.

In this settler colonial logic, Native people do not belong in the modernity that infrastructural imaginaries promise. It is this logic that is expounded by the PPIE in *The End of the Trail* statue, also; the linearity of extinction and death denotes 'the end of the line' for Native tribes, foreclosing possibilities of infrastructural expansion and facilitation that could reproduce the conditions for indigenous life. Ferlinghetti's poem 'Pale horse pale rider' characterises the frontierist spirit in a way that centres its brutal acts of violence, particularly at the level of physical forms of subjugation, decimation through illness (exacerbated by poor living conditions), as well as legislation that steals and partitions land. While

this has the potential to create a call for non-reproduction of death-producing settler colonial infrastructure, it nonetheless repeats settler colonial myths of extinction that foreclose possibilities of reparation and reclamation.

'Starting From San Francisco': surrealist insight into the contemporaneous West

Ferlinghetti's focus on death-producing settler colonial infrastructure often tips problematically into an assumed extinctionism. But where his poetry finds critical purchase is in its characterisation of the contemporaneous West, which relays two distinct ideas. Firstly, Ferlinghetti conveys that the settler colonial project is ideologically centred on white proliferation, at the cost of Native life, which is facilitated and reproduced by its infrastructure. Secondly, contravening this settler colonial ideology, Ferlinghetti conveys the contemporaneous West as a site of solitude, which ultimately punctures this fantasy of white proliferation. In other words, Ferlinghetti represents 'the West' (in this context, referring to the Western part of the United States, with its significations of New World expansionism, capitalist opportunity, and white hegemony) as both death-producing and proliferatively violent to all who remain.

In his collection *Starting From San Francisco*, the introductory poem (also the title poem) marks the beginning of the poetic narrator's journey from West to East, facilitating a kind of backwards-looking perspective that reverses the frontierist trajectory of Westward expansionism. Further, the poem conveys a sense of repetitive movement that, although mimics settler colonial infrastructure and its rhythms, nonetheless refutes its conception in a linear, frontierist narrative

of progressive civilisation. The poem begins 'Here I go again', immediately evoking repetitive movement, and continues 'crossing the country in coach trains / (back to my old / lone wandering) / All night Eastward [...] / Onward? / Back and forth, across the Continent' (Ferlinghetti, 1967: 5). The repeated /k/ sounds in these lines, such as in 'crossing', 'country', 'coach', and 'Continent', convey the churning of the train coach, but for a travel poem, there is surprisingly little else that relates sensory experiences of the journey. The emphasis is on the movement from East to West and back again. As a result, the poem contemplates the movement and possibilities of movement contingent on settler colonial infrastructure: the railroad that connected San Francisco Eastward was disruptive to Native Californians both in its installation and its repetitive transportation of workers, travellers, goods, and livestock that made the city a viable commercial centre (Blum, 1984: 127). The question mark in the line 'Onward?' and the transversal movement back and forth both disrupt this journey's linearity or, in relation to narratives of frontierism, its teleology; the presumption of settler colonial infrastructure as progressive or necessary becomes unsettled.

Travelling by train, the narrator explicitly compares the train to the prairie schooners that transported pioneers Westward: 'Cradle we rocked out of – / prairie schooners into Pullmans, / their bright saloons sheeted in oblivion - / Wagon-lits – bedwagons over prairies' (Ferlinghetti, 1967: 7). This temporal layering draws a direct genealogy (particularly in the use of the word 'cradle', suggesting ancestry and lineage) between the Pullman train he is riding and the wagons pioneers rode in their journey West 'over prairies'. The repeated use of hyphens in these lines convey a sense of interruption and disruption, and much like in 'Pale horse, pale rider', pioneer activity is associated with death, destruction, and 'oblivion'. For instance, the wagon's saloon 'sheeted in oblivion' recalls the pale horse of the

Apocalypse, as both are represented by Ferlinghetti as white-coloured vehicles which bring death. By contrast, the wagons themselves have 'bodies nested in them / hurtled through the night' (Ferlinghetti, 1967: 7). The wagons take on the function of a pregnant body; oblivion of Native life provides the space for the proliferation of white settlers.

This imagery reveals a fundamental underpinning of frontierist ideology: to populate the land that had been 'providentially or historically sanctioned' to Anglo-Americans in what has been termed 'manifest destiny' (Stephanson, 1996: xii). As Henry Knight's research finds, 'manifest destiny' first found purchase as a term in an 1845 article written by John O'Sullivan, editor of the *Democratic Review*, arguing in favour of the U.S. acquiring Texas and California. In the article, O'Sullivan explicitly argues that 'manifest destiny' is an ideology of white proliferation: 'the fulfilment of our manifest destiny [is] to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions' (O'Sullivan quoted in Knight, 2021: 36). The problematics of disavowing violence through justification of divine allotment are evident here, but what's striking about this excerpt is its dual focus on reproduction both in procreative terms (in the sense of 'multiplying millions') and in infrastructural terms (the 'overspread' for 'free development', implicating a built environment into the settler colonial project that facilitates this procreative goal). In order to 'overspread' effectively, there is need for the reproduction of the conditions for reproduction; this is one of the foundational goals of a settler colonial state. It is through what the editors of *Broken relations: infrastructure, aesthetics, and critique* call 'the normative power of infrastructural reproduction' that white proliferation becomes hegemony in the settler colonial state (Beck et. al, 2022: 10).

This proliferative aspect was evident in the PPIE as well, in which another statue, entitled *Pioneer Mother*, completed the triumvirate of figures valorised in frontierist ideology. As Abigail Markwyn writes, the *Pioneer Mother*, in its proscription of women as maternal homemakers, defined women's role in 'creat[ing]' the settler colonial state:

By calling for a monument of a white pioneer mother to stand for "Motherhood, the Womanhood of the nation," the Woman's Board [of the PPIE] asserted in strong terms the link between white women, civilization, and nation building. The pioneer mother was the mother of the nation, according to this formulation, a position that vested in white, middle-class women the power to turn a rough men's camp into a home and a state, ready for inclusion in the national polity. White, middle-class mothers became absolutely essential to the creation of civilization. (Markwyn, 2014: 43).

Part of the project of settler colonial infrastructure is to therefore facilitate the conditions in which women can act as homemakers, helping to populate the 'vacant lands' with civilised, white families. Ferlinghetti's juxtaposition of 'oblivion' with pregnant prairie schooners, as his narrator retraces the journey back Eastward, disrupts the notion of the New World as empty land. Instead, it demonstrates that the facilitation of movement, proliferation, and procreation settler infrastructure provides is not the gentle, maternal process of clearing up a 'rough men's camp', but a brutal process of extermination and oblivion.

Yet in Ferlinghetti's representation of the West, the built environment facilitates the movement associated with a white, middle-class entrepreneurial

lifestyle (what Matthew Huber has usefully term 'petro-privatism' [Huber, 2014: 306]), but it is nonetheless empty and lonely. As his train coach chugs on towards 'a small halfass town', he moves 'past solitary pumping stations, / each with a tank, a car, a small house, a dog, / no people anywhere' (Ferlinghetti, 1967: 7). The plosive /p/ sounds in 'past', 'pumping', and 'people', suggesting activity and movement, are mitigated by the lines' sibilance, the latter emphasising the poem's subdued and deserted atmosphere. Far from the PPIE's or O'Sullivan's visions of proliferative white hegemony, the settler colonial infrastructure depicted in Ferlinghetti's poem serves no one at all. The signifiers of white, hegemonic, petro-privatist life the narrator lists take precedence over the people themselves, whose emphasis on partitioned private property and whose disconnection from more communitarian forms of life leave them lonely and isolated. Ferlinghetti describes the town's 'one telephone wire / and one straight single iron road / hung to the tracks as by magnets / attached to a single endless fence' (ibid.: 6-7). The solitary 'endless' fence recalls the 'overspread' objective of the settler colonial state, and the exponential, multiplicative 'millions' in O'Sullivan's vision of white proliferation and infrastructural reproduction. Similarly, the 'straight single iron road' is an image that brings together the singular teleology of manifest destiny and its moral righteousness (in the sense that morality is often conceived as a spiritual path, and where deviance or crookedness from it is a perversion), settler colonial infrastructure's reliance on extraction, and the consequential loneliness these entail.

For Ferlinghetti, the West's emptiness is not only a result of Native genocide but an unintuitive side-effect of settler colonialism's proliferative aims, in which the valorisation of the white family, centred on commercial and private forms of consumption and extraction, can only produce isolation and emptiness. This is

an idea Ferlinghetti conveys in the absence of people throughout the narrator's journey East ('no people anywhere' and 'no one on these bridges' [Ferlinghetti, 1967: 6-7]), but also in the derelict and abandoned industrial infrastructure that coexists with the small towns he passes. He writes, for instance, of 'Mining towns, once roaring, / now shrunk to the railhead, / streetlights stoned with loneliness / or lit with leftover sun / they drank too much of during the day...' (ibid.: 8).

Glorifications of Western expansionism meet up against Ferlinghetti's representation of 'shrunk[en]', derelict towns, whose disuse is evident in their only remnant being the railhead. The streetlights, no longer functioning by virtue of gas or electricity, become the ultimate symbol of solitude: with no one to power them, Ferlinghetti characterises them as day-drinkers, consuming 'too much' sunlight the way an alcoholic might overconsume. This image's sorrowfulness is conveyed in the lines' sounds: the sibilance in 'stoned with loneliness' (another image of drug use), and repeated // sounds in 'loneliness', 'lit', and 'leftover', give the lines an elegiac and lulling feel. For small US towns that do suffer from high rates of alcoholism, drug use, and isolation, Ferlinghetti's representation acknowledges the way this has been infrastructured and the lineages of this infrastructure itself.

Ferlinghetti's view of the contemporaneous West is one in which dereliction, abandonment, and disfunction emphasise what Marina Vishmidt calls its 'necrocapitalist extraction' (Vishmidt, 2017: 266). She elaborates:

the dangerously frayed built environment of the United States offers one of the best views on the formerness of the "West" as a progressive theodicy, leveled down by necrocapitalist extraction, while it still exerts a disproportionate capacity

to project violence across the globe and on its residents. Broken infrastructure is loquacious. (ibid.).

For those who wish to 'former' the West, to whom the book that Vishmidt contributes her article is dedicated to, understanding broken infrastructure in this way is valuable in understanding how non-functioning infrastructure can still be reproductive in its hegemonic acts of violence. Just as broken infrastructure 'drinks' in Ferlinghetti's poem, in Vishmidt, it speaks, 'is loquacious'; it still has the capacity to exert both physically and culturally its reproductive power. This has salience for Ferlinghetti and his poetry, in which 'forming the West' becomes a radical political project of rejecting settler colonial modes of reproduction. In representing the West this way - with loneliness and dereliction at the forefront - the poem operates not as a call for sympathy for the progeny of white settlers, but a challenge to settler colonial visions of white proliferation when its foundations of extraction and genocide necessarily foreclose avenues of emancipation that settler colonial infrastructure purports to provide.

Ferlinghetti's poem, in its emptiness and solitude, may lead to a political intervention that values proliferation, repair, and connection. Rather than a singular telephone wire and a single iron road, it could be read that Ferlinghetti's metropolitan perspective advocates for more connective infrastructure, understanding that while infrastructures 'prohibit' 'specific forms of coexistence', they can also 'make them possible' (Beck et. al., 2022: 9-10). Ferlinghetti's description of these 'small, halfass towns' implies that they could be larger, more developed; is this metropolitan snobbery, a desire to expand existing settler colonial infrastructure, or a desire to rectify the effects of death-producing

infrastructure? There are moments in Ferlinghetti's poetry that seem to lapse into expansionist thinking; just as the verb 'shrunk' suggests regression to be reversed, so too does the line 'Onward still... or Backward...' as the narrator travels through the town (Ferlinghetti, 1967: 8). Nonetheless, there is still a pervasive sense in the poem that settler colonial infrastructure continues to enact violence to all; this prioritises reparation and repair as much as it pierces the settler colonial fantasy of white proliferation.

As previous chapters of this thesis discussed, post-war surrealist orientations towards reparative infrastructure tend to take a particular proscriptive shape: be it the non-integration of women's bodies into reproductive infrastructure for Kay Sage; infrastructure for creativity and self-expression for Kay Sage and Ralph Ellison; or the infrastructure for radical consciousness for the Chicago Surrealist Group. In each, a tension between past and future shaped these reparative interventions; the reproduction of old, violent relations (perceived through Bretonian surrealist insight) meets up against their rejection and non-reproduction, appropriating futuristic affects and proliferative mechanisms as forms of counterhegemonic resistance. In Ferlinghetti's poetry, the conflation between past and future (or backwards and forwards) is another example. But there are moments where his surrealist vision lapses into a fantasy of an unreturnable past, contributing less of value to the discussion of reparative infrastructure.

For instance, in 'Starting From San Francisco', the only reparative vision Ferlinghetti offers is a primordial one. At the point in the poem when the narrator is travelling through prairie lands, he has a prehistoric vision of an 'indomitable' land: 'roads lost in it [the landscape] – or never existent - / back in the beginning again, no People yet, / no ruts Westward yet / [...] / Still more huge spaces we bowl

through, / still untouched dark land - / Indomitable' (Ferlinghetti, 1967: 6). In these lines, Ferlinghetti most closely resembles fellow surrealist Max Ernst, who began painting primordial landscapes after moving to Arizona, having escaped Europe initially to New York. As Samantha Kavky's research argues, these landscapes formally borrowed from Native American shamanic traditions, and as such Ernst

appropriated the shaman's mythic ability to identify with the natural environment through mimetic performance, and [...] conceived of this mimetic power as an alternative to the European artistic tradition of illusionistic reproduction and to western attitudes of mastery and control over the natural world (Kavky, 2010: 211).

Ferlinghetti expresses a similar kind of relinquishing to the 'indomitable' landscape, forgoing both the 'illusionistic reproduction' of landscapes in European art and media and the reproductive, Westward-moving infrastructure of settler colonialism. These gestures have potential for counterhegemonic intervention into settler colonial infrastructural imaginaries: to relinquish control over the natural world involves relinquishing the desire to reproduce settler infrastructural affects of conquest and proliferative expansionism. This appropriation of Native American shamanic aesthetics is, in Kavky's view, emancipatory: it 'transcend[s] national, racial, and ethnic boundaries' (ibid.).

However, in comparison to previous surrealists analysed in this thesis, there is room for criticism of this primordial fantasy, offering, in contrast, few avenues towards an emancipatory future. In these lines, emancipation seems only possible in a time before any people at all, Native or colonist. This fantasy of an

'untouched' land is an impossibility, nor does it recognise the forms of non-human life that would have populated it in prehistory. It is a repetition of the settler colonial claim that the New World is *terra nullius*; unknowable and 'dark' until conquered. It is at this point that Ferlinghetti's surrealist vision, which allows for unconscious representations of the past to be sensed in the environment and resurfaced through poetry, as elaborated in previous chapters of this thesis, is at its least politically useful. The problematics of petro-privatist life, represented here by a road that is lost in the landscape (and which then 'never' exists in the first place), are dealt with in a way in which fantasy allows the seer to ignore their existence. The narrator instead delves into a primordial past which is appealing due to its simplicity and lack of human conflict. The land is only 'indomitable' because there are no humans to dominate it; even in the narrator's fantasy, there is recognition that domination is an inevitable fact of history, it just has not happened 'yet'. In the face of this inevitability, the narrator fantasises of a time before human or animal-human relations, which avoids the question of how they might be repaired.

Further, the poem flattens all human activity as destructive in its fantasy of a landscape that contains 'no People yet', failing to recognise the relationships Native Californians would have had with the land before colonisation. Even if Native Californians 'fashioned a complex hunting and gathering economy', they did not enact the same levels of ecological destruction that the dominating forces of Spanish colonialism and settler colonialism would (Ryan, 2019: 46). This unhelpful collapsing of Native and colonist impact is also evident in the transcendence of national and ethnic boundaries that Kavky similarly identified in Max Ernst's primordial landscapes. This issue with this kind of collapse is that it obscures recognition of how settler coloniality, and its designations of racial normativity and racial otherness, continue to structure social and political

relationships of power and infrastructural access. There can be no rectifying of inequality under settler colonialism if these boundaries are dissolved and transcended; it is a false egalitarianism that fails to account for settler colonial infrastructure's reproductive power, i.e., how it continues to reproduce inequalities.

Ferlinghetti's reparative impulses, then, continue to manifest in the poem's intercession in hegemonic constructions of settler colonial identity, which is when the poetry is at its most non-reproductive. For Ferlinghetti, theft, privatisation, and death-bringing form settler colonial identity's constituent parts, drawing together the lonely West with the isolated settler colonial subject. The final lines of the poem see the narrator characterising the train's brakeman as a stand-in for the settler colonist, mirroring some of the descriptors of Ferlinghetti's horseman in 'Pale horse, pale rider', before finally reflecting on his own position as progeny of colonisers:

And at long last now / this world shrunk / to one lone brakeman's face / stuck out  
of darkness - / long white forehead / like bleached skull of cow - / huge black sad  
eyes - / [...] swings his railroad lantern high, close up, / as our window whizzes by -  
/ his figure splashed upon it, / slanted, muezzin-like, / very grave, very tall, /  
strange skeleton - / Who stole America? / Myself I saw in the window reflected.  
(Ferlinghetti, 1967: 8).

This striking description in which the brakeman's white racial characteristics are conflated with skeletal deathliness compounds Ferlinghetti's previous depictions of the settler colonist as a destructive, death-bringing force. But even further, the

narrator characterises the brakeman as somehow foreign or alien: 'muezzin-like', for instance, is a simile that suggests an Oriental otherness without assigning it completely (meaning, in turn, the brakeman retains his white racial identity), while 'strange skeleton' operates as a similar kind of alienating adjective. Both descriptors displace the brakeman's settledness in the context of San Franciscan anxieties and tensions over migratory workers, as well as conveying the alienation that attends settler colonial identity.

In interpreting the brakeman's figure through the window – where it is 'splashed upon it' - the narrator opens up discussion of settler identity as it is perceived through human consciousness. The language of splashing and reflection – as well as the contemplative /w/ sounds repeated in these lines – evokes imagery of looking into a pool or mirror in order to assess one's identity or place in the world. Seeing in himself and the brakeman 'huge black eyes', suggesting a void-like emptiness, as well as 'bleached skull of cow', the narrator reflects on what it means to be the progeny of people who ruthlessly subjugated others and converted prairie lands into hellscapes for agricultural animals (San Francisco, like Chicago, also played a significant role in the US's meat-packing industry [Blum, 1984: 118]). Rather than embracing a proliferative nativism, justified through divine providence and manifest destiny, Ferlinghetti's narrator experiences alienation from himself and his race, a gesture which reconfigures settler identity as isolating and lonely. The final line, for instance, is segregated by a blank line space (where the rest of the poem has no such spacing). Consequently, the 'Myself' in the poem's final line stands in solitude, disconnected from narratives of whiteness that purport racial supremacy, domination, or a divine right to land.

This experience of loneliness comes across at the level of infrastructure, also. The train's capacity to travel distance at speed results in the narrator's experience of 'now / this world shrunk', a phenomenon that intensified with faster forms of transport moving into the latter half of the twentieth century. But where settler colonial infrastructure has had expansionist aims – what Deborah Cowen has called 'expanded reproduction' in the Marxist sense, in which capital is 'accumulated or hoarded' (Cowen, 2024: 300) - the effect in the poem is the opposite. Here, the train – like the journey itself – is characterised by a regression and shrunkenness that do not expand opportunities for white proliferation, but seem to limit it. The world shrinks, in particular, to the face of the 'lone brakeman'; as such, the narrator experiences the journey across the continent as a recognition of the limitations of white identity due to expanded reproduction. Rather than being liberating, the possibilities for white identity are defined by the historic and ongoing conditions that settler colonial infrastructure reproduces: inequality, death, and theft.

### Surrealist poetics as infrastructure for radical consciousness

Just as surrealists in New York and Chicago understood art and poetry's potential to provide infrastructure for radical consciousness, so too does Ferlinghetti orient thinking away from a reproductive status quo. In the previous section, we saw how Ferlinghetti refuses to reproduce a hegemonic settler colonial identity, emphasising loneliness, alienation, desolation, and inequality. However, there are moments in Ferlinghetti's oeuvre where there is recognition of the privileges that some experience as a result of settler colonial infrastructure,

particularly if their enjoyment of a settler colonial city (such as San Francisco) is based in superficiality and ignorance. The benefit of a surrealist eye makes itself evident here: being able to sense traces of historical violence resituates the poetic narrator into a position of critique of an otherwise idyllic imaginary.

For instance, another poem from *Pictures of a Gone World*, 'The world is a beautiful place', reveals legacies and continuations of death in a way that typifies North American post-war surrealism. The poem starts with a cheerful and jovial sentiment that 'The world is a beautiful place', and this line is repeated at the beginning of each stanza. The subsequent lines in each stanza, however, describe acts of war, death, and atrocity that need to be ignored in order for the first line to maintain its resolve. The result is that the 'The world is a beautiful place' is a sentiment that when repeated is not reinforced, but becomes contrived; the stanzas' subsequent lines excavate the underlying or repressed content that pervades the world's beauty.

While not specifically about San Francisco, since the poem discusses 'the world' more broadly, the more jovial aspects of the poem recount the everyday activities that constitute life in an established, functioning settler colonial city: 'walking around / looking at everything / [...] and goosing statues / [...] and wearing pants / and waving hats and / [...] just generally "living it up"' (Ferlinghetti, 1995: 37). While there is a playfulness and distinctly non-productive attitude to these activities that does not exactly recall the Protestant work ethic so closely aligned with the pioneering spirit, the reference to statues suggests an organisation of public space more closely aligned with the memorialisation and durability of pioneer myths exemplified by *The American Pioneer* and *The End of the Trail* statues that were displayed at the PPIE. As Christopher Dickenson writes,

'Whatever the subject, the decision to set up a statue is a profoundly political act. A statue is a statement in bronze, stone or some other durable material that its subject is somebody or something that a society wishes to commemorate' (Dickenson, 2021: 6); in the context of mid-century San Francisco, the most prominent of these statues were figures of nationalist and frontierist power, such as the founding fathers. For instance, Richard Brautigan, another San Franciscan poet, would write in 1967 about the Benjamin Franklin in San Francisco's Washington Square, which 'speaks [...] in marble' (Brautigan, [1967] 2014: 1). The statues in Ferlinghetti's poem evoke an orientation of public space that facilitates statues to 'speak' of durable myths of nationalism and pioneerism.

Ferlinghetti's narrator, then, is a kind of mid-century *flâneur*, whose experience of the sensory environment conforms to a masculinist consumption of urban life. Uninhibited in this public space or by broader social conventions that impede free movement and expression, the world is a wondrous opportunity for 'smelling flowers / [...] and kissing people and / making babies' (Ferlinghetti, [1955] 1995: 37). This sense of freedom, gaiety, and leisure are also part of the imaginary of settler colonial infrastructure moving into the twentieth century, in which the organisation of urban (and suburban) land creates opportunities for white, middle-class families to enjoy 'natural' spaces away free from the inner city's vices. For instance, at the time of the PPIE (and partly in preparation for it), City Beautiful architects sought to reform the 'Outside Lands' that constituted San Francisco's extra-urban environment, noting its 'vice-ridden' reputation (Mallery, 2024: 1). Part of the motivation was economic: to entice workers back into working in the city itself, offering suburban developments and 'residence parks', connected with paved roads that facilitated travel to the city centre by streetcar or automobile (see, for instance, the development of the Twin Peaks Tunnel in 1913 [ibid.: 169]).

Yet the City Beautiful Movement, as the name suggests, was far from anti-urban; it valorised European architecture in its ability to subjugate and tame the 'wild' Outside Lands (ibid.: 162). James Mallery, for instance, notes the death of the 'rural ideal' in these designs, citing as evidence 'An article in the [newspaper] *San Francisco Call* [which] argued that residence park designs combined the grand, City Beautiful avenues of Paris, Berlin, and Vienna with the "gentle topography and restful contour of drives and green lawns."' (ibid.: 176). The pioneer attitude of 'civilising', especially in contrast to the 'vice-ridden' activities of both Outside Lands and the inner city, retains its legacy in these developments.

Further, underlying these developments is the racist concern for white procreation, which manifests in an anxiety that at the time was termed as 'race suicide'. As Mallery explains,

Residence parks claimed to be ideal environments for mothers to raise children apart from the vices of extra-urban land and downtown. The urgency to create such an idealized, "domesticated" setting for raising white children in residence parks was tied to fear of racial mixing and "race suicide." One advertisement in the *San Francisco Call* asked, "Where do your Children Play? Is their playground the sidewalks of the city's crowded streets, where undesirable companions cannot be avoided?" Unlike downtown streets filled with temptations and youth gangs, Forest Hill allowed children to "romp up above the noise and dust of the city, among the trees and flowers, breathing the pure, fresh air of the country—a life that makes plump, rosy-cheeked children." (ibid.: 178).

Much like *The Pioneer Mother* statue, the advertisement expresses and capitalises on settler colonial sentiment of nurturing and care, bound within the confines of the nuclear family, that ensures white proliferation. In Ferlinghetti's poem, the narrator notes that part of the world's wonder is 'smelling flowers' and 'making babies', imagery that recalls residence parks' advertisements and their promise of access to 'natural' spaces, nuclear family-coded domesticity, and the maintenance of racial purity. The playful tone of both offers a sanitised version of these developments, in which cleanliness and beauty are imagined as qualities which adhere to white-coded nuclear family living and which bypass racial, sexual, and gender non-conforming others. Ferlinghetti's repeated line 'the world is a beautiful place' may even directly recall City Beautiful's own branding lexicon, which works to extend and facilitate the biological reproduction of white Americans alongside the reproduction of the suburban ideal. Read in this context of the fear of race suicide and the desire for white proliferation, the poem unearths legacies of pioneerism and the subjugation of wilderness that form the *flâneur's* enjoyment of the settler colonial city and its extra-urban extensions.

However, as mentioned previously, this repeated line 'the world is a beautiful place' operates as an overarching statement that, while maybe true, necessitates excavation to unearth further realities of war, inequality, and death. These subsequent lines qualify the world's beauty with the subordinating conjunction 'if', such as in the lines 'The world is a beautiful place / if you don't mind some people dying / all the time / or maybe starving / some of the time' (Ferlinghetti, [1955] 1995: 35). Much like in 'Pale horse pale rider', Ferlinghetti's depiction of 'place' demonstrates a concern for the ways in which death and atrocity constitute and organise it. This has relevance to the settler colonial city whose areas of leisure and enjoyment have only been made possible through

subjugation and death of Native life. More so than 'Pale horse pale rider', 'The world is a beautiful place' contrasts this death with the white procreation that settler colonial infrastructure facilitates. The result is that the poem reveals and foregrounds the otherwise implicit violences that underlie imaginaries of the lively, proliferative, and life-affirming settler colonial city.

Where the two poems diverge further is the difference in tone, with 'The world is a beautiful place' articulating these deaths and atrocities more casually, placing it within a surrealist tradition of black humour. People may be 'dying / all the time' but this is softened immediately by the caveat that they are only 'starving / some of the time', and the narrator even suggests in a darkly comical manner that this 'isn't half so bad / if it isn't you' (ibid.). Black humour was intended as a revolutionary tool, developed by André Breton and Jacques-Pierre Vaché, to disrupt bourgeois dispassion and indifference to everyday cruelties (Standfest, 2022: 177). In dismissing these atrocities so casually and humorously, the narrator simultaneously embodies and confronts the frontierist ideology of the self-serving individualism, demonstrating it as both hegemonic and laughable. Further, the poem's use of the second person undermines this individualism by inviting the reader directly to consider whether they mind them or not, and implicates 'not minding' in structural violences that make enjoyment of the settler colonial city possible.

Simultaneously, the narrator presents these cruelties as thought exercises (that is to say, in the abstract) rather than a tangible, material reality: in the poem, it is about 'mind[ing]', rather than seeing, death and starvation. This abstraction demonstrates the processes of externalisation that is part of the settler colonial project, particularly in the relocation of Native people to substandard conditions on

Reservations which become out of sight, out of mind from the settlers' perspective. Further, this process of externalisation happens not just in retrospect, either, but in the settler colonial imaginary of New World space as *terra nullius*. As Henry Knight's research illustrates, settlers conceptualised California as 'vacant lands': Samuel Brannan, who established the newspaper California Star, 'articulated California's settler colonial destiny [...]. In 1847 [the paper] called for West Coast Americans to become boosters of California, such that the "wealthy vacant lands of our territory become the home of the American settler."' (Knight, 2021: 51). By contrast, the poem's use of the present continuous forms ('dying' and 'starving') reminds readers not just of settler colonial violence which the rhetoric of vacancy obscures, but of its ongoing processes, presenting it as a continually structuring force. In turn, the abstraction demonstrates the need for an imaginative, surrealist vision in order to make these realities more tangible again; the settler, past or present, may see previously empty space now populated with children playing, but because the surrealist sees the past's construction of the present, they can bring death and atrocity back to the forefront of people's consciousness. The overall effect is that it unsettles the narrative of what it means to be born into the structures of settler colonialism; in this narrative are legacies of death as much as there are of proliferative development and procreation.

The poem's second stanza addresses this notion of being 'born into' a world structured by settler colonialism more directly, starting with a slight variant on the repeated line: 'Oh the world is a beautiful place' (Ferlinghetti, [1955] 1995: 35). This 'oh' takes on the quality of ambivalence, at once serving to anticipate the joy of marvelling at the world's beauty and simultaneously providing a sigh-like and elegiac beginning to a stanza saturated with war and death. Again, settler colonial life is juxtaposed with Native death, particularly at the level of government: 'Oh the

world is a wonderful place / to be born into / if you don't mind / a few dead minds /  
in the higher places / or a bomb or two / in your upturned faces / or such other  
improprieties / as our Name Brand society / is prey to / with its men of distinction /  
and its men of extinction' (ibid.: 36). Here it becomes clearer that the narrator's  
casual tone is confrontational: the severity of violence that undermines the  
'beautiful world' becomes represented by an unignorable bomb in the face. This  
imagery immediately brings to mind contemporary US violence abroad, which  
Ferlinghetti saw firsthand. Before establishing City Lights, Ferlinghetti had been  
sent to Japan during WWII, and saw the devastation of the atomic bomb in  
Nagasaki; he would recall later that it made him 'an instant pacifist' (Ferlinghetti in  
Emblidge, 2005: 31). His pacificism as well as his belief that artists should be  
'enemies of the state' are what motivated his collaborations with Eastern European  
dissident poets into the period of Cold War intensification (Ferlinghetti in Browning,  
2023: 118). While Ferlinghetti's anti-war sentiment is well-documented, there is  
multiplicity in the poem's critiques of violence and extinction, particularly when  
read in the Californian context of privatisation, commercialism, and settler colonial  
hegemony.

For instance, this violence is tied to institutional patriarchal power (men in  
'higher places') and the power of consumerism, articulated as 'our Name Brand  
society'. While at first this line appears to be a non-specific criticism of the mass  
commodity production and consumerism that accelerated in the United States  
after WWII, it has particular resonance with California, whose conceptualisation as  
a state has always been as an endpoint and apotheosis of the consumerist ideal.  
From the private partitioning and selling off of land, to the hosting of two World's  
Fairs within twenty-five years of one another, to reorganisation of extra-urban area  
into the suburban ideal, San Francisco typifies the claim that California is made up

of 'magic kingdoms, theme parks for a better life on the part of an equally new class of people, the family-centered middle class, defining itself as a consumer' (Starr, 2009: 15). The 'impropriet[y]' of 'our Name Brand society' is built into San Francisco's foundations, and the rhyme in these two lines, so close together that it is almost an internal rhyme, gives it a claustrophobic sense of repetition and inescapability. The poem's formatting in the collection similarly emphasises movement and repetition, with the first line being left-aligned and then every alternating line being right-aligned, moving back and forth across the page. These transversal lines convey the sense that the world's (superficial) beauty and liveliness is contingent on repetitious movement that facilitates the consumerist status quo.

The narrator's confrontational tone continues in the poem's reference to 'upturned faces', which projects an image of a desensitised subject or reader who would rather, like the settler colonial vision of Samuel Brannan, not see violence or harm to life, but rather nothing, 'vacan[cy]'. However, because the line rhymes with the stanza's first line ('place' and 'faces'), and the lines transverse across the page as they alternate alignment, the poem wields its connective, repetitive forms to illuminate that it is precisely this unwillingness to see and recognise violence that perpetuates it. Simultaneously, the poem in its transversal movement – antagonistic to repetitions of violence and 'extinction' it describes – provides an alternative mode of repetition that can prove destructive to the object of its critique. In Marina Vishmidt's assessment of infrastructural critique and social antagonism, it is this transversal quality that provides the 'gain' of both query and the production of new, disruptive infrastructure:

as soon as it [social antagonism] gains a transversal dimension by looking to the infrastructure, and sees itself too as infrastructure, there is a gain (one could even call it a “gain of function”?) in the capacity of critique to not only query its own conditions of existence but to see how the resources of critique itself can provide infrastructure for other fights that pull the institution into their vortex. (Vishmidt, 2022: 44).

What emerges from an infrastructural analysis of Ferlinghetti’s poem is not only confrontation with institutional violence – both settler colonial and overseas – but with modes of repetition of this violence that require resources to disrupt. The narrator undermines the repeated assertion that ‘the world is beautiful place’ in the poem through the latter’s commitment to the non-reproduction of the conditions that sustain both the world’s beauty and its deathliness. As the poem ends, the narrator’s affirmations are undercut by its final deathly image: ‘Yes / but then right in the middle of it / comes the smiling / mortician’ (Ferlinghetti, [1955] 1995: 37). Recentring death as the structuring force in the world allows the poem to intercede into institutions that create infrastructure for death (what Vishmidt would term ‘necrocapitalist’ production [Vishmidt, 2017: 266]) and create new, non-reproductive repetitive forms.

In accordance, Ferlinghetti felt that poetry should serve as communication lines for radical ideas. In a letter to his friend Kenneth Rexroth, he wrote that he believed ‘that the avant-garde poet must reject the idea that “a poem is an end in itself, an anonymous machine for providing aesthetic experience” and embrace the poem as a radical tool for urgent communication’ (Woods, 2017: 3). This has interesting implications in terms of placing Ferlinghetti into a surrealist tradition, in

which 'psychic automatism' (a method of writing and art production that relies on trances, seances, and attempts to represent the unconscious) formed the basis of avant-garde experimentation. Psychic automatism has the potential to valorise machinic production: for instance, a Chicago Surrealist Group collaborator and visual artist, Robert Green, experimented with algorithmic computer code to produce automatist art, though he decided not to publish the results (Susik, 2021: 209). However, what Ferlinghetti articulates here is in line with post-war North American surrealist thinking, which is that poetry is not an aesthetic object or endpoint, but a series of communicative lines that orient thinking away from hegemonic thought. In other words, poetry infrastructures consciousness, as much as it reveals and dispels the more Marxian 'false consciousness' that comes with internalising settler colonial logics. Understanding Ferlinghetti's poetry in this way opens up pathways for understanding City Lights bookstore and publishing house as a similar kind of infrastructure, whose proliferative mechanisms strive for non-reproduction of the status quo and the infrastructuring of radical forms of consciousness.

'City Lights still here, like some old lighthouse': infrastructuring radical poetry

In 2014, radical poet Diane di Prima, author of *Revolutionary Letters* (a poetry collection first published by City Lights' Pocket Poets Series in 1968), wrote a poem commemorating City Lights Bookstore's longevity. Titled 'City Lights 1961', in it, she describes her first time visiting the store in the title's year, noting 'it was so much smaller then / that crowded downstairs full of poetry' (di Prima, 2014: 22). In the lines immediately following, she notes the haphazard 'racks of tattered

little mags against the wall / those rickety white tables where folks sat reading/writing' to give a sense of the bookstore as a space in which cobbled-together forms create opportunities for readers and revolutionaries to congregate and think beyond the sheen and idealism of commercial imaginaries. From the outset, this was Ferlinghetti's vision for City Lights: he wanted it to be a 'literary meeting place' that was hospitable and inviting to 'writers and young people' (Ferlinghetti in Browning, 2023: 117); di Prima's description conveys the success of this vision, with the bookstore 'crowded' with both poetry and people.

Eliza Browning notes that Ferlinghetti's reference for creating such a space was from Parisian bookstore culture, 'inspired by Paris's Shakespeare and Company', with 'lidded book racks outside reminiscent of the bookstalls next to the Seine' (ibid.: 117-118). And yet Ferlinghetti would extend this notion of a meeting place to one of community support, offering far more than a typical Parisian bookseller: the store was open until 2 AM, and Ferlinghetti made himself available to young poets by driving them to poetry readings in Berkeley, and offering his Volkswagen as refuge for the homeless around the bookstore at night (ibid.: 120). Gioia Woods' research demonstrates Ferlinghetti's commitment to hosting and publishing international dissident poetry too, working with Czech and East German teenaged poets who were writing against their respective oppressive governments in the context of the Cold War (Woods, 2017). While commercial viability remained (and remains) a concern throughout City Books' lifetime, the bookstore nonetheless became an expansive site of insurgent ferment, harnessing young poets' political energy to propagate anti-war, pro-democracy, and anti-nationalist ideas.

Finnish poet and City Lights collaborator Anselm Hollo would write to Ferlinghetti: “LONG GLOW THE CITY LIGHTS - Yours, hopefully, Anselm H.” (Anselm in Woods, 2017: 9), a sentiment which conveys how the store became a nexus and conductor of the ideas of a young, hopeful, international insurgent left. What Holm’s proclamation also conveys is the material way in which City Lights provided the infrastructure for insurgent poetry. As much as the poetry itself – Ferlinghetti’s included – involved an infrastructuring of radical consciousness, the store itself operated as a space that created opportunities and pathways to radical poetry. Whether that was providing the lighting to read and write late into the night; driving poets to and from the store for readings and events; hosting poetry workshops for young people and what would come to be known as San Francisco’s renaissance poets; providing affordable paperbacks and supplying the ink and paper needed for the Pocket Poets Series; and lastly, providing a community hang-out space and sleeping space for those who did not fit into the petro-privatist model of the nuclear family. Holm’s ‘glow’ is the material glow of the bookstore’s lighting as much as it is the numinous glow of insurgent poetry’s diffusion of hope and solidarity. The bookstore’s name, (perhaps coincidentally, as it is recorded that the name came from the title of a Charlie Chaplin movie [Emblidge, 2005: 31]), invites this understanding of it as operating in an infrastructural mode of hopeful proliferation. As David Nye illustrates, electrification of urban areas produced affects of modernisation, futurity, and social and intellectual enlightenment (Nye, 1992). City Lights is a name that adopts these affects while orienting them towards a radical politics and poetics of insurgency, and in the case of Ferlinghetti’s own poetry, the non-reproduction of settler colonial conditions. For those living outside the status quo, City Lights is a beacon for an alternative future that includes them and proliferates their voices.

This metaphor of light and hope is one that appears in di Prima's poem, too. In the final stanza, di Prima writes: 'And dig it, City Lights still here, like some old lighthouse' (di Prima, 2014: 23). The metaphor extends the affects of electrified light and recontextualises it into a scene of turbulence and storminess, i.e., the conditions in which a lighthouse is needed to guide boats to shore. This positions City Lights as a guiding light amid the tumultuous conditions of US hegemony, be it the death-producing infrastructure of settler colonialism; the repressive states that emerge out of US imperialism during the Cold War; or the exclusion of racial or sexual others from the petro-privatist nuclear family ideal. As di Prima's poem suggests, City Lights was well-positioned to support San Francisco's countercultural community, noting 'How many late nights did we haunt the Store / buying scads of new poems from all corners of the earth / then head to the all-night Tower Records full of drag queens / & revolutionaries, to get a few songs' (ibid.: 22-23). City Lights operates a site of non-reproduction in its facilitation of both communitarian activities and access to literature that directly challenge US hegemony.

Nonetheless, while 'non-reproduction' is an important term to describe City Lights' insurgent proclivities, proliferation, reproduction, and expansion remain crucial aspects of the store and its vitality. In di Prima's poem, she recalls an exchange with Ferlinghetti in which he makes the association between the literature he prints and sells under City Lights publication and biological procreation: 'Arriving again a year later, two kids in tow / Lawrence [Ferlinghetti] gave me a huge stack of his publications / "I've got books" he said "like other people have mice"' (ibid.: 22). This simile uses the known proliferative quality of mice to emphasise the extent of the store's publishing, and the exclusivity of this claim is one that elicits pride. This sense of the bookstore's vitality is emphasised

by the fact that Ferlinghetti is offering a pile of books to di Prima and her 'two kids in tow', recreating the basic structure of a nuclear family (with Ferlinghetti adopting the role of a provider and di Prima, a nurturer) but subverting it, as the sustenance provided is radical literature. This sense of generational passing on of ideas is extended beyond the family unit in di Prima's poem, too, with the final lines reflecting on the (now expanded) bookstore's continued success with young people: 'the poetry's moved upstairs, the publishing office / right there now too & crowds of people / one third my age or less still haunt the stacks / seeking out voices from all quarters / of the globe' (ibid.: 23). Where Ferlinghetti focused on the death-producing aspects of settler colonial infrastructure in his own poetry, the bookstore's youthful vitality and long-form sustainment (i.e., its longevity) provide an alternative model of proliferation centred on anti-nationalist and communitarian ideals. While 'non-reproduction' remains a central strategy against settler colonial hegemony, proliferation and expansion nonetheless remain vital components (in the dual sense of importance and of producing vitality) to radical literary movements.

### City Lights today

Knowing that City Lights is still an operable business to this day, it's easy to anticipate that the bookstore would be enveloped into the folds of consumer capitalism, deterritorialised from its initial plane of radical insurgence and as such, losing its capacity to facilitate the counterhegemonic conditions for communitarian life. This is somewhat the story of City Lights as it still exists today, but not entirely. At the level of finances, Ferlinghetti had always refused government funding for

the bookstore, citing his belief that 'poets and artists should be enemies of the state' (Ferlinghetti in Browning, 2023: 118). This sentiment was no doubt fuelled by the *Howl* obscenity trial which saw Ferlinghetti briefly detained, and this hostility has allowed the bookstore to maintain its independence from state interests. As a result, City Lights remains a space where radical literature from across the globe can be sought, and it has demonstrated remarkable resilience to the waves of alt-right and neo-fascist ideas that are seeing increasing proliferation under Donald Trump's presidency, what journalist Ezra Klein calls a right-wing 'media ecosystem' (Klein, 2023). The bookstore's global selection may initially suggest an unhelpful egalitarianism, in which all perspectives are given equal weight, but its postcolonial awareness has meant that the store has retained a selective anti-colonial and anti-fascist collection. Online and instore, City Lights offers a substantial collection under the heading 'Native American studies' and has printed Native American poetry and literature, including Kim Shuck's poetry collection *Deer Trails* and Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony*. At the time of writing, City Lights' next planned publication by Palestinian poet Nasser Rabah, titled *Gaza: The Poem Said Its Piece* (City Lights Booksellers and Publishers, 2025A). The bookstore has similarly maintained its relationship with surrealism; André Breton's *The Cavalier Perspective*, his final piece of writing, is currently being advertised on City Lights' Instagram and website pages as one of the store's forthcoming titles (City Lights Booksellers and Publishers, 2025B). All signal a continuing commitment to diffusing material that resists continuing settler colonialisms.

As it did in the 1950s, City Lights has also maintained its commitment to fight censorship; its current social media campaigns include a petition to congress to reverse all book bans brought in by the Trump administration, as well as the decision to unseat former Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden, the first African

American woman to hold this position. In an Instagram post from 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025, the page posted an image of Carla with the caption, 'The Trump administration fired one of the most respected, celebrated, and qualified librarians in America. [...] Please see a link in our bio for more details and a petition to Congress' (citylightsbooks, 2025). The link leads to the webpage EveryLibrary, which describes itself as a 'Political Action Platform for libraries' (EveryLibrary, 2019: para. 1). Available on the webpage is the petition to congress title 'Don't Ban Books in the United States' (EveryLibrary, 2025A), as well as an article picking apart the reasoning for Carla Hayden's dismissal (EveryLibrary, 2025B). In this new era of state attacks on 'DEI' (and subsequently, or more accurately, marginalised groups), City Lights continues to proliferate anti-racist and anti-state media.

That said, there are aspects of the store today that demonstrate its reliance on profit for survival. During the launch of the Pocket Poets Series, Ferlinghetti ensured that all publications would be affordable paperbacks; this commitment to affordability has over time eroded as the store expanded, which 'now offers three floors of new release hardcovers and paperbacks from major publishing houses' (Browning, 2023: 121). This development highlights a tension between remaining a profitable business and providing the infrastructure for printing and diffusing radical literature. Though as a conversation with Ferlinghetti implies, these two strands are not always at odds. As David Emblidge notes having interviewed Ferlinghetti about City Lights' 'highly praised public program "Youth Speaks"', where young people in the Bay Area listen to and perform Slam poetry, 'Ferlinghetti gets an impish sparkle in his bright eyes as he confesses that this isn't just a public service. "All this effort is aimed at promoting the survival of the independent bookstore"' (Emblidge, 2005: 37). It would be easy to dismiss

Ferlinghetti's 'impish sparkle' as evidence of being motivated solely by the store's continuation, but what he describes here is a reciprocal relationship in which the program's success keeps the store running as an independent space.

City Lights is the story of a radical bookstore and printing press whose success distinguishes it from other insurgent surrealist groups of the mid-century. As discussed in chapter 3 on the Chicago Surrealist Group's Black Swan Press and their two gallery spaces for the exhibition of surrealist art, the Chicago Surrealist Group were often at odds with the property-owners who rented these spaces to them, and financial pressures increasingly impeded printing efforts in the longer term. Ferlinghetti and co-owner Nancy Peters, by contrast, were able to buy the building where City Lights operated in 1999. Where privatisation and the selling off of land was an area of critique in Ferlinghetti's poetry collection, (which launched City Lights' still running Pocket Poets Series), it is interesting to note how private ownership has provided the store security and an even greater longevity. It is at moments like these in City Lights' narrative where non-reproduction meets its material limitations in sustaining the infrastructure for counterhegemonic life and literature.

Proliferative mechanisms are the sustainment and expansion of radical movements, and their distinction from expanded reproduction is not always clear, or they can become indistinct as financial pressures change their shape and movement. One of the more commercial and tourist-oriented moves Ferlinghetti has made is when he 'pressed the city to name [surrounding] streets after its many famous writers. The alley next door to City Lights became "Jack Kerouac Alley." Nearby in North Beach is "Via Ferlinghetti"' (Emblidge, 2005: 36). Centring the white male canonical authors of the Beat generation and San Francisco

Renaissance, this is a move that is perhaps unsurprising from Ferlinghetti, whose poetry, as discussed previously, does not consider or leave room for reparations to Native Americans that is expected, even incumbent, from a critique of settler colonialism. As a surrealist, Ferlinghetti's auratic insight only takes this critique so far, missing the crucial perspectives of those marginalised by settler colonial infrastructure. Proliferating their voices through City Lights publications is reparative in some ways, but it doesn't foreground the more imminent material concerns of forging pathways for the continuation of Native life. This comes across in Ferlinghetti's poetry, too, which centred Native death. For these reasons it is to Native American surrealist artist and photographer, Wendy Red Star, that this thesis now turns.

**Chapter 5 - Reservation Life: Fossil Infrastructure, Autonomy,  
and Futurity in Wendy Red Star's Photography**

Tracing the legacies of surrealism in the United States can lead to places we may not expect. Surrealists often found their comrades in larger cities, which served not only as obvious sites of fossil infrastructures' surplus of possibilities – large networks of car-oriented roads, skyscrapers, 24/7 lighting – but as significant centres of cultural production that facilitated the printing and diffusion of surrealist art and literature. We have seen this in previous chapters concerning New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, where surrealist artists formed groups, organised exhibitions, and created their own publishing houses. This is not the case for Wendy Red Star, however, whose distinct oeuvre in the canon of Montana-based art makes for a geographical outlier in this thesis' North American surrealist corpus.

The focus on metropolitan centres has been useful in interrogating hegemonic infrastructural imaginaries; these cities are loci of grand displays of the energy-intensive infrastructures that inform post-war surrealist texts and their own incisive imaginaries. But a limitation is that they are distant from the sites of fossil fuel extraction that make these infrastructural worlds possible. If Kay Sage's desolate wastelands, explored in chapter 1, are the beyond of New York City, a hollowed-out ecology that sustains hierarchical world-building, the perspective is not one that considers people who continue to live near sites of extraction due to settler colonial infrastructural development and displacement (Ralph Ellison's Harlem-based perspective in chapter 2 has a similar limitation). In parallel, the Chicago Surrealist Group (chapter 3) may have offered solidarity to indigenous peoples in its interrogation of settler colonial meat infrastructure, but this too is distant from sites of extraction that directly affect indigenous communities.

Meanwhile, as seen in the previous chapter, Lawrence Ferlinghetti's poetry, though

critiquing settler colonial infrastructure, too often leaned into the myth of indigenous extinction, foreclosing avenues for reparation. It is from these limitations that Wendy Red Star, Apsáalooke (also known as Crow) tribe member, emerges as a vital inclusion into this thesis' North American surrealist corpus, working as a photographer who challenges hegemonic fossil infrastructural imaginaries with a decolonising perspective.

This chapter distinguishes itself from other writing on Red Star's work, foregrounding the Apsáalooke's relationship to fossil infrastructure in its analysis. Academic writing on her is sparse, though it tends to emphasise the 'vitality' her work offers, both in its representation of Native subjects and Apsáalooke-produced objects. In the former instance, writers acknowledge Red Star's intervention into the legacy of previous photographers of Native subjects, such as Edward Curtis, whose motivation for photographing the Apsáalooke was rooted in the belief they were near extinction (Raymond, 2016). In the latter, the focus on Apsáalooke-produced objects 'upends normative assumptions about Native cultural production as isolated from the fabric of U.S. society' (Bryan-Wilson, 2020: 130). While production and vitality emerge as key terms for scholarship on her work, there has not been (until now) any writing that prioritises Apsáalooke relationships to fossil infrastructure and fossil fuel extraction as it manifests in Red Star's work. This new perspective on Red Star work allows for intervention into and supplementation of previous scholarship on indigenous relationships to infrastructure, offering a proscriptive shape of reparative infrastructure for groups who have been dispossessed and marginalised by fossil infrastructural development.

Electric lighting, coal, and non-reproduction of the pageantry of white-coded creativity

Red Star's intervention into fossil infrastructural imaginaries intersects with her work's interrogation and non-reproduction of hegemonic assumptions of what constitutes a Native subject. This is partly because fossil infrastructural imaginaries designate a subjectivity for Native Americans in contrast to white-coded creativity and cultural achievement. In her 2006 panorama series *Four Seasons* (figures 11-14), a series of self-portraits, Red Star directly confronts the preconception that Native Americans are innately more "in tune" to nature, offering artifice that is intensified by electric lighting. In these four photos, Red Star, in Apsáalooke dress, seats herself under intense studio lighting and amidst artificial materials: painted backdrops of idyllic, untouched natural landscapes of each respective season, which are notably and visibly creased, drawing attention to their own artifice; an inflatable deer; printed cardboard cut-outs of various animals, as well as animal skulls; artificial grass, leaves, flowers, and snow, all of which satirise her supposed ecological place as naturally harmonious. The artificial materials reinforce the satire of hegemonic US representation of indigenous people, but the noticeably intense electric lighting even further opposes the ideology that underpinned US electrification and its promotion of racial superiority and conquest over nature. By asserting herself as an artificial subject, Red Star challenges the narrative that her people have been "conquered" like the rest of "nature" in the history of infrastructural development; she sits centrally in each photo, radiant, lively, and assertive.



Figure 11 – 'Summer', *Four Seasons* (© Wendy Red Star, 2006. All photos have been reproduced with permission by the artist).



Figure 12 – 'Fall', *Four Seasons* (© Wendy Red Star, 2006).



Figure 13 – 'Winter', *Four Seasons* (© Wendy Red Star, 2006).



Figure 14 – 'Spring', *Four Seasons* (© Wendy Red Star, 2006).

Red Star's work encapsulates what Anishinaabe cultural theorist Gerald Vizenor calls 'survivance', a term that 'fuses survival and resistance, a trickster-style outwitting of domination through native stories that enables indigenous peoples to survive while changing' (Stam, 2023: 31). Survivance has been a vital concept in the study of indigenous media because it works as both a mode of autonomous indigenous representation and as resistance to static notions of indigenous identity as victims of colonial domination. The term offers the scope for contemporary indigenous artists to showcase how tribes have survived and transformed through their survival into the modern era, rather than being frozen in time at moments of colonial violence, displacement, and erasure.

But the term 'survivance' cannot promote celebration through transformation without acknowledging that the changes indigenous people have endured resulted in a need to survive apocalyptic circumstances. In the case of the Apsáalooke, these circumstances are a direct result of fossil infrastructural developments that would displace the tribe and result in a far lower quality of life than their white Montanan counterparts. In the 1880s, the US government ignored the tribe's protestations to its plan to build the Northern Pacific Railroad. Its purpose was to connect New England to Montana's coal and copper mines, which proved vital in the process of electrification: copper provided the conductivity in electric cabling, and coal was the fuel source. In fact, the US still relies predominantly on coal to power its electrical grids (EIA, 2023), and states such as Minnesota still primarily power their electricity with truck- and rail-transported Montanan coal (Castellanos, 2016: para. 22). Due to electricity's ties to the energy monopoly company General Electric, electrification was an uneven process: it was firstly prioritised in cities' and towns' street lighting; then theatre productions, world fairs, and bourgeois houses; and by the 1960s, it would become the standard in homes across the US (Nye,

1992: 29-33). As a consequence of these developments, the tribe's Reservation shrank from over 30 million acres of land to just 2 million (Doyle, 2019: para. 40). How might we read Red Star's intense, bright, artificial electric lighting in the context of the Apsáalooke's displacement, enforced for the purposes of coal-powered electrification? How do these fossil infrastructural contexts complicate her work's depictions of survivance and celebrations of contemporary Apsáalooke life? And if complicated, how does her work intervene into fossil fuel hegemony?

In *Four Seasons*, the bright electric lighting conveys the vibrance, creative autonomy, and liveliness that is encoded in the history of US electrification. As historian David Nye writes, private sectors prioritised grandiose lighting in spaces such as theatres, public streets, World's Fairs, automobile displays, and shopping centres well before electricity was implemented in homes (Nye, 1992: 29-33). The history of electricity, as it exists in the public imagination, is misremembered as a purely logistical solution to more dangerous forms of lighting that existed previously. However, Nye uses public testimony and diary entries to reveal that theatre-going and fair-going middle class North Americans never conceived of electrification in these practical terms. In his analysis of World's Fairs, which emerged at the time of the Northern Pacific Railroad's development, he understands the Fairs' use of electric lighting as a 'technological sublime', displacing awe away from natural landscapes and towards human manipulation of electricity for creative purposes. The result was that the otherwise dull, grey, and charmless aesthetic of industrialised urban environments were newly enlivened, celebrated, and enfolded into narratives of human ingenuity and progress (ibid.: 61). Rather than a practical tool, the public primarily understood electricity as a spectacular, awe-inspiring intelligence.

In this context, Red Star's usurpation of the technological sublime to illuminate herself is a subversive, reclamative act. She positions herself as someone more than capable of wielding electric lighting for the purposes of creative expression, which in turn de-essentialises and refuses to reproduce the historically white-coded assumptions of power, authority, and resourceful creativity. Alongside this intensive lighting are Apsáalooke signifiers of cultural heritage, power, and richness; for instance, commenting on her choice of traditional dress for the series, Red Star notes:

In *Four Seasons*, I am dressed exactly how my grandmother dressed me and how I was raised to present myself as a Crow woman. [...] The dress is an elk-tooth dress or iichíilihtawaleiittaashte. [...] The biggest reason I didn't think of us as poor is that we're so culturally rich. I feel like we're the richest people because we have our culture. For me, the elk-tooth dress embodies that cultural richness and that power. (Red Star in McNamara and Berry, 2018: para. 5-9)

By drawing on electrification's connotations of ingenuity and creativity, Red Star enhances her work's celebratory survivance with a suitably intense form of lighting, creating a maximal and maximally visible form of Apsáalooke expression. She uses electrical lighting's affect as awe-inspiring and impressive to intervene in and discredit a history of electrification that solely celebrates white creative and technological achievements.

The photos in *Four Seasons* are carefully staged and curated through Red Star's use of artificial materials, including plastic flowers, inflatable and cardboard cut-out animals, styrofoam snowballs, and painted dioramas. This speaks to the

history of Montanan coal and copper, used to electrify stage productions at the same moment the US government was displacing the tribe and shrinking their land. For instance, Historian Jeremy Zallen notes how the US's first electrically lit theatre production, whose use of copper and coal can be traced directly back to Montanan mines, was staged in Boston's Bijou Theatre in December 1882. The *Boston Evening Standard* wrote of the production:

The Bijou Theatre was opened last evening amid a blaze of glory [...] The Edison Incandescent lights worked to universal admiration, and it was shown on more than one occasion how beautifully manageable and tractable this mode of lighting can be made. (quoted in Zallen, 2019: 259).

Electricity, used creatively, united two potentially contradictory ideas: the first is that it provided an energy-intensive means of illumination that 'blazed' and inspired 'admiration' for its ability to enhance a theatrical audience's suspension of disbelief, and the second is that despite this energy-intensity and combustive logic, it is still 'manageable' and 'tractable' by human forces. In other words, it is power that enhances (rather than overwhelms) creative agency; it is a testament to human authority and creativity; and a demonstration of how scientific advancement can conquer and manipulate otherwise powerful, chaotic, and blazing natural forces. All of this is magnified in the space of the theatre, where construction and artifice take precedence.

*Four Seasons* does not reproduce the same rationalist celebrations of conquest over nature; the series' ecological connotations are more challenging, ambivalent, and mournful. Further, the series interrogates the notion that Red Star

and the Apsáalooke are part of the 'nature' that has been conquered. The series' artificiality draws attention to the photos' own construction; each photo makes visible its set pieces, revealing the preconception of Native American attunement to nature to be a construction. By asserting herself as an artificial subject, Red Star liberates Apsáalooke identity from the constraints of the hegemonic biological essentialism that served as justification for their marginalisation and displacement. Wielding electricity and artificiality in this way, Red Star asserts that her identity is transformative and adaptable to new environments and technologies. She refuses to reproduce hegemonic understandings of indigenous subjectivity.

There is a temporal aspect to this highly electrified aesthetic, too, which serves to counteract logics of Native 'primitiveness' in favour of self-representation as modern subjects. At the time of the development of the Northern Pacific Railroad, electricity was sold primarily as a new and futuristic means of creative expression. At ever popular World's Fairs, electric towers - whose lighting were made possible by miles of copper wiring derived from Montana mines - were presented in direct contrast to "ethnological" villages which suggested that Cubans, Mexicans, Filipinos, African Americans from the South, Africans in the jungle, and Native Americans lived in an unlit, 'dark', uncivilised past (Nye, 1992: 36). In these spaces, electric lighting served a symbolic purpose well beyond its use as a contained, fumeless source of light; it promoted a narrative of white and middle class-led progress into an advanced, civilised future.

Red Star writes how this logic of primitiveness, proliferated by popularly attended World's Fairs, formed in part the justification for the US government's decision to build the Northern Pacific Railroad through Apsáalooke land: the tribe were already seen as 'relics' of a primitive past, or a 'vanishing race' which would

have no place in an infrastructurally modern world (Red Star and Vittoria, 2020: para. 8). Despite prominent Apsáalooke members forming a delegation to save their land from this colonial-infrastructure expansion, the railroad was approved and built.

Red Star's own research into the delegation's journey to Washington DC reveals how US government officials took the opportunity to take photos of the delegates for the express purpose of historical conservation (ibid.: para. 3). Similarly, Edward Curtis' series of photographs *The Vanishing Race* (1904), which Red Star references in her research, depicted Apsáalooke tribe members living on their now much reduced Reservation. Red Star's interventions are therefore in the tradition of photography depicting Apsáalooke subjects; rather than historical conservation and memory, Red Star redeploys photography as an innovative form. This reflects a broader movement in the production and analysis of Native photography to move focus away from '*recovered histories*' towards '*enduring memories*' (Strathman, 2020: 8). Her photos are not, as Curtis' are, historical snapshots but present and lasting interventions into Apsáalooke identity and representation. She adopts the affect of electricity as future-bringing to achieve this, and to declare that the Apsáalooke exist in the present, and belong in the future.

This builds on ethnographic theory that suggests that access to infrastructures bestows a sense of political belonging (Anand, Appel, and Gupta, 2018: 3); rather than a national belonging, Red Star's work suggests this is a temporal one. Her use of visible, intense electric lighting counteracts a hegemonic logic of primitiveness, intensified by fossil infrastructural installation. Illuminated so starkly in this way, Red Star is an Apsáalooke subject who is present rather than

vanishing; modern rather than a relic; and who is a living curator of modern images through the manipulation of the lively, creative force that is electricity. That these lights are very likely coal-powered (and that North Americans used and still use Montanan coal for their electricity) is a reclamation of the materials that settlers stole during the Apsáalooke's displacement and the non-reproduction of the colonial logic of the nature-bound Native. Coal's energy-intensity provides the bright-light aesthetics that helps to convey the intensity of this displacement as well as the intensity of the stakes of being represented or misrepresented; for the Apsáalooke, it's the difference between being afforded space in the future or not.

### The surreality of ecological severance

Already in this discussion of survivance, there is a sinister subtext to *Four Seasons* in which intensity signals celebration but also precarity and loss. There is something oneiric, unsettling, and ambivalent about *Four Seasons*; the nature depicted is an uncanny simulation, and the extractive settler colonial contexts encourage a critical eye towards the ecological connotations of these artificial aesthetics. They are not just reclamation but a representation of the material, ecological, and spiritual losses the tribe has endured due to the development of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Her dioramas, for instance, point towards a traumatic infrastructural past that severed the tribe's interrelatedly spiritual and ecological relationships, with now no more than a superficial connection to Montana's landscape. Before the US government reduced Apsáalooke land, it was oriented around places of spiritual significance such as Heart Mountain (Grant Bulltail in Keller, 2014: 86). War chief and medicine man Déaxitchish (Pretty Eagle) foresaw

the interrelated physical and spiritual violence that building the railroad would enact on his people and the land they relied on, recounting:

[President Hayes] wanted from the Boulder to the Mountains and all the mountains, and a road cut through our land to drive cattle over, and a Railroad to run through our land. The whites got together and talked until it made my heart feel dead. (Déaxitchish quoted in Red Star and Vittoria, 2020: para. 21).

As a consequence of the railroad development, Heart Mountain can no longer be seen from where the Reservation stands today (Keller, 2014: 83).

Returning to *Four Season's* dioramas, though they recall some of Montana's and Wyoming's mountain ranges, Heart Mountain's characteristic plateau-shaped peak is noticeably absent. Instead, they are generic, with no communal spiritual resonance to draw upon; the mountains are flat, both physically and spiritually. Red Star based these designs on museum dioramas she encountered while a student at UCLA; feeling homesick, she knew she would find familiar Crow imagery and materials at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. She explains:

The way that the building was set up, you walked under this big brontosaurus and saw all this extinction, and then you entered the Native galleries. It set people up to think of Native people as extinct. I've always loved dioramas, but it was uncanny how much the museum's dioramas looked like Montana, where I'm from, but there was this sense that everything was dead here. I wanted to re-create that scene in a way where I could grapple with those feelings but also encourage viewers to step

back and really think about what they're seeing. (Red Star in McNamara and Berry, 2018: para. 3)

Red Star challenges the perception of Native people as 'extinct', but her choice of dioramas adopts their deathly, synthetic aesthetic to speak to the very real ecological severance caused by fossil infrastructural development.

Similarly, the artificial animals and their skulls which appear in each of the series' photos speak to their erasure and displacement. The extinction of American buffalos marked a significant moment of cultural devastation for the Apsáalooke: Crow elder Plenty Coups would say 'After this, nothing happened' (Plenty Coups quoted in Lear, 2008: 2). As Robert Lear extrapolates, Plenty Coups' statement is more productively read as ontologically true rather than mournful exaggeration. Before moving to the Reservation, Apsáalooke lives and material cultures were oriented around animal hunting as well as war practices and ceremonies which demarcated and demanded recognition of Crow territory, such as planting and counting coups sticks (ibid.: 16). After the move, buffalo extinction and criminalisation of war practices robbed the Apsáalooke of traditional methods of meaning-making. It may be physically possible to plant coup sticks or hunt an animal but it ceased to be an intelligible act (ibid.: 38). Crow territory, no longer movable, became defined in stricter terms by the US government and war practices were met with punishment from authorities. As with buffalo extinction, Crow subjectivity began to lose meaning, too; 'the Crow have lost the concepts with which they would construct a narrative. [...] It is *the real loss of a point of view.*' (ibid.: 32).

Red Star's animal skulls convey the interrelation of these cultural and ecological losses, with 'nature' represented as an uncanny simulation. Just as Baudrillard would recognise the way 'Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, whereas all of [...] America [is] no longer real, but belong[s] to [...] the order of simulation' (Baudrillard, 1995: 10), Red Star reveals that the imaginary of the ecologically attuned Native subject conceals the ecological severances that are the reality of contemporary Crow life, and the unintelligibility of Crow identity in the context of ecological and cultural devastation. Red Star's simulated nature may counter colonial logics of inherent 'naturalness' but it also acknowledges these interrelatedly cultural and ecological deaths and losses. Her vibrant dress, encoded with Apsáalooke heritage and subjectivity, juxtaposes the artificial set pieces; this demonstrates that the methods and means to assert Apsáalooke identity become more difficult and unintelligible as a result of the fossil infrastructural developments that displaced the Apsáalooke.

The continuation of ecological and cultural devastation exists across a multiplicity of indigenous communities, and is a long-term colonial strategy to marginalise, dispossess, and criminalise. Anne Spice, Tlingit member of Kwanlin Dun First Nation, writes how the 'bureaucratic criminalization of traditional activities through environmental permits, civil injunctions, industrial allowances' that resulted in her arrest are 'timeless colonial techniques' (Spice, 2021: 1). Just as the artificial electric lighting intensified *Four Seasons*' elements of future-oriented survivance, so too does it intensify the photos' continuity of colonially enforced devastation and loss, a coerced timelessness that forecloses the possibility of an indigenous futurity beyond colonialism. The electric lighting in *Four Seasons* is reproductive in both senses: it reproduces a future-oriented aesthetic that is reclamative, but it also

reproduces the cultural and ecological losses that ground the images' interventions in a settler colonial past and present.

Similar to the brightly illuminated 'Invisible Man Retreat' in chapter 2, electricity serves as an intensifier: the plastic and cut-out animals shine all the more due to the intensive lighting; the white animal skulls stand out as even whiter. It is in this way that Red Star participates in the methodology of Afro-surrealists, who rather than outright resisting dominant (in this case, fossil infrastructural) cultures, represent the 'damaged surplus of dominant culture[s]' instead (Eburne, 2022: 154). It is through this methodology that Red Star is able to represent Apsáalooke infrastructural relationships as intense and ambivalent: she highlights the sense of empowerment and futurity they bestow on the one hand and their continued ecological, cultural, spiritual, and material devastation on the other. She refuses to reproduce settler colonial constructions of indigenous subjectivity, all-the-while reproducing fossil infrastructures' future-oriented affects and representing the reproductive capability of fossil infrastructure to enact and repeat indigenous losses.

### Montana oil and the surrealism of Rez life

Ecological severance is a throughline in Red Star's work, especially her photograph series which depict life on the Crow Reservation, such as *Reservation Pop* (figure 15) or *My Home is Where My Tipi Sits* (figures 28-32). Rather than an idyllic mountain scene, the Reservation has the same post-industrial infrastructures as the rest of Montana: suburban-style housing, cars, pipes, cables, and sewage

(though in a more dilapidated condition). While it may not be intuitive to understand cars and houses as fossil infrastructures in the same way as electrical grids or asphalt roads, they are infrastructures in the sense that they are 'defined by the movement or patterning of social form' and by 'use and movement' (Berlant, 2016: 393-394). North American fossil fuel ubiquity and liberal petrocultural world-building resulted in a patterning of social form that proliferated roads and suburbs and prioritised mobility, autonomy, and liberation from 'nature' so that 'subjects [are] "freed" to participate in civil society and produce economic life' (Anand, Appel, and Gupta, 2018: 4). Despite hegemonic conceptions of indigenous communities still living in 'nature', Red Star's oeuvre demonstrates how the Apsáalooke are a part (though marginalised) of this fossil infrastructural world.

Moving into the twentieth century, Montana became a site of successful oil extraction that saw the development of road infrastructures and increased private car ownership (Cartwright, 2003: 3). This was both as a consequence of oil abundance (to fuel cars and make synthetic asphalt) and for the purposes of further extraction, as road-building in the 1920s was driven in part by the petroleum industry's desire for motorised transport (trucks) to carry oil (Weaver, 2010: 155). The Apsáalooke were part of this transition to petroleum-based transport: as Crow Elder Lillian recalls in her transcribed autobiography, having access to a car empowered her to go bitterroot picking in the mountains with other tribe members, pick up coal and wood to prepare for winter, store extra money for herself, access sacred spaces no longer part of Crow land, and travel to various family ceremonies (weddings, funerals, etc.) (Hogan et al., 2012: 254, 299, 390, 336, 294).

Red Star's use of petroleum-derived materials is present in *Four Seasons* and its artificial aesthetic. For instance her manipulation of plastic materials (the

word 'plastic' itself meaning pliable to human will) allow her to assert creative agency as curator and set designer. But they also allow her to create political commentaries about the Apsáalooke's place in ecological discourse. Disconnected from spiritual and cultural practices that would have fostered forms of ecological intimacy – a situation for most living in the fossil infrastructural Northern hemisphere - Red Star not only criticises the perception of her tribe as attuned to nature, but that the expectation of indigenous environmental stewardship in the face of climate collapse is itself absurd. Amidst inflatable deer, animal skulls, and plastic leaves, Red Star asks: what exactly do her people have left that would enable massive ecological change? The irony that the burden of environmental stewardship is placed on a community who has been robbed of resource is a facet of Red Star's work that plays out in *Four Seasons*, as well as in her depictions of reservation life.

For instance, the aforementioned series *Reservation Pop* (2017) (figure 15) depicts an eight-part series split into two groups of four. The first has four photographs of dilapidated and rusted cars from the Crow Reservation, complete with graffiti, dents, opened doors and bonnets, and flat tires. Each photograph has been cut out and placed on brightly coloured fabric, and in white frames horizontally adjacent to one another. The next four are presented in the same fashion, but this time they depict colourfully painted and modestly sized reservation houses. The title and brightly coloured backgrounds recall pop art pioneer Andy Warhol, whose repetitive, multicoloured paintings convey both the mundanity and vibrance of commercial-capitalist objects (see *Campbell's Soup Cans* [multicoloured versions], figure 16). Here the reference is more subversive; 'Where Warhol created his pieces from a place of privilege', Cynthia Gladen writes in an interview-article with Red Star, 'Red Star's vivid works celebrate the rural, lived

material reality of some of the least-celebrated communities in the US' (Gladen, 2017: para. 1).



Figure 15 – *Reservation Pop*, depicting the broken down 'rez cars' and homes on the Crow Reservation (© Wendy Red Star, 2017).



Figure 16 - Andy Warhol's "Campbell's Soup Cans" (multicoloured version), 1965 (© The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.).

One main point of difference is that Warhol exercised his autonomy over his colour palettes; the result is that Warhol instates the reproduction of commercial objects as "art", from the silk-screening process he used to the choice of branded

commercial object he chose to depict. In contrast, for the Reservation's houses, the US government mandated the paint colours, as they were the cheapest palette available. No such autonomy has been afforded; the houses' multicoloured-ness arose from the programmatic and systematic reproduction of low-cost products. And yet, the houses' colours remain as an act of resistance: a form of 'a refusal to assign value to the choice and not to expend effort undoing yet another imposition' (ibid.: para. 2). Unlike Warhol's multicoloured soup cans, which he had previously represented in their original white and red packaging before creating the multicoloured version, Red Star's reproduction of the houses are true to their original colour at the point of production. This acts as both a form of refusal to expend effort undoing colonial imposition, and it also rejects Warhol's artistic process, which celebrates the autonomy in choosing colours within the limiting context of mechanical reproduction of representations of products. Instead, autonomy is mediated through refusal of such proliferation; the photographs are collaged onto archival paper rather than silkscreened, and as such the houses retain their diversity and individuality, all-the-while signifying the lack of autonomy afforded to the Apsáalooke. The result is a celebration of the Reservation's houses as colourful and homely, conveying the beauty and necessity of sustaining pathways to life within the strictures of capitalist-colonial infrastructure.

More than highlighting discrepancies in artistic authority, the Warhol reference intervenes into discourses of mass commodity production and image reproduction that arose out of pop art's prominence in the United States. Warhol received criticism as a fundamentally reactionary artist, someone whose processes became more and more serially repetitive and machinic in a way that embraced, ironically or not, systems of mass production. John Coplan reads Warhol's move away from hand-painted images to photomechanical and silkscreen printing

processes as evidence of this (Coplans, [1970] 2016: 116). And Donald Kuspit more scathingly noted:

For all its supposed irony, Pop art endorsed and embraced these mass images for the American world they signified - the infinite reproducibility of the images suggested the inescapability and omnipresence of the world - thus putting an artistic stamp of approval on the American status quo. (Kuspit, 1976: 31-32)

Here, 'infinite reproducibility' suggests a nightmare of commodity proliferation in Warhol's work, with all its connotations of waste and systems of fossil fuel extraction and combustion. In *Reservation Pop*, Red Star both rejects and adopts pop art's 'reproducibility'. On the one hand, this reproducibility offers engagement in a fantasy of endless Apsáalooke survivance. Mechanically reproduced through photography, Red Star proliferates serial images of reservation life to redirect Warhol's celebratory impulses away from the commercial-capitalist status quo and towards the Reservation's infrastructures, in turn 'reimagining what can initially appear shabby or discarded as something resilient and alive' (Red Star in Gladen, 2017 para. 9). Simultaneously, her method of reproduction (refusal of silk-screening process, individual placement onto archival paper, the heterogeneity of each image) is the non-reproduction of Warhol's artistic method and the non-reproduction of settler colonial infrastructural priorities of cheap mass production and homogeneity.

This vital, non-reproductive yet reproductive process has the benefit of resisting the homogenising effect of Warhol's work and the homogenisation of Native communities in hegemonic culture. 'There's this whole idea that Native

people or Indians or whatever are one homogeneous thing, and we're not' (Red Star in McNamara and Berry, 2018: para. 20); the only 'commonalities', Red Star notes, are the relationships of marginalisation and dispossession that 'all Native people share with the U.S. government' (Red Star in Gladen, 2017: para. 17). Just as Native communities and the people within them are not homogeneous, so too are indigenous relationships to fossil infrastructures. For the Apsáalooke, they are surviving evidence of extractive settler colonial history but also a site of non-reproduction, survivance, and self-representation.

Red Star demonstrates through this series that even while acknowledging that the Reservation's infrastructures are deteriorated – and deteriorated because of historic colonial violence and dehumanisation – that they still provide the comfort and familiarity of home life, and serve as signifiers of community experiences in a shared space. The choice of fabric as background to the photos emphasises their homely feel, as well as gesturing towards the objects' fabric-ation as not just dilapidated logistical apparatus but as sites of social signification. In an interview about the Reservation's cars, affectionately nicknamed 'rez cars', she relays the wealth and breadth of experiences the cars, even broken down, could facilitate:

The rez cars were one of my favorite games to play with my cousins. [...] Each of us would pile into the cars which were parked in a row and pretend to drive off to faraway places like California, New Mexico, sometimes even outer space.[...] If you were lucky you might take in a stray rez car like the time my father's cousin hit a deer near my father's ranch, totaling the car's front end. [...] Sometimes a rez car becomes a painful memorial for a lost loved one. I learned of a family who keeps their son's car parked in front of their home as a final memory of him. Their son's car had broken down so he parked it at his parent's home and hitched a ride

[...and] died en route. The car has been parked in front of their home for many years. (Red Star in Gladen, 2017: para. 8)

The rez cars in their imaginative (even if not functioning) state signify polyvalently different kinds of relationships that are made or severed: the mutual joy of sharing possibility and adventure with childhood playmates and family members; the casualisation of animal death in a petro-prioritised and highly mobile world, what Matthew Calarco has termed 'hyperautomobility' (Calarco, 2023: 5); and the memorialisation of those lost to the consequences of energy-intensive infrastructures that become systemically necessary but which are forced to exist with uneven levels of safety and stability. What is reproduced here are automobility's affects of freedom and mobility, but also its realities of breakdown, danger to life, and grief. Representing these realities is non-reproductive, as it intervenes into fossil infrastructural imaginaries which elide them, or which exclude Native American subjectivity from its imaginings entirely.

The grief explored here is not just personal, but historical; the Apsáalooke would be safer and better resourced if there had not been systematic attempts to erase them. And yet Red Star resists understanding these dilapidated cars as pollutants of colonial enterprise, because they themselves are part of the infrastructure that constitutes her home and the diversity of experiences and relationships that coexist in that shared space. Infrastructural access denotes more than just the ability to carry out socio-economic activities; infrastructures construct the safe, familiar space in which to dream of possibilities and the future, and to mourn traumatic personal and communal histories. This framing encourages its audience to think of infrastructural access for marginalised groups not as a mere

logistical fight, a battle to access futuristic technology afforded to the privileged and wealthy, but a reparative fight, in which current infrastructural modes are always already reclaimed, repurposed, and reimagined through and beyond the Apsáalooke's colonial marginalisation.

This is further demonstrated in Red Star's representation of the tribe's yearly Crow Fair Parade, in which photographs of procession participants are layered onto archival paper depicting traditional Apsáalooke patterns, objects, and materials. In one series, *Accession* (figures 17-18), the participants are all riding horses, significant to Apsáalooke culture and mythology. Riding across the North American continent in search of the land promised by their Creator, horses represent the mobility and autonomy the Apsáalooke shared as semi-nomadic people (Red Star and Vittoria, 2020: para. 16). The horses and riders are decorated in patterns and colours that mirror the objects on the archival paper. By doing so Red Star layers temporalities of traditional aesthetics with ongoing cultural practice in order to reanimate them and situate them outside their otherwise lifeless presentation under museum glass, the non-reproduction of the extinction effect Red Star spoke of when visiting the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.



Figure 17 – From the *Accession* series, a photo of a Crow Fair participant is layered on archival paper from the Denver Art Museum (© Wendy Red Star, 2019).



Figure 18 - Another horse-riding fair participant from the *Accession* series (© Wendy Red Star, 2019).

In another series depicting the fair, *A Float for the Future* (figures 19-21), Red Star employs a similar technique, but with the rez cars which are also a part of Crow Fair processions. What's striking is how similarly decorated the cars are to the horses; they are both adorned with tradition patterns, fabrics, and colours, and riders sit on the car hoods as if straddling a horse. This brings yet another dimension of temporal layering, demonstrating how the Crow Fair has evolved alongside fossil infrastructural access and been incorporated into the Apsáalooke's own collective identity, forged through their mythos, as highly mobile and autonomous people.

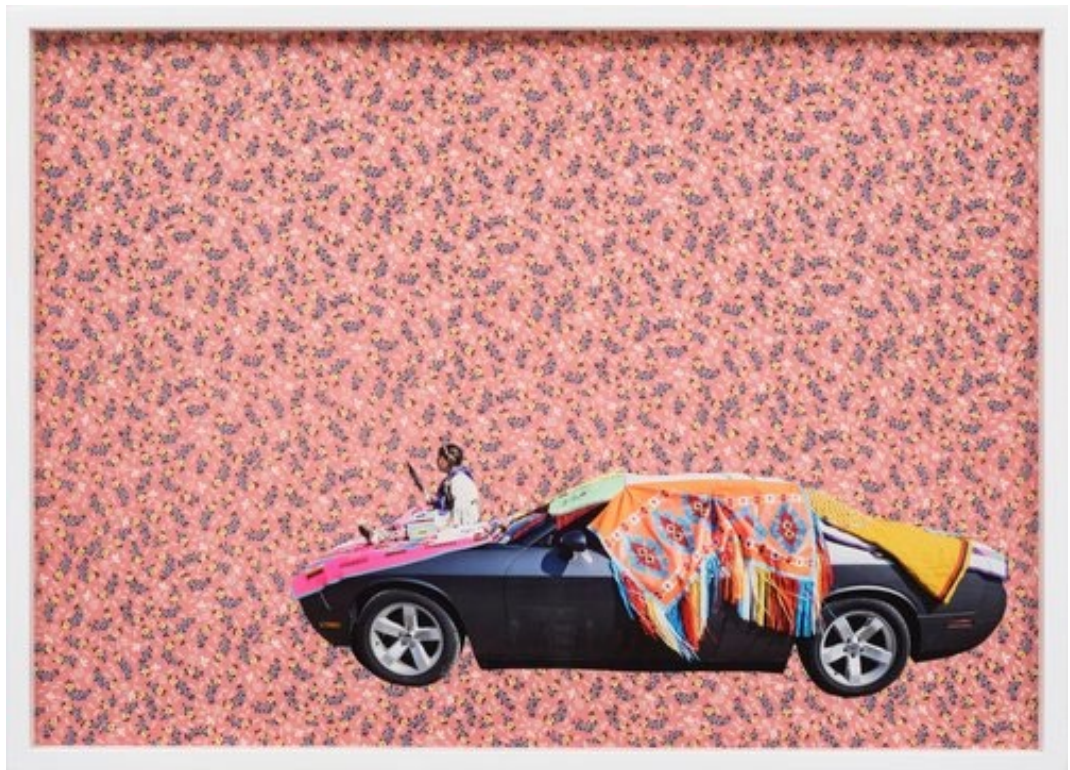


Figure 19 – 'Axpawatahpe (Nineteen)', part of the *A Float for the Future* series; a fair participant straddles the hood of a decorated car. (© Wendy Red Star, 2021).



Figure 20 - *A Float for the Future*, exhibited at the 2021 Armory Show in New York (© Wendy Red Star, 2021).

The photos are part of a larger exhibition Red Star created for the 2021 Armory Show held in New York, in collaboration with Apsáalooke artist Clive Francis Dust Sr., known by his community as a ‘cultural keeper’ (Red Star, [2021] 2022: para 1.). The exhibition included a brightly lit papier-mâché rendition of a Crow Fair Parade car, with a traditional feathered headdress prominently featured on the car’s roof. Recalling American traditions of World’s Fairs and commercial automobile displays – and their entanglement in fossil infrastructural development and, in particular, US electrification – Red Star merges these aesthetics with traditional Apsáalooke patterns and a future-oriented title. This combination foregrounds the vital question of the Apsáalooke’s place in the future, when so much cultural work has tried to justify their relegation to the past.

This series is at once confrontational and reparative in a similar way to Afro-surrealism, as explored in chapter 2: Red Star represents this ambivalence in the

form of 'damaged surplus', which simultaneously draws together loss and precarity but also empowerment and reclamation (Eburne, 2022: 154). This Afro-surrealist register is particularly useful for a community who has been historically understood in US hegemonic culture as a surplus population themselves, an identification which served to justify their displacement and dispossession. While Red Star refuses to reproduce this hegemonic understanding of indigenous communities as 'surplus', there is nonetheless a reclamation and reproduction in her work of fossil infrastructural affects that celebrate surplus energy. *A Float for the Future* evidences this in its adoptions of the significations of US car culture: futurity, autonomy, and orientation toward the extraction of energy-intensive fuel sources. This reclamation has the benefit of prioritising sustained pathways for Apsáalooke life and culture, even as it reproduces fossil infrastructural affects.

#### Surplus energy, surplus effects

Reclaiming the designation of 'surplus' is not without its problematic elements, however. 'Surplus' refers here to both a designation of Native communities as surplus population and to the energy surplus that has characterised fossil fuels' ubiquity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, a false faith in fossil fuels' perpetuity that Imre Szeman has termed a 'fiction of surplus' (Szeman quoted in Wenzel et. al., 2017: 11). While both designations of 'surplus' are fictional, they nonetheless have real, material effects on the Apsáalooke's relationship to fossil fuels and fossil infrastructures. As Red Star's present- and future-oriented work suggests, this relationship is not just historical: uranium water poisoning from ongoing coal and vanadium mining projects and

contamination from petro-agricultural fertilisers (needed on the Reservation due to poor soil quality and dryness) have contributed to higher infant mortality rates and a twenty-year lower life expectancy than predominantly white areas of Montana (Eggers et. al., 2015). Red Star's understanding of 'surplus' may be at once the reclamation of vibrance and liveliness that is encoded in electrification's historical-cultural expression of the technological sublime in the US, but it is also the surplus of the continuing bodily and material effects of fossil infrastructural development: a surplus of death, contamination, and pollution.

These latter elements can be more strongly felt in her photo *The Last Thanks* (2006) (figure 21), in which a gloomy Red Star sits at a Thanksgiving dinner spread amidst plastic skeletons, an oversized inflatable turkey wearing a pilgrim hat, and an assortment of mass-produced and ultra-processed American branded foods (Kraft cheese singles, oatmeal creme pies, Wonder Bread, bologna, etc.) as well as Natural American Spirit-branded cigarettes, whose packaging depicts a stereotypical drawing of a Native American. Alongside car and road infrastructures, access to petroleum completely altered food processing, transport, and storage. As Matthew Huber elucidates, petroleum-derived plastic packaging, as well as the increased use of preservatives in food, allowed for longer-term food storage and as such, infrastructural systems that favoured private car ownership, roads, highways, suburban areas, and megastores became the norm after 1950 (Huber, 2014: 305). This came at the sacrifice of traditional Apsáalooke food sources; as agricultural production was forced to expand and hunting grounds on Crow land shrank, by 1960 the Apsáalooke were already experiencing not only a decline in water quality from their largest water source, the Big Horn River, but a noticeable reduction in fish and molluscs (Martin et. al., 2021: 5). One tribe member even recalls how the joy of catching a catfish turned to horror, as its

stomach was covered in sickly-looking boils, likely the result of pesticidal run-off (Apsáalooke water quality study participant quoted in *ibid.*: 12). As a consequence, 55% of the Reservation's homes do not have access to safe well water (*ibid.*: 5). The result is a reliance on bottled water and ultra-processed foods, with significant rates of diabetes, heart disease, and cancer on the Reservation and a ten-to-fourteen-year lower life expectancy for those diagnosed with these diseases (Keene et. al., 2023: 3).



Figure 21 – *The Last Thanks* (© Wendy Red Star, 2006).

The title's reference to Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, reinforced by Red Star and the skeletons' positioning on the opposite side of the table from the camera, reimagines the scene of Jesus' revelation of betrayal to express Apsáalooke grievances with a recognisably North American infrastructural system

of food commodity production and distribution. Far from the carefree, autonomous, entrepreneurial subject that, as Huber convincingly argues, these infrastructures were supposed to support and create (Huber, 2014: 306), Red Star sits dejectedly, arms outstretched upwards, disinterested in the food's boldly branded packaging, with her gaze focused on a feathered fan in her hand. This becomes an object of mourning as it contrasts the garish paper headdresses worn by the skeletons, which mimic those that American primary school children typically create as part of their schools' Thanksgiving festivities. Like in *Four Seasons*, traditional Apsáalooke and artificial materials juxtapose to synthesise the real, material continuation of Apsáalooke cultural practices with the reality of their losses and ecological severances. But even further, *The Last Thanks* demonstrates how these losses are exacerbated by fossil infrastructural systems of mass food production and mass image reproduction that homogenises and misrepresents indigenous cultures and aesthetics.

The photo is at once a commentary on the Native American genocide Thanksgiving traditions (conveniently sweep aside in their mass reproduction of tacky and superficial 'Native' imagery); the low-quality, carcinogenic ultra-processed foods that have become the affordable norm in fossil infrastructural systems and which have displaced traditional Apsáalooke food sources; and the various kinds of fossil infrastructural pollution that directly or indirectly cause Apsáalooke deaths. The lighting conveys a similar effect to *Four Seasons*: Red Star shines a bright, coal-powered light to further emphasise the plastic's sheen and the skeletons' bones. In doing so, she highlights the surplus of effects that mark the tribe's specific relationship to fossil infrastructural systems, and not just their installation in the settler colonial era. Red Star's intervention here is non-reproductive, refusing to reproduce the homogenised image of an indigenous

person in her own self-portraiture, all-the-while reproducing (through representation) the repeated injustices and inequalities of settler colonial food infrastructure.

### Photography as infrastructural disruption and celebration of heterogeneous space

Red Star's chosen medium – photography – intervenes in discourse of infrastructure's capacity to reproduce as much as it is a choice to reclaim autonomy over Apsáalooke representation. The Apsáalooke's unique relationship to photography comes from the US government's decision to take individual portrait photographs of each of the six members of the Crow Delegation, who arrived in Washington DC in 1880 to negotiate against land loss due to the Northern Pacific Railroad developments. Following visits to the National Anthropological Archives at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC, Red Star has written extensively about these photos as well as edited some of them herself. During this process, she digitally reproduced the photos and then wrote extensive notes in red ink on each. She included bibliographical information and researched what each of the delegation is wearing and what this would have meant about their personalities, achievements, and status in the Apsáalooke community of that period (Red Star and Vittoria, 2020). In her writing, Red Star is careful to note:

The delegates' body language and facial expressions do not reflect their passivity in the picture-making process, but are instead the result of long exposure times,

which required absolute stillness, and the established conventions of portrait photography, which called for sitters to adopt a serious appearance. (ibid.: para. 26)

Red Star's reinscription of these photos serves to reinfuse them with life, especially important when the motivation for taking the photos was to capture a historical record of the tribe before what was seen as the inevitability of their genocide. Refusing to treat the portrait subjects as object-relics, Red Star helps to reconstruct narratives of life, action, relationships, cultural practice, and individual flair that are otherwise muted due to the period's photographic conventions.

Yet Red Star's photography continues this convention of stillness into her own work. Working in this medium is a gesture of reclamation in the context of colonial photography of the Apsáalooke, reflected in the fact that many of her photos are self-portraits or portraits of other Apsáalooke tribe members. But in order to capture life, motion, and instability of representation, most would see the benefit of turning to film. For instance, as Lynn Kirby argues in *Parallel Tracks*, US silent film accorded special status to railroads in its representation of them, as '[t]he train [is] cinema's mirror image in the sequential unfolding of a chain of essentially still images and the rapid shifts of point of view that the train and cinema experiences entail' (Kirby, 1997: 2). In contrast, that Red Star chooses the still medium of photography reads as a deliberate infrastructural disruption. Rather than participate in the free-flowing circulation that fossil infrastructures promise, and the rapid unfolding of railroad development and its concurrent proliferation of sequential images, Red Star pauses at moments that are at once life, community, and reparation but simultaneously breakage, death, and decay. Read through the

history of the development of the Northern Pacific Railroad and its decimation of Apsáalooke land, Red Star's photographs act as moments of pause and non-reproduction of hegemonic fossil infrastructural discourse that prioritises rapidity, progress/'unfolding', and easy circulation.

Red Star use of photography also allows her to intervene in European photographic traditions that value and prioritise the repeated and reproducible homogeneity that arises from fossil infrastructural development. In her series *My Home is Where My Tipi Sits* (2011) (figures 22-26), she creates what the 2019 Newark Museum exhibition catalogue calls 'gridded taxonomies of five idiosyncratic elements of Crow Reservation life' (Fellah and Bloom quoted in Red Star, [2019] 2022: para. 1). These idiosyncratic grids allow her to interrogate fossil infrastructural imaginaries in which 'taxonomi[cal]' structuring celebrates homogeneous and tractable ordering and erases vibrancy, difference, and otherness.

The series borrows its form from German photographers Bernd and Hilla Becher, best known for their square grid arrangements of photographs depicting disappearing or disused remnants of World War II industry: water towers, gas tanks, factories, and coal bunkers (figure 26). The Bechers photographed the structures from a vantage point that depicts them starkly against an overcast sky, and then arranged them in a grid formation to draw comparison and create visual taxonomies. As Bernd explained:

We want to offer the audience a point of view, or rather a grammar, to understand and compare different structures. Through photography, we try to arrange these

shapes and render them comparable. To do so, the objects must be isolated from their context and freed from all association. (H. Becher quoted in Anand, 2021: 64)

The result was what the Bechers would call 'Anonymous Structures', in which US water towers and Italian ones merge into a homogeneous aesthetic that united form and function, or more generously, beauty and engineering. Red Star recreates the grid formatting as an intervention into this taxonomical structuring, but with photos of different groups of images from the Crow Reservation: one grid depicts highway signs signalling Crow land, renovation projects, schools, and churches; another has reservation homes with rez cars parked out front; one has sweat lodges made from diverse cloths and blankets; and the last, various church buildings which all are recognisably Christian but share no unified architectural aesthetic. Intervening in the narrative of anonymous industrial beauty created by the Bechers' photography, Red Star creates a distinct and heterogeneous set of taxonomies in which bright, sunny, clear skies and luscious grass contrast the faded, messy, disrepaired, diverse, and disunited aesthetic of each series of photographs.



Figure 22 — road sign grid from series *My Home is Where My Tipi Sits* (© Wendy Red Star, 2011).



Figure 23 – ‘rez cars’ from series *My Home is Where My Tipi Sits* (© Wendy Red Star, 2011).



Figure 24 – Reservation housing from series *My Home is Where My Tipi Sits* (© Wendy Red Star, 2011).



Figure 25 – sweat lodges from series *My Home is Where My Tipi Sits* (© Wendy Red Star, 2011).



Figure 26 – churches on Crow Reservation from series *My Home is Where My Tipi Sits* (© Wendy Red Star, 2011).



Figure 27 – ‘Pitheads’ (1974) by Hilla and Bernd Becher, depicting coal bunkers from across North America and Europe (© Estate of Bernd Becher & Hilla Becher).

In contrast to the Bechers’ objects, ‘freed from all association’, Red Star’s photographed objects and structures refuse anonymity and functional ordering precisely because of their positionality within a specific set of capitalist and colonial relations. In the grid of road signs (figure 22), the faded school sign for instance also contains a barely visible Coca-Cola logo in its corner, evidence of poorly funded educational infrastructures and the supremacy of processed commodities that was one of the focuses of *The Last Thanks* and its critique. Another very faded blue sign depicts in barely legible capital typeface: ‘CROW COUNTRY / KEEP IT BEAUTIFUL / DON’T LITTER’, which requests a level of environmental responsibility from non-Native visitors. The sign serves to guard against further pollution and foster collective responsibility, but its disrepair speaks to the imbalances of power and resource that impede Native efforts. Again the expectation of environmental stewardship is exposed as absurd; the proliferation of non-biodegradable trash such as styrofoam and plastic packaging in fossil infrastructural systems is problem of such intensive scale that Morton has designated them ‘hyperobjects’, materials that are ‘massively distributed in time and space relative to humans’ (Morton, 2013: 1) which once known, become so enmeshed with human activity and life that ‘our cognitive powers become self-defeating’ (ibid.: 160). This image conveys how fossil infrastructure’s reproductive capabilities – here reproducing pollution and dilapidation - extend beyond human agency or stewardship, repeating and intensifying inequalities inherent in settler colonialism.

And yet the series also includes evidence of repair and renewal, including a sign which indicates that a nearby project has received funds via the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and another sign that notifies the entering into Crow lands and warns that 'Non Tribal Members Restricted to Paved Roads'. Roadside signage is an intriguing genre of infrastructural object to represent because like the medium of photography, it hones in on stasis rather than circulation, and it provides specific information not only about the Reservation, but is indicative more generally of its state of repair or disrepair. As specific geographical markers, they convey, from Apsáalooke perspectives, the nostalgia of returning to the Reservation after being away, as much as they signal inherent inequalities and heterogeneous attempts at infrastructural maintenance.

The signs also demarcate Native lands as being separate from the 'paved roads' so associated with autonomy, safety, and mobility in US fossil infrastructural imaginaries, suggesting fragility and incomplete infrastructural access. However, the signage simultaneously creates a necessary boundary that prevents further colonial encroachment on Crow territory, and mitigates against forms of erosion and pollution that emerge from contemporary tourist industries and ventures. There are tensions that come with this boundary, however; the series title, *My Home is Where My Tipi Sits*, interrogates a Eurocentric conception of land boundaries and ownership. The phrase comes from Crow Chief Sits, who said this in reply to the US government when he was asked to describe the boundaries of Crow land in 1868 (Red Star, [2011] 2022: para. 2). Reflecting the Apsáalooke's historical status as semi-nomadic, as well as disrupting hegemonic European notions of land ownership, the series title and photos refuse the individual distillation of industrial objects. If the Bechers wanted to offer 'a grammar' or ordering to understand the post-war structures they photographed, Red Star's depiction of fossil

infrastructures offers an alternative 'narrative grammar' that helps to make sense of fossil fuels' (particularly petroleum's) otherwise elusive qualities (Wenzel, 2022: 154), and understand their 'positionality within a set of colonial/capitalist relations' (Johnson and Nemser, 2022: 5). Interrogating the strict structuralism of influential European post-war photography, Red Star offers alternative taxonomies that relay a specific narrative of dispossession, displacement, infrastructural inequality, community, homeliness, and heterogeneous attempts at repair.

The series' inclusion of different religious infrastructures, including a grid of churches (figure 26) and a grid of sweat lodges (figure 25), invites consideration of experiences of spiritual belonging in infrastructural contexts and futures. Sweat lodges hold a central place in Apsáalooke spiritual practice, with practitioners partaking anywhere between one-to-three times a week. The heat and steam from water poured over hot rocks induces dream or trance-like states and visions of the future. As Dale D. Old Horn describes, participants ritualistically end the dream sessions with the phrase "'May we progress to that day'", 'or they would make a wish such as, "May we see the next spring, the next season"' (Old Horn and McCleary, 2018: para. 20). Just as car ownership for Crow elder Lillian allowed her to visit sacred spaces no longer on Crow land, sweat lodges are travelled to by car, with dozens dotted along Interstate 90 heading southwards from Hardin, Montana, 'almost invisible to the untrained eye' (Pease, 2002: 181). Access to spiritual spaces is therefore mediated through fossil infrastructural access, and even if the lodges themselves may not be fossil infrastructures or reliant on fossil fuels to be built. Like fossil infrastructures, too, they are imaginative spaces in which communal, future desires and a sense of belonging in the future play out. Their inclusion in the series alongside the rez cars (figure 23) and road signs relay a set of reparative priorities when it comes to imagining infrastructural futures,

foregrounding spiritual health as an aspect of infrastructural development (or potentially transition) that require attention, planning, and maintenance.

Red Star's grid draws attention to the similarity in form between the lodges, but the diverse colours and fabrics, as well as the choice to photograph each at different times of day, in different seasons, and with distinct backgrounds (including some built on grass seemingly in the middle of a field, others built on concrete, some in gardens with paths leading to them) emphasise their heterogeneity instead. It's easy to read the Christian churches as evidence of colonial religious encroachment, but their heterogeneous materials, colours, aesthetics, and framing (being shot from different angles) as represented by Red Star resist this reading. The Apsáalooke celebrate and foster spiritual diversity, and many partake in a mix of Christian hymnody and traditional Apsáalooke religious practices (ibid.: 184). Red Star's representation of diverse spiritual sites resist the homogenising effects of settler colonial and neoliberal infrastructural planning, which prioritises uniform privatised spaces and entrepreneurial subjectivity. Instead, Red Star foregrounds communal futurity, spiritual health, diverse and heterogeneous space, and access to spiritual spaces as infrastructural priorities.

#### Infrastructural tensions: contemporary Apsáalooke coal relations

Understandably, Apsáalooke relationships to fossil infrastructures and fossil fuels are ambivalent, and Red Star's adoption of surrealist aesthetics facilitate her representation of fossil infrastructural relationships as intensely oscillating between the poles of damage/loss and of repair/surplus. Unequal access and means of

maintenance reveal the long-lasting effects of displacement for the purposes of fossil infrastructural development, while empowered self-representation via electric lighting and car ownership convey a sense of political belonging to the future, as well as the latter facilitating access to spiritual spaces. This ambivalence plays out in their economic relationship to fossil fuels too, as the Apsáalooke have in recent years decided to continue to mine and sell the Reservation's extensive coal deposits.

This goes directly against a 2013 resolution passed by 57 tribes in the Pacific Northwest (including the Apsáalooke), who agreed that sustainable resources (including fisheries) 'will face detrimental impacts from the transportation and export of non-renewable fossil fuel resources' (Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, 2013: 2). Intertribal conflict has oriented around the development of the Gateway Pacific Coal Terminal in Washington state, supported by the Apsáalooke (as it would open up coal markets to Asia) but currently resisted by the Lummi Nation (Patterson, 2016: para. 11). The Apsáalooke have perhaps surprisingly garnered much sympathy from their neighbouring tribes for this decision, despite it directly contravening the 2013 agreement. For instance, Brian Cladoosby, chairman of the Swinomish Indian Tribe located an hour north of Seattle and president of the National Congress of American Indians, noted that:

Those tribes that have the opportunity to try and create an opportunity for their people, I don't hold it against them. [...] We're blessed in the Northwest with still having the largest job producer, the fishing industry, but other tribes were put in places where they were thrown away, discarded (quoted in Patterson, 2016: para. 21).

With the Little Big Horn River quality so deteriorated, tribes have recognised the Apsáalooke's limited options for economic survival. As *Four Seasons* in particular demonstrated, Native American relationships to ecology and fossil fuel extraction are not homogeneous, and decisions to wield fossil fuels economically or creatively do not mean that that ecological loss is not deeply felt. As Eric Henson, a senior vice president at the economics consulting firm Compass Lexecon and research affiliate with the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, summates: "All people, not just tribes, want clean air and clean water and they want to protect the environment [...] For tribes, though, that philosophy outlook often bumps up against the basic human need to have a job." (quoted in Patterson, 2016: para. 14). While Red Star foregrounds creative autonomy, the means of self-representation, heterogeneous space, and spiritual health as infrastructural priorities, the reality of both fossil capitalism's pressures and their colonially enforced lack of resource necessarily limits the role the Apsáalooke can play in their implementation in alternative infrastructural futures.

While Red Star has not commented on the Apsáalooke's decision to extract and sell the Reservation's coal, she has been asked about her thoughts on the Dakota Access Pipeline, which was met with protests in 2016-2017 from neighbouring tribes in North Dakota. The question itself seems to betray the expectation of an enthusiastic adoption of environmental stewardship from Red Star, as well as a statement of solidarity and support, but the answer she gives is more complex. Referring to her series *Reservation Pop*, she replies:

The reservation cars and houses are not a direct conversation [with the protests] but because of the commonalities all Native people share with the U.S. government, many of the images allude to the consequences of an oppressed people and culture. Much of what I have photographed helps explain situations like the pipeline controversies and political activism—that these people who have already given up so much are asked to sacrifice yet again. (Red Star in Gladen, 2017: para. 17)

In capturing both the Reservation's lack of resource but also the Apsáalooke's resourceful creativity, Red Star simultaneously captures both the power and limitation of her position as an Apsáalooke artist. The power of Red Star's photography is that it encourages a well-needed and thoughtful pause to consider infrastructural process and history from Apsáalooke perspectives, at a moment when alternative infrastructural futures are currently being designed and are urgently needed. She presents an alternative set of priorities and taxonomies that would ensure her tribe's physical safety, cultural survival, and autonomy over the means of their representation. But if we consider the means of creative expression and the dissemination of media as a kind of infrastructure, one indebted to fossil fuels, then the expectation of environmental stewardship from indigenous communities becomes incompatible with these priorities: they are being asked to sacrifice the means of self-representation yet again. In light of the Apsáalooke's relationship with settler colonial infrastructural installation, it's clear that this expectation of sacrifice is not adequately oriented around energy justice or reparative infrastructural transition.

This tension between having access to empowered means of self-expression (what chapter 3 of this thesis referred to as 'the means of reproduction')

and the need to transition away from fossil fuels is productive, however. The non-commitment to enthusiastically embody environmental stewardship does not in this case indicate an inverse ideological commitment to sustained fossil fuel extraction, nor to the neoliberal world-building that is embedded in the US's fossil infrastructural imaginaries. If anything, it indicates a lack of autonomy and choice; the Apsáalooke have agreed in writing that fossil fuel extraction hampers tribes' ecological efforts, but the reality of premature death on the Reservation and the history of their marginalisation have put them justifiably in a position where they are not willing to sacrifice any more.

While the Apsáalooke may not have the means or resources to build alternative infrastructural futures, Red Star's work – and its diffusion across the US into various metropolitan exhibitions and across the world via the internet – urges a new set of priorities that are reparative, just, and empowering to those who have been marginalised by past infrastructural developments. Her choice of surrealist modes of expression allow her to convey the intense ambivalence of the tribe's fossil infrastructural relationships, both historic and contemporary. Through empowered reclamation, celebrations of diversity, and unapologetic wielding of fossil infrastructures, Red Star asserts that the Apsáalooke belong in the future. How to reproduce the pathways for sustained Apsáalooke life and self-representation and to repair continued losses in alternative infrastructural futures will be in the hands of those with the resources to enact them.

## **Conclusion - Towards Reparative Infrastructure**

Much like interwar surrealism, post-war surrealism in the United States was at times collaborative, at times disparate (due to its expansive geography and temporality) artistic and literary movement. Read in light of fossil infrastructural contexts, post-war surrealist texts juxtaposed fossil fuel hegemony and its attendant, repetitive violences with their own compulsive aesthetics, returning to moments of trauma in histories of infrastructural development. Irrational insights and paranoid dispositions informed their perspectives, which in turn set up surrealist texts to dispel the illusions and obfuscations of fossil infrastructural imaginaries and reparatively propose new priorities and pathways of their own, including minoritarian survival and self-representation.

In chapter 1, Kay Sage's repetitive, smoggy, lonely verticality registered New York's petroaesthetics and contrasted the hegemonic imaginaries presented at the 1939 World's Fair. Instead of reproducing the pageantry of electrified, motorised modernity, Sage's texts represent fossil infrastructures' ecocidal mechanisms. From her work's non-reproduction of fossil infrastructural imaginaries' eager and affirmative futurity, particularly in her paintings' titles ('Tomorrow is Never', 'The Answer is No'), there emerges a politics that Lee Edelman would many decades later propose as radically altern. It is from this position of non-reproduction that Sage's work resists envelopment into the reproductive machinery of fossil capitalism, configuring the female body as cyborg in her painting 'Small Portrait', whose affects recall the modernity, futurity, and autonomy of fossil infrastructural imaginaries. This act of reclamation is an exercise in surplus that reveals fossil infrastructural violence and depersonalisation as much as it moves towards reparation for imposed and coerced motherhood. Nonetheless, Sage's selective valorisation of reproduction – particularly artistic reproduction – reveals her reparative priorities, valuing

infrastructure that provides sustained pathways for creative autonomy and self-expression.

Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, as analysed in chapter 2, adopted a similar strategy of empowered self-representation, as seen in 'Invisible Man Retreat' and its representations at the novel's bookends, that is nonetheless layered with histories of violence against black bodies, coerced labour, and imposed substandard living conditions. This image uses surplus in the form of bright lighting to reveal both the damage of fossil infrastructural hegemony and to reparatively gesture towards futurity for blackness. Attentive to the way repressed relations of coal and coal labour meet the novel's surface, this chapter argued that the novel's repetitive, backwards looking narrativisation indexes the non-reproduction of fossil infrastructural imaginaries' sanitised and whitewashed visions of the future. Much like Sage's negative titles, the phrase 'Harlem is Nowhere' (which became the title of one of Ellison's essays) informs the novel's sense of dispossession and displacement for African Americans in a fossil infrastructural world. More specifically, the novel's representations of electricity and artificial lighting demonstrate how white supremacy wields these technologies to reify blackness as a signifier of civilisational backwardness within electricity's larger metanarrative of progress and (white) human achievement. Consequently, the novel's tensions between visibility and opacity play out as the desire to be liberated from white supremacist racial constructions (for which there is infrastructure) and to have the means of self-representation (for which infrastructure must be built).

Chapter 3's focus on Franklin Rosemont's poetry and the Chicago Surrealist Group's politics is yet another example of post-war surrealism's commitments to non-reproduction of the status quo. The chapter read Rosemont's

poetry through the history of mass animal death, be it the eradication of native life to engineer grazing space for cattle and pigs, as well as the mass mechanised death of these animals in meat production. In light of these contexts, revealed through the narrator's paranoid surrealist vision, Rosemont's poetry advocates for animal life, diversity, dignity, and freedom from anthropogenic violence and incarceration. Borrowing Shukin's expression 'animal rendering' to describe both the mechanised rendering of animal bodies into commodities and the representation of animals across media, the chapter argued that Rosemont's poetry intervenes to render animals as subjects of an expansive and reproductive settler colonial infrastructure that repeatedly commodifies and brutalises them. Additionally, in his non-reproductive rendering of animals, he opens up imaginary and reparative possibilities for disruption and liberation. Adjacent to the critique of animal rendering under fossil capitalism is his criticism of settler colonial infrastructure that partitions space. Liberation from this infrastructure is mediated through representations of breakdown and decay, disrupting fossil infrastructures' fast-paced flows. As with previous surrealists explored in this thesis, Rosemont and the Chicago Surrealist Group nonetheless selectively valorised the reproductive mechanisms that are part of the infrastructure for radical consciousness: in particular, the counterhegemony of surrealist texts proliferated through their own Black Swan Press. This productive interplay between non-reproduction and reproduction (similar to Rosemont's rejection of some forms of animal rendering, and commitment to others) advocates for reparative infrastructure that facilitates pathways for liberated animals, the restoration of indigenous life, and liberated consciousness.

In chapter 4, San Francisco's City Lights bookstore and publishing play a similar role to Black Swan Press in proliferating and providing the infrastructure for

radical consciousness. Co-owner and surrealist poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti demonstrates a similar concern in his poetry to the Chicago Surrealist Group about the settler colonial partitioning of space, though the contexts that inform his poetry are more specific to the 'West', from the partitioning and sale of San Francisco's lots to the Westward expansion that settlers felt was their destiny. Intervening on settler colonial imaginaries of proliferative (white) life, as evidenced in San Francisco's own World's Fair (the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915), Ferlinghetti's poetry instead represents settler colonial infrastructure as proliferating death. As such, the chapter argued that his politics were non-reproductive of the settler colonial status quo, using transversal poetic form to convey non-linear movements that dispel settler colonial myths of linear progress. Furthermore, Ferlinghetti attempts to confront and rectify white settler identity in light of settler colonial infrastructure's reproductive capability (continuing to exert structuring force, violence, and loneliness). However, this rectification sometimes led to primordial visions that foreclosed avenues of reparation and futurity for the groups marginalised by the fossil infrastructural/settler colonial developments he engages with. Nonetheless, his role in proliferating surrealist and counterhegemonic texts through the long-standing (in fact, still-standing) City Lights bookstore was key to its success in reproducing the conditions for radical consciousness.

Lastly, in chapter 5, the thesis turned to Apsáalooke photographer Wendy Red Star as an example of post-war surrealism's legacy continuing on into the twenty-first century and as a vital additional perspective on the fossil infrastructural and settler colonial concerns of the surrealists that preceded her. Refusing to reproduce the colonial designations of the Apsáalooke as nature-bound and belonging to the past, Red Star adopts fossil infrastructural affects through her

representations of bright, artificial lighting as well as the Crow Reservation's 'rez cars'. Her aesthetics of surplus – surplus lighting, a population designated as surplus, the surplus of fossil infrastructures' pollutive and dispossessive effects – allows her work to oscillate between representing a genocidal settler colonial past and a proliferative Apsáalooke future. Both mournful and hopeful, alienating and homely, Red Star's work continues the legacy of post-war surrealism in order to redirect infrastructural priorities towards new and sustained pathways for Apsáalooke culture, spirituality, and life. In confronting fossil infrastructural homogeneity with Apsáalooke heterogeneity, Red Star rejects fossil infrastructural mass reproduction. Nonetheless, she refuses to place the burden of transition on communities who have had to sacrifice so much already. The result is a politics that is non-reproductive, even if the priority of proliferative mechanisms that enable Apsáalooke survival takes precedence over the issue of transition away from fossil infrastructure and fossil fuel extraction.

### Repercussions of research and application of findings

This thesis has provided a framework in which to read fossil infrastructure in historical, literary, and contemporary contexts as reproductive apparatus that takes on the political forms of settler colonialism and white supremacy. In turn, the thesis developed a methodology for analysing literary texts by comparing and contrasting their imaginaries of infrastructure to those that have social and commercial hegemony, such as those evoked by the affects and experiences of World's Fairs. This methodology opens up avenues of research into different literary and art movements and their responses to the intensification of fossil infrastructural world-

building, reading infrastructure in textual representation not as a symbol for human desire, liberation, incarceration, escape, but as a response to and incision into infrastructure's material conditions and reproductive capability. There are repercussions here for how we might read a cityscape, a highway, a bridge, a broken-down car, skyscrapers, or coal chutes, and how these images and representations contend with the implicit reproductive futurism of fossil infrastructural world-building. This thesis findings' ask: are there modes of infrastructural reproduction that aren't settler colonial? What do they look like? What must they prioritise?

It has been this thesis' contention that post-war surrealists and Wendy Red Star reorient infrastructural priorities away from homogeneous, fast-paced, mass producing, mass circulating, privatising, and isolating fossil infrastructure towards infrastructure that sustains pathways for minoritarian communities to survive and to have the means for creativity and self-representation (what this thesis termed 'the means of reproduction'). They therefore offer a proscriptive shape for reparative infrastructure, and as such they extend Sedgwick's notion of 'reparative reading' and create slippages into material reparation for minoritarian groups who have borne the brunt of fossil infrastructures' violence and dispossession. For post-war surrealists, reparative infrastructure is reparation, even if they cannot offer its exact form and design. In part this is a limitation of literary and art movements, whose incisions into cultural and social hegemonies are more meaningful and impactful than an unqualified attempt at engineering the specific logistical details needed in designing new infrastructural futures. But as Wendy Red Star conveyed through her work and interviews, this lack of definite form for reparative infrastructure is at times a consequence of minoritarian groups having limited access to resources. The burden of transition should not rest on their

shoulders; their art conveys the pathways and prioritises needed for their survival, and this alone is a vital contribution to transition discourses that more-often-than-not exclude them.

That said, it is also this thesis' contention that mechanisms for surrealist and counterhegemonic textual proliferation are themselves reparative infrastructure. Fossil infrastructure can have a voiding and homogenising effect, as seen in Kay Sage's voided face in 'Small Portrait'; in the racist configuration of the 'shines' in *Invisible Man's* battle royal scene; in the homogeneous rendering of animals that informed Rosemont's poetry; in the decimation of native life in Ferlinghetti's poetry; and in the ecological losses felt in Wendy Red Star's 'Four Seasons'. Each contend with the representational consequences of reproductive fossil infrastructure, repeating again and again the same configurations that marginalise, exclude, and rob groups of their agency to self-represent. By contrast, vibrant, heterogeneous, and proliferative art and literary scenes have a restorative effect, facilitating the means of self-representation. Knowing this, we can now be armed against infrastructural imaginaries that do not consider or facilitate minoritarian textual proliferation as a key priority. This may be a key tool in the arsenal in resisting the intensified homogenising effect of AI-driven futures, for instance, whose reproduction of uncritical and intrinsic biases extend fossil infrastructures' homogenising and reproductive capability. Reparative infrastructure must grant minoritarian groups the ability to self-represent, so that they can join the collective endeavour of imagining and making the future.

Wendy Red Star's inclusion into the thesis opens up avenues of future research, demonstrating how legacies of post-war surrealism permeate minoritarian discourses and art into the twenty-first century. For instance, although

there was not the space to explore it fully in this project, there is currently a revival of Afro-surrealism across a range of different media, from popular black artists' recent music videos (including Kendrick Lamar, Flying Lotus, Kamasi Washington, and Beyoncé) to Boot Riley's satirical film *Sorry to Bother You* to the Southern Gothic Horror films of Jordan Peele, as well as Donald Glover's absurdist and darkly funny TV show *Atlanta* (Bakare, 2018). This thesis has provided the theoretical framework to analyse these texts from the perspective of race and fossil infrastructure. Being attentive to the specificities of these texts' twenty-first century contexts, and to their specific medium, would produce distinct hermeneutic outcomes and new contributions to the energy and infrastructure humanities.

It would be insightful to read, for instance, episode four of season three's *Atlanta*, entitled 'The Big Payback', originally airing in 2022. This episode imagines a world in which African American demands for reparations for slavery are taken seriously: well-to-do white-collar male workers are mandated to divide some of their income into a 'restitution fund'; an African American man is reported over the radio to be suing a Tesla investor, whose family tree can be traced back to those who owned the suer's family as slaves; the episode's white characters seem to be unable to escape slavery's 'cruel, unavoidable ghost' (Glover, 2022). The episode demonstrates similar concerns to post-war Afro-surrealists, including the resurfacing and repetition of past violent and extractive relations, as well as a reparative impulse that slips into reparation's ordinary and material meaning, taking the form in this episode of money, as well as the reconfiguration of racial and labour positionings. It interrogates infrastructure that enables the continued success of white middle-class families, offering its own vision of reparative infrastructure that is both cultural and material. There are many other episodes that feature the city of Atlanta and its movements, priorities, configurations of racial

positionings, and partitions of space that would make the show's analysis an insightful extension of this thesis' research and methodology. How contemporary Afro-surrealism extends, builds on, responds to, or rejects previous modes of Afro-surrealist expression would be a valuable contribution to knowledge, providing the opportunity to uncover contemporary responses to twenty-first century fossil infrastructural contexts and to cast further light on how post-war surrealism has developed from the period's limitations.

### Contributions to knowledge

This thesis argued that post-war surrealism is concerned with fossil infrastructure's reproductive capability, non-reproduction of the status quo, and reparative infrastructure. It demonstrated post-war surrealism's strength in offering reparative insight, in the sense meant by Eve Sedgwick, that is 'additive and accretive', contributing to discourses beyond the 'paranoid' (Sedgwick, 1997: 27). It was already known that fossil infrastructural development was exploitative, violent, and dispossessive. Post-war surrealists and Wendy Red Star demonstrate how these violent conditions are reproduced via infrastructure, and offer alternative infrastructural priorities that reinstate creative autonomy and facilitate sustained pathways for minoritarian lives and cultures. Textual proliferation proved to be a key mechanism, and the continued output of Black Swan Press and City Lights Publishing well beyond the post-war period are examples of sustained infrastructure for radical consciousness.

As such, the thesis elaborated on different modes of infrastructure. There is the fossil infrastructure that is represented in surrealist texts; the infrastructure of surrealist textual proliferation which take on forms such as Black Swan Press and City Lights Publishing; and there are the methods and aesthetics of surrealist texts themselves, such as the representation of 'surplus' reality that conveys minoritarian experience of fossil infrastructure and builds bridges towards radical consciousness. This broadening out of the term 'infrastructure' has its risks: it has the potential to de-materialise the term, and for it to become abstract in a way that de-prioritises or obfuscates the material reparation that is these texts' political focus. As Jennifer Wenzel writes, thinking with infrastructure in this way risks 'reducing the hard-won insights and material objects of other disciplines [anthropology, political ecology, media studies] [...] to *mere* metaphor, in a mode at once underthought and overimagined' (Wenzel, 2023: 209-210). However, understanding Independent literary movements and presses as infrastructure – and for other media, art galleries, radio stations, TV show and film distributors, webpages – contributes to our knowledge of them as reproductive forms that require solidarity, as well as material and cultural sustainment, to maintain them. It also opens up their capacity to become reproductive in a way that is not repetitive of fossil infrastructural and settler colonial configurations of minoritarian groups. Seeing them as infrastructure invites discussion of maintenance and possibility, and invites understanding of their dismantlement as a directly material as well as political attack on minoritarian rights.

Further, this project spotlight how literature, poetry, and visual art shape human subjectivity in response to fossil infrastructural contexts. Post-war surrealist texts advocate for receptivity to the non-human, be it the sensing of infrastructure's past lives or the mass eradication of native animal and plant life. They do so at a

moment when fossil infrastructural imaginaries seemed to have foreclosed the possibility of reconnecting with the non-human world, repressing the violence done to the non-human in two ways: one, by partitioning space into commercial, domestic, and public spheres, and two, by presenting the narrative that fossil infrastructural development signifies escape from the limitations of the natural world. The surrealists of this thesis advocate for animals, but never talk as them, or for them; they resist fossil infrastructural affects that anaesthetise humans from feeling non-human pain. It is this project's findings that literature and art are particularly apt in developing a human receptivity and sensitivity to non-human life and death, reconfiguring the human subject in fossil infrastructural contexts.

Finally, this thesis identifies post-war surrealism as a category that can be used to think through insurgent responses to contemporary contexts. Previously in this chapter, it was discussed how this thesis' methodology could be used to further energy and infrastructure humanities research; equally, this corpus provides opportunities to explore how post-war surrealist texts register other forms of infrastructure (for instance, nuclear infrastructure) or to other contemporary contexts and politics that concern reproduction, representation, and reparation. By presenting a corpus of post-war surrealists, this thesis contributes a clearer image of the form and focus of insurgent radical groups in the United States in the midcentury and historicises surrealism's continuing influence into the twenty-first. As discourses of energy transition continue, what new forms of surrealism will emerge? What will surrealist texts contribute to our knowledge of energy and infrastructure? This thesis has provided some of the pathways to attaining this knowledge.

## Coda: surrealist transition

At this thesis' beginning, it used a definition of fossil infrastructure that included 'infrastructure that is archaic, obsolete, and otherwise tethered to the past, standing as an obstacle to transition' (Wenzel, 2022: 153). Materially, fossil infrastructure represents this impasse, spatially distributed in a way that makes it difficult to fully conceptualise and obstinately durable in its pollutive effects. The writers and artists discussed in this thesis recognise this obstacle, using surrealist methodologies and ways of seeing to push past the glossy newness of infrastructural imaginaries of their time to sense the repetitive resurfacing of violent, pollutive, and extractive relationships. These infrastructures and the relationships they facilitate are 'tethered to the past', but as surrealists show, they manifest in the present, and their repetitive mode presents an obstacle to future alterity. Kay Sage's title 'Tomorrow is Never' conveys this feeling of foreclosed avenues to futurity for those marginalised and dispossessed by the smoggy cityscape the painting of that title depicts. There's undeniable comfort in this nihilism. If there is no future, there is no need to think through the seemingly impossible task of transition.

And yet post-war surrealist texts' representation of minoritarian futurity ensures that they disavow rather than resign to the fossil infrastructural status quo. In these texts, this disavowal takes the form of adopting fossil infrastructural affects to insist that marginalised groups belong as part of infrastructure's collective significations of modernity and futurity. This is not the same as an advocacy for continued fossil fuel extraction, nor a proclamation that fossil fuels are the only means of power, self-representation, and survival for minoritarian

communities. Rather, post-war surrealist texts demonstrate how representations of fossil infrastructure can be useful signifiers for integrating minoritarian communities into collective imaginaries of the future. Wielding fossil infrastructure in this way replicates fossil fuels' energy-intensity and invests it into creating space and pathways for groups marginalised and dispossessed by fossil infrastructural development. Using fossil infrastructure as shorthand in this way similarly alleviates the burden of finding solutions to transition from minoritarian communities whose power and resources are limited. In their representative form, fossil infrastructure is not so much an obstacle to transition, but a tool in defining priorities in alternative infrastructural worlds.

Further, in moments of breakdown and decay, post-war surrealist texts spotlight opportunities for the emergence of new life-worlds. There is no reflexive impulse to maintain or repair existing fossil infrastructure; breakdown becomes a point of rupture, through which histories of inequality can be seen and rectified. In Kay Sage's paintings, the sloping buildings represented the impossibility of reconciling and maintaining an ecocidal infrastructural system; for the Chicago Surrealist Group, breakdown is the starting point of the political project of rewilding; for Ferlinghetti, breakdown and disconnection are the consequences of a proliferative settler colonialism; and in Wendy Red Star, broken down 'rez cars' operated as sites of imagined indigenous futures as much as they were of memorialisation, death, and marginalisation. Representation and embrace of breakdown contribute to transition discourse by rejecting the 'economic and techno-scientific impulses' that lead those in power to believe that 'a cleaner source could – and indeed will – be seamlessly swapped for existing fossil fuel infrastructure' (Kinder, 2016: 15). The artists and authors highlighted in this thesis see fossil infrastructural breakdown not as an obstacle for a reparative transition

but its acceleration, so long as this breakdown does not close down avenues for minoritarian life.

In our current era, petro-aesthetics and defence of the fossil infrastructural status quo are increasingly aligned with an authoritarian ‘fossil fascism’ (see Daggett, 2018; Malm & the Zetkin Collective, 2021). In this context, post-war surrealism’s politics of non-reproduction serve as a rejection of fossil infrastructure as it continues to materialise into the forms of white supremacy and settler colonialism. As Christian Parenti writes,

[T]he North is responding with a new authoritarianism. The Pentagon and its European allies are actively planning a militarized adaptation, which emphasizes the long-term, open-ended containment of failed or failing states – counter-insurgency forever. This sort of ‘climate fascism’ – a politics based on exclusion, segregation and repression – is horrific and bound to fail. (Parenti, 2016: 35).

Post-war surrealist politics offer the antithesis: inclusion, de-partitioning of privatised space, heterogeneous vitality, and liberation of consciousness. By standing in direct opposition to those most fervently defending the fossil infrastructural status quo, transition becomes a necessary part of the conversation. Post-war surrealists may not offer the definitive sense of what this transition entails, but they express what it should prioritise: sustained pathways to life and creativity for those who have been marginalised by fossil infrastructural development. These priorities arm us against commercial imaginaries of alternative infrastructural futures whose obfuscations, marginalisations, and white-washing align them with fossil fascism’s politics of exclusion, segregation, and

repression, even as they express a commitment to moving away from fossil fuel extraction.

Moving into an uncertain future, surrealism's register will continue to be expressive for writers and artists who are living with fossil infrastructures' surplus effects. Ultimately, this thesis contends that fossil infrastructure is surreal in itself, in the sense that it creates a surreality of energetic, disaggregated, haunted, voided, yet homely experience. For surrealists, it is through textual proliferation and community that these surplus effects can be reclaimed and reimagined into the reparative infrastructure that moves to rectify the injustices and inequalities of fossil infrastructure.

## Appendix

### LANDSCAPE WITH MOVEABLE PARTS

*for Penelope,  
because if the earth turned  
twice as fast or faster, the  
sun's perspective would change*

The paint fresh as an egg  
and the same color but darker  
and heavier like the footsteps  
that stick in the door  
like gloves  
like an oyster  
If the fireplace were cooler  
left to its own devices  
its own solitude of trees and windows  
Perhaps a man standing on the corner  
oblivious to his cigarette  
its smoke and the reactions it produces  
among the birds far overhead  
The drawing room leads to a watery grave  
Her ancestors walked that path  
The windows were darker and one grandfather  
wore a peculiarly marked tie  
like a jack of clubs  
It was a Sunday children were playing  
softly like a murdered bear  
The mirror shattered the light from its frame  
A violin repeated the gestures of blindness  
in the rain  
The cathedral steps led to a dark roof  
There was a dog there  
two dogs three  
hundreds of dogs  
and several trees arranged like an observatory  
or a cemetery with a sundial buried  
beneath the water  
It was as dark as a hand in front of the moon  
the streets veiled in train whistles  
distances starred by frogs and the rare glimpse  
of hitchhikers  
The morning opens like a knife in a melon  
It begins anywhere  
ambiguously  
and tears for itself an itinerary along the hemispheres  
of flesh and blood  
The edge of the map is burned  
Its vagueness causes lack of sleep  
The navigator's eye has lost sight  
of its goal

too far away to hope for  
too near to do without  
The night casts its embers  
The conductor sleeps  
in photographic silence  
There is a seal in the water  
balancing on its nose  
a red and yellow ball  
If it is a balloon will the winter surrender  
its peppermint its boots  
Will the stars in the sky  
rise to tell  
of the Northern Lights  
in your eyes  
And if not what is there to say  
of danger of the high seas of a strawberry sundae  
on a night  
like tonight  
What is there to say for a tidal wave  
or a vase of flowers  
or a revolver  
After all the forest is nearer than the trees  
and the barricades were not designed  
to keep us out  
like strangers like lovers  
The war in which the blood  
settles like leaves  
upon the trees  
and the goats vanish into the lake  
The puzzling venison of dawn  
The drowning of swans  
The mechanical sand evaporates the hours  
In this coagulated island  
the simplest formulas all fit  
with the simultaneity of dancing shoes  
The rain meets the shoulders with a warm good-by  
No spokes in these wheels  
No left turn on this bridge  
Straight ahead stop keep moving  
I love you  
The harpsichord of silence tightens its grip  
on the liquid tigers  
like the night that flows  
in the arteries  
of tomorrow's  
noonday sun

*Chicago,  
2 July 1965*

## FIRST MEMORY OF AFRICA

*for Penelope*

1

The disconnected owl forgotten in the woven lamps of the night air  
groping stabbing staggering swimming falling  
in the crumbling sunlight of the feathery buildings  
Vague suppositions in the fictitious palm trees  
passing hints of devastating seduction for bushbabies  
for oxidized Japanese fans  
and for the children on the bus  
waving rifles waving hands  
The trees blow the shadows from the dissolving wind  
Open the windows the grass is red  
like rabbits the moon loses its patch of green  
surrenders the saddle of its hesitations  
returns to the idleness and flavors of the day before  
mechanical dawn of simple chains  
rearranged to dissect the invisible salt  
and the spider's web of thin gasoline  
along the edges of a photographed hand in the sea or in the street  
Distances twice three times four around the block  
because the telescope failed to measure the lacquered wrist  
of six o'clock  
as if the harvest was a bleeding throne  
an open grave waiting for a stampede of angry bottles  
The firetruck turns somersaults in the shade of a gun  
I'm hit says the cop  
but the priest is already dead at his side  
like a deflated balloon yellow as dust  
and rejected like an empty cup  
put in the street  
Let a car run over it  
or let the sparrows carry it  
to the unrecorded midnight  
the unhyphenated sea  
No matter the calendar is full of water  
the deserted islands are black as moths  
Forget the bronze cheeks of weak arithmetic folding its security  
to a chiseled breast withered from a book  
like fingers poking the windowpane  
discovering the fluctuating sand its miles of motion  
The hourglass has its revenge  
turned upside down  
like a bat  
in the frying pan  
The anguish of kangaroos dying in the metallic orchard

losing grains of wristwatch uncertainty  
in the kindergartens of the infinite  
varnished walls of hello and good-by  
obliterated doors too full of straight lines  
and straight lies  
like a cookbook on a flat stomach  
bees burning the black bush  
pendulums encountered in the iron twilight of blue leaves  
adjectives forged in the spring  
verbs in the winter  
nouns ripped from the earth's tender flesh  
moist ghosts of a medieval cheese  
and it's on the table  
all the time

## II

Unleash the terrible furniture from the ropes of closed eyes  
Bend the doorways into the light and erase the stop-signs  
It's too dangerous too beautiful to ignore in the purple light  
but the velvet pigs flutter in the mud of exhaustion  
and thimbles cloud the path with the pottery of decayed illusions  
automobiles in a line  
tracing the shadows of a silent falcon on the weathervane  
the imperceptible rain  
on the wheelbarrow  
Somehow the revolving streets lose their firecrackers in the heat  
The heavy wool of passers-by secludes the eagle of temptation  
paper hats paper swords paper napkins paper lives  
an encyclopedia of matches  
in the cavernous level of nocturnal aspirations  
systematized according to gesture according to the eye's mad dance  
The barnyard overflows with mocking landslides of crows  
and hay  
because the pitchforks return to the last cause  
the primary visibility  
the unforeseen vagueness  
of a rock  
It's an apostrophe  
in the sky  
sagging visage of a forlorn hope  
a neglected piece of Saturday  
hypodermic and monolithic clocks  
to keep out the time  
It's a race and the tree-trunk isn't a turtle  
no bets because  
because  
because  
the lambs flee the evasion of running-boards

because because  
the schoolhouse inflates the crushed vehicle of sedentary doom  
because now's the time  
because this is the place  
because you're the one  
I love

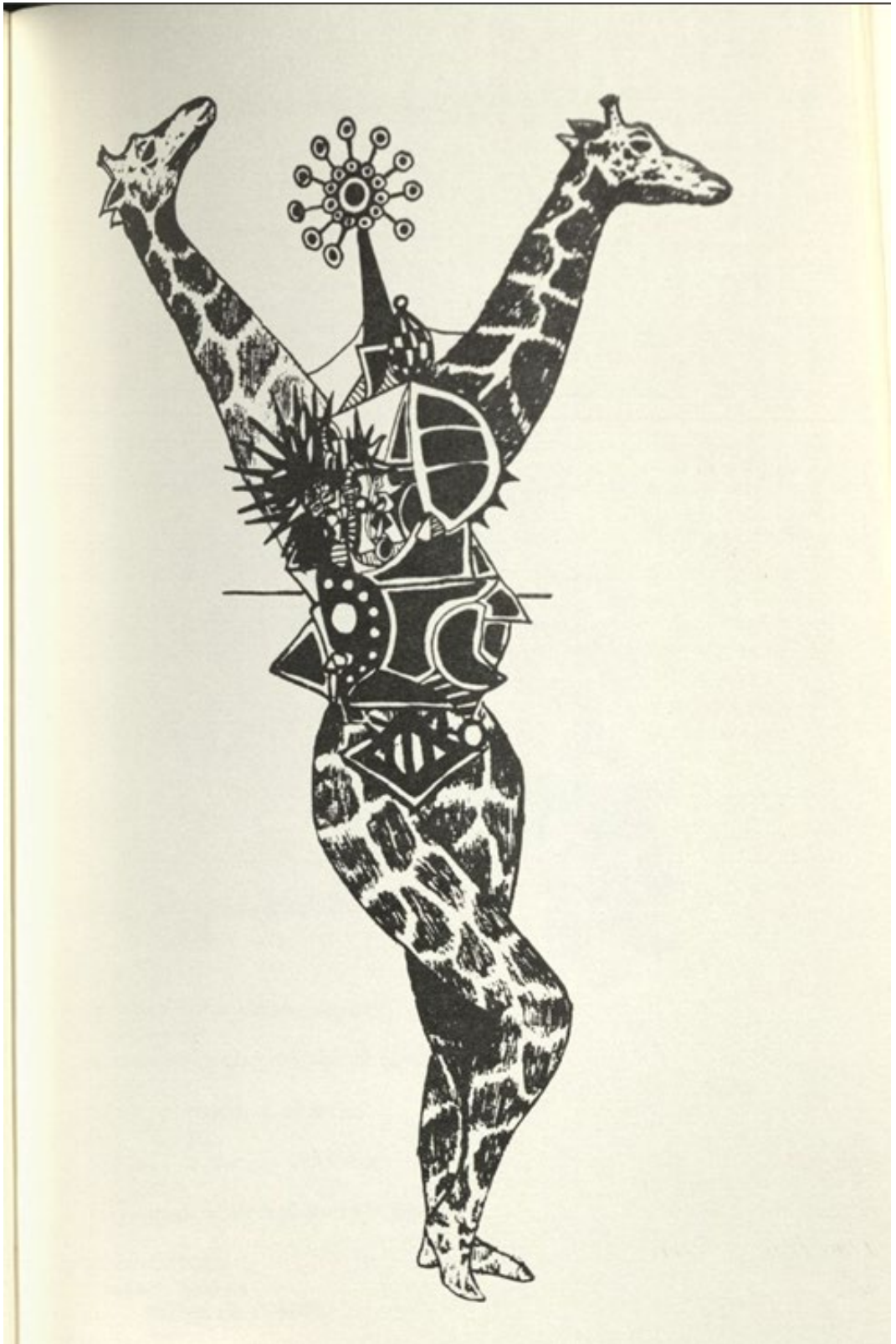
III

Incalculable longitudes of wings  
left in the alley by impenitent pedestrians  
but rediscovered by venomous dogs  
and by the incurable wanderers  
with microscopes perennially infecting their brains  
It's the blues of a lampshade  
over a beautiful face a woman's face smiling  
but with a certain fear because of the intersections  
and because of the slow-motion here  
and the close quarters  
of the world  
The best islands are the ones my eyes see  
when I love  
They are the farthest away  
but the easiest to reach  
with pockets full of mulberries  
tiny mirrors for squirrels  
wooden masks for moonlit Thursdays  
and footprints that rattle like bones  
in a sack of sunlight  
the raccoons high in the calcium trees  
articulating the grammar of ladders and hands  
no calliope no lumberjack's moustache  
no five-cent beer not even a striped necktie  
or a sleeping village constable  
just smoke insidious and black  
flames as high as the vines of an eye  
machinery blue and woven into solid tea like a statue's toes  
in the grayness of early morning  
the time of the lunatic crows  
the hasty steps of chimneys fastened like locks  
the crusted screams and terrors of a new day  
but the same cloth  
the same apologies to the government  
the same lukewarm water  
instead of a hammer instead of an axe  
instead of a chrysanthemum instead of ice cream  
instead of a slingshot aimed at the leering horizon  
around the corner

The hydrogen pulse opens the sultry secrets  
of their afternoon their calculations  
their tea-party their collection of recipes  
It's a passenger train of luxurious zoology  
pigeons of glacial momentum and sleep  
in the thick saxophones of cartography and trees  
the frog's eye slant on bended knee and foregone conclusions  
the affirmative negation of plus and minus  
the strawberry of the inevitable  
a sweeping statement across the engraved tides  
a chain reaction but without real chains  
just casual suggestions rare seconds of dreams  
the key in the glass  
the glass in hand  
the hand in glove  
the glove in water  
and the water rushing madly along the castle stairs  
in drumbeats of carbon monoxide  
rowboat delirium of ace jack king queen  
the permissive astrology of hysteria without a phonograph  
Love  
the absolute zodiac  
internal eternity a dandelion  
yours  
and mine

*Chicago,  
July, 1966*





## FOR LUIS BUÑUEL

One notices nothing extraordinary along the curbstones merely  
the bones of dogs long dead and the silence of the  
old women their hollow cheeks the empty windows  
It is a day very much like any other day the children  
play with their kites and hammers or an egg  
which breaks on the trunk of a tree  
There is an obscure message somewhere near but it must  
be said that it will probably have little meaning  
for the corpses  
It is true that the schools have been closed it is even true  
that there are some fires raging  
There is moreover a certain inescapable theft  
And rain which is not merely black  
There is moreover a certain inescapable eye  
And a night which is not merely red  
Slowly the river multiplies the horses  
galloping over the wooden bridge  
Quickly the bridge divides its planks  
and splinters among the river's fish  
Someone raises a hand another speaks the moon sheds no light  
there is not even a frog the lips quiver with fear chickens  
run down the stairs the bulb is burned out there are  
the words ARE YOU CRAZY painted on a fence  
No airplane  
No iron gate imprisoning a blind crow it is only  
Four o'clock  
The farmer is dead in his bed  
No one knows that it is Sunday or Wednesday  
They listen to the echoes of their footsteps they put on their  
hats and take them off  
They bleed  
They even say hello

Chicago,  
16 January 1968



### TRIPLET

The water is hot  
the leaves are green  
the room is far away  
without any doubt  
without any sand  
without any speeches  
the black dogs howl  
the white dogs sleep  
the yellow dogs are very alert  
as if the road was closed  
as if the telescope had broken  
as if the ladies' hands were on the floor  
a tree dismembers the earth  
a nail unifies a mirror  
a glass of water frightens the candle  
because the zeros are all lined up  
because the cars are out of gas  
because the kitchen is as dark as a glove  
without rain  
without a crystal  
without a canary locked in a cage  
People are in the street  
Wind leaves its pebbles on one's ears  
Dandelions grow in the laughter of flat tires

Paris,  
6 April 1966

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