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THINGS THAT GO NOWHERE: SCALE, CITY AND THE LIST IN RICHARD PRICE'S *LUSH LIFE*

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Richard Price's 2008 crime novel *Lush Life* develops a narrative strategy for mediating between large-scale problems and local narratives. Police officers and suspects must come to terms with both New York City's huge scale and the opacity of the suspects' faulty narratives in order to solve a murder. Referencing Jean-François Lyotard, Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, and The Invisible Committee, among others, the author develops the narrative strategy of a list (a collection of items devoid of syntactic connections) as a mediating agent. Price uses the list to penetrate the large scale of the city and the lies told by suspects. In *Lush Life* the list traces connections between the individual and supra-individual, suggesting a way to effect change on a large scale in the age of globalization.

Key words: scale, *Lush Life*, list, *The Wire*, object-oriented ontology

LOCALIZING THE GLOBAL

Richard Price's novel *Lush Life* (2008) maps connections between the scales of the individual and the city. The narrative technique used is *the list*: a collection of items devoid of syntactic connection, as in a cluster or enumeration of concepts. The list's lack of syntax allows the individual to "scale up," and the city to "scale down". I argue that *Lush Life* localizes large scales, which seem out of reach and unchangeable, rather than offering small, local strategies of protest. The term "scale," derived from the Greek *metron*, not only signifies dimension or measure, but is also connected to control over a domain that is untouchable by others (Negarestani 2008: 233n33). In this sense, scale functions as a placeholder for "boundaries we are unable to grasp" (Shaviro 2014: 1). There are two forms of large scale in the novel: grand narratives and the city. Price uses the narrative strategy

of the list to show how the large scale of injustice, usually seen as too big to challenge, is actually just a network of real-world institutions, policies and persons, all of which can be changed.

Yet initially any discussion of the global scale sounds suspicious. Jean-François Lyotard has made the concept of globality seem negative and oppressive, in many cases correctly. For example, in *The Postmodern Condition* he develops the concept of the grand narrative, a meta-story used to provide a context that gives meaning and legitimation to the actions of a specific culture (Lyotard 1984: 38). Lyotard shows how capitalism has corrupted global grand narratives such as speculation (science and the university) and emancipation. For him, the way to combat grand narratives is through local narratives, meaning a narrative "agreed on by its present players and subject to eventual cancellation" (Lyotard 1984: 66). As Fredric Jameson puts it in his foreword to the English-language translation of the book, Lyotard's work is the

> revival of an essentially narrative view of "truth," and the vitality of small narrative units at work everywhere *locally* in the present social system, are accompanied by something like a more global or totalizing "crisis" in the narrative function in general, since, as we have seen, the older master-narratives of legitimation no longer function in the service of scientific research (Jameson 1984: xi).

Lyotard finds meaning in local rather than global narratives. This can be seen, for example, in the fact that European organizations of knowledge cannot capture the meaning of African experience; only local knowledge can do that (Feierman 1995). One mechanism through which local narratives can occur is that of language games, which Lyotard describes as "a heterogeneity of elements. They only give rise to institutions in patches – local determinism" (Lyotard 1984: xxiv). Here Lyotard indicates that the local itself is not as important as the way in which it foregrounds contingency, fragmentation and heterogeneity (Rojek and Turner 1998).

This essay argues against local determinism, and replaces it with access to the global. One recent work that opposes seeing the local as a positive strategy for challenging contemporary scales of inequality is The Invisible Committee's *To Our Friends*. Its anonymous author(s), believed to include Julien Coupat, the anarchist convicted of sabotaging the French high-speed train network in 2008, argue(s) that

> We risk losing everything if we invoke the local as against the global. The local is not the reassuring alternative to globalization, but its universal

> product. Before the world was globalized, the place I inhabit was simply my familiar territory – I didn't think of it as "local." Local is just the underside of global, its residue, its secretion, and not something capable of shattering it. (The Invisible Committee 2015: 188).

Instead of contrasting the universal and local, the global should be treated like the local: attention should be paid to the universal as a concrete entity, tied to actual institutions, processes, abstract ideas, and people, rather than as a distant cloud that hands cannot grasp. However, the reason that the universal seems so hard to grasp is that it often exists in scales of time and space that are different to those humans normally experience.

A number of contemporary thinkers have attempted to connect scale and conflict to theories about change, possibility and reality. In *Drone Theory*, Grégoire Chamayou shows that with the global war on terror "armed violence has lost its traditional limits: indefinite in time, it is also indefinite in space. The whole world, it is said, is a battlefield" (Chamayou 2015: 52). Paradoxically, the globalization of battle is the result of weapons that are supposed to be more precise: when a drone can deliver a weapon through the window of a specific room, this gain in precision actually extends "the field of fire to take in the entire world" (Chamayou 2015: 56), rather than limiting its scope to specific targets.[1] Thinking about scale the other way around (from the global to the individual) Ruth Gilmore argues that if we think of imprisoned bodies as places, "then criminalization transforms individuals into tiny territories primed for extractive activity to unfold – extracting and extracting again *time* from the territories of selves" (Gilmore 2017: 227).[2] Wage garnishing, interest and debt are only some of the ways that "A stolen and corrupted social wage flies through that time-hole to prison employees' paychecks" (Gilmore 2017: 227). Following this current of thinking, it seems impossible to fight such oppressive scales of violence. Jacques Rancière says

[1] In *Targets of Opportunity*, Samuel Weber argues that the identifying of contemporary military targets has changed, due to the "mobility, indeterminate structure, and unpredictability of the spatio-temporal medium in which such targets had been sited" (Weber 2005: 4). However, in *Arab Spring*, *Libyan Winter* Vijay Prashad argues that drones and cruise missiles "that strike at populations whose sorrows do not trigger any of the legal terms that indicate warfare and suffering" hark back to "the first aerial bombardment in world history, the Italian bombing of Tajura and Ain Zara in 1911" (Prashad 2012: 213).

[2] On the other hand, Nahala Abdo describes different kinds of time experienced by Palestinian women in Israeli detention: for some women it is about waiting for what tomorrow may hold, while for some resistance fighters it is about the time before the next interrogation (Abdo 2014: 36–37).

that the feeling of impossibility that is part of the time in which we live stems from the split between "the time of the global progress and the time of the lived world of the individual" (Rancière 2012: 22; Willems 2018b). This split causes the inability of the individual to enact change on a political scale, at least until "the practice of dissensus, constructing another time in the time of domination, the time of equality within the time of inequality" (Rancière 2012: 28) takes place (Willems 2017b).

However, the strength of the comments made by The Invisible Committee lies in the way they connect the local and global by seeing them as intertwined. For example, they say that

> Rather than seeing Wall Street as a celestial raptor dominating the world as God used to, we would have much to gain by determining its material, relational networks, tracking the connections from a trading floor out to their last fiber. One would find, no doubt, that the traders are just idiots, that they don't even deserve their diabolical reputation, but that stupidity is a power in this world (Invisible Committee 2015: 190).

Localizing the global means tracing the people, institutions and networks that have given rise to global phenomena, thus putting local actors face-to-face with the global through concrete lines of labor and production. Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams follow a similar path, but with a focus on changing the global once it becomes localized. This is found in their development of the idea of "subversive universals" (Srnicek and Williams 2015: 75–78). First, in order to combat global capitalism they trace the mechanisms of its rise, stating that in the 1970s those who would come to be thought of as neoliberals "had both a diagnosis of the problem" of the combination of high employment and high inflation "and a solution" (Srnicek and Williams 2015: 61). They offered a "plausible solution" to government officials who were lost in the crises. It was long-term, and involved various post-Bretton Woods committees committed to de-regulation, conservative textbooks for Economics Departments at universities, and ready-made policies for politicians grasping at straws (Srnicek and Williams 2015: 61). Srnicek and Williams use this history to argue that the current universality of neoliberalism, captured so strongly in Mark Fisher's expansion of the term capitalist realism (Fisher 2009), "was not a necessary outcome, but a political construction" (Srnicek and Williams 2015: 61). Srnicek and Williams then suggest a number of concrete, long-term counter-strategies with a similar global scope: for example, a new series of think tanks and recommendations for more progressive Economics textbooks at universities, such as William

Mitchell and Randall Wray's *Modern Monetary Theory and Practice* (Srnicek and Williams 2015: 230n67). Setting out such concrete strategies for change is what is meant by treating the global as a local political construction.[3] However, what is most important for this discussion is the *structure* of the connection between local and global. This is where Price's novel comes into play. *Lush Life* does not offer new subversive universals, for universals are just placeholders for different strategies for equality to battle each other. Rather, it presents a narrative technique for tracing the connection between individual and supra-individual scales, thus creating a connection between the individual and the universal, which enables the latter to be changed. The technique it uses is the list.

THE LIST

Richard Price's 1992 novel *Clockers* was an inspiration for the television series *The Wire* (2002–2008), for which he eventually wrote. His novel *Lush Life* has a similar feel, and its connection with and difference from the series will be discussed below. *Lush Life* is set on the Lower-East Side of New York, which is transitioning into gentrification, and it describes the conflict between those moving in and those moving out (Heise 2014). Eric Cash is out at the bars late one night with some acquaintances. They are mugged by three youths, and Ike, one of the men with Eric, is shot. The novel centers around the stories the different protagonists tell about the shooting. Yet this is not a traditional crime story. The perpetrator is revealed quite early in the novel (Price 2009: 151–153), as Tristian, one of the youths from the holdup. Thus the novel is not a whodunit; rather, it is about the narration of events, specifically how the narration created by both suspects and police officers is challenged. This challenge takes place through the protagonists' contact with the characteristics of the list, which is a collection of items without syntax. The city is presented as such in the novel, as we will explore. As the author says, "The geographic location

[3] Bruno Latour makes a similar point in an ecological context in *Facing Gaia*, in which he argues for the "relocalization of the global" (Latour 2017: 136). By this, he means that scales do not exist on separate planes, but that "we have to slip into, envelop ourselves within, a large number of loops, so that, gradually, step by step, knowledge of the place in which we live and of the requirements of our atmospheric condition can gain greater pertinence and be experienced as urgent" (Latour 2017: 139).

drove the story and the characters came after it" (Moore and Strumpet 2008). The use of "drove" here is important. The city is not a backdrop: its chaos breaks into the constructed narratives the characters create, bringing them closer to the truth of the event. For example, although Eric lies to the police about what happened at the shooting, "the City of New York wasn't finished with him" (Price 2009: 165), and he eventually tells the truth after walking through the crime scene again. This is what connects *Lush Life* to a discussion of the intertwining of the local and the global: narratives are disrupted by specific elements of the city, thus putting characters into contact with forces larger than those they usually experience. The city is not a massive entity completely removed from the characters. Nor is the narrative a grand narrative that cannot be changed. Price's novel posits the list as the narrative strategy of such disruption.

At the beginning of the novel, two police officers patrol the city. The description of the way their car moves around the urban space provides a strategy for mediating the local and global:

> Restless, they finally pull out to honeycomb the narrow streets for an hour of endless tight right turns: falafel joint, jazz joint, gyro joint, corner. Schoolyard, crêperie, realtor, corner. Pink Pony, Blind Tiger, muffin boutique, corner. Sex shop, tea shop, synagogue, corner. Boulangerie, bar, hat boutique, corner. Iglesia, gelateria, matzo shop, corner. Bollywood, Buddha, botanica, corner. Leather outlet, leather outlet, leather outlet, corner. Bar, school, bar, school, People's Park, corner. Tyson mural, Celia Cruz mural, Lady Di mural, corner. Bling shop, barbershop, car service, corner (3–4).

In this passage, the global is represented by the city, and the city is localized by its representation in a list. Before this claim is supported, it should be noted that the rhythm and alliteration of this passage illustrate the passing of the city by the police car windows. Sometimes the coupling of establishments seems based on difference, as with "Schoolyard, crêperie, realtor," and other times it seems poetic, as with "Bollywood, Buddha, botanica." Yet there is another aspect to this description: it is a list (Willems 2018a). Lists gather objects in an inconsequential order (Kolb 2000: 28). The absence of conjunctions such as *and*, *but* or *before* foregrounds the arbitrariness of the way items in a list are presented. In *Lush Life*, everything seen through the police car windows is placed one-after-the-other, joined by the passing of the car, and perhaps by different zoning laws and other material considerations, but the logical relations between one establishment and another are left ambiguous. There is no reason for the order of "Pink Pony, Blind Tiger,

muffin boutique" or "Bling shop, barbershop, car service". It does not matter which establishment comes before which. This lack of order is what connects this description to the list. As Francis Spufford says in his anthology on lists in literature, *The Chatto Book of Cabbages and Kings*, " 'Syntax joins: *I want to be loved by you*, or *the sky is falling* …' Lists, however, divide, or leave divided, the things they include … *I*, *you*, *love*, *love*, *sky*, *fall* …" (Spufford qtd. in Bogost 2012: 40). Spufford indicates another important characteristic of lists: their power to keep objects separate from each other, rather than gathering them together. This separation indicates a world outside of human order-making, although this is done through the human world of narration. As Latour (a great user of lists in his writing) says, "we have to agree to remain open to the dizzying otherness of existents, the list of which is not closed, and to the multiple ways they have of existing or of relating among themselves, without regrouping them too quickly in some set, whatever it might be" (Latour 2017: 36). The protagonists in *Lush Life* narrativize (Jameson 1981a: 35) the city, so their own, local story functions as the "dominance of one sign or logo over another, which it interprets and rewrites according to its own narrative logic" (Jameson 1981b: 91). In other words, their version of the events close down the "dizzying otherness" of New York City's grand scale that surrounds them. Price re-inserts the inhumanity of the world-without-us into the human world of experience by foregrounding the vertigo-inducing otherness of the list. The dizziness described here is the opposite of what Arthur Krystal claims of the list, which he describes as "a precision and formality that makes us think we've got a handle on things" (Krystal 2016: 59). Instead, the otherness of the list functions as a mediator between illusion and reality, much as it does between the local and global.

The list is a point of connection between the human scale of things—which is full of conjunctions such as *and*, *but* and *because*—and the syntaxless world of the city, which exists on a much larger scale than the human. As Ian Bogost argues, when confronted with objects not connected to each other through human sense-making, "the first reaction we might have is that of the registrar, taking note of the many forms of being." This is "a general inscriptive strategy," otherwise known as "the *list*, a group of items loosely joined not by logic or power or use but by the gentle knot of the comma" (Bogost 2012: 38; Willems 2018a). Bogost argues that Latour's lists turn "the flowering legato of a literary account into the jarring staccato of real being". This is because "Lists do not just rebuff the connecting powers of *language* but rebuff the connecting powers of *being itself*" (Bogost 2012: 40).

According to Graham Harman, the primary power of lists is to "establish the autonomous force and personality of individual actors, rather than allowing them to be reduced to or swallowed up by some supposedly deeper principle" (Harman 2009; Harman 2013: 84–85). Price's use of the list in this description puts the two cops in a similar position: encountering the city as an individual entity occupying a non-human scale.[4] This is one of the main features of the philosophy of object-oriented ontology (with which both Harman and Bogost identify), which aims to show how the world is separate from ourselves, and yet approachable at the same time.

The importance of the list for the rest of Price's novel is that the city "drives" the story, eventually proving key to solving the crime. The initial influence of the city is seen shortly after this quotation, as the two police officers continue their patrol: "Right turn after right turn after right" (Price 2009: 4). All this right turning affects the way the officers experience the world. They are still affected by the direction of their patrol after their beat, when they have drinks at Grouchie's before going home: "they'll be canting to the right at the bar, then, later in bed, twitching to the right in their dreams" (Price 2009: 5). Their experience of the city influences them even when they sleep. Yet this influence turns out to be positive in the novel, as the detectives assigned to the case need to be in tune with the city in order to solve the crime. The times they are shown not to be are when they put too much faith in the stories told by the suspects.

At this point the list moves beyond the specific example seen through the officers' car window to a larger strategy for disrupting the local narratives offered by different suspects and interviewees. For example, Detective Matty is always impressed by "how you could literally see the narrative building right before your eyes in a cross-chorus of data: names, times, actions, quotes, addresses, phone numbers, run numbers, shield numbers" (Price 2009: 43). The data Matty mentions is the list; it does not matter whether names or times come first in this quotation. As with many crime stories, the issue in *Lush Life* is that the narrative the police and suspects create out of this data is problematic (Parker 2016). Eric, the main witness to the event, provides different information about the same data. Sometimes he says the

[4] Latour would call the city an actant rather than an actor, because the former is defined through what it does, rather than by a construction of what it is (Latour 2017: 56–57). For a sympathetic critique of "doing" in Latour, see Harman 2010: 65–81. The term "actant" was first developed by A. J. Greimas, based on Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*. See Greimas 1984.

shooting victim said one thing, sometimes another. Sometimes he says the youths ran one way, sometimes the other. At first he says he called 911, then later denies it. It is clear from the beginning that Eric is lying, but it is also clear that he is not the perpetrator. The real story is that the youth Tristian shot Ike out of fear and nerves (151–152). Yet Eric's lies are not part of a grand cover-up; he is just ashamed of not having asked after Ike. The way that he describes this shame to the police is instructive: " 'You turned me into a bug that day … You asked me why, why, after talking to you all day about what happened, hours and hours of review and recap and going over it, going over it, I never once asked how Ike was doing, or just even whether he was dead or alive … What kind of human being just mentally blots out another life like that? Abandons the most basic … All it took was a few hours with you two and I turned into a bug' " (Price 2009: 418). But Eric does not only feel like a bug because he forgot to ask about Ike; the manner in which he narrates his shame gives another clue to its source. The police insist repeatedly on a narration of the crime. In the previous quotation, Eric says that " 'you asked me why, why' " and he had to keep " 'going over it, going over it.' " The repeated demand for narration makes Eric nervous, and he ruins the data on which the narration is based by lying about the 911 call and other facts. The role of the list is to interrupt this ruined narration and drive characters beyond it, to the truth, the "dizzying otherness" (Latour 2017: 36) of the world.[5]

The list mediates between local and global narratives, connecting the two and showing that one is approachable by the other. A distrust of purely localized narration is reflected in another character, the youth Shawn "Blue Light" Tucker. At first his nickname is misheard as "True Life" (Price 2009: 225), and then he is considered a suspect although he has nothing to do with the case. Finally, Tucker confesses to the shooting, although he seems to be doing it just to impress female detective Yolanda. This is borne out, since Tucker is not the real perpetrator: he simply gains his information about the case from a wanted poster taped up all over the station where he is being questioned (Price 2009: 257), and is quickly released. Tucker is a figure of misinformation, as neither his name nor his narration of the crime are to be trusted. As Detective Matty says to Ike's father (while still using Tucker's misheard nickname, True Life), " 'You want True Life to explain to you? What would you like him to explain? You want explanations, you talk to

[5] Here Latour is talking about the dizzying otherness of nature, not of a city. On the concept of world, see Willems 2017a: 42–44; 51–54.

your wife. Your priest. Your shrink. True Life's out of the explanation loop' " (Price 2009: 264). Tucker is an illustration of the way in which localized narration is untruthful.

A similar "narrativization" of the inaccessible world into a "textual form" (Jameson 1981a: 35) happens when Yolanda interviews the real shooter, Tristian, at his home. She is not there to talk to him about the murder, but is responding to a report of domestic violence. "It was a typically slow night in the area, so anyone who could pick up the transmission had responded just for something to do" (Price 2009: 261). Yolanda approaches the situation outside the context of Ike's shooting, thinking instead about domestic abuse, something her brothers had also experienced. Yolanda first sees Tristian sitting at the dining table. He has been fighting with his ex-stepfather. She interprets an old scar across his cheek as the lesson received the first time he tried to talk back (Price 2009: 263). Then she interviews Tristian in his bedroom. The context of the room, and of the situation at large, blocks Yolanda from considering Tristian a suspect for Ike's murder. The apartment is oppressively clean, and a set of the ex-stepfather's "*HOUSE RULES*" is pinned to a wall over the door to the room. The rules include "NO ONE IN HOUSE when I am at work. This includes when my wife is there but I am not … No loud or PROFANITY style music and no headphones where you cant hear if theres an EMERGENCY" and "DISRESPECT equals INGRADITUDE" (Price 2009: 265–266). Yolanda narrativizes Tristian through the lens of his environment, which leads her to regard him with sympathy before considering him a suspect. She ends the interview with " 'You're a nice-looking kid … Don't make me go home worrying about you, alright?' " (Price 2009: 267). This interview takes place only a few pages after the scene of misinformation with Tucker. During Tucker's interview, Yolanda is misled by too much narrative. In her discussion with Tristian, she is misled by too much context. The fact that these two scenes are located so close together in the novel suggests that they are similar. The issue with both is syntax: the experiences are too well-ordered for Yolanda to see the list of data underneath, data that are without connection to the narrative she is constructing.

Despite this, she solves the crime. Therefore the question then becomes: what changes to enable her to do so? The thesis of this essay is that a connection to the list provides the change, and that the list mediates between local narratives and the syntaxless nature of the world, or how it exists outside the human experience, the world-in-itself. This is still a world made up of institutions, policies and persons, but also of gravity waves, ancient

civilizations, star explosions and chromosomes. The world is syntaxless because all of this exists together, even if it is not connected through the lens of human understanding. The list represents these myriad things in the universe, but it can only "record variations of behavior" (Meillassoux 2015: 37), not contextualize data. Thus an aspect of the list is responsible for the change the detectives' experience, allowing them to free themselves from the connection of the things of the world through narration. This allows them to learn the true perpetrator of the crime. To develop the role of the list in this novel, it will be contrasted to that of another work Price was involved in: *The Wire*. By looking at the two together, the particular role of the list in *Lush Life* will be clarified.

LUSH LIFE VS *THE WIRE*

Richard Price was a writer for the HBO series *The Wire*, starting with its third season. Price's work is intimately connected to the show, but while *The Wire* is explicitly concerned with the connection between the city and narration, it treats them differently to the way in which *Lush Life* does. Examining how *The Wire* functions will help develop the role of the list in *Lush Life*.

One powerful aspect of *The Wire* is, in the words of Sven Cvek, the way "it 'follows the money' ", meaning that the series maps "the creation and distribution of wealth, the economic process at work" (Cvek 2014: 11). One effect of this mapping is to turn the global scale into the local, so that "the characters with their identifiable characteristics figure as almost incidental embodiments, or local effects of a more general and impersonal process" (Cvek 2014: 12). A mechanism for this mapping is the foregrounding of class rather than race (Cvek 2014: 2), a strategy also noted by Sherryl Vint (2013: 36), and which finds a powerful precursor in the autobiography of Angela Davis (Davis 1974: 160).[6] However, without diminishing the role of class (or race) in the series, this essay focuses on the role of the city.

[6] Although in *Critique of Black Reason*, Achille Mbembe argues that "[i]t is false to think that racist logic is only a symptom of class warfare, or that class struggle is the final word regarding the 'social question.' Race and racism are certainly linked to antagonisms based on the economic structure of society. But it is not true that the transformation of the structure leads ineluctably to the disappearance of racism" (Mbembe 2017: 36).

As the show's creator David Simon says, "*The Wire* was not about Jimmy McNulty. Or Avon Barksdale. Or Marlo Stanfield, or Tommy Carcetti or Gus Haynes. It was not about crime. Or punishment. Or the drug war. Or politics. Or race. Or education, labor relations or journalism. It was about The City" (Simon 2009: 3).[7]

One role of the city in the series is that it imparts a sense of realism. As Matija Jelača notes, the series is "so deeply rooted in the real world that it purportedly depicts" that "it is virtually impossible to tell where reality ends and fiction begins" (Jelača 2017: 276). In other words, "the real world of the city of Baltimore is inextricably intertwined with the fictional world of *The Wire*" (Jelača 2017: 276). Following the work of Robert Brandom, the mechanisms for this intertwining are rationality and realism, so that "*The Wire* as a whole is a complex structure, composed of numerous commitments as to how things are" (Jelača 2017: 278), thereby rationally integrating "its elements into a unified whole" (Jelača 2017: 279). However, these commitments are not to the real city of Baltimore that lies outside the series, but rather to internal commitments to the narrativization of Baltimore within it. Thus "Virtually every commitment of *The Wire* is either justified, discarded for being incompatible with other commitments, or has its consequences drawn out over the course of the show's five seasons," leading its rationality to be interpreted as realism (Jelača 2017: 279). While Jelača provides a powerful reading of the mechanism of realism in *The Wire*, Price's novel has a different function. Although the city also plays a definitive role in *Lush Life*, this role is not about rational commitment but rather the lack of one. As David Kolb argues, "Cities as lists lack syntax. They lack internal structure that might impose limits and connections [...] Syntactic articulation is replaced by next-to, juxtaposition" (Kolb 2000: 28). The traditional deductive method, which is tied to the commitments

[7] Morton makes a similar claim for the city when he says that "A street full of people is much more than just a part of a greater whole called 'city.' It's hard to locate contemporary megacities because we keep looking for something that totally incorporates its parts. Towns, villages and other formations are strung together in Java in such a way that only the volcanoes on that massive island prevent them from spreading everywhere. The only limit is a perceived threat to life. The string of dwellings isn't even a megacity, it's a *hypercity*, a city that is hardly a city at all. But precisely because of this less-than-a-city quality, a hypercity is beyond even the colossal size we associate with megacities such as Mexico City. Java's hypercity and Mexico City are less than the sum of their parts. Parts of them – houses, regions of houses – keep on pouring out of them like ice cubes bursting through the paper bag they made wet" (Morton 2017: 102).

of narrativization, fails when faced by the global details of the city. *Lush Life* is different from *The Wire* in how it foregrounds this failure, rather than attempting to rein it in through even more narration, as seen before.

In their writing on *The Wire* in *Cartographies of the Absolute*, Alberto Toscano and Jeff Kinkle come close to the thesis of this essay in their definition of a strategy to connect the local and global though what they call horizontal and vertical lines. Building on the work of Fredric Jameson (1995), the authors define vertical mapping as "making internal hierarchies explicit" and horizontal mapping as tracking the connections between one world and "the other 'worlds' spread throughout the city" (Toscano and Kinkle 2015: 138). Vertical mapping traces the chain of command in a drug gang, and horizontal mapping follows the connection between a snitch, a patrolman and the chief of police (Toscano and Kinkle 2015: 138). When the "cash nexus" of the series is traced both horizontally and vertically, "[t]he economy of crime is never hygienically sundered from the crimes of the economy" (Toscano and Kinkle 2015: 148), thus forging a connection between the local (the changeable, according to Lyotard [1984: 66]) and the global (the immutable) in the manner previously pointed out by Srnicek and Williams and The Invisible Committee. Or, as Cvek argues, the series "delineates an 'abstract' structure of capital, which is shown in its specific historical and local articulation" (Cvek 2014: 12). *Lush Life* is similar in that it also maps the connections between an individual and a city; the difference is in the mechanism of the mapping. Rather than forming connections through rationality or class, or confining itself to vertical or horizontal lines, the novel foregrounds the concept of the list, a syntaxless collection of "sealed compartments, their commas hermetic barriers" (Spufford 1989: 7), which, in the words of Umberto Eco in his book on lists, is a dizzying surplus that indicates the infinite (Eco 2009: 122–123).

David Simon based *The Wire* partly on his non-fiction book *Homicide: A Year on the Killing Streets* (1991). In this book, Simon provides a similar view of the misleading nature of narrative in a crime investigation, although the solution he provides is different to Price's. For Simon, the fog of narration is pierced by *more* narration, in this case describing the intensity of the police interview process:

> Accomplices are consolidating their stories, agreeing on places and times and shedding wayward and conflicting details. Coherent and reliable alibis are being established. And in the neighborhood where the murder took place, the locals are mixing rumor and fact into one thick, homogeneous gruel, until it becomes almost impossible for a detective to know whether a potential

> witness is expressing first-hand knowledge or barroom talk. The process begins when the body hits the pavement and continues unabated until even the best witnesses have forgotten critical details. When Landsman's squad was handling calls, however, the process of deterioration would never be far along before someone, somewhere, was locked in a soundproof cubicle and forced to endure the heat from a detective sergeant in the throes of spontaneous combustion (Simon 1991 85–86).

The "heat" that is inflicted upon a suspect by detectives in the midst of "spontaneous combustion" represents stress or demands put on the truth by narration. This pressure is seen in an interrogation scene that appears in both "Three Men and Adena," the third episode of the first season of the TV series *Homicide: Life on the Street* (the first adaptation of Simon's book; it is also set in Baltimore and is seen as the first attempt to televise the stories that make up *The Wire*), and "One Arrest," the seventh episode of *The Wire's* first season. Both episodes feature an intense interrogation session, which eventually breaks the subject down so the truth can come out.[8] However, there is a fundamental difference between the interrogations in Simon and in Price. Simon shows how intensity can break through the haze of narration, but this is not the case for Price. In the interrogation of Eric previously discussed, the repetition of " 'you asked me why, why' " and the fact that he had to keep " 'going over it, going over it' " resulted in more falsification rather than drawing towards the truth.

This point is key to this essay, and brings together its numerous threads regarding the list and narrativization. Simon's belief in the overabundance of narration keeps things local, insisting that the truth is to be found in the local narrativizations of individual protagonists. The suspect eventually cracks under a barrage of narrative, enforcing the belief that words, or text, can get to an external truth. This position is similar to what Timothy Morton calls ecomimesis, in which a writer attempts to represent a real connection to the natural world, although ecomimesis is achieved through increasingly descriptive text, and more of it (Morton 2007: 31). As seen in the work of Henry David Thoreau and other nature writers, ecomimesis attempts to convince the reader of a real world outside the text through descriptive authenticating devices (Morton 2007: 33). This intense build-up of narrative detail turns into a "pressure point" (Morton 2007: 33), intended to evoke the writer's "Where I am". The interrogation scenes from *The*

[8] The crime in *Homicide* is left unsolved, as was the real crime it was based on: the murder of Latonya Kim Wallace in Baltimore (Vest 2011: 91).

Wire and *Homicide* feature similar pressure points that are meant to puncture narrativization to get to the true story. In addition, the truth about the crime is discovered indoors, in a cramped interrogation room, which foregrounds the lack of connection between the person being interrogated and the city in which the crime took place. However, in *Lush Life*, this technique is shown not to work. The textual pressure points seen in Eric's interrogation do not get to the truth of the story: instead, they create more false narration. In order to solve the crime, Yolanda needs to get out of the interrogation room and into the city. She needs to get away from narration and into the syntaxless data of globality, and she needs to be concerned with, as Price puts it, "things that go nowhere" (Moore and Strumpet 2008), data unconnected to the crime through syntax, in order to understand what really happened.

THINGS THAT GO NOWHERE

How is the crime solved in *Lush Life*? As discussed, Yolanda comes into contact with Tristian by chance. She is not looking to interview him for the murder of Ike, but meets him while investigating a domestic violence case during a slow shift. The way in which Ike's murder is solved is similar. It is about a lucky detail rather than the building of a solid, court-worthy narration, or gleaning the truth from an intense interrogation. We have seen that the global scale was localized by its perception as a concrete entity, tied to actual institutions, processes, abstract ideals and people. The list localizes because it represents those concrete entities outside the large-scale phenomena of narration and the city. An important figure of localization stands at the beginning of the scene in which the crime is solved. In the novel, a memorial is spontaneously created at the site where Ike was killed (Price 2009: 182). One of the items placed at the memorial is a photograph of the real-world criminal Willie Bosket, who was convicted at a young age of a number of killings on the New York City subway (Butterfield 1989). Right before the scene in which Eric lets slip the detail that allows the crime to be solved, the picture of Willie is described: "Matty was waiting for [Yolanda and Eric] in front of 27, nothing left of the shrine now but Willie Bosket glaring at them through the tattered, wind-wafted newsprint, looking as if he were peering out from behind his own image" (Price 2009: 419). The tattered newsprint suggests a less-than-trustworthy narrative of the crimes involved. When the narration of the crime has been challenged, leaving the

large-scale media narrative in tatters, the crime of Bosket's murder can be solved. A similar event takes place in *Lush Life*.

The final dénouement comes near the end of the novel, when Eric gets beaten up while trying to buy some cocaine (Price 2009: 385), and then has a dream about Ike's body lying in his apartment (Price 2009: 392). This unsettles him enough to make him decide to cooperate, which in turn elicits the confession in which he is made to feel like a bug, as previously cited. Then Detectives Yolanda and Matty agree that they all need to go back to the crime scene, so that Eric can physically walk through the events of that night again, to see if any new memories arise. It is during this walk through the streets of the Lower East Side that the lucky detail appears. Eric, for the first time, remembers that the shooter had a facial scar (Price 2009: 420), which is immediately connected to Tristian. Eric is not trying to remember a facial detail, nor does he, or anyone else, think Tristian's scar is an important clue up to this point. A detail that could have appeared anywhere in the story just happens to be noticed here, and the crime is solved. This indicates the syntaxless aspect of the list. There is no overwhelming interrogative pressure being applied to Eric to fit the pieces of the puzzle together. The solution to the crime is not found in any new narration of events. Instead it is found outdoors, in the randomness of the city. The connection between the local narration of the crime and the global data of the city takes place syntaxlessly, by accidentally coming across the right detail: a facial scar. Eric has given up on narrativization, and is open to the dizzying openness of this list. This is how the crime is solved.

Importantly, Eric's trustworthiness as a narrator is not restored after this. " 'I think that the guy was telling us the truth from day one more than he knew,' " Matty says of Eric's testimony, " 'I think he didn't see shit. And I'll tell you something else. If we're ever lucky enough to collar this guy? No way is Cash getting anywheres near that lineup. He'll fuck it up for us with a wrong ID … I'm serious, Yoli, he's useless' " (Price 2009: 424). For the case to be closed Tristian still needs to confess to the crime, and he does so without fanfare, as if the narration meant nothing. His scar was caused by biting an electrical cord when he was young, not by abuse (Price 2009: 436), and he shot Ike because he was frightened, rather than from any dark motivation. He " 'Scared me,' " Tristian says, " 'He started to like, step to me, and I flexed. Bap' " (Price 2009: 438). There is no intense interrogation here, as can be seen in the aforementioned episodes of *Homicide* and *The Wire*. There is none of Simon's "heat" or "spontaneous combustion". Solving the crime is a kind of accident. As Price says of the novel in an interview,

"I don't even care who did it. It's an excuse to get into the world. I would rather say who did it in the first sentence and get it out of the way. There are so many dead ends in this book, so many things that go nowhere. This thing solves itself almost out of spite" (Moore and Strumpet 2008). Price states that he would rather get the plot "out of the way", that the story is filled with "dead ends" and "things that go nowhere". This indicates that the local narratives the police and suspects create around the crime are not important. Instead, as Price was previously quoted saying, "The geographic location drove the story and the characters came after it" (Moore and Strumpet 2008). The drive of the city comes from its syntaxless nature, from the dizzying amount of data it contains that refuses to be narrativized. In this way the novel is about the details of a city, rather than the narrative constructed around those details. In other words, the novel is an "assault on a place, rather than on a person" (Heise 2014: 236).

The crime is solved because the city drives the story. The city drives the story because it is tied to a random list, rather than a cohesive narrative drawn from an intense interrogation. Narration is suspect and the truth comes out only during a walk along the city streets. Local individuals and the global city are intertwined rather than separate, connected through an openness to the syntaxless. Yet this is not only a story about connection. The items on a list are separate from each other, joined solely by a mere comma. The list represents what Latour calls the "dizzying otherness" of the world, separate from human understanding yet essential to it. Freed from narration, inspired by the detail of a scar haphazardly remembered, the detectives are able to solve the crime. However, this freeing takes place within the narration of the novel. It is part of a literary, rather than pragmatic, list. "The literary list […] is complex in precisely the way a pragmatic list must not be," says Robert Belknap, "[i]n a literary work, lists and compilations appeal for different reasons. Here we do not hunt for a specific piece of information but rather receive the information the writer wishes to communicate to us" (Belknap 2004: 5). Price's list is not about the data it presents, but about sending a message. The message is The City, but the city is connected to the characters through specific, traceable, material lines, and is not an impossibly global entity that can never be touched or changed.

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