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INFRASTRUCTURAL BRUTALISM: ART AND THE NECROPOLITICS

Michael Truscello. *Infrastructural Brutalism: Art and the Necropolitics of Infrastructure*. The MIT Press. 366. US \$45.00,

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There are only a handful of books in our preciously short lives that force us to re-evaluate and re-imagine the world around us in fundamental ways, and our role(s) within it. For me

Infrastructural Brutalism will be *one of those* books, and I have every confidence that such a transformative relationship will be shared by many others. I am certainly convinced that, at the very least, every reader will view infrastructure and transport systems – in the knowledge of how these inform who may live and who must die) - in quite the same way again.

At the heart of *Infrastructural Brutalism* lies a devastatingly brilliant and *brutal* critique, not only of the ruinous planetary impact of capitalism, but also the ongoing suicidal tendencies of the State in enabling and supporting its hyperindustrial expansion. Furthermore, in articulating ways to effectively challenge the “ecocidal order of global capitalist logistics”, Truscello delivers a devastating truth-bomb to those raggedy souls who still desperately seek to divine something of ‘truth’ and ‘relevance’ by clamping down on the barren breasts of Marxism. It is the anarchist tradition, Truscello argues convincingly, that holds the promise and potential to undertake the necessary revolutionary examination of existing infrastructure and be “capable of transforming conditions so brutal that they incur mass extinction.”

Infrastructural Brutalism is driven by an impressively confident and full-throttled narrative. The four main chapters each draw critical insight and inspiration from an eclectic range of artistic media: (popular) fiction, movies, photographs and so on. Whatever impression or after-life the book may have on the reader, there is no denying that it is beautifully written and crafted. Words and sentences flash and crackle with fiery intensity, carrying the reader through the swollen necrotic skies overhead, and toward new visions of how we might yet find relatively better futures. For all the nightmarish realities that the book asks us to confront, including the ‘death-trains’ of the holocaust, colonialism, racism, genocide, and the likelihood of the near-term extinction of the species, on an aesthetic level it is a genuine pleasure to pick up and read.

While there are a great many reasons why I could recommend this highly original and prescient book, I was particularly impressed with the way in which Truscello meaningfully extended the reach of the book to reflect on the (devastating) impact on more-than-human worlds and lives.

Too often, in similar “critical” or “radical” literature the key arguments are severely compromised by the author’s unreflective humanocentric framing and analysis. While still thoroughly articulating the catastrophic impacts on humans and human-based society,

Infrastructural Brutalism clearly avoids such criticism and disappointment. Indeed the crises – and the possible solutions - that Truscello urges us to pay attention to will only be fully appreciated through an inter-species and intersectional lens.

The conclusion pulls no punches in offering a compelling – and I feel courageously honest - vision and strategy of resistance and action. While taking care to make explicit that acts of violence must be against objects not sentient beings, Truscello appeals to an expanded concept of brisance, one which “[encompasses] any assemblage capable of producing a shattering effect.”

(p. 232). For Truscello, the best chance of slowing the suicidal pace of hyperindustrial society is by anarchist and allied political philosophies coming together as a courageous brisantic political force on a global scale. Their success will be determined by nothing less than their ability to prevent “industrial capitalism from killing most life on earth.”

With this clarion call firmly in mind, the ultimate ‘success’ of *Infrastructural Brutalism* will be gauged on an instrumental level: its ability to inspire people to think and act in ways that might yet make all the difference. In this spirit I’ll end this review with a direct response to the invitation Truscello offers up in his last line: ‘*Yes, I’ll meet you at the underpass*’, and I’m quite convinced that many other readers of this exceptional book will be there as well.