

Trans-scalar Sydney, narrative form and ethics in Eleanor Dark's *Waterway*

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In the opening scene of Eleanor Dark's novel *Waterway* (1938), Oliver Denning drives over Sydney's South Head through the dawn, looking out over the red roofs of Watsons Bay to the harbour below. Oliver's elevated perspective and physical distance allow him to offer readers a holistic assessment of Sydney, one hundred and fifty years after white settlement. As a doctor, Oliver relies on medical metaphors for his description, diagnosing the city as a germinating disease, 'the growth of whose parent cells had fastened upon the land' in 1788 (11). Struggling to reconcile with its cost—a land 'violated,' a people decimated—Denning finds himself wishing to 'annihilate the city' (12, 11). As the scene continues, however, the doctor forces himself to reconfirm his connection to the present place and time, as Dark shifts to second person to enfold the reader in a vision of radical community:

You were one of the red roofs, and all about you, on this shore and on the opposite shore, from Balgowah to Parramatta, were your neighbours, the other red roofs ... He was very well pleased that it should be so. ... What you see now, spreading itself over the foreshores, reaching back far out of sight, and still back into the very heart of the land, is something in whose ultimate good you must believe or perish. The red roofs and the quiet grey city become intimate and precious—part of a story of which you yourself are another part, and whose ending neither you nor they will see. (12-13)

This passage aptly summarises the features of the novel with which this essay is concerned: it exemplifies what I identify as the narrative's 'trans-scalar' approach to space and time, which gives rise to an ethics of radical interconnection among people and between people and land. In contrast to the authorised geography of the city encoded by the place names and prepositions 'from Balgowah to Parramatta,' the doctor imagines a trans-scalar, vitalist life-force that moves out from his immediate surroundings to engulf greater Sydney, its past lingering in the 'heart of the land' below him, and a future which remains just out of sight. Oliver's insight enfolds place and subjectivity, collapsing the singular with the collective and articulating a self that is profoundly relational. As he says later, any moment in time and place contains many lives 'closely woven, breaking away:' one's life is never solely one's own, but 'thrumming and alive with contacts, reacting to them in harmony or discord like the strings of a violin' (13). This interconnection and reactivity is an 'ultimate good' in which one must 'believe or perish.' For Denning, this perspective remakes the city—that which he earlier wished to 'annihilate'—into something 'intimate and precious.' Introducing a project that animates the novel as a whole, Oliver's trans-scalar vision ignores usual boundaries of time and space, moving from the singular to the collective and across the past, present and future, in order to articulate an ethics of embedded interconnection.

The concept of trans-scalarity has its roots in geography and sociology, where it is used in relation to entities and concepts which participate in and are shaped by multiple spatial, temporal and organisational scales. Although its definition is by no means fixed, the trans-

scalar is beginning to be employed within Cultural Studies as a concept capable of moving across otherwise discrete scales, such as small to large, singular to collective; past, present and future. In this regard, it is a useful tool for thinking through phenomena such as global warming, the effects of which are seen across multiple scales (Slovic 2015, 2017). My use of the term places emphasis on the prefix ‘trans-’ as suggestive not only of crossing but challenge, a movement with the potential to disrupt the dominant socio-spatio-temporal order. In this definition, I draw upon Jessica Berman’s application of the term ‘transnationalism.’ Berman uses theory from contemporary transsexual and transgender studies to define a ‘transnational optics’ that moves away from analogies of transference and translation to foreground modernist texts’ ‘nonnormative movement on both local and global levels,’ with the effect of destabilizing hierarchical understandings of how meaning is transferred across space and time (18). *Waterway*’s trans-scalar narrative destabilizes the colonial-capitalist city as the spatial, temporal and organizational principle of Australian modernity. In so doing, it offers a vision of the urban refunctioned into a sphere of ethical interconnection, which is figured within the novel as a particularly urgent consideration at a time of national historical reflection and global upheaval.

Waterway was Eleanor Dark’s fifth novel and the last of the modernist-influenced, contemporary fictions of the 1930s before she began *The Timeless Land* (1941), which is the first in a trilogy imaginatively recounting white invasion and settlement. A modest but compelling body of critical work has established the primacy of history, environment and related ethicopolitical concerns in Dark’s oeuvre. Drusilla Modjeska identifies the importance of the politics of writing in novels such as *Waterway* and *The Little Company* (1945), both of which feature characters deliberating over their work’s interaction with the contemporary socio-political context (viii). Nicole Moore locates Dark’s writing within a ‘rationalist modernist project that still had a place for, indeed relied on the natural or organic in its constructions of sociality, history and nationhood’ (21); while Brigid Rooney reads *Waterway* as ‘anticipating and inciting the arrival of a culturally progressive, egalitarian society’ (108). Harriet Edquist examines Dark’s collapsing of colonial and contemporary space, arguing that in her work, ‘human action is conditioned to an extent by the exigencies [of] place and history’ (253). Identifying the prevalence of environmental concerns in a number of novels, Susan Carson claims that Dark was interested in the development of a ‘political praxis for the harmonious co-operation of human and non-human existence’ (191).

There is less consensus on where Dark’s work sits in relation to formal and generic categories. In an early essay, M. Barnard Eldershaw condemned Dark as an ‘unwilling romantic’, although later critics have rebuffed such claims (184). Modjeska, for instance, characterises Dark as a successful mediator between European, modernist forms and popular, more readable styles (vii). Barbara Brooks assigns *Waterway* a transitional place in Dark’s oeuvre, suggesting that in style and content, it is poised between her ‘popular/modernist’ novels, ‘commercial’ work and the historical trilogy (16). Rooney argues that the book is ‘at once modernist in style and internationalist—broadly socialist—in outlook’, but also gestures towards a national readership in its attention to the development of an Australian cultural community (108). In this essay, I argue that *Waterway*’s form and features cannot be disentangled from its ethicopolitical considerations: Dark’s handling of narrative space—her deployment of modernist techniques to realise localised iconography—is crucial to the book’s intervention in the ethics of urban space and Australian settler modernity.

In this, I follow Jessica Berman’s challenge to collapse the distinction between aesthetic modernist forms and more actively political writing. Berman argues that when narrative is

positioned at the crossroads of ‘rhetoric, action, ethics, and politics’, it functions as an ‘ethical event’ between writers and readers, directly engaging with the exigencies of its rhetorical and social context (26, 14). For Berman, it is precisely modernism’s experimental remit that allows it to function so well as a ‘laboratory for action in the world, committed not to mirroring reality but to redescribing and reworking it’ (26). By reading modernist fiction transnationally and from outside and across the European canon, Berman argues that experimental narrative knits together aesthetics and the ‘ethicopolitical experience of modernity’, remaking the world a ‘problematic to be addressed, transformed, configured, and reconfigured’ (29). Berman argues that modernist experimentation often traces ‘the terrain between intimate ethics and the politics of the global’ by challenging ‘the normative dimension of the original entity or space’ (41, 18). I argue that *Waterway*’s particular ethics of emplaced interconnection draws upon contemporary global discourses and challenges dominant socio-spatial frameworks. Accepting Berman’s argument that narrative generates ‘ethicopolitical connection at the textual level’ (26), I show how the form and technique of *Waterway*, specifically its multifocal narrative and trans-scalar perspective, negotiate with the symbolic geography of the city in order to reconfigure urban modernity according to an ethics of interconnection among people and between people and environment.

Throughout the novel, interpersonal connection exemplified by bodies in proximity is a force with the capacity to destabilise the hierarchical socio-spatial order of the city. *Waterway* takes place over a single day, most of which is spent on the streets of the central business district; within this clear spatio-temporal framework, however, the narrative remains fluid. It shifts between the perspectives of sixteen characters whose thoughts flow into one another as they cross paths. In this way, *Waterway* stresses the self as relational and place as produced by interconnections amongst people. Repeated slips into second person—evident in Denning’s opening reflections—insist upon a reciprocal relationship between text, author and reader, the latter of which does the work of producing community by bringing together the novel’s diverse narrative strands. With its frequent point of view shifts as the characters move through space, the formal topography of the novel is produced relationally. By its conclusion, the narrative will have similarly reordered the topography of the city, destabilising and flattening social and spatial hierarchies in pursuit of the ‘ultimate good’ of responsible, emplaced interconnection. This is largely achieved through the movement of an unemployment protest march through the heart of the colonial city, which is written with attention to how its relational and rhizomatic energy destabilises the city’s socio-spatial order.

Each of *Waterway*’s five sections is prefaced with extracts from colonial documents that pertain to the space in which the section takes place. Dark’s narrative writes back to these passages, often in ways that negotiate with or challenge their authority over the space about which they are written. The long middle section of the novel, ‘The City,’ is prefaced by an excerpt from a letter to Lord Sydney from Governor Phillip in 1788, outlining his ‘intended plan’ for the town (174). Grace Karskens argues that this plan was a ‘spatial fantasy of control and beauty,’ produced of the desire to leverage the built landscape to assert authority over both people and the environment (72). In *Waterway*’s depiction of the city, the same desire animates a greedily consuming urbanism which, though purportedly modern, reproduces the failings of the colonial system and exists in a destructive, dialectical relationship with the natural world.

Dark’s city is mired in colonial and national institutions: characters pass by the Harbour Authority, Water Police and New South Wales Parliament, and national cultural landmarks such as the Art Gallery and Public Library. It is also a playground for ‘the rich, the beautiful, the privileged:’ colonial and cultural monuments are accompanied by the new sacred sites of

capitalism, including society starlet Lorna Sellman's beauty salon and her brother Arthur's exclusive club on George Street (181). In contrast, working-class and unemployed Jack Saunders, through whom much of the narrative in the city is focalised, feels the modern metropolis offers him 'no place' (258). It is this official, hierarchical vision of the city with which Dark's narrative attempts to undermine.

Perhaps the city site most laden with symbolic markers of control and order is Macquarie Place, which Governor Macquarie named as Sydney's first public square in 1810. Early in the novel's movement into the city, elderly Professor Channon stops by the park on his way to the Art Gallery. In the scene, Dark's trans-scalar narrative side-steps the place's colonial capital, instead leveraging its symbolic capacity to ground an ethics of interconnection. Recently diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumour, Channon is close to death and this knowledge has allowed him to see life 'with an incredible, all-embracing comprehension:' Dark suggests that the breakdown of the Professor's corporeal body allows him to mediate the material environment (119). Thus, Channon finds himself re-interpreting the city, noticing 'myriads of tiny facets, details trivial but rich with the freshness of discovery' (237). One such facet is,

... the obvious ill-health of the Moreton Bay fig across the road in the tiny park which enshrined the Obelisk, and the comical little anchor of the *Sirius*. Was it not getting enough nourishment, he wondered, or did it hate the hot crust of city pavement which tried, not always successfully, to hold underground roots which loved to coil partially about the surface. (237)

Here, the official public history of Macquarie Place is left unstated; it is just a 'tiny park.' Also undefined is the function of Macquarie's Obelisk, which when it was erected in 1810, quantified space by marking out distances to various locations throughout New South Wales. The anchor of the *Sirius*, supply ship of the First Fleet and thus representative of imperial conquest and the convict system, is undermined as 'comically little.' The focus here is instead on the non-human element, the Moreton Bay Fig tree.

The tree functions in the novel as a trans-scalar device which, with ethical ramifications, collapses the distinction between subject and object, depth and surface, nature and culture, and past and present. An evergreen tree native to the Eastern coast of Australia, the Moreton Bay Fig is ubiquitous in Sydney. This is largely due to Joseph Maiden, director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at the turn of the twentieth century. Maiden believed the planting of trees would have a 'civilising influence' on the city's residents, and he chose the Moreton Bay Fig amongst a number of other species to serve as a street tree (Frawley 304). *Ficus Macrophylla*, however, did not always neatly conform to the city plan. Moreton Bays are known for their distinctive buttress roots, which ensure the tree's survival in nutrient-poor soil by twining with those of other nearby trees to provide support for the whole. This means it will disturb any soil or cement in which it is planted: it destabilises the surface of the city. A tree's roots are its life-force, and with the Moreton Bay Fig, Dark highlights a life-force that relies on interconnection for its generative capacity. This is an example of the association Carson identifies in Dark's work between 'land usage and political structure' (92): a link can be made between the roots and Oliver's vision of lives 'closely woven, breaking away ... thrumming and alive with contacts', of radical communality in which one 'must believe or perish' (13). Thus, the Moreton Bay Fig metaphor unites social, ecological and aesthetic schemas as it registers the fractures of colonial progress and reappraises the dominant forces of urban modernity.

Trees operate in their own ecological time, extending beyond human-centric temporal scales (Cloke and Jones 54). Accordingly, by feeling his ‘failing body mystically identified with the failing tree’, Channon is drawn into the pre-colonial past (238). The Moreton Bay Fig stands in the ‘naked glare of street lamps’, but its ‘ancestors’ knew a darkness lit only ‘corroboree’ and ‘camp-fires’ (238). For Channon, this image brings home the failings of the present, and ‘the whole illness of humanity, the whole insanity of civilised life, the whole long, bloody history of mankind, rushed over him’ (238). Not for the first time, the novel associates Indigenous being with the communality and symbiotic relationship with the natural world it believes are lacking in urban modernity. Critics including Laurie Hergenhan, Brigid Rooney and Nicole Moore (2006) have discussed the problematics of Dark’s approach to settler-indigenous politics. I argue that in its search for the lost *Gemeinschaft* to the modern city’s *Gesellschaft*, the narrative appropriates as its model a refracted indigenous ethics because white Australia has no pre-modern community about which to be nostalgic. This movement beyond the time of colonialism also accords with the novel’s trans-scalar temporality, which works to destabilise the contemporary city with the palimpsest of its past—just as the Moreton Bay Fig disturbs the concrete in which it is set.

Despite the limitations of its environment, the Moreton Bay Fig in Macquarie Place continues to exist: the pavement only tries ‘not always successfully’ to keep its roots underground. The tree still maintains the ability to survive in, challenge and even refigure the space of the modern city. In this way, it works as a textual image of the intervention staged by Dark’s narrative of the city, played out by the unruly movement of a crowd of protesters through the streets. In this capacity, the Moreton Bay Fig image links ecological and social schemas, and stresses the relational nature of reading by relying on the reader to forge links between the material, symbolic, formal and discursive elements of the text.

Though ostensibly a protest against unemployment that gathers around a speaker in the Domain, the march is not narrated as primarily a political force. Rather, it serves as an example of the vitalistic energy of bodies in close proximity, which contrasts with the alienating built environment. It is first apprehended as ‘a strange, swelling murmur like wind in pine trees or distant rushing water’: this oceanic, arboreal imagery aligns the crowd with the ‘nature’ half of the nature-city dialectic (264). Indeed, the crowd is ‘infected with the ominous germ of excitement’, serving as a challenge to the diseased cells of the city diagnosed by Oliver in the novel’s opening pages. Despite the narrative’s many references to street names and landmarks, within the space of the text the city is knitted together by that which challenges it: the development of the march is the link uniting the many characters’ individual plots as they develop over the course of the long middle section of the novel.

When the march begins to move, it interrupts in various ways the usual rhythms of life in the city. This is emphasised in a passage laden with verbs of movement, transition and surprised stasis:

People on the steps of the Gallery paused a moment to shrug or grin, people on the footpath turned to stare, loafers on the warm grass looked up from their siesta and then lay down again with newspapers over their faces. Some rose and followed. Urchins drinking at a street fountain waved with hoots of joy, and fell in behind. (252-3)

Jack Saunders joins the crowd without knowledge of its political impetus. Rather, he becomes involved out of a desire to recoup the capital and agency denied to him because of his class and unemployment. This disenfranchisement is directly linked to urban modernity:

... in all the activity, the enterprise, the wealth, the industry which the city represented, it was strange that there should be no use for the restless strength which he could feel consuming him. (177)

Furthermore, through participation in its collective life, the crowd offers Jack a return to a community he feels has forsaken him: he will have 'other men round [him], a sense of being one with them' (177). Dark offers no direct moral judgment of the mass; rather, it is seen as the obvious result of inequality and exclusion. Ensnared in the body of the people, drawing on and contributing to its vital energy, Jack can challenge the socio-spatial hierarchy that excludes him. Dark writes this realisation in terms that echo Marxist logic:

for the first time, he saw the established order, which had no place for him, opposed by something in whose latent, undirected power he saw his own bitterness, his own frustration, his own resentment multiplied a thousand times. (258)

The protest succeeds, as Arthur Sellman complains, in 'disturbing the peace, obstructing the traffic, inciting [...] sedition' (264). At one point, it is described as 'swaying,' 'turbulent and undisciplined' around the statue of Queen Victoria in Queen's Square (263). 'Serenely oblivious to change,' the monarch's extended sceptre is a silent and useless rebuke against 'the mass of ... humanity,' which denies the authority represented by such monuments (263). Thus, the crowd intervenes in and challenges the symbolic geography of the city. This is why amongst the protesters there is a 'big man with the white dust of the demolition job he had just left thick upon his battered hat and half-bared chest' (265). The demolition in which the man now participates as part of the crowd is metaphorical, but no less significant.

The march reaches a climax when it collides with guests leaving a society wedding on Macquarie Street. This 'parade of the Idle Rich' is characterised as ordered movement seamlessly integrated with the city environment:

Long, gleaming, opulent cars with uniformed chauffeurs were gliding into the curb before the church, receiving people no less gleaming and opulent, and moving out again, slowly. (253-4)

The wedding guests' easy domination is challenged by the crowd when the two groups collide in a moment of confused, organic fusion that devolves into something resembling a riot. 'Engulfed' by the 'mob,' the wedding guests recognise the significance of what is happening (254). Earlier, ensconced in her upper floor beauty salon, Lorna could remark that,

... to look down from a high window upon some vulgar turmoil in the street was not only a physical but a comfortably symbolic action. (181)

When the two crowds merge, however, Lorna is in the car and thus on the same level as the mass, and it is then that she feels 'for one second a spasm of something which was almost fear' (219).

This fear is realised when Lorna's brother Arthur becomes unintentionally involved in the riot. Arthur is the unmistakable villain of the novel, embodying everything against which the narrative's ethical agenda is cast. He is an abusive husband, a wealthy capitalist, and ascribes to a dogmatic individualism. His wife Winifred recounts her failed attempt to involve him in an attempt to protect a patch of trees in the Blue Mountains, a reference to the Blue Gum Forest campaign to prevent logging in the Blue Mountains, which Dark and her husband Eric supported (Carson 191). Arthur is dismissive: if there is no financial benefit for himself, then what would be the point of protecting the trees? These failings have their punishment on the streets of the city, which are now in control of the mass. As a man who believes himself to be free of links to the rest of humanity, when he is swept up in the crowd, after leaving his club on George Street, Arthur finds his 'confidence ... which was rightly his by virtue of his wealth' at an 'ebb' (263, 265). Fearing the challenge posed to the social hierarchy supporting his authority, Arthur feels 'not only personal danger, but danger to all his jealously guarded world' (294). This realisation is radically destabilising, a moment in which,

... he had been forced to realise that his life was like a city which feels for the first time the ominous, subterranean tremors of an earthquake. (294)

Echoing both Marxist and Bergsonian emphases on the power of the submerged mass, in this simile—itself a relational device—the crowd fulfils the promise of the Moreton Bay Fig's roots, struggling up beneath the 'hot crust of city pavement' to disturb the ordered city landscape. Arthur's desperate desire to be away from the mob sees him do something he never does - catch the ten-to-five ferry to Watsons Bay, which will ultimately cause his death. The two events are linked: Arthur meets his drowning 'with the same ferocious panic with which he had resisted less tangible perils earlier in the day' (314). In this way, Dark's narrative has the city, the crowd and the waterway work together to enact justice against Arthur for his ethical failings.

In 1930s Australia, David Carter writes, the perceived 'crisis of civilisation demanded an engagement with new political and artistic ideas *together*' (27, emphasis in original). In *Waterway*, the ethicopolitical impetus of the protest march is linked with consideration of literary discourse and aesthetic forms. In a short reflexive scene that takes place as the protest is brewing, Lesley Channon sits in the public library nearby, deliberating over her work's literary and political merits, which cannot be disentangled from each other or, as readers are made aware, from the commotion outside. Lesley writes short stories and poems set in colonial Sydney, doing so primarily for financial gain and with no great illusions about their quality. In a perhaps deliberate echo of Barnard Eldershaw's criticism of her own work as 'carefully constructed ... every phrase is a brick in the scientifically planned and erected edifice' (189), Dark has Lesley dismiss her latest effort as 'just another example of deft literary architecture, another neatly fitting mosaic of words...' (187).

Procrastinating from research and a story that refuses to be written, Lesley daydreams, nostalgically recalling childhood camping holidays spent in 'a place incredibly fresh, unstaled, hopeful', sheltering 'where no other human being had ever sheltered' (187). Ignoring thousands of years of prior occupation by Indigenous peoples, Lesley articulates a Romantic view of an extrasocial nature, separate from the world of politics. This is an 'escape', the product of the same longing for an 'uncontaminated' land and past indulged in by both Oliver Denning and Lesley's father, Professor Channon, earlier in the narrative. Lesley is 'cheered and subtly reassured' by her memories, and begins writing (187). Thus, her escape from the realities of

the present time and place is connected with her ability to write romantic stories of colonial Sydney that do not engage with the pressing questions facing humanity in contemporary times.

Nevertheless, Lesley remains bothered by her work's lack of political relevance: she recognises that now, in the mid-1930s, her country and the world are on the brink of chaos and writers have a responsibility to confront that uncertainty. Lesley has 'a conviction that the time and energy which she was using so badly could be used well. But how?' (189). The narrative that unspools after Lesley goes out into the city to be confronted by the crowd will answer this question by forcing upon her the realisation that her life, and her work, are interconnected with and embedded in messy but unavoidable 'communal life' (121).

After leaving the library, Lesley meets her would-be fiancé Roger Blair, and it is with him that she is caught up in the crowd as it collides with the wedding guests. The editor of a failing national cultural magazine called *The Free Voice*, Roger is described as the 'stormy petrel of the city's intellectual life' (15). 'Violent and impetuous,' 'swift and impulsive,' with 'inexhaustible energy,' Roger relishes the crowd, which embodies the same characteristics (53, 76, 199). In contrast, Lesley is at first fearful and disgusted upon finding herself amongst the mass of people, feeling 'a terrible wave of excitement [that] ran round her like an electric current, a terrible pressure of bodies [which] filled her with panic and fury' (255). Despite this fear, Lesley is infected by the contagious energy; like a pulse of electricity, the experience jolts her perspective on the world. She turns down the offer of escape into the car of her rich lover, Sim Hegarty, and chooses to stay with Roger in the crowd. This decision prompts an epiphany, which is worth quoting in full as it marks the culmination of the novel's intervention into the ethics of modern, urban habitation:

The heat and turmoil about her, the reek of humanity, the ugliness, the endeavour, the fear and the hope, the brutality and the lusty humour were all translated into parts of another struggle in which whether she liked it or not, she was involved. The escape Sim offered was an illusion, Roger's arm, solid, hard like the branch of a tree, was a symbol, too; Roger's eager stare, his uninhibited welcome to life in any one of its beautiful and terrifying forms, was the real escape, the only escape, by endurance and achievement, into peace. (256)

Here Lesley realises that she cannot forfeit involvement in the realities of the present through narratives of the past that offer no meaningful reflection on current predicaments. This moment plays out Oliver's contention from the beginning of the book, that no life is solely one's own; each individual is intertwined with others, reacting to them in 'discord or in harmony.' Dark employs again the motif of the tree, as Roger offers a point of interconnection between Lesley and the crowd. This reminds us that the crowd parallels the Moreton Bay Fig roots disturbing the 'hot crust of city pavement' with their interconnective energy. Indeed, in a telling linguistic link, Arthur Sellman later claims that his involvement in the riot radically destabilised the 'crust of custom and convention stable beneath his feet' (294). Lesley's union with Roger suggests that, together, they will produce a discourse that marries politics with aesthetics and fulfils Bergson's call for art to return us 'back into our own presence', through a 'a break with utilitarian convention' that is capable of 'dissolving or corroding [life's] outer crust' (qtd. Douglass 110).

Lesley's dramatic change in perspective is foreshadowed in the library by a visual metaphor, which integrates ideas of narrative form and aesthetics with the novel's consideration of the relationship between cultural objects and ethicopolitical concerns. As she ruminates over this

relationship, Lesley draws a 'complicated maze of black patterns' down the margin of her page, but, suddenly overwhelmed by the knowledge that she is 'alarmingly entangled' with 'all humanity', she 'scribble[s] suddenly all over her careful lines and circles' (189). The 'complicated maze' of 'careful lines and circles' is akin with Lesley's 'deft literary architecture'; her doodling is produced by her desire, at this point unrealised, to produce work with aesthetic qualities that extend rather than preclude such entanglement. Furthermore, reading across the novel, it is possible to find echoes of the careful lines and circles in Governor Phillip's 'intended plan' for the city, and the ghost of it traversed by the narrative's precise attention to street names and landmarks. If this analogy is accepted, then Lesley's scribbling is the imagistic equivalent of the protect march's undisciplined, chaotic movement through the city, and the intersubjective, contrapuntal narrative voice that delivers it to readers. Dark's ethics are thus located at the nexus of symbolic, discursive and spatial schemas.

In *No Barrier* (1954), the concluding volume of her historical trilogy, Dark imagines Governor Macquarie planning for the town square that will bear his name. Macquarie Place will be 'the heart of his town, the spot from which he would measure all the streets and roads in the colony:'

His vision pictured them spreading fanwise over hundreds of miles, tying the whole land together, converging upon this point, the hub of colonial civilisation, Macquarie Place ... (96-7).

Here, Dark has Macquarie partake in a fantasy of socio-spatial control, which flattens difference in a hierarchical system represented by a network of streets and roads. From the dispersive yet entangled root structure of the Moreton Bay Fig that disturbs Macquarie's hub, to the contrapuntal narrative of the crowd moving haphazardly through the streets, *Waterway* offers an alternate vision, in which a trans-scalar approach to time and space enfolds place and subjectivity in an ethics of radical interconnection.

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