

**YOU ARE HERE: IN PURSUIT OF A CONTEMPORARY
LITERATURE OF THE MALL**

by

Emily Fedoruk
B.A. Honours, Simon Fraser University 2008

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

In the
Department of English

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Spring 2010

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APPROVAL

Name: Emily Fedoruk
Degree: Master of Arts
Title of Thesis: You Are Here: In Pursuit of a Contemporary Literature of the Mall

Examining Committee:

Chair: Dr. Carolyn Lesjak
Associate Professor

Dr. Clint Burnham
Senior Supervisor
Associate Professor

Dr. Jeff Derksen
Second Reader
Associate Professor

Dr. Paul Kingsbury
Internal Examiner
Assistant Professor

Date Defended/Approved: _____ April 26 2010 _____



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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines social activities productive of “mallspace”—a dynamic term I employ to designate a range of retail spaces, from familiar malls to pedestrian promenades and new lifestyle centres—in a variety of fictional, poetic and filmic texts produced within the last thirty years. Engaging a somatic or bodily understanding to achieve a new perspective on the postmodern spaces of daily life, I conceptualize the moving body as a source and site of social agency. I work to identify methods of corporeal activity that embody cultural and ideological structures, physically standing up against the representational problems that entangle postmodern literary practice. Focusing on mallspaces as commercial sites where literary experimentation, cultural critique, and architectural quandaries converge, my thesis emphasizes that current economic crisis and dramatic social and political changes need to be approached as individual spatialized concerns.

Keywords: contemporary literature, cultural studies, postmodern, postmodernism, Marxism, architecture, malls, mallspace, gesture, poetics, film

DEDICATION

for Dad for staying home with Jeff and me and drawing, but not any more malls and for Mom, who goes to school everyday. If finishing is for them, the work can go forward to Jeff—so keep doing it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Too many have made space for this project—the social networks of my thesis stretch beyond this first page and into each word that comes after it. But before gesturing to the countless friends and colleagues who have helped me pull everything together, I need to thank the teachers who have helped me to lay the groundwork for what will hopefully be years of exciting research. My supervisor, Dr. Clint Burnham, bravely agreed to take on a project I was already hard at work imagining, and has generously considered each one of my mall-minded ideas. I have valued his encouragement and energy immensely, as he helped me towards coherence and challenged my creativity. The title of “Second Reader” does little to embody the continued and careful attentions of Dr. Jeff Derksen, who has motivated me since this project’s inception, not to mention talked me towards graduate work in general and studies in English at SFU in particular. Dr. Paul Kingsbury’s attentions as Internal Examiner and contributions during the defense process were invaluable—stimulating important discussion and drawing out new ideas. Finally, or maybe, to begin with, Dr. Carolyn Lesjak’s exceptional class on Marxist theory sparked many of my ideas about social relations. In her capacity as Graduate Chair, Carolyn has been an unabatedly attentive mentor to all members of our cohort, stirring up dialogue and inspiring critical camaraderie.

My graduate classes with Dr. Margaret Linley and Dr. Carole Gerson allowed me to imagine my research within historic contexts and broader literary traditions. Many other professors in the English department, as well as Dr. Kathy Mezei and Dr. Laura Marks, working in Humanities and Contemporary Arts respectively, have provided ideas and conversations that have shaped my current research and supported my aims. In order to imagine any kind of educational future, I have come to depend on the close friendships many of my fellow students and study dates—Ranbir Banwait, Amy Bath, Cris Costa, Jocelyn Hallman, Kasim Husain, Tiziana La Melia, Peter McDonald, Echo Quan, Carolyn Richard, Ada Smailbegovic and Myka Tucker-Abramson are just a few who jump to mind and have been side-by-side. My mall balla's, Meghan Armstrong, Natasha Barrow, and Sarah and Laura Lilley have spent much more than time contributing to this research, and Lia Hood deserves special mention as a best friend who wants to listen to me talk about my homework as much as she wants to listen to hip hop.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge funding from the Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarships Program, which provided me with a SSHRC Master's Scholarship in support of this project. In addition, a Simon Fraser University Graduate Fellowship and Travel and Minor Research Award enabled me to prioritize my research and extend my urban investigations.

I've dedicated this thesis to my parents, Debbie Bouska and Rick Fedoruk, for reading and writing and drawing and teaching and making sure I do the same. For my brother Jeff—more than the words, the work. Thank you for being home.

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1 HERE IS MALLSPACE

1.1 Introduction

It is not the economic origins of culture that will be presented, but the expression of the economy in its culture. At issue, in other words, is the attempt to grasp an economic process as perceptible Ur-phenomenon, from out of which proceed all manifestations of life in the arcades (and, accordingly, in the nineteenth century).

-Walter Benjamin The Arcades Project 460

*I'm shuttin shit down in the mall,
And tellin every girl she's the one for me
When I ain't even planning to call
I want this shit forever man, ever man, ever man, ever man
-Drake "Forever"*

Getting there: I approach the social spaces of malls in a new, dynamic way. My original critical approach refers to many different spaces and defines malls not merely as they are changing, but as spaces that are characterized by intrinsic social transformation. By “mallspace”, I mean the various contemporary structures that constitute types of shopping malls, ranging from the malls we define as such, large buildings or interconnected series of buildings containing a variety of retail stores and restaurants, but including other shopping centers such as stripmalls, pedestrian promenades, megamalls and regional malls, outlet malls, power centers, and finally, lifestyle centers—which often shrug off the mall moniker to intensify their own innovative strategy.

My attention to space adopts postmodern theory as a social and cultural analytic rather than a periodizing apparatus, deployed with a temporal flexibility that simultaneously challenges and celebrates Fredric Jameson's claim that "it is at least empirically arguable that our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages, are today dominated by categories of space rather than categories of time, as in the preceding period of high modernism" (Jameson *Postmodernism* 16). Overwhelmingly, "our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages" are processes performed in and contingent on commercial space.

A simple, and dismissive, perception of malls as artificial, socially alienating, and oppressively capitalist does little to incite cultural or material readings of the spaces. "You Are Here" does not merely present malls as readable space, but suggests myriad methods of perception are involved in this reading, contesting the textual metaphor of space as readable. Adopting a literary basis, but assembling an interdisciplinary arsenal of theoretical perspectives that moves from postmodern architectural critique through Marxism, post-Marxism, cultural materialism, psychoanalysis, and performance studies, I trace the limitations of socially understanding postmodern space solely through language and instead, propose movement and gesture as alternative means of representing and understanding space. The failure of language to represent the spaces of late capitalism occasions a "movement towards movement", a shift in the social production of meaning I track through explorations of cultural representation in texts, spaces, and bodies. I am not abandoning literary critique,

or forging blind explorations outside of language to propose movement as a representational strategy, but rather, investigating varied systems of spatial representation from a literary basis. I weave my study and theorization of movement, then, through my readings of prose, poetry, and film, concluding with field notes on movement in actual mallspaces. This perspective effectively disrupts the association of malls with a sense of disembodiment, suggesting instead that mallspace does not merely create a means of inscribing the body through material relation and fashion, but that bodies create and perpetuate the development of mallspace itself.

1.2 Lots for Words: Postmodern Space with Fredric Jameson

I am more at a loss when it comes to conveying the thing itself, the experience of space you undergo when you step off such allegorical devices [elevators and escalators] into the lobby or atrium, with its great central column surrounded by a miniature lake, the whole positioned between the four symmetrical residential towers with their elevators, and surrounded by rising balconies capped by a kind of greenhouse roof at the sixth level. -Jameson Postmodernism 42-43

I begin this thesis in hot pursuit, taking a few steps back to Jameson's 1991 description of his experience in the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in downtown Los Angeles while forging forward towards a (perhaps post-) Marxist conception of a moving body in contemporary space. I wonder, why can't Jameson explain it, what limits him from "conveying the thing itself, the experience of space you undergo when you step off such allegorical devices"? The language of this passage in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* complicates our experience of reading, transferring the phenomenological burden

of moving through this postmodern space to the reader. Jameson's confession that he is "more at a loss" is paradoxical; he loosens his language to allow for a sort of bewildered omission, but permits critical entry into a space he has sustained through concentrated description. This, of course, is where I step in, seeking to give more language to "the thing," further linking "the lobby or atrium" with Jameson's theorization of "our physical trajectories through such buildings as virtual narratives or stories, as dynamic paths or narrative paradigms which we as visitors are asked to fulfil and to complete with our own bodies and movements" (*Postmodernism* 42). For Jameson, the Bonaventure presents "a dialectical heightening of this process"; he argues that "the escalators and elevators here henceforth replace movement but also, and above all, designate themselves as new reflexive signs and emblems of movement proper (something which will become evident when we come to the question of what remains of older forms of movement in this building, most notably walking itself)" (*Postmodernism* 42). The escalator is foundational to my own analysis of Jameson's Bonaventure experience, as exemplar in his explanation of this "dialectical heightening" and as object of critique, subsequently, in an essay by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. As "allegorical devices," these machines provide and emphasize the referential possibility Jameson presents via the Bonaventure hotel.

In seeking more words for this moment, I understand it as synecdochic or even microcosmic of a more general phenomenological struggle the moving body endures when confronted by postmodern space. In Jameson's terms, "this

alarming disjunction point between the body and its built environment...can itself stand as the symbol and analogon of that even sharper dilemma which is the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects" (*Postmodernism* 44). Given recent recessionary headlines in *The New York Times* such as "Mall Set to Open, and Worry Persists", "New Jersey Malls Take On a Downturn", "To Fill Vacancies, Mall Tests Experimental Waters", and "The Fall of the Mall", an analysis of malls as quickly changing, or even failing, social spaces is both necessary and immanent. As Jameson has astutely recognized elsewhere, "Benjamin took his snapshot of the nineteenth-century arcade at the moment of its decay—and thereby developed a whole theory about history: that you can best understand the present from the standpoint of an immediate past whose fashions are already a little out of date" ("Future City" 69). More than a century later, malls too can be seen as spaces that simultaneously aggrandize and subdue our opportunity to grasp our "immediate past", attempting to "learn something about our own mode of production from the ways in which we tend to think about change and permanence, or variety and homogeneity—ways that prove to have as much to do with space as with time" (Jameson *Cultural Turn* 51). "More at a loss", then, alludes also to the potential windfalls to be found in seizing spaces as they slip away. I begin on shaky footing, falling, failing, and forgetting, but recognizing this peril as a pointed social strategy.

Caught up, stalled, or at least, theoretically transfixed for the moment, Jameson acknowledges the capacities of escalators and elevators to challenge the spatio-experiential abilities of the users the hotel space. His critique of these machines appears in “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” in *New Left Review* (1984) and *Postmodernism* (1991) and later, in “Postmodernism and Consumer Society” (1998). The site under study is architect and developer John Portman’s Westin Bonaventure Hotel, located in downtown Los Angeles. These sedately grinding conveyers and counterweight systems, Jameson argues, figure as “somewhat more significant than mere functions and engineering components” (*Postmodernism* 42). Both machines, then, are not just structures present in malls, but rather, connect malls symbolically to broader social systems. In Jameson, the unique phenomenological experiences of elevators and escalators ask us to be attentive to how we move through postmodern space. He recognizes escalators and elevators as “very real pleasures in Portman,” explaining:

particularly [elevators], which the artist has termed “gigantic kinetic sculptures” and which certainly account for much of the spectacle and excitement of the hotel interior, particularly in the Hyatts, where like great Japanese lanterns or gondolas they ceaselessly rise and fall—and given such a deliberate marking and foregrounding in their own right, I believe one has to see such “people movers” (Portman’s own term, adapted from Disney) as something a little more meaningful than mere functions and engineering components. (*Postmodernism* 42)

Here, Jameson’s description launches elevators and escalators, as “a little more meaningful than mere functions and engineering components,” into direct demonstration of that capacity. I close read this dense passage as it packs a

complex system of spatial references to define the various structures at work in the Bonaventure. Jameson connects elevators to sculptural artworks, suggesting that their value within the specific aesthetic experience of the hotel's "interior" space emphasizes qualities beyond their basic infrastructural functions. Their kinetic and sculptural attributes, which add to the "spectacle and excitement of the hotel interior", allude to cultural connections hearkening from Disneyland and beyond, as Jameson associates the mechanics of "spectacle and excitement" with the modernist art practice of the Futurists, and more specifically, the Marxist critique of Guy Debord in *Society of the Spectacle*. The elevators' symbolic value is further complicated as Jameson likens them to "Japanese lanterns or gondolas," engaging cross-cultural play that just dodges appropriation and leans toward postmodern globalization. His twice-removed use of "Portman's own term, adapted from Disney," designates these components "people movers," and highlights this exuberant borrowing, which Jameson soon stretches into more extensive scrutiny of bodily movement.

Before considering "conveying the thing itself" or the machine as "allegorical signifier of that older promenade we are no longer allowed to conduct on our own," (*Postmodernism* 42) I read Jameson's description of the Bonaventure lobby as a dialogue that supports his critique as a kind of substructure—tossing the spatial practitioner back and forth between modernist expectations and postmodern spatial confusion. Illustrating the surrounding lobby area, characterized by its "miniature lake," adjacent "four symmetrical residential towers with their elevators," "rising balconies" and "a kind of greenhouse roof,"

Jameson divulges, “I am tempted to say that such space makes it impossible for us to use the language of volume or volumes any longer, since these are impossible to seize” (43). This modernist language is exemplified in a quotation from Le Corbusier’s *Vers Une Architecture*: “L’Architecture est le jeu savant, correct, et magnifique des volumes assemblés sous la lumière (Architecture is the masterly, correct, and magnificent play of masses brought together in light)”, described by Rayner Banham as “a proposition so commonsensical as to be self-evident—architecture is a play of volumes appreciated by the eyes—into which are injected the intangibles *savant, correct et magnifique* and the loaded word *assemblés*” (*Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* 224). According to Banham’s reading, “the precise nature of the rules is left ambiguous”, speaking volumes for the issues with translation, semiotics, and imagery that plague and problematize this language.

Meanwhile, the perfunctory buoyancy of the elevators across the atrium capture Jameson’s attention, and he attempts to perceive the “hanging streamers” that “indeed suffuse this empty space in such a way as to distract systematically and deliberately from whatever form it might be supposed to have” (43). These “streamers”, along with the elevators and escalators, themselves mechanical products of the modern era, break up any remnants of modern volumes in this postmodern space. Moreover, this account troubles the postmodern visitor’s achievement of position: while Jameson steps from elevator/escalator within the Bonaventure lobby, he loses consciousness of his experience with the particular people mover that has just moved him. Instead, he

is confronted with “a constant busyness,” which “gives the feeling that emptiness is here absolutely packed, that it is an element within which you yourself are immersed, without any of that distance that formerly enabled the perception of perspective or volume” (43). This “constant busyness” causes a messing up of the unornamented spaces of modern architecture, and a subsequent loss of orientation, as we become fraught in the impending wonder of what is ahead, or around. Described in “Spatial Equivalents in the World System”, Jameson diagnoses this feeling as “symptomatic” to “hyperspace,”

At any rate, all these features—the strange new feeling of an absence of inside and outside, the bewilderment and loss of spatial orientation in Portman’s hotels, the messiness of an environment in which things and people no longer find their “place”—offer useful symptomatic approaches to the nature of postmodern hyperspace, without giving any model or explanation of the thing itself. (117-8)

Hyperspace, while perhaps characterized by this lack of “model or explanation,” begs examination of the potential for language to account for postmodern spatial experience.

In my deconstruction of his argument, Jameson seems almost to sacrifice the structural instability of the space he investigates to the culmination of his critique; after indeed giving words to “the experience of space”, he reveals, “[w]e may conclude all this by returning to the central space of the lobby itself”, guiding us with the rise and fall of the elevators as they offer “dialectical compensation for this filled space of the atrium...giv[ing] us the chance at a radically different, but complementary spatial experience: that of rapidly shooting up through the ceiling and outside, along one of the four symmetrical towers” (*Postmodernism* 43). The elevators in and of themselves, then, are not confusing. These

machines provide exceedingly quick means of motion, but offer further two methods of spatial order. First, “the glorious movement of the elevator gondola” is “dialectical compensation” for the ambient mess of the atrium. As they function to “replace movement” (42), they burst us outside of the “emptiness” that is “here absolutely packed”, taking us briefly outside of the hyperspace and the “bewilderment and loss of spatial orientation” (117). Simultaneously, they track the surface of “one of the four symmetrical towers”, any of which, viewed from below, appear in “absolute symmetry,” creating the sensation that “it is quite impossible to get your bearings in this lobby” (43). Finally, Jameson realizes, “even this vertical movement is contained” –both within the body of the elevator and in its destination, a revolving cocktail lounge (43).

Reflexively, this series of concluding revelations in the Bonaventure lobby and elevators seems quite literally to “account for” Jameson’s earlier speechlessness at the foot of the escalator, or as the doors of the elevator breathed open. The language of this account though, functions to trouble its own reliability, as Jameson almost overcompensates with organizing his elevator experience into “dialectical compensation” with his dizziness in the atrium, and oscillates between the smooth certainty of accelerated motion and frustrating experience of containment created by the rising gondola-shaped machines. The machines then, start to make sense, while the lobby space is, vaguely, “something else”:

The descent [of the elevators] is dramatic enough, plummeting back down through the roof to splash down in the lake. What happens when you get there is something else, which can only be characterized as milling confusion, something like the vengeance

this space takes on those who still seek to walk through it.
(*Postmodernism* 43)

Even this space's "milling confusion", described earlier as "constant busyness" imposes its own vindictive hierarchy on its visitors, causing confusion "something like the vengeance this space takes on those who still seek to walk through it" (43). At this point in the argument, these slips of theoretical speechlessness and fleeting moments of critical tongue-tie serve as self-reflexive reminders: it is not the postmodern spatial practitioner's fault that the Bonaventure is confusing. Instead, this "milling confusion" is inherent to the space itself. Markedly, as the "constant busyness," at least in Jameson's experience of the Bonaventure lobby, seems to be associated with objects rather than people, we come to an interesting conundrum in communication.

Situating his research within contemporary architectural criticism, Jameson explains, "recent architectural theory has begun to borrow from narrative analysis in other fields" (42). More specifically, this "borrowing" involves an "attempt to see our physical trajectories through such buildings as visual narratives or stories, as dynamic paths and narrative paradigms which we visitors are asked to fulfil and to complete with our own bodies and movements" (42). Michel de Certeau's "Walking in the City", published in English in *The Practice of Everyday Life* in 1984, suggests "[t]he act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered" (97). Jeff Derksen, quoting Jameson's recognition of "[t]he appetite for architecture today", which "must be in reality an appetite for something else", posits that "[t]his something else, it turns out, is text" (117). Derksen argues that the "textual turn" has

promoted postmodern practices through which “it has been relatively easy, even inviting, to read cultures, nations, history, the body, landscape, and architecture as texts” (117). Understanding “architecture as narrative (building on Todorov’s structuralist gem, *The Grammar of Narrative*) ultimately deflects a reading of architecture itself, as architecture must be textualized—rendered into *something else*—in order to be read” (117).

Thus, a central aim of my project is to loosen this binary spatial reading, troubling de Certeau and Co. At the same time, however, acknowledgement of any “attempt to see our physical trajectories through such buildings as visual narratives” is involved in every movement, gestural or theoretical, outside of a textual reading of space. As Jameson describes, postmodern space already tests these trajectories:

In the Bonaventure, however, we find a dialectical heightening of this process: it seems to me that the escalators and elevators here henceforth replace movement but also, and above all, designate themselves as new reflexive signs and emblems of movement proper (something which will become evident when we come to the question of what remains of older forms of movement in this building, most notably walking itself). (42)

The Bonaventure Hotel, Jameson argues, subverts the syntax of this “dynamic path,” in which built space already expects us “to fulfil and to complete with our own bodies and movements.” The “*dialectical* heightening of this process” (emphasis added) imposed by postmodern space necessitates a negotiation of dual forces: our internal motives and understanding of our own movement against the mechanical motion of “the escalators and elevators” which, among other spatial forces, “replace movement.” This process of negotiation is akin to

reading as it asks the practitioner to substitute their subjective preconceptions with external physical influence. “Above all,” Jameson concludes, these people movers “designate themselves as new reflexive signs and emblems of movement proper.” It is through this self-reflexivity that this paradigm becomes most intensely postmodern. Rather than transcribing linear narratives, breaking from modernism, the postmodern body in motion follows texts of collage and fragmentation. Furthermore, moving away from the freer *flâneur* and its modernist connotations, Jameson describes,

Here the narrative stroll has been underscored, symbolized, reified, and replaced by a transportation machine which becomes the allegorical signifier of that older promenade we are no longer allowed to conduct on our own: and this is a dialectical intensification of the autoreferentiality of all modern culture, which tends to turn upon itself and designate its own cultural production as its content. (42)

As “allegorical signifier[s]” of walking, “that older promenade,” elevators and escalators engage in postmodern “autoreferentiality,” calling their own movement to question. Through another process of “dialectical intensification,” Jameson suggests that this self-reflexivity should cause us, as users of the space, to acknowledge the limitation these machines impose on personal pedestrian motion, and, by extension, social agency. He recognizes the capacity of postmodern literary devices—dependent on processes of underscoring, symbolization, and replacement—in tandem with a Marxist notion of reification, developed by Georg Lukács, to define the structural processes that set these machines in physical, and theoretical, motion.

Later, in “Spatial Equivalents in the World System,” Jameson adds another literary term, “reference,” to this dialogue, arguing, “In Portman therefore, reference—the traditional room, the traditional language and category—is brutally disassociated from the newer postmodern space of the euphoric central lobby and left to etiolate and dangle slowly in the wind” (*Postmodernism* 120). This “disassociation” proves that our negotiation of postmodern space is not an easy read. Jameson contends we begin “rewriting” with

questions of minimal units: the words of built space, or at least its substantives, would seem to be rooms, categories which are syntactically or syncategorematically related and articulated by the various spatial verbs and adverbs—corridors, doorways, and staircases, for example—modified in turn by adjectives in the form of paint and furnishings, decoration and ornament... (105)

These sentences, in turn, “are read by readers whose bodies fill the various shifter-slots and subject-positions” (105). Derksen reads this “grammar of architecture as narrative” as it presents rooms, corridors and hallways as “articulating verbs and adverbs and architectural details [as] adjectives which modify the space. These ‘sentences’ of built space then read from a grammatical and syntactical position by a reader/dweller of the entire built space (or text/architecture) is located within the urban” (117). I add, being as Jameson’s experiential features of postmodern space include “the strange new feeling of an absence of inside and outside, the bewilderment and loss of spatial orientation in Portman’s hotels, the messiness of an environment in which things and people no longer find their ‘place’”, the “shifter-slots” become shiftier, the “subject-positions” slipperier (117-8). These social effects are contingent on a spatial scenario in which Jameson argues “the traditional room could be seen as some

feeble, ultimate, tenuous reference, or as the last stubborn, truncated core of a referent in the process of wholesale dissolution and liquidation” (119). In the Bonaventure, however, Jameson “believe[s] nothing like this can be shown...unless it be the now marginalized apparatus of the traditional hotel: the wings and stories of claustrophobic and uncomfortable bedrooms hidden away in the towers”, themselves “brutally disassociated from the newer postmodern space of the euphoric central lobby, and left to etiolate and dangle slowly in the wind” (119-120). How do we occupy spaces as they “etiolate and dangle”? Or, if Jameson suggests “it seems clear that for the newer aesthetic the representation of space itself has come to be felt as incompatible with the representation of the body: a kind of aesthetic division of labour far more pronounced than in any of the earlier generic conceptions of landscape, and a most ominous symptom indeed”, are we meant to give into the spatial vengeance, giving up, and sacrificing our perceptual abilities to the success of contemporary architectural forms and syntax? Jameson’s “principal point”, “that this latest mutation in space—postmodern hyperspace—has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world” should be enough to make us want to quit, to exit space, or stay still (44). As “bodies bereft of coordinates”, what are we to do? (48)

1.3 Really Now: Ideological Illusion in Postmodern Space

My efforts at answering these queries, established by Jameson in *Postmodernism* and stretched across my own analysis, assume the body as a

basis for social relations, and root this premise in early Marxian theory. In *The German Ideology*, Marx identifies that “[m]en are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc.—real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms” (154). Further, we are “definite individuals who are productively active in a definitive way enter into these definite social and political relations” (154). As Marx continues,

The social structure and the State are continually evolving out of the life process of definite individuals, but of individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people’s imagination, but as they *really* are; ie. as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independent of their will. (154)

In this passage, the extension of the actions of “definite individuals who are productively active in a definitive way” as they “enter into these definite social and political relations” suggests an immediate and direct correlation among active individuals and social structure. Marx’s distinction between “individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people’s imagination, but as they *really* are; ie. as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independent of their will” leads to a post-Marxist interrogation of just what “they *really* are” *really is*, and thus I seek methods of locating these “real, active men [and women],” understanding a “definite development of their productive forces” as seen, felt, and executed in space through movement. In identifying methods of corporeal activity that embody cultural and ideological structures, my analysis physically stands up against the “new aesthetic mode[s]” Jameson problematizes as

reflective of the “waning of our historicity, of our lived possibility of experiencing history in some active way” (*Postmodernism* 21). Particularly in conceptualizing social space, understanding the experience of our bodies advances a representational strategy that is simultaneously “lived” and “active”, wrestling with Jameson’s admission that “we seem increasingly incapable of fashioning representations of our own current experience” (21). “[O]ur own current experience”, nearly twenty years after the publication of *Postmodernism*, is characterized by economic crisis and dramatic social and political changes that need to be approached as individual spatialized concerns.

With current spatial experiences in mind, I extend my close reading of the “incapa[city]” Jameson describes, “of fashioning representations of our own current experience,” or of “conveying the thing itself, the experience of space you undergo when you step off such allegorical devices into the lobby or atrium”, (*Postmodernism* 45), to further dialogue with Marx and Slavoj Žižek. Reading Žižek, the “incapacity” is not merely a moment of misrepresentation or false consciousness, but rather, a moment of “ideological mystification” which is necessary for the reproduction of reality (Žižek 25). Referring to a “classic concept of ideology as ‘false consciousness’”, “developed by the Frankfurt School, for example,” Žižek explains: “it is not just a question of seeing things (that is, social reality) as they ‘really are,’ of throwing away the distorting spectacles of ideology; the main point is to see how the reality itself cannot reproduce itself without this so-called ideological mystification” (25). However, Žižek muses, as we discover “the paradox of a being which can reproduce itself

only in so far as it is misrecognized and overlooked: the moment we see it 'as it really is', this being dissolves itself into nothingness or, more precisely, it changes into another kind of reality", then "we must avoid the simple metaphors of demasking, of throwing away the veils which are supposed to hide the naked reality" (25). He asks, "[d]oes this concept of ideology as a naïve consciousness still apply to today's world?" (25), and I echo, how are the "naked realit[ies]" of postmodern space in general, and mallspace in particular, veiled, misrecognized, and reproduced by ideology?

For Žižek, the process of reconciling these ideological issues necessitates a return to analysis of "the genesis of the commodity-form itself. It is not sufficient to reduce the form to the essence, to the hidden kernel, we must also examine the process—homologous to the 'dream-work'—by means of which the concealed content assumes such a form" (9). As in Freudian dreamwork, the unconscious meanings of symbols are actively concealed by the symbols themselves, so a commodity's realization must not be written off as magic or mystery. Rather, we must pay attention (and I use "written off" and "pay" with economic puns intended) to the processes involved in this symbolization.

Observing the exchange of money as "pure abstract movement which leaves totally intact the concrete-sensual properties of the object caught in movement"

(11) with reference to Alfred Sohn-Rethel, Žižek explains:

During the act of exchange, individuals proceed as 'practical solipsists', they misrecognize the socio-synthetic function of exchange: that is the level of the 'real abstraction' as the form of socialization of private production through the medium of the market...Such a misrecognition is the *sine qua non* of the effectuation of an act of exchange—if the participants were to take

note of the dimension of 'real abstraction', the 'effective act of exchange would no longer be possible... (14)

As Sohn-Rethel describes, “[o]ne could say that the abstractness of their action is beyond realization of the actors because their very consciousness stands in their way” (qtd. in Žižek 15). For these “‘practical solipsists’”, the exchange creates an effect that develops out of the Marxist alienation of labour:

consciousness of our life-activity fades, and we lose our ability to “duplicate ourselves” actively. However, Žižek explains, “[s]uch a misrecognition is the *sine qua non* of the effectuation of an act of exchange—if the participants were to take note of the dimension of 'real abstraction', the 'effective act of exchange would no longer be possible”. As Sohn-Rethel elaborates, it is human consciousness that “stands in their way.” Capitalist exchange involves a compulsory loss of consciousness through the alienation of labour. But Žižek suggests that the exchange is not merely contingent on a hopeless dwindling of consciousness, rather:

This misrecognition brings about the fissure of the consciousness into 'practical and 'theoretical': the proprietor partaking in the act of exchange proceeds as a 'practical solipsist': he overlooks the universal, socio-synthetic dimension of his act, reducing it to a casual encounter of atomized individuals in the market. (15)

We can recall Marx's belief that humans achieve an awareness of themselves as universal in interaction with nature, and that “[j]ust as plants, animals, stones, the air, light, etc., constitute a part of human consciousness in the realm of theory... so too in the realm of practice they constitute a part of human life and human activity” (75). Žižek suggests that during the act of exchange, a “fissure” develops within consciousness, distancing the 'practical and 'theoretical'. While Marx

understood the estrangement of humans from the species being as arising from an estrangement from nature—a severing of contact with these elements as *both* scientific, artistic, and spiritual “nourishment” as well as “part of human life and human activity”—Žižek concludes that in our practical behaviours of exchange, we “overloo[k] the universal, socio-synthetic dimension of [our] act”. Invoking a fundamental Marxist concept, Žižek’s formulation suggests losing a sense of species being in our neglect of imagined social connections. “This ‘repressed’ *social* dimension,” Žižek explains, “emerges thereupon in the form of its contrary—as universal Reason turned towards the observation of nature (the network of categories of ‘pure reason’ as the conceptual frame of the natural sciences)” (15). It is through this formal ‘trick’—the repressed social dimension of our act appears as “Reason turned towards the observation of nature”—that we forge a connection with our capitalist reality: a connection that is characterized by disconnection and misrecognition.

Recall how Jameson’s “principle point” in examination of the Bonaventure Hotel in *Postmodernism* argues for the realization of this disconnection and misrecognition in proprioceptive terms:

that this alarming disjunction point between the body and its built environment—which is to the original bewilderment of modernism as the velocities of the spacecraft to those of the automobile—can itself stand as symbol and analogon of that even sharper dilemma which is the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects. (44)

Jameson characterizes this “sharper dilemma” spatially—and here we can recall that he proposes “it is at least empirically arguable that our daily life, our psychic

experiences, our cultural languages, are today dominated by categories of space rather than categories of time, as in the preceding period of high modernism” (16)—and recognizes that “[o]f all the arts, architecture is the closest constitutively to the economic” (5). This “alarming disjunction point between the body and its built environment” is central to my analysis, and needs to be addressed in relation to Žižek’s “crucial paradox of this relationship between the social effectivity of the commodity exchange and the ‘consciousness of it’” (15). Žižek explains this “crucial paradox” in “a concise formulation by Sohn-Rethel—‘this non-knowledge of the reality is part of its very essence’” (15). Žižek continues:

the social effectivity of the exchange process is a kind of reality which is possible only on condition that the individuals partaking in it are *not* aware of its proper logic; that is a kind of reality *whose very ontological consistency implies a certain non-knowledge of its participants*—if we come to ‘know too much’, this reality would dissolve itself. (15)

If “the social effectivity of the exchange process” is made possible “only on condition that the individuals partaking in it are *not* aware of its proper logic,” then the social reality faced by the body within “the extraordinary flowering of the new postmodern architecture,” construction “grounded in the patronage of multinational business, whose expansion and development is strictly contemporaneous with it” presents the mobile participant in that space with a very similar conundrum (Jameson *Postmodernism* 5). Merely inhabiting, using, or moving through postmodern architecture requires a certain embodied knowledge of the same “social effectivity” at work in the capitalist exchange process. Yet this ‘embodied knowledge’ is paradoxical, as learned and developed within “a kind of

reality whose very ontological consistency implies a certain non-knowledge of its participants.” Žižek clarifies,

This is probably the fundamental dimension of ‘ideology,’: ideology is not simply a ‘false consciousness’, an illusory representation of reality, it is rather this reality itself which is already to be conceived as ‘ideological’—*‘ideological’ is a social reality whose very existence implies the non-knowledge of its participants as to its essence*—that is, the very reproduction of which implies that these individuals ‘do not know what they are doing’. (15-16)

Understanding “‘ideological’” as a “social reality whose very existence implies the non-knowledge of its participants as to its essence,” Jameson’s “loss when it comes to conveying the thing itself” (*Postmodernism* 42) and “the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects” cannot be understood as merely fraught by false consciousness or misrepresentation (*Postmodernism* 44). As Žižek confirms, “*‘Ideological’ is not the ‘false consciousness’ of a (social) being but this being itself in so far as it is supported by ‘false consciousness’*” (16). We can imagine ideological embodiment as it affects this social being, who, “supported by ‘false consciousness,’ moves off the Bonaventure’s escalator, or out of the elevator, and into the lobby.

At a structural linguistic level, reading the word *symptom* continually draws us back to the body. Yet as Žižek explains, there is no direct somatic connection to rely on here: “one of [the symptom’s] possible definitions would also be ‘a formation whose very consistency implies a certain non-knowledge on the part of the subject’: the subject can ‘enjoy his symptom’ only in so far as its logic

escapes him—the measure of the success of its interpretation is precisely its dissolution” (16). Defining the Marxian symptom in conjunction with ideological illusion, Žižek, through Lacan, suggests that Marx “ ‘invented the symptom...by means of detecting a certain fissure, an asymmetry, a certain ‘pathological’ imbalance which belies the universalism of the bourgeois ‘rights and duties’” (16). Here, the symptomal, or “pathological” effects of “a certain fissure, an asymmetry” influence the body as a social site in connection with broader ideological forces. “This imbalance,” Žižek describes, “far from announcing the ‘imperfect realization of these universal principles—that is, an insufficiency to be abolished by further development—functions as their constitutive moment: the symptom is, strictly speaking, a particular element which subverts its own universal foundation, a species subverting its own genus” (16). This definition engages Marx’s concept of species being through which “in practice and in theory [a human] adopts the species as his object” and “treats himself as the actual, living species; because he treats himself as a *universal* and therefore a free being” and thus becomes a species being (Marx 75). The “certain fissure” which produces the symptom does not mean a human’s consciousness of themselves as a universal being is incorrect, but suggests that this universalism is contingent upon the existence of such a fissure. That this “‘pathological imbalance’...belies the universalism of the bourgeois rights and duties” suggests a dynamic of internal subversion in which an individual’s treatment of themselves as universal depends on the denial of that universal status. This constitutive moment happens over and over again, because, as Žižek explains, “[t]he very

concept of ideology implies a kind of basic, constitutive *naïveté*: the misrecognition of its own presuppositions, of its own effective conditions, a distance, a divergence between so-called social reality and our distorted representation, our false consciousness of it” (24). This constitution, I argue, is carried out spatially through movement. A “distance, a divergence between so-called social reality and our distorted representation” happens in any space, at the foot of every escalator, and each time we take a step.

1.4 For They Know Not What They Move: Towards an Alternative Method of Spatial Representation

Our question is: Does this concept of ideology as a naïve consciousness still apply to today's world? Is it still operating today? -Žižek 25

Following these questions of ideological currency, Žižek urges, “the distinction between *symptom* and *fantasy* must be introduced in order to show how the idea that we live in a post-ideological society proceeds a little too quickly” and suggests, while deflating the “classic concept” of ideological mystification, “[i]f we want to grasp this dimension of fantasy, we must return to the Marxian formula ‘they do not know it, but they are doing it’” (27). As he describes, “[t]he most elementary definition of ideology is probably the well-known phrase from Marx’s *Capital*: ‘*Sie wissen das nicht, aber sie tun es*’—‘they do not know it, but they are doing it’,” as opposed to the properly Žižekian fetishistic disavowal of ‘*je sais bien, mais...* (I know very well, but...)’ (24). While I insist the “so-called ideological mystification” and the ‘not knowing’ that exists within the ‘doing’ can be accessed and grasped through movement, Žižek is also

concerned with locating or spatializing ideological action. In attempting to perceive ideological fantasy, he asks, “where is the place of ideological illusion, in the ‘*knowing*’ or in the ‘*doing*’ in the reality itself?” (27). Observing the social activity of monetary exchange, Žižek suggests that “the illusion is not on the side of knowledge, it is already on the side of reality itself, of what the people are doing”: people who use money are “*acting* as if money, in its material reality, is the immediate embodiment of wealth as such” (28-30). He concludes: “[t]he illusion is therefore double: it consists of overlooking the illusion which is structuring our real, effective relationship to reality. And this overlooked, unconscious illusion is what may be called the *ideological fantasy*” (30). Human consciousness accounts for, and is aware of, its own estrangement through labour—from nature, or even from selfhood. Žižek reformulates: “if the place of the illusion is in the reality of doing itself, then this formula can be read in quite another way: ‘they know that they are following an illusion, but still, they are doing it’” (30). This “but still” is anything but, well, *still*. Žižek argues that even with an awareness of ideological illusion, people continue with human activity, moving past the fissure in consciousness and past the representational struggle Jameson endures.

Returning to the initial cultural object under analysis, Portman’s Westin Bonaventure, before introducing two mallspaces represented in texts, invites efforts to locate the “place of illusion” within a built structure. Introducing us to this space, Jameson explains,

We do not yet possess the perceptual equipment to match this new hyperspace, as I will call it, in part because our perceptual habits

were formed in that older kind of space I have called the space of high modernism. The newer architecture therefore—like many of the other cultural products I have evoked in the preceding remarks—stands as something like an imperative to grow new organs, to expand our sensorium and our body to some new, yet unimaginable, perhaps ultimately impossible, dimensions. (*Postmodernism* 38-9)

Is this “imperative to grow new organs” ideological? Certainly. The practices and activities we will choreograph and endure in an effort to meet this “imperative” and participate in this “new hyperspace” will develop as we “don’t know it, but [we’re] doing it” (Žižek 30). Jameson identifies one such activity that comes into being in the Bonaventure, “with a certain number of other characteristic postmodern buildings” (*Postmodernism* 40). He describes: “the Bonaventure aspires to being a total space, a complete world, a kind of miniature city; to this new total space, meanwhile, corresponds a new collective practice, a new mode in which individuals move and congregate, something like the practice of a new and historically original kind of hypercrowd” (*Postmodernism* 40). The development of this “hypercrowd,” “a new collective practice, a new mode through which individuals *move* and congregate,” is crucial within my proposal for movement as an alternative method of spatial representation (emphasis added). Jameson’s conception of the hypercrowd emphasizes movement and congregation as simultaneous social activities, and thus provokes an understanding of movement as social practice that creates, connects, and challenges the “total space[s]” of postmodernity.

But any voice speaking of, and out of, these “total spaces” is but one voice of many in any hypercrowd. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak troubles the “conflation

of poststructuralism and postmodernism” executed by Jameson in “Postmodernism”, “consider[ing] the history of the present as differentiating event: code name ‘our culture’” (312-3). Extending from this “conflation”, Spivak “share[s] the contradictions in this text”, the first of which is “a desire to obliterate the subject-position implied by our everyday as we speak about ‘our world’” (313). Spivak continues,

For Jameson’s text to make sense, the reader must fill a subject-position referring at least to State, Institution, Hero-ritual, construction of the object of investigation: distinguished U.S. professor of the humanities with a considerable radical reputation commenting on the postmodern cultural dominant: one of the new nomads.” (313)

For Spivak, reading “Postmodernism”, and furthermore, understanding the term *postmodernism* as a cultural dominant necessitates a clichéd ‘stepping into Jameson’s shoes’—fulfilling a privileged white, male subject position in order to grasp the “empirica[!]” argument “that *our* daily life, *our* psychic experience, *our* cultural languages, are today dominated by space rather than by categories of time, as in the preceding period of high modernism proper” (Jameson qtd. in Spivak 313, emphasis Spivak’s). In calling for a closer attention to movement as Jameson teeters on the edges of new postmodern space, I necessarily engage Spivak’s contentions, though I do not have the theoretical space to expound each of them here.

Centrally, Spivak identifies a “contradiction between desire (for rupture) and performance (of repetition)” as an impediment throughout “Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism”. Spivak suggests this contradiction “becomes most productive where Jameson is most brilliant, in the analysis of the

Bonaventure hotel in Los Angeles” (317-18). As I have done, she initiates her critique with a close reading of Jameson’s experience and description of the Bonaventure escalators. Quoting a statement she identifies as Jameson’s “thesis” on the hotel as “a dialectical intensification of the auto-referentiality of all of modern culture,” Spivak finds a contradiction in that Jameson “interprets it as an ‘allegorical signifier of...[an] older promenade’ and, of course, a ‘miniature city’, as script is supposed to be a miniaturization of an absent speech” (Jameson qtd. in Spivak 318). She fails to make a distinction between Jameson’s description of the entire hotel, as a total space—“a kind of miniature city” (*Postmodernism* 40)—and the escalators themselves: “a transportation machine which becomes the allegorical signifier of that older promenade we are no longer allowed to conduct on our own” (*Postmodernism* 42). Rather, she suggests that when Jameson discusses the escalators “this contradiction reduces itself to absurdity”, as the escalator, as “*allegorical signifier* of that older promenade...is a dialectical intensification of the *autoreferentiality* of all modern culture, which tends to turn upon itself and designate its own cultural production as its content” (Jameson qtd. in Spivak 318, emphasis Spivak’s). Spivak forcefully concludes: “[n]othing that is *auto*-referential can of course be an *allegorical* signifier of something older” (318). I venture: perhaps nothing *older* can be auto-referential *and* an allegorical signifier of something older. Postmodern space, as critiqued by Jameson, functions differently, in a new representational way that operates on demanding and confusing systems of referentiality. Spivak “h[as] taken such pains with Jameson’s theorization of the postmodern ostensibly as rupture but

effectively as repetition because I believe the persuasive power of his essay lies elsewhere”, but in her critique of Jameson’s experience at the Bonaventure, she might be missing the Marx. A symptomatic reading of the Bonaventure analysis would suggest that repetition necessarily engages and recognizes rupture, and that rupture and repetition work in tandem within postmodernism. We can recall that Žižek explains the Marxian symptom through Lacan as it comes about “by means of detecting a certain fissure, an asymmetry, a certain ‘pathological imbalance’ which belies the universalism of the bourgeois ‘rights and duties’” (Žižek 16). This fissure, asymmetry, or imbalance is necessary for ideological illusion, and thus for social activity. By extension, I argue, a rupture is constitutive of any symptomatic experience of postmodern space, even, and especially, when that experience is characterized by repetition. Moreover, Jameson expresses the “*dialectical intensification* of the autoreferentiality of all modern culture” in describing the escalator, suggesting that such “autoreferentiality” exists as dialectic, thus referring, allegorizing, or even repeating (emphasis added).

Jameson’s problematic relation to modernism, Spivak argues, plays out subjectively: “[r]ather than prove that the subject has disappeared in postmodernism, the entire analysis hangs on the presence of a subject in postmodern hyperspace where it *feels* that old-fashioned thing: a loss of identity. The postmodern, as an inversion of the modern, repeats its discourse” (Spivak 319-20). This reading mixes Jameson’s dialectic: none of the experiences Jameson describes within the Bonaventure are simply, or discretely, modernist, within Spivak’s definition. The “loss of identity” Spivak describes is not felt, or

repeated, in an “old-fashioned” way; rather, the subject experiences a symptomatic reaction that develops through “dialectical intensification”: relying on outmoded modernist ideology while searching for new ideological structure that cannot easily be found. Sending out a search party towards mallspace, I read for representations that place postmodern subjects at this troubling juncture.

Unsurprisingly, these subjects move not through the margins of North American cultural production, but within popular media that have embraced postmodernism, for better or worse, as cultural dominant.

1.5 Defining the Field: Mallspaces in Romero and Coupland

The science of taste and cultural consumption begins with a transgression that is in no way aesthetic: it has to abolish the sacred frontier which makes legitimate culture a separate universe, in order to discover the intelligible relations which unite apparently incommensurable ‘choices’, such as preferences in music and food, painting and sport, literature and hairstyle.

-Pierre Bourdieu *Distinction* 6

Defining postmodernism in *New Left Review*, five years after Bourdieu’s *Distinction* appeared in 1979, Jameson writes, “[t]he case for its existence depends on the hypothesis of some radical break or *copure*, generally traced back to the end of the 1950s or the early 1960s” (53). “[M]ost often related to notions of the waning or extinction of the hundred-year-old modern movement”, Jameson supports his characterization of postmodernism with an “enumeration” of art practices that “at once becomes empirical, chaotic, and heterogeneous” (53-4). In the article’s first section, “The Rise of Aesthetic Populism”, he argues “[i]t is in the realm of architecture, however, that modifications in aesthetic

production are most dramatically visible, and that their theoretical problems have been most centrally raised and articulated”, engaging critiques of “architectural high modernism” and “International style” and “the destruction of the fabric of the traditional city and of its older neighbourhood culture”. “Postmodernism in architecture will then logically enough stage itself as a kind of aesthetic populism”; simultaneously, other postmodern artworks

have in fact been fascinated precisely by this whole ‘degraded’ landscape of shock and kitsch, of TV series and Reader’s Digest culture, of advertising and motels, of the late show and the grade-B Hollywood film, of so-called paraliterature and its airport paperback categories of the gothic and the romance, the popular biography, the murder mystery and science-fiction or fantasy novel: materials they no longer simply ‘quote’, as a Joyce or a Mahler might have done, but incorporate into their very substance. (55)

“[T]his whole ‘degraded’ landscape” is prime terrain for mallspace, which breaks ground in America via Austrian architect Victor Gruen in 1956: the first fully enclosed mall, Southdale Center, is built in Edina, Minnesota. My theoretical investment in mallspace deals in the same real estate Jameson describes, striving also to “abolish the sacred frontier” that Bourdieu suggests “makes legitimate culture a separate universe” (6). With these aims in mind, I have selected two representations of mallspace to serve as critical benchmarks from which to productively read for mallspace: George Romero’s 1978 *Dawn of the Dead*, and Douglas Coupland’s *Girlfriend In A Coma*, published twenty years later. A crucial aim of this comparison is to forge a critique of Coupland’s novel as it fails to represent mallspace as a site of social change. The space of the mall represented in each work is a static space: in *Dawn*, it operates as refuge, while

in *Girlfriend*, West Vancouver's Park Royal continually offers a point of social and spatial reference for the characters as the novel unfolds and the familiarity of their surroundings slips away. I read both these texts as they represent mallspace but also as they epitomize the establishment of a new critical field in postmodernism—the redistribution of cultural capital promoted by mixing of high and low categorizations. These readings function to establish meaning not “in” text but between texts, between text and subjectivity, and among art practices.

The generic mix or breadth of objects under study posit the underlying argument that both mainstream and elite art productions—for example, mass market novels and Hollywood cinema, and later, contemporary poetry versus hip hop—can exhibit or provoke Marxist theoretical perspectives. My critique is thus also to censure or take measure of each text's capacity for critique: Romero sets a cultural precedent for popular problematization of consumer society; Coupland exemplifies later artistic efforts that narrowly copy, rather than advance, condemnations of the mall as a changing social space. In this way, Coupland merely forges a repetition of a critical rupture, parroting a dated consumer critique while simultaneously demonstrating a complex characteristic of postmodern art practice. *Dawn of the Dead*, a sequel to Romero's 1968 *Night of the Living Dead*, finds four Philadelphian escapees as they navigate a stolen helicopter above swarms of zombies populating America, or the entire world—no census is clear, but danger is immanent. Stephen (David Emge), Peter (Ken Foree), Roger (Scott H. Reiniger) and Francine (Gaylen Ross) find a suburban mall and seek refuge in a mechanical room that is isolated above the mall's

shops. Devising methods of procuring goods that, over time, progress from necessary to extravagant, and strategizing construction techniques to keep the zombies at bay, Romero's four heroes manage a semblance of survival amidst the horrific chaos. However, they are often at odds over their own engagement with the mallspace as a consumer community, and only Peter and Francine survive.

Douglas Coupland's 1998 novel *Girlfriend in a Coma* is also a story of survival: following a group of teenaged friends in Vancouver from the 1970s to the 1990s, *Girlfriend* begins with the death of Jared, a highschool quarterback, to cancer and finds heroine Karen in a coma following a North Vancouver housebreaker party and a dangerous diet. Part One follows the friends as they grow up. Richard, Karen's boyfriend, is an alcoholic young father to their daughter Megan, Pamela is a supermodel and a heroin addict, Hamilton is Pam's sometimes-boyfriend geologist-turned-heroin-addict, Linus is a transient electrical engineer, and Wendy is a lonely and dissatisfied doctor. In Part Two, Karen awakens, and media frenzy, familial traumas, and impending apocalypse ensue. Before her coma, troubling premonitions had afflicted Karen, and Part Two chronicles a mysterious sleeping plague as it kills off civilization. In Part Three, as survivors, the central characters negotiate their post-apocalyptic neighbourhood and are forced to determine the fate of the world based on their own ontological experiences.

I want to begin analysis of these texts in the midst of the malls, as both Romero and Coupland's introductions to mallspace set up spatial scenarios that

refer to key postmodern hyperspace, disorientation, and modernist reflection. Fundamentally, the difference in representation—and, I argue, critical effectiveness—in these texts is executed in the actions of the characters. A return to early Marxian understandings of social interaction supports my contention that while Coupland's characters are stunted by their post-ideological subjectivities and weak sarcasm, Romero's heroes engage mallspace to demonstrate their dynamic critical perspectives. Emphasizing the critical chasm between immanent analysis and my self-conscious productive readings, I first seize the filmic scene-establishing-shot as technical method for investigating not only the mallspaces themselves, but their status as modernist megastructures within postmodern social critiques. While *Girlfriend in a Coma* allegorizes the cinematic scene establishing shot and layers a self-reflexive collection of neighbourhood maps and diary précis narratives, Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* descends on its Pennsylvanian mallspace by engaging the modernist "originals" of these postmodern methods of pastiche. Processually, the movement of the camera does not deviate from the basic inevitability of plot development: the protagonists are escaping Philadelphia by helicopter, and thus first spot the mall from above. The filmic text does not reach outside of itself, or turn into itself, for auxiliary references. Rather, Romero's first images of mallspace lean further back towards their modernist beginnings, regressing, via a series of jump cuts, into photographic stills of a parking lot lamp; the same lamp, in a low angle shot; a chain link fence bearing a wooden sign reading "Danger/High Voltage", in a low angle shot; and finally, another lamp topped by an "Entrance" sign. The

helicopter flies into this last image, reminding viewers that we are watching jump cuts in succession rather than still photographs. Technical tension between modernist and postmodernist representation is tugged at within other varied elements of this mallspace's mise-en-scene. Most immediately, the objects in the set of the outdoor parking lot are composed of structural elements of modern architectural forms: the lamps are tall steel posts topped by exaggerated yellow orbs, the chain link fence bisects smoking boiler machinery, and the black lettering of "Entrance" appears cleanly capitalized in a sans-serif font. The soundtrack, an electronic soundscape composed by The Goblins and *Dawn's* producer, Dario Argento, creates continuity among these jump cuts. A reverberating guitar chord amplifies the swooping entrance of the helicopter, filmed against the night sky then panning in a point of view shot through the window across the mall parking lot, the concrete glowing under sunrise. As we descend closer to the rooftop, viewing the stark yellow lines of the parking spaces dotted with slow moving zombie figures, the soundtrack changes into a synthesized thumping, beating against the chopping of the helicopter, and punctuated with whistling and chirping sounds.

These discordant noises, riffing off modernist musical dissonance and electronic developments, are interrupted by the bewildered dialogue of the protagonists: "[w]hat the hell is it?", one of the men asks. Another replies, "[I]ooks like a shopping center, one of those big indoor malls". As these comments are recorded in voice-over, they take on anonymity; as this scene occurs early in the film, we are limited in our ability to identify each character by their voice, or even,

maybe, by their names, occupations, and other defining attributes. The four heroes navigating the helicopter—pilot Stephen and his girlfriend Francine, who have stolen the helicopter from the WGON television studio, and SWAT team members Peter and Roger—could easily conduct their discovery of this concrete expanse by falling into the same traps Spivak sets for Jameson, relying on outmoded modernist impulses as reaction to their swiftly shifting spatial scenarios. Leaving a city under siege, seemingly fleeing “a postmodern hyperspace where [they *feel*] that old-fashioned thing: a loss of identity”, these characters speak ignorantly, confusedly, and hopefully, about their new surroundings (Spivak 319-20). The opening scenes of pandemonium in Philadelphia present the impossibility of maintaining conventions of community and social relations as each zombie, mere minutes after being Mom, wife, child, cop, and citizen, mutates into a grey-skinned creature desperate to bite into the husbands, sisters, parents, and friends they have recently left behind. The proliferating “loss[es] of identity” happening in Philadelphia— and, we assume from discussions being filmed for WGON news reports, worldwide—produce a changed world, one in which survival is suspect (“[w]ake up, sucker,” Peter tells Stephen, “[w]e’re thieves and bad guys is what we are. And we gotta find our own way!”), religion is ignored (a priest ventures, “[w]hen the dead walk, Senores, we must stop the killing, or we lose the war”), and trust is limited (retaliating, Peter points his gun at Stephen: “you never aim a gun at anyone, Mister. It’s scary. Isn’t it? Isn’t it?”).

The protagonists' arrival at this 1978 mallspace epitomizes the problems I read into Spivak's critique of Jameson: if impeded by a "contradiction between desire (for rupture) and performance (of repetition)" why do the characters enter this hyperspace as a potential sanctuary? What do we make of the appearance of this mall, a modernist megastructure, which is presented through a series of still (modernist) images of modernist forms, within a postmodernist critique of social passivity and conspicuous consumption? From our descent upon the Monroeville Mall, I start to distinguish the Westin Bonaventure: a place where images, feelings and symptoms of postmodernism, including both rupture from and repetition of modernist effects, play out at once. As Jameson suggests, here, autoreferentiality exists dialectically. The series of structural stills repeat formal strategies associated with modernism, but demonstrate that a socio-spatial rupture has occurred. Each yellowed lamp is no longer lit, the "Entrance" signs do not signify in the same way, because, as Peter realizes, "[m]ost of the gates are down. I don't think they can get into the stores", mallspace thus rendered a commercial shell rather than site for the physical activities of shopping and the exchange of money for goods. The semiotics of the "Danger/High Voltage" sign are similarly denatured, as visitors to the Monroeville mallspace are now in permanent threat almost everywhere and not just near the chain link, except, ironically, beyond the dropped gates, or indoor fences, of each store.

These ruptures, as I've argued, contribute to the bewildering systems of referentiality at work in postmodern space *because* they repeat, refer, and allegorize; spatial change is indiscrete from its recurrence. Jameson's dialectical

dynamic helps explain how the initial confusion experienced by Romero's four protagonists quickly provokes impulses towards combat. Coupland's characters, however, "feel[] that old-fashioned thing: a loss of identity," his "postmodern, as an inversion of the modern, repeats its discourse", but within postmodern aesthetics of metatextuality (Spivak 319-20). The first mall we are led to in Douglas Coupland's *Girlfriend in a Coma* is West Vancouver's Park Royal, an "actual" Vancouver mall rendered first hangout, then burnt-out trove for looting, in Coupland's apocalyptic fantasy. We are taken to this mall metatextually, "[o]n binder paper"(27), in a "Snoopy envelope with the word 'Richard' Magic-Marked on its front in [Karen's] maddeningly girlish, rounded-sloped, daisy-adorned handwriting" Karen has given to Richard before hours she slips into her coma (13). The last paragraph reads:

I don't think my heart is clean, but neither is it soiled. I can't remember the last time I even lied. I'm off to Christmas shop at Park Royal with Wendy and Pammy. Tonight I'm skiing with you. I'll rip this up tomorrow when you return it to me UNOPENED. God's looking.

xox
Karen (28-29)

The letter, while predominantly a materialization of Karen's hallucinatory premonitions ("*It's dark there—in the Future, I mean*"), also serves reflexively, as a summary of the day's events and coming plans. Karen's casual reference to Park Royal Christmas shopping positions the teens within a neighbourhood network of disposable incomes and upper-middle class purchasing patterns.

Richard receives the cryptic note from Karen as the two ride a gondola down Grouse Mountain. The gondola ride and ensuing sex episode operate as

literary scene-establishing-shot descending (both spatially and narratively) upon North Vancouver. They had just been “pumping like lions, the insides of our heads like hot slot machines clanging out silver dollars, rubies, and sugar candies” atop “a snow too icy for snow angels”, (8) but Richard characterizes this “deflower[ing]” more portentously, as “the first small crack in the shell of time” (7). These few moments of sexual success—troublingly depicted in semi-economic semiotics borrowed from casino slot machines, supported by a loose allusion to the Lions, twin peaks on Vancouver’s North Shore—are unsettled by the letter Karen gives Richard during cold post-coitus. Soon after, dropping by a neighbourhood “house-wrecker” of a party, and forgoing food in favour of handfuls of diet pills, Karen passes out. In a later chapter, reading “a science fiction story, *Childhood’s End*”, Richard wonders,

what if the children of the Earth instead fragmented, checked out, had their dreams erased and became vacant? What if instead of unity there was atomization and amnesia and comas? There was the picture posited by Karen: She saw something in her mind—in between the smaller bikini and the itty-bitty bits of Valium, in between putting on a down coat or ski boot one cold winter day, or maybe turning a TV channel or rounding a corner in her Honda.
(61)

This passage emphasizes *Girlfriend’s* metatextuality, via printed letters and “a science fiction story”, but also through designated brand names (Valium, Honda) that extend to the economic languages of casinos and banks echoed in other chapters. This self-referentiality causes a necessary distanciation, lifting Coupland’s characters right of the map of their own productive design.

Where the Monroeville Mall became the primary setting for the characters and events of *Dawn of the Dead*, West Vancouver’s Park Royal serves *Girlfriend*

as a blip on the novelistic radar, offering a point of social and spatial reference for the characters as the novel unfolds and the familiarity of their surroundings slips away. At the center of aggressive media attention after coming out of her coma, “Karen wishes she could shop in the department stores, but a recent excursion to the Park Royal mall caused such pandemonium they decided not to repeat the experience” (153). Chapter twenty four refers to unnamed “malls”; each place “seems [sic] drained of people, and the parking lot has cooled down to near emptiness” (194). In contrast to the active manipulation and creation of mallspace carried out by Romero’s heroes, the central characters in *Girlfriend* treat Park Royal as passerby, as passive, and as past-it, when they loot it and run away again and again as the novel concludes. Thus, *Girlfriend in a Coma* fails to represent mallspace as a site of social change, failing to develop the consumer critique established by Romero twenty years after *Dawn of the Dead* played to a late-1970s capitalist context. More explicitly, *Girlfriend* epitomizes the cultural tendency to adhere to a stagnant perception of, and reception to, mallspace as it suggests alienation or disembodiment. While somatic isolation and mutilation are understood as indicative of a terrifying and abstract, or, terrifyingly abstract, notion of social apocalypse in 1978, the same social signifiers are ironized by Coupland in 1998. Rather than succeeding as GenX critique, to take advantage of Coupland’s own term, *Girlfriend* is a neoliberal copycat to Romero’s horrific Marxist commentary. Where Romero’s four heroes deftly dance between Jamesonian rupture and repetition, dodging Spivak’s identification of the postmodernist subject as a person who merely “*feels* that old-

fashioned thing: a loss of identity”, Coupland’s cast gives up this modernist ghost quite quickly, in the figure of their poltergeist narrator Jared, and with the temporary loss of Karen. As the novel progresses, each character encounters “that old-fashioned thing: a loss of identity”: each of them brought back to North Vancouver with little motivation and even less orientation. In this way, Coupland’s characters enact cynical, post-ideological subjects Žižek analyzes through Peter Sloterdijk. Spatially, meanwhile, Romero’s filmic devices set up mallspace as a modernist megastructure, but play the action of his characters through an engagement of postmodern symptoms. Coupland, in contrast, pretends he is writing to and of a postmodernist Vancouver, but in so doing, absorbs the complications involved in postmodern vacillation between rupture and repetition, and further regresses towards modernist alienation.

In dismissing the mallspace of Park Royal in favor of the domestic interiors of the neighbouring homes of Rabbit Lane, Coupland presents these social concerns as individualized, private, and compartmentalized. Romero’s characters mobilize their bodies, as the basis for Marxist social relation, and charge a fortress mallspace, assailing upon troops of zombies who, instead of exploring their own confusion, are doomed to eternally drift through it, from body to body. The unique embodied agency that develops for Peter, Roger, Stephen and Fran, albeit in differing and conflicting ways, is produced dramatically, or choreographically, in contrast to the movement of the zombies in mallspace. Despite an initial sense of common constraint—Roger realizes, “[w]ait a minute, they can’t get up here!” and Stephen replies, “[y]eah and we can’t get down

there”—the protagonists bust into their isolated service chamber above the mall. This discovery and early spatial success is established by interior shots of the mall through the rooftop skylights, one of which is an impossible perspective parallel with the ceiling, revealing an area dominated by whitespace and marble, three pillars arranged in the second floor with series of lit rectangular lamps, a railing, some stores with indistinguishable signs, and a lone zombie walking among some plants on the first floor. Penetrated by the four protagonists, the mall quite literally, and beautifully, comes to life again: though Fran worries, “[t]his is exactly what we’re trying to get away from”, Roger and Peter work quickly to secure the “keys to the kingdom,” and Romero represents this brisk achievement by giving viewers equally swift access to most of the mallspace, supported by a cheerful, if eerie, soundtrack. These first images of Monroeville Mall depict the setting as a still space, one in which escalators and fountains have stopped running and zombies amble aimlessly.

What I am suggesting is an achievement of “embodied agency” in Romero’s heroes begins with their aggressive efforts to control their mallspace situation. Armed with the “keys to the kingdom”, Roger and Peter face a circuit breaker, and by symbolic extension, their own capacity to set up their own spatial scenario in the mall. “How about a little music?” Roger asks. When he suggests, “[m]ight cover the noise we make,” Peter obliges, replying, “[h]it ‘em all, might as well have power in everything. We might need it.” Syntactically, their repetition of the word “might” indicates the colloquial oscillation between certainty and insecurity—a verbal movement between rupture and repetition, moving forward

versus hesitating in their own confusion. More importantly, my initial mishearing of Peter's statement "[h]it 'em all" as "*in a mall*" offers a site-specificity that is mostly absent from this conversation. These blips and trips at the level of dialogue in Romero's script set up tensions of postmodern pastiche and collage. The terseness through which these lines are delivered further emphasizes the divided dispositions of the protagonists, who push forward whilst uncertain and attack with one foot propping open the sliding doors. Among the group, disagreements about plans complicate their achievement.

Fran might be the 'most Marxist' of the group, as she worries about the mall as a final destination, as in the quote above and, eventually, rejects the engagement ring pilfered from the department store and presented to her by Stephen because it "wouldn't be real." She plays with the performance of mallspace on the surface of her body, in one scene applying makeup to resemble a mannequin head nearby and staring at her reflection in a gilded mirror, dragging a handgun seductively across her cheekbones. While viewers might be tempted to regard Fran's actions as constrained by her female positioning within a second wave feminist social context, her physical protests, whether sardonic about preparing coffee and breakfast without "pots and pans", or insisting she "didn't want [Stephen] to see her like this" while vomiting into a mall toilet, from morning sickness or maybe even spatial disgust, establish complex layers of embodiment that are semiotically richer and politically more powerful than much of the male characters' simple strategic warfare.

Through these performances, Romero's characters embody Marx's "real, active men and women" with more diligence, sincerity, and flexibility than Coupland's heroes. While they seem to realize rather quickly what they should do with the mallspace, in contrast to the zombies, who return to the mall, Stephen describes, because of "[s]ome kind of instinct. Memory...of what they used to do. This was an important place in their lives", the teens of *Girlfriend* gain no such sense of agency in relation to Park Royal as the novel develops. Remember that Marx argues "[t]he social structure and the State are continually evolving out of the life process of definite individuals...as they *really* are; ie. as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independent of their will" (154). I have demonstrated the methods through which Romero's four central characters "work under definite material limits", securing mallspace as a means for survival, and want to extend my comparison of their embodied agency against the zombies to a reading of Coupland's novel. So far, we have seen the strategies of embodiment Coupland arranges to give us sex, starvation, and a mock-death, all before the fourth chapter. Where the introductory movements of Romero's characters function to fill space, the early actions in *Girlfriend* position characters at the center of something bigger than themselves, of a great, abstract change of which they have knowledge but no control. This disempowerment produces a systemic emptying of the spaces of the novel, disconnecting every body from every other body, and from an ability to associate with space.

Not only was the sexual activity between Richard and Karen reduced to a semiotic matter of dollars and cents, but Richard, undoing his own point of view perspective shot, despatializes the experience by describing it as “the first small crack in the shell of time” (7). We learn later, from the letter, that Karen was supposed to go to Hawaii, but instead, she ends up in the hospital, in a coma, lost to a sort of nowhere. Karen’s coma, and Coupland’s title, reference The Smith’s song “Girlfriend in a Coma”, and some chapters similarly engage signifiers from the band’s lyrics, suggesting broader social connections via rock invocations. Coupland uses Karen’s own disconnect from her body to set up her eventual loss: Richard insists “Karen and I were transformed from the two who had gondola’ed up just two hours earlier” (15), he swears to Karen “I think you look great; you’ve got a great body, you’re perfect the way you are”, but Karen keeps sticking Valiums under her tongue to satisfy her own dysmorphia (19), and explains her internal doubts in her letter: “*I don’t think my heart is clean, but neither is it soiled*” (28). The body of this teen heroine is thus already inorganic, genetically modified by abstract symbolic references, semiotics of brand name pharmaceuticals, and sexually transformative experiences depicted by slot machines, even before she is “unchanged for so long: ever-shrinking hands reduced to talons; clear plastic IV drips like boil-in-bag dinners gone badly wrong; an iceberg-blue respirator tube connected to the core of Earth hissing sick threats of doom spoken backward in another language” (25). Locating our heroine Karen, “*off to Christmas shop at Park Royal with Wendy and Pammy*” (29), or later “connected to the core of Earth”, is a process that cannot begin at

her body, nor from the spaces around this frail form. Even if, as Karen tells Richard in her last words to him, “God may be watching”, readers are left uncertain as to where we should watch (19). Karen is worried about the end of the world, but she still goes to the mall.

Girlfriend's resolution serves to amplify this spatial abstraction: Jared visits to tell the heroes, “[g]o clear the land for a new culture...If you're not spending every waking moment of your life radically rethinking the nature of the world—if you're not plotting every moment boiling the carcass of the old order—then you're wasting your day” (274). While this might seem to be an engagement of Marxist “real, active men and women”, it is actually self-help masquerading as revolution. Jared's suggestions are about action—he suggests “bring[ing] your axes, scythes, and guns”—but are solipsistic exercises, based in individual practices of “radically rethinking” social abstracts and “plotting every moment” (274). Coupland's concluding paragraph tells readers the group will “be begging passerby to see the need to question and question and question and never stop questioning until the world stops spinning” (284). But what is theoretical questioning, beyond ideological illusion? The final paragraph switches back into first person narration via Richard, who insists “[w]e will change minds and souls from stone and plastic into linen and gold—that's what I *believe*. That's what I *know*” (284 emphasis added). However, as Žižek describes, “[i]f we want to grasp this dimension of fantasy, we must return to the Marxian formula ‘they do not know it, but they are doing it’, and pose ourselves a very simple question: where is the place of ideological illusion, in the ‘*knowing*’ or in the ‘*doing*’ of

reality itself?” (27). Žižek looks to “the classic Marxian example of so-called commodity fetishism: money is in reality just an embodiment, a condensation, a materialization of a network of social relations” to help locate the place of illusion—a process that synchronizes with the events of economic apocalypse in *Girlfriend*. To each of Coupland’s characters, “this function of money—to be the embodiment of wealth—appears as an immediate, natural property of a thing called ‘money’, as if money is already in itself, in its immediate material reality, the embodiment of wealth” (Žižek 28). So when Karen’s daughter Megan, born during Karen’s coma and now a teen mom with a baby of her own, declares, “[i]t’s a joke, really. There’s so much gold it’s silly. We huck it off bridges. We have money fights. Money’s over”, she suggests a *dise*mbodiment of wealth in the form of money (232).

A series of post-apocalyptic interactions with mallspace are meant to illustrate the protagonists’ critical disconnection from social commerce in everyday late-nineties life. Faced with a situational rupture from the world they are already disenchanted with, the characters mock mallspace, adopting this space as microcosm for their broader late-capitalist concerns. As disaster strikes, Karen’s mother “Lois was at Super-Valu in Park Royal, striding purposefully amid the store’s glorious aisles of glorious food all gloriously lit, when the sleeping began” (181), finding herself within mere minutes wearily “climb[ing] up onto the meat...the plastic-wrapped beef cool on her cheeks” (184). Awake and confusedly surviving, *Girlfriend*’s characters return to Park Royal and other malls in Lynn Valley to “window [shop]”, where Megan’s boyfriend Skitter ends up in a

shooting match with “his down jacket pockets brimming full of handguns” (193), or to “[raid] the safe-deposit boxes at the Toronto Dominion Bank at Park Royal” (241). For Žižek, this ironic stance exemplifies a false belief in “post-ideological” critical progress: “the prevailing ideology is that of cynicism; people no longer believe in ideological truth; they do not take ideological propositions seriously” (30). In analysis of Peter Sloterdijk’s *Critique of Cynical Reason*, Žižek describes these cynical subjects—figures who are embodied in each of Coupland’s characters. “The cynical subject is quite aware of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality, but he none the less puts on the mask...Cynical reason is no longer naïve, but is a paradox of an enlightened false consciousness: one knows the falsehood very well, one is well aware of a particular interest hidden behind an ideological universality, but still one does not renounce it” (25-26). Žižek reminds us, “[t]he fundamental level of ideology, however, is not that of an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself” (30). For Coupland’s characters, and for many of us, “[c]ynical distance is just one way—one of many ways—to bind ourselves to the structuring power of ideological fantasy: even if we do not take things seriously, even if we keep an ironical distance, *we are still doing them*” (30).

In looting Park Royal and tossing around Krugerrands, Coupland’s characters are engaging in the “kynicism” which Žižek explains “represents the popular, plebian rejection of the official culture by means of irony and sarcasm: the classical kynical procedure is to confront the pathetic phases of the ruling

official ideology—its solemn, grave tonality—with everyday banality and to hold them up to ridicule, thus exposing behind the sublime *noblesse* of the ideological phrases the egotistical interests, the violence, the brutal claims to power” (26). Are *Girlfriend*'s heroes, then, finally tapping into the “(unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself”? If Coupland's solution lies in “radically rethinking” (274), generating post-ideological subjects who “question and question and question and never stop questioning”, the social rupture occurs neither in the classical sense, at the level of a thoughtful recognition of ideological false consciousness, nor on the side of doing, which suggests a cynical “still doing” within its repetition (284). Recognizing that “the idea that we live in a post-ideological society proceeds a little too quickly: cynical reason, with all its ironic detachment, leaves untouched the fundamental level of ideological fantasy, the level on which ideology structures the social reality itself”, Žižek catches up to Coupland while simultaneously catching him in the act of going too fast (27). Coupland proceeds a little too quickly, while Romero seems fraught by this fantasy: a fantasy Žižek clarifies through a Lacanian reading. Lacan explains that we awaken from frightening dreams “to escape the Real of [our] desire, which announces itself in the terrifying dream” (45). For Žižek, then,

[i]deology is not a dreamlike illusion that we build to escape insurmountable reality; in its basic dimension it is a fantasy-construction which serves as a support for 'reality' itself: an 'illusion' which structures our effective, real social relations and thereby masks some insupportable, real, impossible kernel... The function of ideology is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel. (45)

This statement emphasizes the extent to which both *Girlfriend in a Coma* and *Dawn of the Dead* operate as narratives of escape: but neither provides us “a point of escape from our reality” but instead “offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel” (45). The four heroes of *Dawn* find temporary sanctuary above the Monroeville Mall, but earnestly repeat the methods of “but still” doings in the social actions that Fran describes. These constitute, in her words, “exactly what we’re trying to get away from”, and ultimately reject rupture. Coupland’s cast, perhaps doomed to repeat by making a break with knowing instead of doing, seem socially stuck, their own fantasy-construction of a new social reality letting them believe they will be okay.

Moving towards my second chapter, I seek solutions to the problems I have drawn out of these two textual mallspaces. Specifically, if, as Žižek asserts, social “misrecognition is the *sine qua non* of the effectuation of an act of exchange—if the participants were to take note of the dimension of ‘real abstraction’, the ‘effective act of exchange would no longer be possible”, I wonder, what techniques could we try out to “take note? (Žižek 14) Frustrated with Coupland’s illusory critique of mallspace, I ask, who is “tak[ing] note of the dimension of ‘real abstraction’”? I emphasize the productive possibilities of “tak[ing] note” literally, and test the capacity of language to talk into and back to the late capitalist spaces where such “effectuation” takes place.

2 WHO KNOWS? FIGHTING WORDS IN REPRESENTATIONS OF MALLSPACE

2.1 *Product* / Producing Space

So we have left Fredric Jameson, temporarily stuck and speechless, somewhere in the disorienting concrete corridors of Los Angeles' Westin Bonaventure Hotel—somewhere outside of an elevator, or at the foot of an escalator, loquaciously contemplating his next move. But what is the value in this contemplation? What representational effects emerge from our attention to this moment? This chapter contends that poets “take note of the dimension of ‘real abstraction’” Žižek suggests is the “*sine qua non* of the effectuation of an act of exchange” through experimental writing practice (14). Carrying out their investigation through language, these poets play at “misrecogniz[ing] the socio-synthetic function of exchange: that is the level of the ‘real abstraction’ as the form of socialization of private production through the medium of the market”, producing texts that produce mallspace—“socializ[ing]” the “private production” of writing through the media of the publishing “market” and the public spaces of malls themselves (Žižek 14). The three print texts considered centrally within this chapter are Marxist poetic projects that offer alternative languages for representing mallspace while working *within* language: providing me with the opportunity to consider how language flails, fails, and frees rather than simply carrying out a clean, and counterproductive, break from literary analysis. Daniel Davidson’s *Product*, Clint Burnham’s *The Benjamin Sonnets* and Nancy Shaw

and Catriona Strang's "Arcades Intarsia" explore how language works referentially. Between Burnham and Benjamin, hip hop interrupts: I examine poetic placement of mallspace within high and low cultural frameworks, undoing those very distinctions through flexible analysis. Each work helps me recognize that while it is not possible to represent space outside of ideology, poetic structures of speaking and writing suggest the means of representing reality with words can be characterized by a "metamorphosis" (Schmid 34), a mutation fraught with interruptions, silences, digressions and retellings. Movement does not offer a miraculous solution to the pitfalls of representing social space, but in turning to Henri Lefebvre, whose triadic dialectical theory "helped [him] advance beyond the limitations of the classical critique of a narrow Marxism and the limitations of a classic critique of political economy", I come closer to an understanding of space as it is represented and constrained by language (Schmid 41). These critical "limitations" constitute problems that have contributed to Jameson's stops and starts, Žižek's fantasies, and the critical capacity of pop culture in Coupland and Romero, and later, in hip hop.

Studying the possibility for poetry to overcome "the limitations of the classical critique of a narrow Marxism and the limitations of a classic critique of political economy" precedes my investigation about the potential for these critical languages to play out in everyday life, traversing high/low cultural distinctions, and roaming mallspace (Schmid 41). In "Henri Lefebvre's Theory of the Production of Space: Towards a three-dimensional dialectic", Christian Schmid revisits Lefebvre's concept of social space, reading a three-dimensional figure of

social reality into Lefebvre's Marxist critique. "At a general level", Schmid explains, "the fundamental dialectical figure in Lefebvre's work can be understood as the contradiction between social thought and social action, supplemented by the third factor of the creative, poetic act" (33). Abandoning the "idealistic conception" and "arrest[ed] flow of time" in the Hegelian dialectic, Schmid elucidates Lefebvre's work "[a]gainst the deadly power of the sign, following Nietzsche....Nietzsche alone posed the problem of language correctly in proceeding from the actual spoken word and not from a model, and by linking, from the very beginning, meaning with values and knowledge with power" (32-5). Examining the potential for "radical meaning" in metonymy and metaphor, Schmid paraphrases Nietzsche: "[w]ords here go beyond the immediate, the sensuous, the chaos of impressions and feelings" and "replace this chaos" with an "image, or spoken representation, a word" and thus, a "metamorphosis" (34). Schmid contends,

Lefebvre, then, views metaphor and metonymy in the original sense as acts that become rhetorical figures only through use. Accordingly, he understands society as a space and an architecture of concepts, forms, and rules whose abstract truth prevails over the reality of the senses, of the body, of wishes, and desires. (35)

Yet approaching this "architecture of concepts, forms, and rules" and comprehending the sense of "abstract truth" that "prevails" as they mediate, confine, and determine "the reality of the senses, of the body, of wishes, and desires" is not merely a matter of peering behind whatever "masks some insupportable, real, impossible kernel", to repeat Žižek's formulation (45). In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre proposes that a notion of "(social) space as a

(social) product” is “concealed...by a double illusion, each side of which refers back to the other, reinforces the other, and hides behind the other” (27). Thus, his concept of social space neither embraces a classic critique of ideology nor fixates on a fundamental misrecognition of social effectivity. In contrast with Žižek’s double illusion, which we can recall “consists of overlooking the illusion which is structuring our real, effective relationship to reality” (30), Lefebvre recognizes a spatial-linguistic premise within the “overlooked, unconscious illusion” Žižek calls “the *ideological fantasy*” (30).

Within Lefebvre’s first illusion, the illusion of transparency, “space appears as luminous, as intelligible, as giving action free reign” (Schmid 27). In achieving this semblance,

a rough coincidence is assumed to exist between social space on the one hand and mental space—the (topological) space of thoughts and utterances—on the other. By what path, and by means of what magic, is this thought to come about? The presumption is that an encrypted reality becomes readily decipherable thanks to the invention first of speech and then of writing. (28)

The problematic conjecture of “a rough coincidence” between social and mental spaces can be traced through the “magic” of language: “an encrypted reality becomes readily decipherable thanks to the invention first of speech and then of writing”. “It is said, and believed,” Lefebvre continues, “that this decipherment is effected solely through transposition and through the illumination that such a strictly topographical change brings about” (28). This linguistic approximation—carried out through “topographical” changes to words through the constant and inherent “transposition” required in speech and writing—contributes to the

second illusion, the realistic illusion. The second illusion is “the illusion of natural simplicity”, a “primary (and indeed ultimate) naivety which asserts that language, rather than being defined by its form, enjoys a ‘substantial reality’” (29).

Consideration of these illusions—the illusion of spatial transparency and the illusion of realism—in relation poses problems of representation and mimesis. Each illusion can be characterized not by “antagonism with each other” but through mutual “embodi[ment]” and “nourishing” that promote a “flickering or oscillatory effect” between both illusions. This “flickering or oscillatory effect” suggests that while space itself, in the first illusion, cannot be fully captured by representation, the illusion of realism tricks us into believing that language might represent unproblematically (30).

The common characteristics of this “flickering or oscillatory effect” within Lefebvre’s three-dimensional dialectic come from “the core of the dialectic” or “sublation of the contradiction”, as Schmid defines it (30). Coming from Hegel, who engaged the concept for its “dazzling polysemy”,

sublation in this radical sense does not mean at all finding a higher, so to speak, ultimate truth. The contradiction tends toward its resolution, yet since the resolution does not simply negate the old contradiction, but brings it to a higher level. Therefore, resolution bears germ of the contradiction. The understanding of the dialectic is characterized by a deep history and a dynamic interpretation of development and history” (31).

In Lefebvre’s terms, quoted by Schmid, “movement is thus a transcending” (31).

Schmid suggests, “[t]his could just as well read in reverse: transcending (sublation) means (historical) movement” (31). Lefebvre’s dialectical formulation certainly puts a bounce in Jameson’s step, perhaps catapulting him closer to the

confusion of the Bonaventure lobby, or, theoretically, meeting the pace of the postmodern synchronicity of rupture and repetition critiqued by Spivak. This “three-dimensional figure of social reality” furthers close reading of the four poetic projects that present another series of mallspaces. Expounding Schmid’s rereading of Lefebvre permits a literary critique of contemporary poetry as it enters into “oscillation” between the two illusions, or leaps off the page and into mallspace, broader social fissures, and late capitalist expanse.

Working from “the contradiction between social thought and social action”, Lefebvre’s “three-dimensional figure of social reality” develops through three moments that are discretely defined in *The Production of Space*; however, as he explains, “[s]tructural distinctions between binary operations, levels and dimensions must not be allowed to obscure the great dialectical movements that traverse the world-as-totality and help define it” (218). The first moment describes “things (objects) in space. Production, still respectful of nature, proceeds by selecting portions of space and using them along with their contents” but designates that “[f]orm (of thought or of action) is inseparable from content” (218). Schmid explains that here, material social practice is taken as the starting point of life; analysis is the first moment (33). The second moment stands in contradiction to this, as “knowledge, language, and the written word” produce social effects of “abstraction and power, compulsion or constraint”(33): in Lefebvre’s terms, “from this prehistory certain societies emerge and accede to the historical plane—that is, to the plane of accumulation (of riches, knowledge, and techniques)—and hence to the plane of production, first for exchange, then

for money and capital” (218). The third moment is “relative now, space and things are reunited; through thought, the contents of space, and in the first place time, are restored to it” (218). This moment, Schmid interjects, “involves poesy and desire as forms of transcendence that help becoming prevail over death” (33). Significantly, Schmid argues, “Lefebvre doesn’t stop at this sublation in transcendence or poesy. He does not drift into metaphysics but returns again to practice and activity” (33). While Lefebvre admits that “[t]he moment I am describing may seem abstract. And indeed it is!”, he responds to historical materialist development:

For here, at the present juncture, as in Marx’s work (or at least in part of it), a reflection upon the *virtual* is what guides our understanding of the real (or actual), while also retroactively affecting—and hence illuminating—the antecedents and the necessary preconditions of that reality. (219)

Lefebvre cites a chapter in Marx’s *Capital* which “envisaged the implications and consequences of the extension of the ‘world of commodities’ and of the world market, developments which were at that time no more than virtualities embedded in history” in rooting this moment to a concept of reality that “reflect[s] upon the *virtual*...while also retroactively affecting—and hence illuminating—the antecedents and the necessary preconditions of that reality” (219). At the same time, Lefebvre acknowledges the productive aspects of representation, or “the *virtual*”, which retroactively affect the conditions of reality. Sharing in the problematization of social effectivity Žižek explains—“individuals proceed as ‘practical solipsists’, they misrecognize the socio-synthetic function of exchange”—Lefebvre works to locate these disembodied “virtualities” among the

activities of individuals (14). Schmid asserts: “[c]entral to Lefebvre’s materialist theory are human beings in their corporeality and sensuousness, with their sensitivity and imagination, their thinking and their ideologies; human beings who enter into relationships with each other through their activity and practice” (29).

Schmid presents that it is in this “return[ing] to practice and activity” that “a three-dimensional dialectic figure emerges, wherein the three moments are dialectically interconnected: material social practice (Marx); language and thought (Hegel); and the creative, poetic act (Nietzsche)” (33). This triad allows a reading of Daniel Davidson’s *Product* as a negotiation of the same series of moments. Further, in reading for “interconnect[ions]” among Davidson, Burnham, Benjamin, Shaw and Strang, and several hip hop artists who rap about malls, I trace the relation between form and content as it is achieved through the material fields of mallspace, the “low cultural” languages and Marxist critique, and the many “poetic acts” that serve as primary sources. *Product* begins, “[g]ame, a cavalcade of desire, cleaning all. Every infection is mine to invest, lingering to arrive, levels around scarcity, bodes a forbearance. There is a direct route, access being denied” (n.p.). Here, mallspace is distorted by words, each verb twisting spatial nouns and offering alternative techniques for entrance and investment. The process I’m calling ‘distortion’ is indeed the necessary outcome of Lefebvre’s realistic illusion, for space cannot be represented and language cannot represent directly.

The spaces that cannot be represented by *Product* are a series of malls in San Francisco; this five-part poem carries out a Californian fieldwork that

engages with critical anthropology and its reflexive research, offering a poetic parallel to my own spatial practice in Los Angeles in new mallspaces. My version of *Product* is printed in an edition of five hundred copies by San Francisco's e.g. press in 1991, but the poems also appear in Davidson's *Culture* collection alongside "Bureaucrat, my love", "Image", and "Anomie". The site-specificity of *Product*, particularly in its chapbook format, which underscores the possibility for the poems to be read as field notes, tightens the connections of material, language, and the creative act. An annotation on the copyright page acknowledges that "*Product* was largely written from notes taken *in situ* at Nordstrom, Macy's, Emporium, Crocker Galleria, Stonestown Galleria, The San Francisco Center, and the Tanforan Shopping Center". In the first poetic text, Davidson describes:

If we look at the tradition, many of one thing, type is competing beneath. From beneath see between. From between see beneath. Speaking to the level of belief, which we are enclosed in, a public space. Proffering the mirrored reverse, the wrap of cloth, the big reach, actually a favour in consumption. Obligation to arrive, when to assert is to know.

These statements are spatial, specular. A productive reader can locate themselves as they "look at the tradition", glancing "beneath" and "between", knowing "we are enclosed", surrounded by "the level of belief" and in "a public space". Mallspace's "mirrored reverse", "wrap of cloth", and "big reach" are substances "proffer[ed]" as "favour[s] in consumption"; "obligation", "arrival" and "assert[ion]" appear to be methods in our own abilities "to know". These are places for the performances of Žižek's "practical solipsists", who "misrecognize the socio-synthetic function of exchange" carried out in mallspace (14).

Furthermore, Davidson's use of language smears the "material social practice" of mallspace into its "language and thought patterns", constantly calling the "creative, poetic act" into question. While spinning through Lefebvre's three-dimensional dialectic, Davidson's poetics echoes the questions of Lefebvre's third moment: "But with the development of capitalism and its praxis a difficulty arises in the relations between space and time. The capitalist mode of production begins by producing things, and by 'investing' in places. Then the reproduction of social relations becomes problematic, as it plays a part in practice, modifying it in the process" (219). *Product* "invest[s]" in places in the same way, through representation and poetic language: problematizing "social relations" and "play[ing] a part in practice, modifying it in the process". Lefebvre insists, "capitalism is surely approaching a threshold beyond which reproduction will no longer be able to prevent the production, not of things, but of new social relations. What would those relations consist in?" (219). In *Product*, Daniel Davidson rephrases: "What happens to those with too much to remove, the assortment complete?", and, later, "What happens to those with too much to remove? How many feet are needed to turn for two? For sleep?"

Despite claiming potential ownership of "[e]very infection, [his] to invest", Davidson seems unsure of exactly where his poetic project begins. "This is a guess: attention, density, tension, identical locations" This is further example of Žižekian social effectivity at work: "[a] range blocks the day, hand passing money at it then" (n.p.) Notably, while time ("day") is blocked by a vague hourly span, or possibly a sense of space ("range"), the exchange of money is rooted

corporeally, in “hand” and in time, as that “hand” ticks. Similarly, while “[k]nown is a lie,” Davidson instructs, or is instructed to “walk along, vent the limit, insist and predict, status renames”. The verbs in this passage—“walk”, “vent”, “insist”, “predict”, “renames”—move from the body outward, beginning with physical activity and ambling towards thought and language. While “walk along” suggests progress, conscious or unconscious, “insist and predict, status remains” function reflexively, emphasizing the capacity of Lefebvre’s third “creative, poetic act” to demand and anticipate simultaneously, on the space of the page. Here, in language, “status remains”. To “vent the limit” tests referential boundaries: “vent” expresses, discharges, and airs, but is also a structural implement within mallspace. Through this opening, Davidson opens, expanding symbolisms through homographs and peering out through the ducts to begin his investigation of mallspace, a social and architectural space that produces meaning in the text, co-authoring. *Product* provides me with a way to see mallspace within a dynamic semiotics: a place that, like his vents, expresses, discharges, and airs within its seemingly enclosed structure. Understanding a changing space starts from a readerly ability to change words within their own shape.

And mallspace may be the sum of its structural parts. We can recall, if we “understand architecture as narrative”, Derksen suggests, we “ultimately deflec[t] a reading of architecture itself” (117). He asks, “[c]an texts be read architecturally?” (117) For Jameson, reading space is a “question[n] of minimal units”; the stairwell, as site of so much contemplation in the Bonaventure and as “spatial ver[b] and adver[b]”, is also a key structural device in Davidson—

substantiating Derksen's query. Davidson describes, "[t]he stairwell spirals up. There is a direct route, access being denied, the unifying end of the brain stem or roof. We look, but not at the body" (n.p.) Davidson's gaze, "not at the body", is surprising—first, in its synchronicity with Jameson's escalator moment but also as it follows the glance upwards, following the "direct route" and discerning "the unifying end of the brain stem or roof". Here, like so many tangled synapses, building and body become one. Davidson's looks away from his own ("the") body within this place, seeming to stunt the symbol he just crafted, but in seeing the "unifying end of the brainstem" he proprioceptively identifies himself through space. He hits his head on the mall's atrium ceiling and again, confronts language: "[t]he name, displaced by interest, increases excitement". This sentence suggests a shifting of space, not merely the movement involved in the spiral stairway, but the paradoxical status of "the name" which, though "displaced by interest", still "increases excitement". And just what name invades this space? How does language come to draw Davidson away from the body, and above the remarkable movement of the Westfield San Francisco Center's spiral escalator, a machine with few counterparts in Times Square and the Forum Shops in Caesar's Palace, Las Vegas?

In the next line, Davidson pulls himself together:

Attention, display, and here you are, dressed in a public space,
unlike a coffin. Home is the big reach, actually a factor in being
consumed. Waiting is suspect, beyond name, date and amount, the
long cry as you fall.

"Attention, display, and here you are" enforce a phenomenological perspective on the scene. Like Lefebvre, whose "attitude towards the phenomenological

version of perception is quite sceptical”, Davidson “combines it with the concept of spatial practice in order to show that perception not only takes place in mind but is based on a concrete, produced materiality” (Schmid 37-8). “[Y]ou are” a figure “dressed in a public space, unlike a coffin”, as Schmid suggests, “based on a concrete, produced materiality” and not fraught with postmodern spatial confusion, nor left to linger in language. The next step is approached aggressively at the beginning of Davidson’s following paragraph: “[t]he plan of attack, or you, it, advancing. No one, once, glances, disgorges the phrase, excruciating as the mannequin bringing its theme” (n.p.). Suddenly, violently, language and space converge: Davidson executes his “plan of attack” at the same time as strategizing, but again falters in situating its agency, “or you, it, advancing”. Recall that in Lefebvre’s third moment, “through thought, the contents of space, and in the first place time, are restored to it” (218). Though Davidson’s situation is achieved by a distorted phenomenology and lack of social network, “[n]o one, once, glances, disgorges the phrase,” he is able to situate his language and his own affect in objecthood: “excruciating as the mannequin bringing its theme”. Language here invests in mallspace, borrowing emotion from mannequins while avoiding the gazes of all animated anatomical forms. As the third moment’s dominant “capitalist mode of production begins by producing things and by ‘investing’ in places”, this passage in *Product*, which develops, “beneath see between. From between see beneath. Speaking to the level of belief” that I quoted in introduction, establishing a free market economy that abandons syntactic and symbolic linguistic control to create new poetic terms of

reference. In *Le langage et la société*, Schmid explains, Lefebvre “develops his own Nietzsche-oriented theory of language”, which, like Davidson, “breaks with the basic premises of contemporary semiotics” (34). In this text, Lefebvre develops his “understand[ing of] society as a space and an architecture of concepts, forms, and rules whose abstract truth prevails over the reality of the senses, of the body, of wishes, and desires” (35). Considering “[t]he first detailed application of [Lefebvre’s] three-dimensional principle” in language theory provides another avenue in which to place my poetic mallspaces.

2.2 Calling All Culture: Ways with Words in *Product* and *The Benjamin Sonnets*

For Schmid, that temptation to characterize Lefebvre’s three-dimensional dialectic as a “ ‘spatial dialectic’ is nevertheless misleading. It is rather a general principle applied by Lefebvre to very different fields” (34). His triadic work in *Le langage et la société* “forms a kind of preliminary stage in the theory of the production of space, even if Lefebvre does not explicitly refer to it” (34). In *Product*, Davidson wonders, “[h]ow do I transcribe? How do I look? How do I look? How do I transcribe”. These four queries end with a period, which shifts the grammatical and expressive status of his transcription anxiety. Davidson seems perplexed by his own status here: engaging critical anthropology as fieldwork, he is doing *and* knowing, producing and representing, looking and being looked at. He is caught in the “radical” representational “chaos” Schmid argues is identified in Nietzsche’s philosophy: “[w]ords here go beyond the immediate, the sensuous, the chaos of impressions and feelings. They replace this chaos with an image or

a spoken representation, and thereby a metamorphosis” (34-5). While Jameson, the temporarily stranded spatial critic, recognizes that “architectural theory has begun to borrow from narrative analysis” (*Postmodernism* 42) and locates postmodern scenes where these “narrative paradigms” are executed by moving people, Davidson, as poetic practitioner, deploys language to indicate his consciousness of words as stumbling blocks which can “give us possession only of metaphors of things”, which aligns closely with Lefebvre’s illusions (Schmid 35). Schmid quotes Nietzsche, who wrote, “[w]e think we know something of the things themselves, when we speak of trees, colours, snow and flowers, and yet possess nothing but metaphors of things, which do not by any means correspond to their original essence” (35). Furthermore,

every word immediately becomes a concept, not in having to serve as reminder of the unique and fully individualized original experience to which it owes its birth, but in having simultaneously to fit innumerable more or less similar cases, that is, strictly speaking but never equal, thus altogether unequal ones. Every concept comes into being by equalizing the unequal. (Nietzsche qtd. in Schmid 35)

Straightforwardly, Schmid asks, “[w]hat, then, is language?” (35). Schmid answers through Lefebvre’s citation of a Nietzschean definition of truth, “[a] mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, anthropomorphisms, in short, a sum of human relations that have been poetically and rhetorically heightened, transposed, and embellished” (qtd. in Schmid 35). Significantly, these “seem to people, after a long usage, fixed, canonical, and binding” (qtd. in Schmid 35). Alert to these social binds, which stem from Saussurian semiotics, Davidson reminds readers, “[t]his is playing a game, a cavalcade of description, cleaning all” (n.p.).

Lefebvre conceptualizes this “cavalcade of description” in a syntactic or syntagmatic dimension, a paradigmatic dimension, and a symbolic dimension (35-6). The first dimension is “the classic dimension of linguistics and grammar. It deals with the formal rules of combination that determine the relationship between the signs, their possible combinations, sentence structure, and syntax” (35). The second, paradigmatic dimension “refers to Roman Jakobson, who developed a two-dimensional theory of language, distinguishing between two kinds of classification of a linguistic-sign”. Considering “combination or the context” in contrast to “selection or substitution”, Jakobson understands that “[e]very linguistic unit therefore serves as a context for simpler units or occurs in the context of more complex units” and formulates a second dimension which “implies the possibility of substituting one term for another that is equivalent to the first from one point of view and different from it when viewed from another angle”. Schmid states that “[t]his second classification of the sign corresponds to a metaphorical process and relates to a code, a system of meanings: paradigms” (35). The third, symbolic dimension “is confusing, since various meanings can be attributed to it. On the one hand, it denotes the formalized sign of mathematics; on the other, it is also charged with images, emotions, affectivity, and connotations” (36). Lefebvre “wants to investigate the instinctive, the emotional, and the ‘irrational’ as social facts”, and “aim[s] at precisely this second meaning of the symbol: that is, its substantiality, its ambiguities, and its complexity that are integral to the lived and living language” (36). The symbol needs to be decoded only in terms of “its significance for human beings in a given society” (36).

Though the complex syntactic arrangements and inebriate spatial symbols of *Product* do not straightforwardly, or banally, speak to their own “significance for human beings in a given society”, Davidson problematizes the late capitalist languages that disguise this simplicity within their own rhetoric. Section Three suggests:

We’ll romance you, assembling a model of capital, assets, service, performance and design.

Health care, where dreams come true.

Then:

Check out our imagination, pleased to let *you* be *you*.

Refreshingly modern, in the American tradition, and with computer science to increase you, a deal is a deal is a deal.

Sensuous, brilliant passion... Experience it now.

This is language that, in Davidson’s own terms, “[e]xudes an aura revolutions are intended to address”, testing new combinations and contexts, selecting and substituting, and “investigat[ing] the instinctive, the emotional, and the ‘irrational’ as social facts”—spiraling through each linguistic dimension Lefebvre describes (Schmid 36). At the same time, they operate as and perpetuate postmodern production of pastiche. Davidson’s “aura” is immediately Lefebvre’s third dimension, “charged with images, emotions, affectivity, and connotations”, even a “connotation” in itself (Schmid 36). In representing mallspace, *Product* suggests that new words might be needed, or rather, new syntax—a system Davidson develops in combination with a new ethnographic model—as existing syntactic relations with capital stir infinite sources of illusion.

But where can we find new syntax? Lefebvre's triadic dialectic prescribes linguistic actions of formal rule making and breaking, coding, and finally, and eclectically, living. Davidson engages with the production of signifiers, connotations, auras and illusions in mallspace, suggesting that spatial interaction is often contingent upon interactions with representations of spatial signifiers. Clint Burnham's *The Benjamin Sonnets* bears a hand-altered, DIY-working diagram of Burnham's production on its cover, foregrounding this production of signifiers in a spatial schematic rendered diagrammatically. Germanic "Ich" and "sie" are visibly askew, cut and pasted in roughed-out rectangles connected by semi-straight lines and dark arrows. These words descend into "seaweed", which appears in a rectangle below, followed by an arrow pointing to the phrase "not meaning but word". Parallel to this statement is "{Hier war}", bracketed vertically; these two ideas are connected by two lines triangulating downwards, revealing a subcategory of "(Repressed sounds)" as unifying feature. This drawing is not linear flow chart, but instead, the words "alten" and "zu", encircled, with "zu" supported by "finden." outside of its ring, produce inverse arrows. One marker directs back towards the "{Hier war}" bracket set, where a combination of circle and vertical brackets support "holster'n here4", a phrase that appears parallel to the initial "Ich" and also to "alten", but may actually indicate the end of the diagram's development, as a point of convergence of terms. While decoding this drawing could be very simple for a reader of *The Benjamin Sonnets*, particularly a reader writing a thesis under the supervision of the poet himself, I want to suggest that the diagram is perhaps more valuable in its ambiguity—

abstruseness that comes from perfunctory judging of books by their covers and, in the case of contemporary experimental poetics, often continues while paging through the volume.

While in *Product*, Davidson asked, “[h]ow do I transcribe?”, Burnham’s second sonnet asks, “[h]ow am I to pull her?” (8) So who do we have here, in these *Sonnets*, Burnham, or Benjamin, or are these pronouns, alternatively, not people but linguistic outcomes of the phonological translation? Subjective meaning shifts its emphasis from how the self, whether he is Burnham or Benjamin, is represented in the text to how the self represents in the text: Burnham is not an authorial construct but rather, a mediating force that determines that process of construction. Burnham’s afterward sets up a textual self in its social complicity: he offers “thanks to Max and Hadley in Berlin and Arni Haraldsson in London for accommodation during the genesis of this poem”, shouting out three Vancouver artists with transnational residencies. Further, reading *The Benjamin Sonnets* as autobiography is a process complicated by some explanations presented in the afterward. Providing an ample list of “the kind of words that emerged is a record both of my own memory & history & of the contemporary moment” in the form of “proper names” which identify a range of celebrities, political figures, musicians, and “kid culture”, Burnham justifies, “[t]hese signifiers are cryptonyms: semi-voluntary choices from my unconscious: the text is my autobiography, no, better it is the autobiography of my son” (58). But when he reflects, “what is this poetry not doing? It’s not about myself, even though those references end up in there”, Burnham here complicates his

statement about his poems as autobiography...or was it his son's autobiography...or was it Benjamin's autobiography...or are the *Sonnets* not autobiography at all, but the life story of the process of phonetic translation?

Returning to the second *Sonnet*, where we left someone wondering “[h]ow and I to pull her?”, the poem continues, “Escobar sins right / Cons Streetheart / meanwhile back in Berlin” (8). The semiotic “pull” here engages the stuff of search engines: “Escobar” demands a Googled double-check (dead drug lord or dead footballer?) but capitalized “Cons” are for me, most immediately, not deception nor disadvantage but rather Converse sneakers—surely the shoes of “Streetheart[s]” (a 1970s Canadian rock band who may or may not have worn the shoes). These contemporary references, however, demand a concurrent semiotic pullback—withdrawing the twenty-first century troops each word signifies and returning to the 1938 source text, listening to the German words the *Sonnets* say. These poems, therefore, cannot be read in a normative manner. Three simultaneous layers within the text compete for readerly attentions and complicate the production of meaning: “Escobar” does draw out a cultural reference, but it is a reference out of context, requiring the reader to work to attach a symbol or connotation, opening the text to myriad meanings. At the same time, or perhaps before, “Escobar” has a phonetic relationship to the German word and, thirdly, a social relationship to the construct of “Burnham”. We might wonder, to whom is this dialogue directed, “[h]ow am I to pull her?”, and where do reader and writer meet, “meanwhile back in Berlin”? Prior to these lines, Burnham writes,

Dirty heart fund eye sigh
Curse icky sick Tigger, under
wound her fair wend
when fairly treatment shirt
(Shrek, “shek”, shirk, shirty, sheik)
Munch near thine
Braille’s brilliant
Susan Sontag’s kaput (8)

Here is our first her, an anonymous female pronoun that is, in its first German form, a masculine title, among A.A. Milne’s (and Disney’s) “Tigger” and DreamWorks’ “Shrek”. Soon after, “Munch near thine / Braille’s brilliant / Susan Sontag’s kaput” brings Edvard Munch, Louis Braille, and Susan Sontag into the mix (8). Perhaps with particular reverence to Sontag— who passed away just three years prior to Burnham’s discovery of “a German copy” of Walter Benjamin’s *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehundert* “when visiting Berlin in 2007, a tale shared in the *Sonnets*’ afterword—this passage reads like a ‘who would you invite to dinner, living or dead?’ query. Perhaps more to the point, what would you call them?

The afterword, itself perhaps a funny addendum to one’s possible autobiography, but one which functions to locate the work within the Canadian tradition of avant-garde translation techniques, begins explanation of Burnham’s homophonic writing process. “Working from the German, I tried to find similar sounding English words; thus *Haus auf ihre Stärke hätte schließen* becomes ‘house slice aunt Hattie starkers ear off’...” (57). Burnham acknowledges that “[f]irst of all, the homolinguistic translation is a kind of barbarism, a kind of appropriation, a form of simulacra” (57), and, as I quoted, “a record both of my own memory & history & of the contemporary moment” (58). Contrary to these

explanations, Burnham concludes that “this is not what a reader or listener has to know—something I say again and again to my students & is one of the jobs we have to do is undo some teaching: poetry isn’t about ‘getting it’, there is no ‘meaning’ already in the text...” (59). Noting that many of his lines

obviously carry a resonance from everyday language, from its fragmentary nature...in most, if not all of my work then, there’s an attempt to be awake to that everyday language, to how it works, to how it flows, to get some of that down on the page, not to have meaning, just to have language. (59)

Through “this attempt to be awake” to *today’s* “everyday language”, Burnham’s translation operates primarily as an update: structurally, while working on Benjamin’s text through a kind of respectful historical preservation, the homophonic changes stir effects of renovation and renewal. Riffing off Burnham’s own inspirations from “kid culture”, *The Benjamin Sonnets* play out like a lengthy game of Telephone. Here, aural distortion and subsequent linguistic recasting are the object of the game, and the purpose of the poetics.

2.3 Our Arcades I: Burnham and Benjamin

Telescoping the past through the present.
(Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* 471)

At the level of language, *The Benjamin Sonnets* implements the past and present in a telescopic relationship, using contemporary vernacular to recite Benjamin’s 1938 narration of *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehundert* in a new performance. Setting these texts in dialogue with the epigraph above, from Benjamin’s *Arcades Project*, Burnham’s poetic process is clarified. The past, Benjamin’s own childhood in Berlin, does not come into focus through Burnham’s

rerouting. Instead, Burnham's selection and rearrangement of English words that sound like the German originals cuts through the misty present, reverberating through his own "cryptonyms", "unconscious" and "autobiography" (58). In *Arcades*, Benjamin reminds us of the difficulties of this type of "reconstruction": "[i]t is important for the materialist historian, in the most rigorous way possible, to differentiate the construction of a historical state of affairs from what one customarily calls its 'reconstruction'. The 'reconstruction' in empathy is one-dimensional. 'Construction' presupposes 'deconstruction'" (Benjamin 470). As both *Product* and *The Benjamin Sonnets* constitute postmodern poetic projects that self-reflexively emphasize the materiality of their language and their own social construction, checking both poets' capacities to perform the "reconstruct[ive]" tasks of "materialist historian[s]" illuminates their roles developing and defining mallspace. While Davidson draws attention to the development of mallspace as a cultural construct, Burnham develops commodity relations that manifest mallspace not as a particular place, but as a set of social relations. The Benjamin-Burnham back-and-forth seems to absorb this "one-dimensional" "empathy", knowingly smudging conventional semiotic frameworks that "presuppos[e] 'deconstruction'" amidst the postmodern social networks Benjamin's *Arcades* all but predict. But in its intimacy, or recklessness, with Benjamin's language via each word's sonic qualities, how might the *Sonnets* construct a productive reader who is equally "rigorous" in their materialism?

To get a better sense of the "back" before the "forth" of this exchange, I turn to Benjamin's own historical materialist perspective, presented in *The*

Arcades Project. The texts included in the volume's "Convolutés" function, as Benjamin describes in "On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress", similarly to "[t]he expression 'the book of nature'", which "indicates that one can read the real like a text. And that is how the reality of the nineteenth century will be treated here. We open the book of what happened" (464). Recounting "what happened" in historical materialist terms, however, is not merely a matter of observation and documentation. Benjamin explains, "[a] central problem of historical materialism that ought to be seen in the end: Must the Marxist understanding of history necessarily be acquired at the expense of the perceptibility of history? Or: in what way is it possible to conjoin a heightened graphicness <*Anschaulichkeit*> to the realization of the Marxist method?" (461). Identifying this "central problem of historical materialism", Benjamin suggests "a heightened graphicness" complementary to Marxism might be achieved in the form of montage:

The first stage in this undertaking will be to carry over the principle of montage into history. That is, to assemble large-scale constructions out the smallest and most precisely cut components. Indeed, to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event. And, therefore, to break with vulgar historical naturalism. To grasp the construction of history as such. In the structure of commentary. (461)

This description clarifies Benjamin's earlier statement, which reads, "[m]ethod of this project: literary montage. I needn't say anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them" (460). Both *Product* and *The Benjamin Sonnets*

seem to engage this method of “making use”: a writing in which the poet “needn’t say anything. Merely show” (461). In Burnham’s poems, “the small individual moment” which reveals “the crystal of the total event” happens at the level of each word, interpolating a pop cultural cast of characters and bounding across international terrain (461). Burnham’s buzzing referentiality, incorporating “the rags, the refuse” of cryptograms, the unconscious, and autobiography, does not “inventory” but “allow[s], in the only way possible, [these signs] to come into their own: by making use of them” (460). These words, “use[d]” homophonically and semiotically, suggest a chopped montage that represents a “historical state of affairs” of the postmodern present in its glory of “heightened graphicness”.

This “graphicness”, as I have explained with reference to Burnham’s afterword, is achieved by archiving everyday life in explicit detail. I quoted, “in most, if not all of [Burnham’s] work then, there’s an attempt to be awake to that everyday language, to how it works, to how it flows, to get some of that down on the page, not to have meaning, just to have language” (59). Benjamin reinforces, quoting J. Joubert,

On the style one should strive for: “It is through everyday words that style bites into and penetrates the reader. It is through them that great thoughts circulate and are accepted as genuine, like gold or silver imprinted with a recognized seal. They inspire confidence in the person who uses them to make his thoughts more understandable; for one recognizes by such usage of common language a man who knows life and the world, and who stays in touch with things....Offered in this way, the advice to write simply—which usually harbors resentment—has the highest authority. (Joubert qtd. in Benjamin 482)

Producing *Arcades* then, with the stylistic aims of “bit[ing] into” and “penetrat[ing] the reader”, means “[t]his work has to develop to the highest degree the art of

citing without quotation marks. Its theory is intimately related to that of montage” (458). “[C]iting without quotation marks” is, in Burnham’s terms, akin to the homophonic translation: “a kind of barbarism, a kind of appropriation, a form of simulacra that...is not much different from the colonial way in which, for example, the Coastal Squamish word Khatsalano became Kitsilano” (57). For both Benjamin and Burnham, sharing in this theory of citation from the everyday entails syntactic splicing and sampling stimulated by an “overheard at the mall” social context. In Benjamin’s *Arcades*, and in my own thesis, this is a “[n]ecessity of paying heed over many years to every casual citation, every fleeting mention of a book” (470); for me, “citing without quotation marks” means attuning myself to representations of mallspace and, more often than not, editing through elliptical spatial references.

“[C]asual citations” in mind, there are three malls in *The Benjamin Sonnets*, one more than my initial tally, taken, albeit distractedly, while volunteering at the book table in the back corner of the Kootenay School of Writing Positions Colloquium, held in Vancouver in August 2008. Burnham acknowledges the support of KSW, who “commissioned the work as a whole” in his afterword. My extended analysis does not base itself on this count qualitatively; rather, my experience with the few *Sonnet* malls emphasizes my situatedness in the project and the symptomatic qualities of mallspace that develop episodically, or occasionally, from social experiences. In researching for this project, tallies like this one took on their own unique historicity—one also driven by montage. I did not even have time to quote fully from Burnham’s KSW

reading, nor was I certain he had even recited the right kind of mall (where a bear's *maul* or a crushing tool of the same name could easily be confused). Even after the book's publication in 2009, these spaces remain obscure, and indeed, are many things at once: "squeezed", "squeezed a garge mull mall moll mills"(53), "Jedi's mall" (32), and counted: "from Isherwood to the Canada / count exhumed malls" (14). In these citations, the representations of "malls" shift around spatially: German words are Canadian places and the property of intergalactic republicans. In the first instance, in sonnet VI, the mall appears when,

After theatre disease it was
Her foxy for hut thwarted
grow test, grotesque Hi-Test-icles
either a year for diapers
or a pair of foxes in Alexanderplatz (14)

Here, temporal consciousness is indistinct, despite the montage-snipped precision created "after theatre disease" or "either a year for diapers" (14). This "year" is presented alongside its own spatialized alternative, "or a pair of foxes in Alexanderplatz" (14). "Alexanderplatz" can represent a specific space—Burnham identifies a vast public square located in Berlin's central Mitte district, a place where U-Bahn and S-Bahn trains cross paths more often than foxes in transit hubs of the same name, and mallspace users dart from street to street, stopping perhaps at the large mall ALEXA; incidentally, the first mall where I have ever been asked to refrain from taking photos (a limitation I would now deem symptomatic of new mallspace). Any social relationships in Burnham's urban scene are similarly hazy, emphasizing Lefebvre's illusion of transparency, where

“space appears as luminous, as intelligible, as giving action free reign” (Schmid 27). The disjunctive female pronoun, a certain “her” that was masculine pronoun *Herr* and is here further frustrated, “her foxy fur hut thwarted”, and connected to the two animals that later appear in the Berlin square. This vague heroine is thrown further off her mark at the next mall, where

that man is often after her
and so her shine
where the daughter don't shy
her bruis'd breas't
nicked drag in control
yes Jedi's mall (32)

Reading the last line as an affirmative response without a prior question, we might react, “wait, what mall...?” While a Jedi is interpolated and assigned a mallspace property—and here I will stall my close reading so as not to stretch my exceptionally limited knowledge of *Star Wars* symbolism—“that man” and “her”, “her shine”, “the daughter”, and most luridly, “her bruis'd breas't” are dismembered from any corporeal association, with space or with subject. Indeed, the “her” was actually a “him” in German, a “nicked drag in control” that is gendered differently in both languages and challenges the facile social representation achieved through pronouns, or even through body parts.

In sonnet XLIII, someone's subject rolls into port, as the “self barge docks easily”, not at a station but via “terminal mange mobilize Teddy Boys, Bears / pap kit *sshhh*” (53). The disease, and, indeed, the absence of ease, from the earlier “[a]fter theatre disease it was” returns (14), here kept in check, or perhaps provoked, by both “Teddy Boys” and “Bears”: a sartorial subculture and their eponymous toy box counterparts. “[P]ap kit *sshhh*” censors the check-up I'm

pretending is part of the plot here, as active readers wonder “who curs the cobbling” in this “abject abstractrumental”—two phrases which continue to mess conventional homographic relations in these lines. “[A]bstractrumental” is a compound word that comes to induce the particular soundscape stirred in this stanza: a cacophony of “park tent table fights” where “overheard is my thunderbird”—a sequence of spatial references that switch foundations as quickly as Burnham seems to pass the semiotic mike. The mallspaces here, “squeezed a garge mull mall moll mills” are mixed with imagined vocabulary (“garge”) and a slippery series of near-homonyms. Each representation of mallspace is granted blink-and-you-miss-it visibility, but becomes uniquely significant as a place for instant, and ephemeral contemplation: a source of sonic riffing, fleeting reference, and monosyllabic rhythm that attends to Lefebvre’s illusion of transparency. We can recall, here, a “rough coincidence is assumed to exist between social space on the one hand and mental space—the (topological) space of thoughts and utterances—on the other” (Schmid 28). The multifarious layers of the *Sonnets*, at the same time, engage Lefebvre’s second “illusion of natural simplicity”, a “primary (and indeed ultimate) naivety which asserts that language, rather than being defined by its form, enjoys a ‘substantial reality’” (29). We must keep in mind that Burnham’s three “malls” were something entirely different in the source text written by Benjamin, testing the “illusion of natural simplicity” as language works to refer to spaces that are not themselves transparent, according to Lefebvre’s first illusion. Working through another

“rough coincidence”, I extend these issues with referential reading process to the appearance of my four-letter word in another homophonic form.

2.4 Our Arcades II: Burnham and Hip Hop

“Hip hop is my supermarket”- Lil Wayne, “Phone Home”

“I am the hip hop socialist”- Lil Wayne, “Steady Mobbin”

Unlike *Product*, which founds its writing in fieldwork performed in several San Francisco area mallspaces, Burnham’s malls are mere mentions, just another site for speeding past. In a phonetic reading, however, we must remember that these “malls” might not even be sites, these are terms used in a non-hierarchical semantic field that, furthermore, do not function to represent space as transparent. The three simultaneous methods of reading *The Benjamin Sonnets*—as phonetic translation, or as open text that generates both an autobiographical subject and a productive reader—support an understanding of mallspace as dynamic. Like the *Sonnets*, mallspace often sounds like something we’ve heard before, but as a socially produced space, is contingent upon both individual phenomenological experience and public interaction. Most importantly, as mediated by capitalist exchange systems (and their ensuing social effectivity), mallspaces are sites for concomitant production and consumption. The short series of hip hop samples I feature emphasizes mallspaces as sites for production and consumption, but also paradoxical places for conflict and for showing off, for aggressive heterosexuality but also for the lyric. Crucially, I follow Burnham’s high / low cultural cues and combinations, continuing an exploration of mallspace as it negotiates a postmodern collapse of categories within a

conventional class framework. In *The Jamesonian Unconscious*, reviewing Jameson's footnote on "listening to the radio as 'fieldwork'" published in *Signatures of the Visible*, Burnham argues, "[t]he serio-comic designation of listening to the radio as 'fieldwork' belies the importance of this digression to the mundane and everyday" (166). Further,

when Jameson discusses "our reception of contemporary pop music of whatever type—the various kinds of rock, blues, country western, or disco"...Jameson stresses the importance of repetition, which, like Baudrillard's theory of simulation, "effectively volatilizes the original object...so that the student of mass culture has no primary object of study." With pop music, the work "by means of repetition, insensibly becomes part of the existential fabric of our own lives, so that what we listen to is ourselves, our own previous additions". (Jameson qtd. in Burnham *JU* 168)

Burnham asks, "[b]ut how does pop music differ in this respect from a classical piece, which Jameson claims is at first a 'bewildering' experience? Does classical music in this sense even exist anymore?" (168-9). Recognizing that "Jameson's model here is high art = difficult, low art = easy", Burnham puts forward, "are not both 'sides' of culture under capitalism, mass culture and high art, both easy and difficult at the same time?" (169). Like mallspaces themselves, which thrive on return visits and spatial commodification for consumer attraction, "certainly pop music exists as that which must be repeated and commodified (enacting the Freudian death drive) and hence must become banal" but Burnham asserts, "a lot of pop music is difficult to listen to both cerebrally and in terms of the body", offering "the more advanced [which is not to say politically correct, thank God] forms of rap" as prime example of this contemporary musical difficulty.

The Benjamin Sonnets represent the high cultural moment of Walter Benjamin's *Berlin Childhood*, sourcing early twentieth century European social space and language, and still find malls as contemporary traces of the fallen world of transnational capitalism—discovering the arc of the *Arcades* today.

Reviewing the *Sonnets* for *The Mansfield Revue*, Alessandro Porco confirms,

Forget making sense of the lines, there is no message—no need wondering who “Melle Mel” is (rapper who famously performed the rap hit “The Message” as part of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five) and then googling to find out if and when or why he travelled to the holy land (for the record, he hasn't—at least as far I know).

Porco, who also writes a rap column for *Maisonneuve*, centralizes Melle Mel in his reading, a ‘character’ I contend sounds kind of like a mall himself. This semantic aside supports a brief reading of the bodies in rap music's malls, providing a set of character foils that function to disrupt the conventional association of women with mallspace. For rapper Drake, who, we can recall, in my first epigraph, told “every girl she the one for me” and was, simultaneously “shuttin' shit down at the mall”, girls are granted semiotic equivalence to stores as sources for reaffirmation of male dominance and economic success in the hip hop market. Meanwhile, in “Drive Slow”, Kanye West narrates,

We'll take a Saturday and just circle the mall
They had the Lincoln's and Aurora's we were hurting them all
With the girls a lot of flirting involved
But dawg fuck all that flirting I'm trying to get in some draws

West's terseness with his female companions is echoed by T.I., whose own approach in “Swing Ya Rag” is more pedagogical:

Catch me flossin at the mall talkin to a broad

She follow me and Gucci and I taught her how to ball
3 pair shoes 4 shirts 6 rags
Chick said dad that's more in my bag
Shawty I can show you how to spend this bread real fast
Then get a group of chicks to give you head real fast

Note that “Gucci” here refers not to the Italian luxury brand but to Gucci Mane, an Atlanta rapper. In “I Got Money”, Mane’s rival Young Jeezy provides the exact name of his selected mallspace, an Atlanta mall, and is similarly precise in surveying the number of women he will approach and successfully “serve”: “26 inches Greenbriar Mall pulled 26 bitches, make a quick stop serve 9 hoes, these are my confessions, I’m a sucker for clothes”. Jeezy’s verse is also intertextual, referencing R&B singer Usher’s “Confessions Part II”, a song about a man who has impregnated a woman who is not his girlfriend and must admit this to his partner. In considering an historical trajectory, research of my own iTunes collection (presumably, more instances occur in additional sources) reveals that as early as 1998, mallspace provided a similar referent for Jay Z, in “Can I Get A”:

Do you need a balla? So you can shop and tear the mall up?
Brag, tell your friends what I bought ya
If you couldn't see yourself with a nigga when his dough is low
Baby girl, if this is so, yo...

Using apostrophe, Jay Z directs his curiosities about mallspace to female listeners, engaging end rhyme between “mall” and “balla”, a term initially used to describe wealthy athletes which now, in hackneyed use, refers to anyone, or perhaps anything, admirable. Generally, and generically, rap music explicitly objectifies and exerts semiotic violence upon women. While these dialogues with mallspace certainly perpetuate the same anti-feminist stereotypes—positioning

women as shoppers and as ‘shopped’ by the male speakers—they reproduce social relations that occur in mallspace, through the exchange of money for clothing, and, sexually, through the bodies of the spatial practitioners.

2.5 Our Arcades III: Benjamin and Shaw and Strang

“Arcades Intarsia” follows *Product* and *The Benjamin Sonnets* as a text that emphasizes representational spaces through its intertextual association, again with Benjamin, this time through *The Arcades Project*. This serialized poem shares in Burnham’s dialogism, talking back and forth with Benjamin, and executes a flexible fieldwork methodology that situates it in urban scenarios akin to those devised by Davidson. The set is dedicated to Benjamin, and its first section, “Vows to Carry On”, bears the subtitle “1—Fragments of a General Layout”, alluding, or in conventional epic terms, invoking, the influence of Benjamin’s own montage technique (8). Reflexively, Shaw and Strang bear the seams of the various interdisciplinary techniques they weave together to form “Arcades Intarsia”. Each of the poetic projects in this chapter engages experimentation in language, particularly, as I have argued, as language functions to represent space. However, Shaw and Strang’s poetics most directly, and eclectically, traverses representational boundaries by engaging methods of drawing together words that work outside of the page, pulling at threads of communicative craft. “Arcades Intarsia”, they reveal in the work’s Appendix, is not only for Walter Benjamin, but also “[f]or a Love of Knitting” (111). The poets explain:

[a] love of knitting and Walter Benjamin's 'Arcades Project inform our latest collaboration, "Arcades Intarsia"...We liken our writing to knitting; we provisionally stitch and restitch, ravel and unravel. We shape our writing in light of the mosaic knitting technique Intarsia's distinct, yet integral, sections of compositional fabric. We apply this patterning to our research into the shifting boundaries of affiliation and disaffiliation, inclusion and exclusion. (111)

The spatial practice of Shaw and Strang is thus a process that begins at fabric-level, just at the horizon of our own bodies as subjects who negotiate the "shifting boundaries of affiliation and disaffiliation, inclusion and exclusion". Like Benjamin, the poets select a process of "mosaic" in order to craft, and graft, passages that are "distinct, yet integral" as well as "provisiona[ly]". Also like Benjamin, this "knitting technique" calls attention to the systems of social patterning we endure and perpetuate as urban subjects; of course, all modes of this patterning are contingent upon movement.

To study movement, I engage Lefebvre's third three-dimensional dialectic: a spatial framework that brings these bodies into dialogue. In an epigraph quoted in Shaw and Strang's "IDR Manifesto", the group pledges: "[t]o live ordinary life in a nonordinary way" (108). The "Manifesto", published in *Light Sweet Crude* alongside "Arcades Intarsia", contends that "[t]he domestic is a rubric through which fear, belonging, security, and emergency are defined" (109) and "operates as a space for self-fashioning and contestation" (110). Where Burnham carries this "contestation" out aloud, in vernacular that reflexively challenges normative syntax and its cultural logic, Shaw and Strang ground social interaction in a spatial origin. "Like the Arcades," they explain, "our work intersects with the public space of the street and the spectacular interiors built for dwelling,

consumption, and entertainment. Like Benjamin, we want to unravel the conditions of our engagement” (111). To conceptualize these “conditions of...engagement” as executed through movement, Lefebvre’s spatial dialectic must be exercised in its vivid three dimensionality.

Recall that “Lefebvre does not by any means intend lapsing into irrationality and mysticism. On the contrary, he wants to investigate the instinctive, the emotional, and the ‘irrational’ as social facts”, Schmid recognizes that “[t]he application of this schema to *space* would now seem literally obvious. Thus, Lefebvre postulates repeatedly that activity in space establishes a system that corresponds to the system of words up to a certain point” (36). This “correspond[ance]” is formulated as spatial practice, the representation of space, and spaces of representation. Schmid states that spatial practice “designates the material dimension of social activity and interaction. The classification *spatial* means focusing on the aspect of simultaneity of activities” (36). Materially, spatial practice constitutes “networks of interaction and communication as they arise in everyday life” or “in the production process” (36). Furthermore, spatial practice works “in analogy to the syntagmatic dimension of language, denot[ing] the system resulting from articulation and connection of elements and activities” (36). My readings of mallspace thus far track spatial practice as it is documented creatively, “resulting from articulation and connection of elements and activities”. These artistic interpretations of space correspond to Lefebvre’s definition of “representations of space”, which, in his own terms, “are tied to the relations of production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose, and hence to

knowledge, to signs, to codes” (Lefebvre 33) and are “conceptualized space” (36). As Schmid suggests, “representations of space give an image and thus also define a space”, “[a]nalogous to the paradigmatic dimension of language” and “emerg[ing] at the level of discourse, of speech as such, and therefore compris[ing] verbalized forms such as descriptions, definitions, and especially (scientific) theories of space” (36-7). Mallspace itself, meanwhile, is a “representational space”, “embodying complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not” (Lefebvre 33). As the “(terminological) inversion of ‘representations of space’”, Schmid explains that Lefebvre’s third spatial category “concerns the symbolic dimension of space. According to this, spaces of representation do not refer to the spaces themselves but to something else: a divine power, the logos, the state, masculine or feminine principle, and so on” (37). Considering the myriad manners in which mallspace “links itself to a (material) symbol”, I have worked so far to track textual interpretations of “(spatial) symbolism”, understanding mallspace as it “expresses and evokes social norms, values, and experiences” (37). In my third chapter, I will shift my attention from “the representation of space” in films and literary works to “spatial practice” and “spaces of representation” in contemporary Los Angeles. However, Lefebvre’s spatial dialectic is designed to, and designs, opportunities for fluid movement among these categories.

Conceptualizing knitting as a movement-based process demands the same patience and fastidiousness required by the craft itself—but it also demands censure, as social practices that can be either valorized for their

challenges to late capitalist culture and patriarchal power structures or troubled for their association with recreation and diversion in contrast with artwork.

Despite these perspectives, in watching knitting for purely for its movement, the incessant crisscrossing of long needles is an almost miraculously productive activity, a practice that can be either quick and dexterous or slow and frustrating depending on the knitter's ability. Indeed, the formation of stitches, twists, cables and purls occurs through the deft punctuations of a series of rhythms. Thus, knitting becomes poetic and also ambulatory. How is knitting, then, like *flânerie*? Shaw and Strang describe their shared sense of patterning:

As such we crave history and alliance in all their variances: in their numerical, gestural, musical, and discursive configurations; in their textures, designs, and colours. We blend, traverse, contest, hash and rehash, translate, adapt, and intersect. Rather than prescribe rules and regulations dictating conduct, we braid and cast, blend, hem and trim disparate and related skeins, spinning time and weaving space for people to eke out their possibilities and limits within. (111)

This description, extensive and experimental in its array of adjectives, nouns, and verbs, sets up an inspirational scope that supports Shaw and Strang's final claim: "[w]e are committed to activating, reorganizing, and redirecting these processes towards ends that are flexible and inclusive" (111). Furthermore, "[o]ur arrangements are aimed at the curious and restless, at amblers, pursuers, and fellow travelers, as well as the dispossessed, excluded, and silenced" (111). While Shaw and Strang do not call on the *flâneur* by name, the figure might wander toward their affable summons.

I forge this association between knitting and *flânerie* in an effort to edge upon a contemporary definition of movement in mallspace. This effort "concerns

the symbolic dimension of space”, and, like Lefebvre’s spaces of representation, “[does] not refer to the spaces themselves but to something else: a divine power, the logos, the state, masculine or feminine principle, and so on” (Schmid 37).

“[T]he masculine and feminine principle” in relation to *flânerie*, however, emphasizes the extent to which this social practice has been gendered as almost explicitly masculine, almost entirely through male definitions. As Elizabeth Wilson explains,

In recent years feminists have argued that there could never be a female *flâneur*. They have gone further, suggesting that the urban scene was at all times represented from the point of view of the male gaze: in paintings and photographs men voyeuristically stare, women are passively subjected to the gaze. (56)

Wilson demonstrates the association of artistic representations of spaces of the city with the “restrict[ions]” endured by women: while the “public arena” of cafés and performance venues was open to men, who “could meet and seduce working class women” in these locations, “[m]iddle-class women were restricted to certain limited public spaces designated as respectable”, such as parks or the opera (56). “This division is reflected in the subjects chosen by the Impressionists, painters who devised new techniques to capture the glittering visual fragmentation of the urban scene”, and while “Manet, Degas and others painted backstage scenes, bars and brothels...Berthe Morisot’s choice of locations and subject matter was necessarily much more restricted; she often painted domestic scenes” (56). In emphasizing the productive possibilities of knitting, Shaw and Strang pick up on these urban spatial constraints and

redeploy feminine feelings of being at home and at ease within the domestic sphere towards a twenty-first century political climate.

Contextualizing his *flâneur* within nineteenth century politics, Benjamin describes “[t]he particular irresolution of the flâneur”, a disposition akin to the “waiting [which] seems to be the proper state of the impassive thinker”. By extension, “doubt appears to be that of the flâneur” (425). Chiefly, this thoughtful “doubt” must not be confused or conflated with passivity, for “[t]he attitude of the flâneur—epitome of the political attitude of the middle classes during the Second Empire” (420, sic). Benjamin continues, “[t]he laissez-fair attitude of the flâneur has its counterpart even in the revolutionary philosophemes of the period” (420) and “[t]he flâneur is the observer of the marketplace. His knowledge is akin to the occult science of industrial fluctuations. He is a spy for the capitalists, on assignment in the realm of the consumers” (427). Furthermore, paradoxically, “[t]he idleness of the flâneur is a demonstration against the division of labour” (427). The economic and philosophical knowledge, political perspective, and complicated Marxism of the *flâneur* are amassed during his idiosyncratic urban fieldwork. Benjamin describes,

The anamnestic intoxication in which the flâneur goes about the city not only feeds on the sensory data taking shape before his eyes but often possesses itself of abstract knowledge—indeed, of dead facts—as something experienced and lived through. This felt knowledge travels from one person to another, especially by word of mouth. But in the course of the nineteenth century, it was also deposited in an immense literature. (417)

Here, the *flâneur*'s “anamnestic intoxication”, a sensation brought on by the immune system's reaction to antigens, is characterized by contrasts between

“the sensory data taking shape before his eyes” and “abstract knowledge” which is “felt”—“travel[ling] from one person to another” but “also deposited in an immense literature”. The experiential qualities of these two methods of knowledge, “sensory data” and “something experienced and lived through”, stimulate a phenomenological perspective that arises from the tension between knowing and doing—a tension that continues in “Arcades Intarsia”.

“Arcades Intarsia” is not a poem that uses the word *mall* to signify mallspace—a distantiation I develop later—nor does it shout out the *flâneur* in dialogue with Benjamin. Rather, these are poems that “refer...to something else,” integrating “sensory data” with “something experienced and lived through”. In the poem’s first line, they ask:

Question One: What is the historical object?

These can be messed with; the shawls were not documented. Here a defiant venture, a combat paid without approval, and an empire of a-certain shame-world poised to sprint from recapitulation to sell-off. And there our tasks are slightly easier? (8)

Whatever “historical object” might offer itself in response to “Question One” is clearly open to argument: “[t]hese can be messed with”. Immediately, these opening phrases to “Vows to Carry On”, the first poem in the series, strike stylistic parallels with Davidson and Burnham, who I argued “knowingly smea[r] conventional semiotic frameworks” (Burnham) and “expan[d] symbolisms through homographs and peering out through the ducts to begin his investigation of mallspace” (Davidson). Also like the two other poets featured in this chapter, the space of Shaw and Strang’s page is simultaneously a space of order and meticulous arrangement; on the page following this first passage, small groups of

words loop across the page at broad intervals, recalling a knitting pattern or needlepoint template. Reflecting on their shared spatial capacity, they describe, “[a]s for my own personal terror—in order to decipher the contours of the collective dream, we must find space for provisions of all sorts, and coax a proliferating collectible context, i.e. envy portfolio” (8). The sentence connecting this statement with the longer passage I quoted above reads “[i]t was nothing more than rational convenience; that there is a larger connection may safely be doubted” (8). This “larger connection”, one of “rational convenience” might move the singular speaker’s “own personal terror” outwards, towards the collaborative act, towards “the collective dream”, or further, towards “an empire of a-certain shame-world” (8). The pronoun play here is of a different slipperiness than Burnham’s mystery “her”, as suggestive “I”, “us”, or “we” slide in and out of the text without identifying themselves. “moreover”, Shaw and Strang argue next, “he is no buyer”, speaking in the same whispered tongues about gendered subjects as *The Benjamin Sonnets*, but complicating this connection as they subvert masculine practices of *flânerie* and stir a new productive *flâneuse*.

These quiet characters too are subjects without any explicit sense of location—a status that immediately calls their own positionality to question, associating with symbolic definition in Lefebvre’s spaces of representation. It is a status shared by the *flâneurs* Benjamin follows, for whom the “[c]ategory of illustrated seeing” is also “fundamental”, as the *flâneur* “composes his reverie as text to accompany the images” (419). Shaw and Strang arrange spatial visuals that, while very much within the *Arcades*—the collection often mentions numbers,

41, 406, 396, that could very well be citations corresponding to Benjamin's text—as I previously stated, do not employ the word *mall*. We can assume that new *flâneurs* of all genders might wander the halls of malls with the same perspectives their predecessors tested in Parisian arcades. Emphasizing alternate spaces in getting at mallspace, we can enter a “a dance hall” as another space produced by movement and “postures”:

In year two:

whoever postures
at a pageant (or avalanche)

in a dance hall

...skipping the line
disappearing on all sides

(9)

Here, the “dance hall” is also “(distanced, or / gulfed) / the merit of volumes” and later, contextualized:

by fences
by herding
by water
by licks

Sphinx unite.
Hotel.
Dance.
Hall.
Chorus, girls. (26).

In examining this ‘hallspace’, I again look to its temporality, “[i]n year two”, and find this schedule distorted by the suggestion that the events of writing occur “at a pageant (or avalanche)”. Patched together, these two scenes are united by the subsequent description of movement: “...skipping the line / disappearing on all sides”. The material qualities connoted in “avalanche” delimit the potential for a

scene of “skipping”, but this precipitous situation is certainly characterized by the disruption of a “line”, perhaps “disappearing on all sides”. Thinking of space through abstracted visual qualities like this also permits an association of the early “pageant” with “fences”, “herding”, “water”, and even “licks”. The demand “Sphinx unite” encourages this kind of collage. “Hotel”, “Dance”, and “Hall” complete the map of this space with a legend in which the concluding statement is key: “Chorus, girls” is another order, mixing up choreography while commanding feminine orality and connecting to groups in Ancient Greek tragedies who comment on the main action, speaking and moving together.

The extent to which the language of these passages is grounded in movement and a studied physical sense of motion substantiates my claim that “Arcades Intarsia” explores the potential for a contemporary mode of *flânerie*. In seeking a new proprioceptive technique, Shaw and Strang document “the construction of a historical state of affairs”, a “construction”, we can recall, which Benjamin differentiates “from what one customarily calls its ‘reconstruction’”. The ‘reconstruction’ in empathy is one-dimensional. ‘Construction’ presupposes ‘deconstruction’” (470). Writing reflexively, Shaw and Strang ask:

Are we:

- to observe
- to take a restricted promenade
- to secure, or know

(back the source) (10)

Suggesting that they could just as well “rub, disseminate / or pirate” in the lines following this passage, the poets speak to their own capacity to perform *flânerie*, and, simultaneously, their writerly entitlement to quote from *The Arcades Project*

as text germinal to the definition of this social figure. “(back the source)” is at once citation and action, “rub, disseminate / or pirate” an active call to communicative arms. Later, another passage reiterates this process of quotation:

From the very first bar it was parenthetical. In an opal fog, he travelled with one of his few salvaged possessions. He sold it and opened a tiny shop. They wear pumpkin orange and pale green profiles with watches that follow the seasons. In a crease, we pulled at her collar. The gesture suggested discrepancy. (15)

“[B]ar”, spatial, musical, and limiting, provides a point of origin, suggesting also a point of “parenthetical” reference. This section of text takes up a different position on the page, appearing in a solid prosaic block that embodies the narrative conventions jettisoned by other areas of “Arcades Intarsia”. The second and third sentences develop this storytelling structure, while the following phrases change perspective. “[H]e”, “[t]hey”, and “we” are a confusing cast of characters, but Shaw and Strang’s descriptions are marked by their delicacy—a figurative attention that reflects the tension between intimacy and impersonality in urban space.

This description of “a tiny shop” and the materialist motions of buying and selling is in keeping with Benjamin’s recognition that “ ‘[t]he colportage phenomenon of space’ is the flâneur’s basic experience” (418). This phenomenon, the peddling of books and newspapers, “from another angle—shows itself in the mid-nineteenth century interior...Thanks to this phenomenon, everything potentially taking place in this one single room is perceived simultaneously” (418). Benjamin’s association of colportage with *flânerie* is thus founded on perceptive principles, rather than economic practice. “The space

winks at the flâneur: What do you think may have gone on here? Of course, it has yet to be explained how this phenomenon is associated with colportage” (418-9). This “wink[ing]” spatiality corresponds with the flickering referentiality of Davidson, Burnham, and Shaw and Strang’s poetics, particularly as they serve spatial representation. Most tangibly, as colportage is developed without a clear definition in *The Arcades Project*, we can understand it as a readerly process—an exchange of information—that is contingent on spatialization in order to be brought to life. Quoting French Symbolist painter Odilon Redon via Raymond Escholier, Benjamin adds:

On the colportage phenomenon of space: “ ‘The sense of mystery,’” wrote Odilon Redon, who had learned the secret from da Vinci, ‘comes from remaining always within the equivocal, with double and triple perspectives, or inklings of perspective (images within images)—forms that take shape and come into being according to the state of mind of the spectator. All things more suggestive just because they do appear.’” (429)

The varied interpretive strategies championed by Redon’s quotation are indeed reflected in the repetitions involved in its reading—three sets of quotation marks complete its citation, as the words move from Redon, through Escholier, to Benjamin, to me. “[T]he secret” of multiple perspectives is, too, once removed, as Redon “learned...from da Vinci”. This cacophonous process of quotation contrasts with Shaw and Strang’s direct demands, “Chorus, girls” (26) and “go ahead” (19). How, then, do we reconcile the *flâneur* figure with “the phenomenon of colportage”, a Benjaminian theory that still has a few loose threads, and position these ideas to be refracted through “Arcades Intarsia”?

The second part of Shaw and Strang's passage in which "[h]e sold it and opened a tiny shop" provides another connection to the first *Arcades* from which to form a viewpoint on this "refract[ion] of perspectives", achieving new modes of looking at mallspace. We can recall, Shaw and Strang write: "[t]hey wear pumpkin orange and pale green profiles with watches that follow the seasons. In a crease, we pulled at her collar. The gesture suggested discrepancy" (15). In Benjamin's chapter entitled "Fashion", he quotes at length from Charles Blanc's article "Considérations sur le vêtement des femmes". Explaining how "[t]he ascendancy of the bourgeoisie works a change in women's wear", Blanc argues,

Everything that could keep women from remaining seated was encouraged; anything that could have impeded their walking was avoided. They wore their hair and their clothes as though they were to be viewed in profile. For the profile is the silhouette of someone...who passes, who is about to vanish from our sight. Dress became an image of the rapid movement that carries away the world. (74)

Formally, this quotation represents the wide range of Benjamin's sources; the content of the passage demonstrates the ease with which social commentators of the period move from a seemingly superficial discussion of "hoop petticoats" and "full skirts" to broader politicized remarks on modernization and urbanism. Shaw and Strang echo this conversation, embedding observational "pumpkin orange and pale green *profiles*" alongside subtle statistics: "[t]he data shrunk in comparison, nuzzling and rotating in exquisite patterns" (15, emphasis added). In both quotations, I read from the word *profile* for its formal emphasis, observing imagist strategy as it functions to present multiple perspectives. In the passage from Benjamin, "the profile" determines women's methods of dressing, but moves

metonymically to “bec[ome] an image of the rapid movement that carries away the world” (74). Women in full skirts, then, embody both the possibility of producing an impressive profile, impossible to ignore in its prominence, and simultaneously produce “a silhouette of someone...who passes, who is about to vanish from our site”, subverting onlookers’ attentions. Movement in itself becomes metonymic: like colportage, Benjamin suggests we construct a social perspective from ephemerality and swift symbolic exchange. In their poem, Shaw and Strang’s comment that “[t]he gesture suggested discrepancy” adapts an instance of internal rhyme, between “gesture” and “discrepancy”, to demonstrate that every movement, even when single or distinct, yields potential for discord or debate. Their “profile” is coloured kaleidoscopically and considered in motion, spinning an array of points of view.

2.6 Moving Merchandise: Mallspace Kept Going

If to “move merchandise” euphemizes selling in consumer parlance, my definition of mallspace should be more frank. Like colportage, mallspace is made through selling and moving as simultaneous social practices that engage distorted visual perspectives and stimulate new methods of reflecting these through language. In some ways, mallspace invites its postmodern spatial practitioners to be contemporary *flâneurs*: figures who might be more aware of their sequence of steps than Jameson, stuck midstep and flummoxed with methods of reading architecture as narrative that do not permit architecture to be understood as anything else. Picking up rhythms from Shaw and Strang, a new method of *flânerie* renders walking more like knitting, based on spatial

connectivity—loops that oscillate through Lefebvre’s three dialectics. Both Burnham and Davidson ask that malls be more studied, as multilingual signifiers or as sites for ethnographic sit-ins. In each of the readings within this chapter, mallspace both is and isn’t a mall. This status suggests a certain hidden truth, the fact that “(social) space as a (social) product” is “concealed...by a double illusion, each side of which refers back to the other, reinforces the other, and hides behind the other” (Lefebvre 27). Measuring mallspace symptomatically engages movement as an interpretive strategy that leaves room for lies, because, as Carrie Noland points out, “it would be an exaggeration to state, as Martha Graham famously did, that ‘Movement never lies.’ As scholars and movement practitioners have long known, images and discourses provided by culture can indeed influence what a subject thinks she feels” (Noland *A E* 11). The next chapter understands, as Noland does, that “bodily sensations do not *a/ways* lie. At times they offer valuable information about our culture and its disciplines, information that we can draw on to develop new ways of moving through and inhabiting space” (11). Mallspace will see you there.

3 REALING FROM LOS ANGELES

3.1 Going Back to Cali: Revisiting Critical Los Angeles

When the LA LA hits ya lyrics just splits ya / Head so hard, that ya hat can't fit ya- The Notorious B.I.G., "Going Back to Cali"

Reading Mike Davis' *City of Quartz*, Rosalyn Deutsche explains, "noir is one pole of a thematic division within which Davis frames his pictures of Los Angeles", within "a typology of cultural representations of L.A., a city that, he says, is 'infinitely *envisioned*'" (249). Deutsche describes Davis' chapter "Sunshine or *Noir*?", in which, "[a]ssociating his own alternative history of L.A. with noir fictions, Davis seems to define urban theory as a discourse that not only analyzes representations of the city but, like noir, produces images of the city" (249), and quotes further: "[b]eyond the myriad rhetorics and mirages it can be presumed that the city actually exists. I thus treat, within the master dialectic of sunshine and *noir*, three attempts, in successive generations, to establish authentic epistemologies for Los Angeles" (Davis qtd. in Deutsche 249). "[T]wo current efforts to construct an authentic epistemology," then, Deutsche reads as counterpoints: "the research into post-Fordist urbanism by 'the neo-Marxist academics of the 'Los Angeles School'" and the interventions in popular culture by 'the community intellectuals of 'Gangster Rap'" (249). I read Deutsche's subsequent critique as further encouragement:

He locates the meaning of the city in a terrain between global capitalist structures, on the one hand, and the use of urban space by specific groups, on the other. But when, under the rubric of noir, Davis designates his achievement an “authentic epistemology,” a representation governed by an independent, authenticating model—the L.A. that really exists—he does more than extricate urban scholarship from the city’s *official* dream machinery. By disavowing this question of subjectivity in representations of the city, he disengages urban theory and, strangely, noir as well from any dream machinery whatsoever. (250)

Troubling the viability of Davis’ “authentic epistemology”, Deutsche sets up her own concluding question: speaking to a discourse that “is still largely a masculine terrain,” she asks, “[w]ill urban theory interrogate this space, or will it remain ‘just Chinatown?’” (253) Noir, as merely “a representation governed by an independent, authenticating model—the L.A. that really exists” engages “the city’s *official* dream machinery”, operates from an aerial perspective or scene-establishing shot to “disavo[w] this question of subjectivity in representations of the city”. Following Deutsche, my task is to reinvigorate “this question of subjectivity”. In mallspace I find space that challenges urbanism that “is still largely a masculine terrain”, coupling shopping and cinema as interrelated dream machinery.

Drinking in the city’s dream machinery while engaging “interventions in popular culture” as “community intellectual[ia] of ‘Gangster Rap’”, rapper Biggie Smalls’ verbose experience of Los Angeles (contra Jameson’s loss for words) suggests an urban environment of fierce inspiration that stimulates effortless and extensive opportunities to describe the space through language. “Going Back to Cali”, released posthumously after Smalls was killed in a Los Angeles drive-by shooting on March 9, 1997, functions politically, as Notorious proffers positive

affirmations of a city where his own mobility is threatened by gang culture. He explains,

y'all niggaz is a mess
Thinking I'm gon stop, givin LA props
All I got is beef with those that violate me
I shall annihilate thee

Admitting, “[i]f I got to choose a coast, I got to choose the East” but assuring listeners “[b]ut that don’t mean a nigga can’t rest in the West / See some nice breasts in the West”, Smalls suggests that his complicity in the conflicts between rival East Coast and West Coast rappers should not delimit his own movement in the Los Angeles area or impede creative opportunities there. These are certainly feelings of Žižekian fetishistic disavowal: Notorious knows very well that his activities exacerbate costal rivalries among gang members, but sexually fetishizes “the West”. Considered in the context of songs about LA written by West Coast rappers (for example, Tupac’s “California Love”, NWA’s “Fuck tha Police”, Snoop Dogg’s “Gin and Juice”), which negotiate race and class conflicts, urban turf wars and access to space, and establishment of identity through creative and spatial production, Small’s lyrical attentions speak reflexively to the possibility of writing urban discord for national and international audiences who are also looking in on the city from afar.

Employing “Going Back to Cali” as introduction to this chapter, I extend the soundtrack of hip hop music presented in the previous section to provide an alternate means of entering the city: an urban area predominantly associated with cinematic cultural production despite complex histories in visual art, music, and, of course, architecture. “Going back,” of course, refers also to that which we

can never do again. Emphasizing social conflict and inequalities in access to space, hip hop music stirs new questions and dissent about representation. While I have briefly demonstrated some parallels with experimental poetics that engage common formal techniques via homophonic echoes and slippery cultural semiotics, I engage this rap epigraph to continue my exploration of how words stand for space, returning to Los Angeles, the city where Jameson first lost his footing pages ago. Growing out of Lefebvre, I approach the city as space of postmodern architectural precedents (Jameson/Bonaventure), complicated cultural histories (Smalls/ "Cali"), and, centrally, new mallspace. These representational spaces, developer Rick Caruso's The Grove and Americana, are also "animated spaces", developing, as Lefebvre describes, "[t]hrough the mediation of rhythms (in all three senses of 'mediation': means, medium, intermediary), an animated space comes into being which is an extension of the space of bodies" (207).

Working from architectural and anthropological notes, photographs, film footage, and media coverage of the spaces themselves to record these "animated spaces", I harness Žižek's attention to doing in opposition to thinking—key to identifying of a moving body as a basis for contemporary Marxist analysis of social relations, providing a new method of understanding Jameson's cognitive disorientation on the Bonaventure escalator, and developing Chapter Two's proposal for movement as an alternative form of spatial representation. Mallspace, particularly in its latest "lifestyle" incarnations, which shatter the boundaries of interior and exterior space and aim to create a transnational,

transhistorical streetscape through complicated layering of spatial representation, induce and exaggerate the basic capitalist ideological mystification involved in spending money and interacting with postmodern space. More broadly, Los Angeles offers an urban convergence of accelerated, or inflated practices of cultural production—creating, perpetuating, and sustaining the ideological illusion Žižek describes. In LA, I visit ten shopping centers designed, erected, and modified within the last fifty years. At the center of my analysis are The Grove, in West Hollywood, and The Americana at Brand, located in Glendale. Los Angeles presents me with the lifestyle mall and outdoor shopping center as a new incarnation of mallspace from which to devise a social critique of contemporary patterns of consumption. At the same time, Žižek’s own invocation of Hollywood cinematic examples accentuates the urban and suburban Californian settings of several filmic representations of malls: *Fast Times at Rigmont High* (1982), *Valley Girl* (1983) *Scenes from a Mall* (1991), and *Clueless* (1995), are set and shot in varied (older) Los Angeles-area malls, offering a point of intersection between my fieldwork and my analysis of represented mallspace.

This intersection is a road well traveled—cultural critics and historians have developed, in Delores Hayden’s description, many “[c]lichés about Los Angeles” which “take off from the [Charles W.] Moore/ [Rayner] Banham pop culture view of the urban landscape, where Disneyland, swimming pools, and freeways are icons and people of colour are invisible. These ideas still pervade journalism, films, and the casual comments of the cultural elite” (87). In *Postmetropolis*, Edward Soja marks the Watts Rebellion as a shift in cultural

attention to the city, which, before 1965, “was a virtually unknown city hidden behind the thick sheathing of a hyperactivated American imaginary” (135). He explains, “[w]hat was more generally known about Los Angeles in both the academic and popular literatures was characteristically vicarious and impressionistic, built on a collection of heavily mediated images passing, almost by default, for the real thing” (135-6). While “[e]very city generates such imagery, internally and externally”—and a comparison can be found in Coupland’s depiction of Vancouver’s Hollywood North in the second half of *Girlfriend in a Coma*—Los Angeles

was in 1965 (and remains) more specialized in image production and more prone to be understood through its created imagery than any other urban region. On location here since the 1920s is the multitude of “dream factories” that comprise what is still called “the Industry”, mass-producing moving pictures of Los Angeles that insistently substitute reel stories for real histories and geographies. Camera crews “shooting” scenes depicting practically every place on earth (and often off-earth) are a familiar site on the streets of the city, and a constant local reminder of the confusing interplay between fantasy and reality that pervades everyday urban life in the City of Angels. (136)

Asking of this “confusing interplay”, “Sunshine or *Noir*?”, Mike Davis’ introductory chapter in *City of Quartz* suggests that “[s]nared in the nets of Hollywood...To move to Lotusland is to sever connection with national reality, to lose historical and experiential footing, to surrender critical distance, and to submerge oneself in spectacle and fraud” (18). Thus,

Fused into a single montage image are Fitzgerald reduced to a drunken hack, West rushing to his own apocalypse (thinking it was a dinner party), Faulkner rewriting second-rate scripts, Brecht raging against the mutilation of his work, the Hollywood Ten on their way to prison, Didion on the verge of a nervous breakdown,

and so on. Los Angeles (and its alter-ego, Hollywood) becomes the literalized Mahagonny: city of seduction and defeat, the antipode to critical intelligence. (18)

Davis identifies “what we call *noir* (literary and cinematic)” as “outstanding example” of “some of the most acute critiques of the culture of late capitalism, and, particularly, of the tendential degeneration of its middle strata”, a critical genre that presents “a fantastic convergence of American ‘tough-guy’ realism, Weimar expressionism, and existentialized Marxism—all focused on unmasking a ‘bright, guilty place’ (Welles) called Los Angeles” (18).

Introducing this “bright, guilty place” in *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory*, Norman M. Klein explains his own historical research—“anti-tours”, at “locations where no buildings existed any longer”, which, accompanied by lectures “were the origins of this book” (3)—through a psychological definition of “*imago*, an idealized face left over from childhood” or a “phantom limb”, images which “see[m] to be waiting for us intact: a photo, a document, a table of statistics, an interview. It remains where we put it, but the details around it get lost, as if they were haunted, somewhat contaminated, but empty” (3-4). Approaching Los Angeles as a city in ruins, where “[j]ust west of downtown...over fifty thousand housing units were torn down in the period 1933 to 1980, leaving an empty zone as noticeable as a meteor’s impact”, Klein’s perspective reverberates with impressions from Benjamin’s *Arcades*, and correlates with historical issues faced by the urban downtown as a space under constant threat by new mallspace development. He describes, “[i]n the chapters that follow in this book, the ‘phantom limb’ is often an empty lot where a building

once stood, perhaps on Sunset Boulevard”, and I ask, what is the significance of Klein’s close alignment of these spaces with the subject, in both psychological and somatic terms? Employing a notion of the “social imaginary, but not in the Lacanian, or in the post-Hegelian sense, which seemed to elusive for research on urban planning or neighbourhood politics in Los Angeles”, Klein selects “a version of social imaginary specifically about the built environment, particularly sites that were destroyed or severely altered”, which include “office tours where houses once stood”, “abandoned tunnels”, and, most intriguingly, “consumer simulations of neighbourhoods, like Citywalk, near the Universal Tours” (9).

Klein remarks that “[o]bviously, [his work] enters the divide of postmodern writing”; while he uses “history” to categorize his research, he adds that “[m]ore specifically, I am interested in the history of mass culture as an alternative form of literature, how popular memory makes for a very uneasy form of research” (7-8). His primary sources, “unstable and fundamentally fictional”, comprise “a contagion of fictions” which, ultimately, are best understood “as an installation piece harking back to synthetic Cubism. By installation I mean history as decomposition, about the anxiety of representation, about excisions. Evidence is a remnant left over by chance...what was not consumed by the rhythm of events” (9). Klein’s formulation of history as installation, “about the anxiety of representation” aligns with Rosalyn Deutsche’s work in *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*, essays which “enter and question a particular interdisciplinary space—a discourse that combines ideas about art, architecture, and urban design, on the one hand, with theories of the city, social space, and public space, on the other”

(xi). For my purposes, the book's second section, "Men in Space," which "responds to new problems raised by a form of urban-aesthetic interdisciplinarity generated by an influential group of neo-Marxist geographers and cultural critics", provides a position for my research within a context of feminist critiques of representation.

Deutsche argues that the "alliance" between this "urban-aesthetic" discourse was sparked by Jameson in "Postmodernism", and posits that "[t]he alliance was launched decisively in 1989 when two critical geographers, David Harvey and Edward Soja, published books about postmodernism, marking the entry of urban studies into debates about postmodern culture" (xviii). Deutsche contends that Harvey and Jameson deploy "the social production of space discourse" defensively, "to protect the space of traditional left political projects" and use notions of social totality to contest "challenges posed by new political practices built on partial critiques and aims". For Jameson and Harvey, "the image of a coherent social space perpetuated in the new urban-aesthetic discourse is a fantasy that harbours its own spatial politics. Elevating the subject of the image to a vantage point from which he can supposedly 'see' the social totality, it relegates different perspectives to subordinate or invisible positions" (xviii-xix). "Feminism, of course, has long challenged this kind of totalizing depiction", Deutsche explains, problematizing "Jameson's conten[tion] that he is suggesting a way for radical artists to participate in political battles over representation" (198). This critique steps in line with my own insistence that Jameson's "loss for words" could be rectified by closer consciousness of his own

body, and Spivak's issues with Jameson's contradictory "desire to obliterate the subject-position implied by our everyday as we speak about 'our world'" (313).

For me, critique of Jameson's subject position begins at the body. I have read Jameson's situation at the Bonaventure as emblematic of his critical experiences in *Postmodernism*; thus, Deutsche's problematization of Jameson as "a masculine being who makes himself complete by claiming to *perceive the ground* of an impartial totality" (215, emphasis added) suggests a series of spatialized issues that start proprioceptively, spiralling outwards—to the shifting grounds of elevators and escalators as machines that the escalators and elevators here henceforth replace movement but also, and above all, designate themselves as new reflexive signs and emblems of movement proper (Jameson *PM* 42) each orienting Jameson as he "actually occupies a position of threatened wholeness in a relation of difference" (Deutsche 215).

However, recent feminist discourse on globalization has challenged Deutsche's gendering of this postmodern "impartial totality". For example, J.K. Gibson-Graham explain their "attempt to make globalization less genital, less phallic, by highlighting various points of excess in its inscriptions—places where the inscription can be seen as uncontrollable or indeterminate, or as potentially inscribing noncapitalist identity" (146). Working also to "highligh[t] various points of excess" in gendered perspectives of globalization, Carla Freeman asks, "[w]hat are the implications of a divide between masculinist grand theories of globalization that ignore gender as an analytical lens and local empirical studies of globalization in which gender takes center stage?" (1008). Freeman's research

on “contemporary ‘higglers’ (or marketers) in the Caribbean” demonstrates “that globalization works through many economic and cultural modes and is effected both through large powerful actors and institutions as well as by ‘small-scale’ individuals engaged in a complex of activities that are both embedded within and at the same time transforming practices of global capitalism” (1008). Freeman argues,

[a] gendered understanding of globalization is not one in which women’s stories or feminist movements can be tacked onto or even ‘stirred into’ the macropicture; rather, it challenges the very constitution of that macropicture such that producers, consumers, and bystanders of globalization are not generic bodies or invisible practitioners of labour and desire but are situated within social and economic processes and cultural meanings that are central to globalization itself. (1010)

In this “feminist reconceptualization”, “local forms of globalization are understood not merely as affects but also as constitutive ingredients in the changing shape of these movements” (1013). “[G]ender is interrogated not only in the practices of men and women in local sites but also in the ways in which both abstract as well as tangible global movements are processes ascribed masculine and feminine value” (1013). Both Freeman and Gibson-Graham exemplify current feminist efforts to challenge earlier gendered definitions of postmodern or global totality. Their work “rewriting the globalization script from within” (Gibson-Graham 146) and examining “the practices of men and women in local sites” as concurrent with “abstract as well as tangible global movements” as “processes ascribed masculine and feminine value” (Freeman 1013) synchronizes with my examination of mallspace as it is created through concrete or embodied social practice while metonymically referring to broader social systems. Of course, both

“rewriting the script” and studying “the practices of men and women” in mallspace demands further representational scrutiny, a study I will extend into filmic analysis of Los Angeles malls.

3.2 *Chinatown*, Part Mall? No More Noir

In the second chapter of “Men in Space”, “*Chinatown*, Part Four?”, Deutsche describes recent efforts of urban studies to “compar[e] the texts of critical urban studies with literary or film noir” in which she reads the “urban spatial theorists” themselves “as noir detectives, especially hard-boiled private eyes” (245). Particularly “with regard to sexual difference”, Deutsche’s investigation concludes, “the new urban studies may have some resemblance to hard-boiled stories after all”, as both urban studies and noir narratives are “presented as a quest for reality”, but each “is actually a way of articulating a vision of reality” (253). This “vision of reality” focuses on “the emergence of a subject whose integrity rests on an ability to detect what lies behind a façade of spatial uncertainties, identified in noir with the femme fatale, and in neo-Marxist spatial theory with post-Fordist capitalism” (253).

Deutsche acknowledges Davis’ “attention to the specific struggles and distinctive cultures of L.A.’s third world” in *City of Quartz*, comparing them to conflicts faced by Polanski’s protagonist in the film *Chinatown*, “[l]ike Jake, Davis brings to light the links between violent activities taking place in urban space—the displacement of city residents, for instance—and the violence inherent to the uneven socioeconomic relations that produce advanced capitalist space” (250). “Still,” Deutsche asserts, “this is only part of the story....Overlooked in Davis’

gloss on *Chinatown*, sexuality and subjectivity—and their intimacy with violence—have long been viewed by feminist critics as film noir’s principal themes and, moreover, as the imperatives shaping its visual and narrative structures. Feminist readings have also theorized these problems in spatial terms” (251). Further, Deutsche troubles David Harvey’s cinematic critique, in which he “finds only insufficiency, absence, fragmentation” or “poverty...in comparison with other modes of representation” (232). Harvey, Deutsche argues, is “[b]ound to a depth model of meaning”, refusing to “acknowledge even the possibility of other spatial configurations—the complexity of cinematic space as the effect of montage, for example—or the existence of other discourses on space—such as film theory’s complex analysis of film’s intricate, highly structured spatial relation with viewers” (232). This reading of Harvey precedes Deutsche’s affirmation that “practices [she has] identified under the rubric ‘the critique of representation’ examine art as itself a social relation, a revision that recasts the identity of ‘the social’ as well” (237).

Mobilizing these representational critiques alongside Rachel Bowlby’s admission that “the history of shopping is largely a history of women” (7), I read for shopping and film as dual “dream machinery”, borrowing the term from Deutsche’s reading of Davis, in four films set in Los Angeles in the 1980s and 1990s. In so doing, I work against efforts to define an “authentic epistemology”—both in considering Deutsche’s reading of Davis and in understanding her critique in terms of its own attempts at authenticity—by reinvigorating “questions of subjectivity” in opposition to “the city’s *official* dream machinery” (250). My

attention to “questions of subjectivity” engages the late capitalist “dream machinery” of mallspace. Thus, *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, *Valley Girl*, *Scenes from a Mall*, and *Clueless* function to cast a florescent, atrium-bright light upon the dark streets of Los Angeles noir. This is not a simple matter of switching backdrops and replacing alleys with marbled halls, rather, following Deutsche, I aim to see “beyond” a cinematic “depth model of meaning”, considering “the possibility of other spatial configurations” (232). Accessing these “other spatial configurations” involves emphatically acknowledging the heroines of these films, appreciating the mainstream Marxist critiques at work (*Fast Times*), visiting filmed mallspace locations (*Scenes from a Mall*), and restoring my own pre-teen vernacular model (*Clueless*). Marx and Žižek complicate my critical reading of each film: both stimulate “the possibility of other spatial configurations” in mallspace by crystallizing the social relations that make malls work.

First, though, if we are to understand “*official* dream machinery” in Los Angeles cinematic development, I must clarify my comprehension of shopping as a similar cultural system. Admitting “[c]onsumer culture lends itself to images of unconscious imprisonment”, Bowlby offers that

[o]pposite dark pictures like these stand their mirror images: shopping as freedom of choice, pleasure, and material progress. Instead of confinement, darkness, hidden controls, shopping in its positive guise appears as sheer haven or, more prosaically, as the proud symbol of modern mobility. People are no longer restricted to their traditional horizons, whether geographical, social, or psychological; consumer choice epitomizes their liberty to move away from old constrictions, to induce the freedom of new desires and demands and to take on different identities as they wish. (3-4)

Of course, this semblance of “freedom of choice, pleasure, and material progress” is contingent on the “misrecognition” which “is the *sine qua non* of the effectuation of an act of exchange”, defined by Žižek (14). At the same time, Bowlby confirms, “[t]his is also the dream world of shopping’s own self-images, its beautiful stores and its glossy advertisements, where people’s desires are treated as forever open to change and fulfilment”, suggesting that shopping’s dream machinery operates via a two-way mirror, reflecting the desires of the producers as well as those of the consumer (4).

Recognizing women “have overwhelmingly been the principal shoppers both in reality and in the multifarious representations of shopping”, Bowlby explains the extent to which the fantasies involved in shopping are founded in female spatial practice (7). During the “middle of the nineteenth century, when department stores entered the world”, these “places of leisure and luxury, offering women the image of a life that they could then, in fantasy if not in substance, take home with them” (7). These “splendid new buildings and permanent exhibitions of lovely new things brought middle-class women into town to engage in what was historically a new activity: a day’s shopping” (7). Bowlby then argues that while “[i]n the nineteenth century was the department store; in the twentieth century was the supermarket”, the latter “offered functionality and standard products” rather than “luxury” and “instead of the pleasures of being served, consumers could congratulate themselves on saving money by doing the work themselves” (8). Both department stores and supermarkets “came to be represented in terms of magic and enchantment, seen

as either pleasurable or insidious” (9). Pre-war, “shopping for pleasure tends to be considered a natural inclination for both women and children in a way that it isn’t for men” (129). Yet women of this era also face an “obligation to shop, given their role in the family as housekeepers” (130) and also “a responsibility for the success of her country’s economy—it is her fault if it fails”, a perspective that offers troubling counterpoint to current consumer hearsay (131). By the 1980s, “a striking new political rhetoric gave the consumer a new place a long way from the sales or the supermarket. No longer a silly shopper, he or she acquired a grand new exemplary stature as the very type of rational modern citizenship”, which “involves ideas of collective responsibility (as well as feminine culpability), and includes a concern for social welfare (as well as national interests)” (133). In turn, the shop “has become a place of ethical behaviour more than a place of either convenience or temptation” (133) and “the consumer has lost her sex...Ceasing to be seen as passive, exploited and dim, the consumer has ceased to be seen as female” (7). As I hinted in returning to Žižek, however, just because “the consumer has ceased to be seen as female” and the shop has ceased to be seen as site of “convenience or temptation”, we cannot overlook the mechanics of fantasy as they continue to tick and whirl. Indeed, to understand mallspace as it empowers its users or provides “place of ethical behaviour” is to perpetuate the “socio-synthetic function of exchange: that is the level of the ‘real abstraction’ as the form of socialization of private production through the medium of the market” (Žižek 14).

Each mallspace investigated in this chapter thus becomes exemplary of Žižek's "crucial paradox", which, we can recall, designates:

the social effectivity of the exchange process is a kind of reality which is possible only on condition that the individuals partaking in it are *not* aware of its proper logic; that is a kind of reality *whose very ontological consistency implies a certain non-knowledge of its participants*—if we come to 'know too much', this reality would dissolve itself. (15)

Engaged in Žižek's "kind of reality", we must also recognize these spaces in Deutsche's terms, where "the built environment—and visual or textual images of the city—can only be rescued from idealist doctrines and analyzed as social in the first instance if, released from the grip of determinism, they are recognized, as other cultural objects have been, as representations" (224). As we have learned from Žižek, however, the "recogni[tion]" of both the built environment and cultural objects as representations is characterized by fundamental social *misrecognition*: we produce and maintain "a kind of reality *whose very ontological consistency implies a certain non-knowledge of its participants*" (15). My brief readings of each filmic text then present mallspace as representations of space, in Lefebvrian terms, emphasizing their constructed status as artworks but also within a broader context of socio-spatial construction. Working chronologically, the first space I analyze as successor of Romero's Monroeville Mall is *Fast Times at Ridgemont High's* Ridgemont Mall, which appears immediately, in the film's opening credits. According to the end credits, and affirmed by a map entitled "Hangouts" included in the 2004 Universal DVD's special features, Ridgemont Mall is actually Sherman Oaks Galleria, a mall located in L.A.'s San Fernando Valley that has since been converted to an outdoor lifestyle center

similar to The Grove. The simple map plots “Ridgemont Mall (Sherman Oaks)” on “101 Freeway”, directly opposite a mountain range that runs adjacent to “Sepulveda Pass” and “Mulholland Drive”.

Engaging this map emphasizes the extent to which all representations of space are socially constructed, and thus tenuous. In fact, much of *Fast Times*' dialogue foregrounds mallspace as it is contingent on the origin and maintenance of social relationships: a sexual prospect is quickly identified by Stacey Hamilton (Jennifer Jason Leigh) as “that guy from the record store”, and Mark “Rat” Ratner (Brian Backer) tells his friend Mike Damone (Robert Romanus) that he “hate[s] working at the theatre. All the action’s on the other side of the mall.” These conversations simultaneously stress each character as a worker within the mallspace, or a Marxian “species being”. In *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, Marx’s definition of species being formulated as an aspect of estranged labour that relates to “the fact that labour is *external* to the worker, ie., it does not belong to his essential being” and “the relation of the worker to his own activity as an alien activity not belonging to him” (Marx 74-5). The former aspect relates to “the estrangement of the *thing*”, while the latter is “*self-estrangement*” (75). Self-estrangement arises in “the relation of labour to the *act of production* within the *labour* process,” where activity determines one’s selfhood. Reading Marx explains the Rat’s discontent with his job at the theatre: “it is activity as suffering, strength as weakness, begetting as emasculating, the worker’s *own* physical and mental energy, his personal life or what is life other than activity—as an activity which is turned against him, neither depends on nor

belongs to him” (75). Here the gestures of the working body can be identified as “alien activity not belonging to him”, resulting in the Rat’s feelings of entrapment at the theatre while “all the action”, his own potential pleasure, is “at the other side of the mall”. Significantly, while the Rat is acquainted with his romantic interest, Stacey, in mallspace, his position at the theatre limits his opportunities to communicate with her, though they are also classmates. Marx describes, “[t]he worker’s *own* physical and mental energy” generate movements which are not productive of their own activity, even when that activity is carried out within “his personal life.” These are the conditions which constitute the alienation of labour: the worker’s “labour is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is *forced labour*” (74).

In contrast to the Rat, whose actions demonstrate the alienation of labour, Stacey uses her position at Perry’s Pizza Parlour to her full social advantage. She serves, dates, and does something vaguely sexual at “The Point” with Rob Johnson, “audio consultant”, also known as “that guy from the record store”, and maintains a position of power when the Rat finally works up the courage to ask her out on his break from the movie theatre. While he struggles to come up with words in conversation, Stacey relies on her role as cashier to maintain a cool distance, answering his nervous questions about a fabricated lost jacket, and presenting a working pen with which he can jot down her phone number. During their date, the Rat forgets his wallet and has to call Mike, who works as a scalper at the mall and has coached him in dating, for support—a semiotic slip-up which reinforces his Marxist alienation—and later rejects Stacey’s sexual advances.

Later, Linda Barrett (Phoebe Cates) instructs Stacey that as someone who “has dated older guys” and “works at the best food stand in the mall”, she should not waste her time with Mark Ratner. So, instead, Stacey invites Mike to come swimming at her pool. Stacey initiates sex with Mike in her pool shed, a scene that comes to a quick conclusion as Mike orgasms mere moments after the two agree to undress “at the same time”. Thus, the empowerment Stacey derives from her employment is reflected in her attempts at mastery and liberty in her own body.

Distressingly, Stacey’s liberty is quickly jeopardized by her realization that she is pregnant. She and Mike agree to split the cost of the abortion, so Mike promises Stacey “\$75 and a ride” to the “Free Clinic” after remarking, “doesn’t sound free to me”. Mike ignores Stacy’s phone call on the day of the appointment, so her brother Brad (who is involved in his own alienated labour at All-American Burger, Captain Hook’s Fish and Chips, and Mi-T-Mart) drops her off. Though Stacey lies and says she is going to a nearby bowling alley, Brad is waiting for her when she emerges from the clinic, suggesting the strength of family bonds within the alienated worker’s “personal life”. Eventually, after the Rat helps a sickened Stacey at a class tour of the morgue, and numerous conversations among the friends are carried out (culminating, of course, at prom) Stacey and the Rat are reunited at Ridgemont Mall where they gesture at continuing their relationship. As this resolution plays out over the counter at Perry’s Pizza, we see how the mallspace in *Fast Times* provides a site for the negotiation of conflicts that occur among students who forge social bonds in

another shared space, their high school. I read its transparent demonstration of workplaces as a Marxist move that provokes this spatial possibility, as these areas are not often represented in similar films of this genre. Indeed, *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* remains unprecedented as a Marxist critique in the comedic mainstream until Kevin Smith's *Mallrats* (1995), Gary Burns' *Way Downtown* (2000), and, recently, Canadian Jon Paul Fiorentino's novel/graphic novel *Stripmall*, released last year.

Martha Coolidge's *Valley Girl* (1983) is also set in the Valley, its mallspace action carried out in Sherman Oaks Galleria—here appearing self-conscious and discernable via exterior shots. However, Coolidge's audio commentary for the 2003 MGM DVD reveals that the mall scenes were shot in a Torrance shopping center, because it was the only site they could afford. The IMDb database identifies the Del Amo Fashion Center as shooting location. Fundamentally, the Galleria/Fashion Center amalgam represents the Valley metonymically—a symbolism that extends to the bodies of the two protagonists. Julie (Deborah Foreman), a Valley girl, falls for Randy (Nicholas Cage), a Hollywood punk, after seeing him at the beach and talking at her friend's party. Their immediate attraction sparks concurrent conflict: Julie's recent ex-boyfriend Tommy takes a quick swing at Randy, despite his own efforts to seduce Julie's friend Loryn mere minutes earlier. Between shots of a confused Loryn's bare breasts and the eruptive fight scene, the bodies of these teens are promptly exposed. The "local" mall, as cultural signifier of the suburban, is introduced with a similar immediacy, or immanence: after the opening credits roll over a helicopter shot of Los Angeles

and the Valley, we are thrown into a shopping spree. The heroines are revealed rifling through racks, dressing up, and checking tags. At the same time, we see images abstracted from bodies: a cashier's hands keying in prices, a shoe on a stand, socks, belts, a carbon copy of a Mastercard, and even a tagging gun piercing fabric. This scene does not demonstrate the "striking new political rhetoric" Bowlby identifies as permeating 1980s shopping; these customers have not "ceased to be seen female" (7) nor have they stopped appearing to be "silly shopper[s]" (133). Instead, *Valley Girl's* girls are not represented as solely as shoppers but also as mall workers. Female hands reach to drag the imprinter across the manual credit card machine while other manicured fingers flip through hangers and belts. While Marx's estranged labour genders the worker male, arising, we can recall, in "the fact that labour is *external* to worker, i.e., it does not belong to his essential being", these "alien activit[ies] not belonging to him" (Marx 74-5) are here executed by women's bodies that are fragmented, juxtaposed and jump cut among images of women shopping. 1980s mallspace in *Valley Girl* is a place for these quick changes, framing "a kind of [consumer] reality *whose very ontological consistency implies a certain non-knowledge of its participants*" as "silly" women shop (Žižek 15), while exposing them simultaneously as mall workers alienated by "activities not belonging to them" (Marx 74-5).

While Julie and her Valley girl cohort are characterized by the mallspace, we are not granted access to Randy's own spatial associations until later in the film. He is presented as the leather-clad, hair-dyed fish out of water when he and friend Fred arrive at Suzie's party. The boys mock the guests by making cracks

about a costume party, and after their exile, Fred tells Randy that Julie is “not one of us”. Nevertheless, Randy hides hopefully in the shower until Julie appears to reapply her lipstick. When she exclaims, “What are you doing her? Do you have a death wish or something?”, Randy replies, “That’s what Fred said”, demonstrating the common understanding that the two do not belong together socially, and that any potential association would be dangerous. Randy had retorted to Fred, “[n]o is going to tell me who to score with. So fuck it we’re going back” and Julie drags her awkward friend Stacey out to the boys’ car. Taking off towards L.A., the drive is based on an excited exchange between Randy and Julie that proves they need real “place” to perform their relationship:

Julie: “Wait a minute. Where we gonna go?”

Randy: “I don’t care.”

Julie: “What are we gonna do?”

Randy: “Anything.”

The first site this unlikely couple conquers is an unidentified Hollywood club. Neon signs for Mann’s Chinese Theatre, the Rainbow club, and burlesque theatres illuminate their arrival, and Stacey clutches Julie as they squeeze in among more leather at the entrance. Further conflicted conversation ensues: “[i]s this your hangout?” (Julie); “this is my home away from home” (Randy); “[l]ike, I don’t even want to know what’s on this seat!” (Stacey); “[w]here do you live?” (Julie); “Hollywood. I go to Hollywood High” (Randy); “[t]his is what we call ‘living on the edge’” (Fred); “[y]ou don’t have places like this in the Valley do you?” (Randy).

In particular, one exchange at the club complicates a basic binaristic reading of this *Romeo and Juliet* tale. Julie offers, “[w]e go to normal parties, go

to normal places, we buy nice, new clothes” to which Fred responds “that’s not so different from what we do”, and Randy adds, “[i]t’s the way we *do* things that makes them different”. Further, he argues, “this is the real world. It’s not fresh and clean like a television show”. Julie retorts, “I always *thought* the Valley was real enough for me” (emphasis added). Here, Žižek’s ideological contradiction between knowing and doing is tugged into tight teenage tension. While Julie emphasizes activity, Randy qualifies that it is the manner or method in which these activities are carried out that defines each group socially. Her insistence that “the Valley was real enough for me” is solipsistic, and while she vaguely admits this in stating, “I always thought”, her sarcasm indicates that for her, the Valley offers “a kind of reality *whose very ontological consistency implies a certain non-knowledge of its participants*” (Žižek 14). The “non-knowledge” that there might be romantic prospects and social opportunities beyond the Valley is a fetishistic disavowal overturned by Randy’s arrival. Julie becomes fraught by the choice between Randy and “her friends”, and this decision comes to drive most of the film’s plot development.

Spatially, however, the choice is almost an archaic one, between city and suburb instead of city and country. The scenes also display spatial discord between mall and street or downtown, and single-family home versus club. Julie’s choice between risking social alienation at home in the Valley if she continues to date Randy, or threatening her own happiness if she returns to Tommy, is, in her hippie father’s terms, about “what you *stand* for, not what other people wanna make you” (emphasis added). “Stand” suggests embodiment,

Julie's comfort in her own skin, or ability to choose her own path, depending on your preferred cliché. However, it equally stresses the extent to which her phenomenological orientation is constrained by and contingent upon social space. In the end, when Randy defeats Tommy in a fight onstage at the junior prom, he takes Tommy's place as Julie's date, and thus as Prom King. Randy and Julie then get into Tommy's hired car, passing Sherman Oaks Galleria as the driver asks, "Valley Sheraton, Sir?"—addressing Randy as Tommy, or at least, as the man Julie is meant to leave with. This element of corporeal replacement condenses the symbolism of an earlier montage in which Randy attempts omnipresence in the Valley, appearing in many places including in strips of photos in Julie's textbook, as an usher at a movie theatre, and a waiter at a drive-in diner. These disguises call attention to the thematic transgression of social boundaries while depicting a deft "everywhere" that is uniquely and productively spatial.

Paul Mazursky's *Scenes from a Mall* similarly challenges social boundaries, breaking the walls of the domestic sphere and relocating marital disputes within mallspace: starring Woody Allen and Bette Midler as Nick and Deborah, a married couple celebrating their sixteenth anniversary, the film maintains a semblance of "real time" by following the couple over a few hours at the Beverly Center. The films' end credits confirm that the mallspace of Beverly Center in *Scenes* is also merely a semblance of the actual space, a large indoor mall located on Beverly Boulevard, in blocks between West Hollywood and Beverly Hills. While filmed extensively on location at this site, the credits also list

Stamford Town Center, of Stamford, Connecticut. Having visited Beverly Center prior to viewing *Scenes from a Mall*, I quickly noted the uncharted carpeted seating area on the filmed mall's first level. The series of benches is tiered and semicircular, creating an amphitheatre-like arrangement that would seem otherwise to carve into the Beverly Center's level first floor. As the merging of multiple spaces into a single scene is not unusual in films shot on-location (as we have already seen in *Valley Girl*) my observance emphasizes how representations of space blur architectural distinctions in real space, or in representational spaces. Thematically, this distinction is further challenged by the spaces created and sustained through Nick and Deborah's dialogue. Before they have left their hilltop home, Deborah laments that preparations and a dinner party that evening will prevent them from spending their anniversary alone. Nick replies, "[w]e'll be alone until 6:00. If you count the mall as alone, which I do".

Nick's perspective on mallspace sets the tone and techniques for the spatial practices the couple will carry out in Beverly Center through the course of their *Scenes*. "You know," he confirms, "the lonely crowd, man against humanity, Kafka in California"—relying on anachronistic existentialism, or relying on the outmoded modernist impulses I read from Spivak to Jameson through *Dawn of the Dead*. The mallspace in *Scenes* comes to be characterized by the clamor of public and private spheres crashing against one another: Deborah and Nick execute a complex series of arguments, negotiations, and apologies that drive them through the Beverly Center on foot. Before they even set foot in the mall, a significantly disembodied event occurs within their domestic space: an

impossible sex scene. They manage a quick course to the bedroom after their teenage children have left for a ski trip and arrangements of seating for their evening party, and their subsequent disrobing is only interrupted by Deborah's predictable concern that she looks fat. Nevertheless, the two can achieve mere kisses before Deborah whines, "[h]oney, it's me or the ring", drawing Nick away from an infomercial featuring a large cubic zirconia. They start kissing again, but the phone rings, and they must identify whose line it is before Deborah answers and begins chatting with one of her psychiatric patients. We are privy to another interruption, as a different tone brings a call for Nick, but the next shot finds the two, after Nick asks, "[w]here were we?", in a bath. When Nick muses on "Kafka in California" a few minutes later, his query resonates. The couple's social obligations, strategies, and positions limit their ability to achieve a sexual symbiosis—an issue that has as much to do with their individual embodiments as it does with their relationship.

These issues are quickly taken outside the home. Other than *Dawn of the Dead*, *Scenes from a Mall* features the most scenes in mallspace of all the films in my analysis. The Beverly Center becomes a theatre for the performance of Nick and Deborah's marital disputes, as a liminal zone between public and private that provokes Nick's complaint to an eavesdropping mime, "we're having an intimate erotic conversation here". While their jobs penetrate their domestic lives, once again challenging "the worker's *own* physical and mental energy, his personal life or what is life other than activity—as an activity which is turned against him, neither depends on nor belongs to him" (Marx 75), occupational

stresses continue to disrupt the mall as a space of leisure—where they have come to chat, snack, and pick up items for their dinner party. Furthermore, the couple’s own confusion in the status of the mall as public or private—and the normative techniques that might adhere to this, for they take advantage of escalators as escape routes, perform oral sex in an afternoon movie, and costume themselves in finery to enter the onsite Maison du Caviar—actually creates opportunities for them to engage the space for the revelation of their respective secret affairs. If their activities at home—sex, parenting, friendships—are thwarted by Marxist alienation of labour, “as an activity which is turned against him, neither depends on nor belongs to him” (75), the mall becomes a place where they can grapple with these issues publicly.

So while mallspace spurs dialogue in the *Scenes*, it provides a catalyst for new languages in *Clueless*. The *Clueless* lexicon, mashing up Val speak and Jane Austen’s *Emma*, invents and amplifies the vernacular of a group of Los Angeles teens, releasing the homophonic “I’m Audi” farewell and passive aggressive “whatever” to the masses. Almost fifteen years after *Fast Times* and *Valley Girl*, Amy Heckerling’s 1995 comedy exhibits an intensification of the mall/school dichotomy, parodically suggesting that mallspace, and, more broadly, the activity of shopping, might offer opportunities for philosophical development and ontological influence. Heroine Cher Horowitz (Alicia Silverstone) is constantly mocked by her stepbrother Josh (Paul Rudd), who suggests, “you know in some parts of the universe, maybe not in Contempo Casuals, but in some parts it’s considered cool to know what’s going on in the world”. In another

conversation, Cher claims, “I have direction,” and Josh counters, “[y]eah, towards the mall”. Confusingly, Cher seems unfazed by Josh’s remarks, even recommending to her girlfriends, “I have got an idea. Let’s blow off seventh and eighth [periods], go to the mall, have a calorie fest, and see the new Christian Slater” as a sort of psychotherapy for her friend Tai’s romantic trauma. “Retail therapy”, is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “the practice or an instance of shopping to cheer oneself up; shopping regarded as a leisure activity”. Cher seems to engage this term, officially defined as humorous, with a marked seriousness. Her experience at the mall is unfettered by the alienated labour of a part-time job—her father is a litigator who “earns \$500 an hour to fight with people, but he fights with me for free because I’m his daughter”—and thus her fantasies become contingent upon achieving and demonstrating personal morality beyond liberal spending or behind rows of clothes in a closet programmed with its own outfit selection software.

The Beverly Hills setting, featuring mallspace scenes shot at Westwood Pavilion as well as well as Rodeo Drive, is a space of fantasy that draws, and relies, upon conventional contemporary Western images of wealth extending from the Horowitz mansion and pool (“the columns date back to 1972,” Cher explains), to the park-like grounds of Beverly High (which is here Occidental College and Grant High School). Cher’s realm is a free space: she can drive her “loqued out Jeep” (“loqued” referring to ‘crazy’ impressiveness) before having a license and even goes shopping without seeming to carry a wallet—she had left home in anguish and while philosophizing on Rodeo Drive, sees something she

likes through a window. In the next shot, she is back in her own neighbourhood, swinging a large Christian Dior bag. Beverly High appears to be a standard academic environment with rows of desks, an unappetizing cafeteria, and cliques who clump off on schoolyard benches. However, Cher re-negotiates this order, imposing her position of popularity among her peers even upon her teachers. When slapped with an undesirable report card, she proudly tells her father, “some teachers were trying to low-ball me, Daddy. And I know how you say, never accept a first offer so I figured these grades are just a jumping off point to start negotiations”. Cher’s financial freedom motivates a sense of entitlement, and a fundamental “misrecognition”, within Žižek’s definition, that causes her to treat of all social space as mallspace—areas with the potential to be selected from, traded with, and shopped. Further, her report card bargaining and her earlier comment on lawyer “Daddy”, who “fights with her for free”, demonstrate a mystification surrounding alienated labour and its practices in which she mistakes home for school, and confuses both sites for her father’s litigative workplace.

Because she already lives the North American capitalist dream that grants this happy bewilderment, Cher’s fantasies are driven by her need for moral affirmation; in Žižekian terms, she knows very well that she is spoilt by her father and owns too many things, but she still believes she can help people by spreading these things around. First, Cher and her best friend Dionne adopt newcomer Tai into their popular fold. Tai arrives complete with strong East Coast accent, clothes that classmate Amber says she “could be a farmer in” and a request for “herbal refreshment” that causes confusion over tea and marijuana

and coke and cocaine—all features signalling an impending makeover. After washing out her hair dye, reapplying her makeup, and outfitting her in shorter, tighter clothing, Cher suggests further anatomical improvements via a “Buns of Steel” VHS, scholarly growth if they each read “one non-school book a week”, and concludes, “we should do something good for mankind or the planet for a couple of hours”. The makeover montage demonstrates the heroine’s attention to the social construction of self: a construction that is troubled by the film’s conclusion, where Cher finds herself wondering how she could have “created some sort of a monster” in Tai, who has developed into an exaggerated manifestation of Cher herself.

This realization comes after Tai’s “brush with death at the mall”. While Cher shopped at Westside Pavilion, Tai picks up a couple “Barneys” (generically-styled boys) and teases them by balancing on a high balcony handrail overlooking the mall’s first floor. They jokingly push her, and she slips, only to be rescued by Cher’s shopping partner Christian. At this juncture, mallspace quite literally endangers Tai’s life, but also threatens Cher’s carefully choreographed high school community. As Tai takes over, regaling classmates with lines like, “right before you die, your mind just sorta gets very clear”, Cher seeks new means of social organizing. First taking to the streets, Rodeo Drive, specifically, in a shopping/contemplating scene I have already described, she decides she needs to learn more from those around her: “all my friends were really good in different ways”. Here *Clueless* takes a cue from *Bildungsroman* orthodoxy, suggesting that Cher’s developing socio-spatial awareness is part of her

maturation. She sees suddenly and desperately beyond Beverly Hills when her teacher Ms. Geist alerts the history class of the (fictional) Pismo Beach disaster. Cher's hand shoots up. "Miss Geist", she ventures, "I want to help". Though her motivations might be mixed (a few scenes earlier she confers with her father over a crush on a "do-gooder type." Mr. Horowitz insists she is already altruistic: "who takes care of this household? Who makes sure Daddy eats right?"), Cher's service shows she is honing a social perspective that stretches, less selfishly, beyond the domestic sphere.

Indeed, her collection of donated household items for the Pismo Bay residents who have "lost everything" in an unspecified natural disaster makes a mallspace of pledges and benefactions. Another makeover montage—Cher had just decided that "this time, [she] will makeover her soul"—grabbing caviar, colour-coordinated items from her mechanized closet, skis, and tennis racquets, assembles with the variety and senselessness of a shopping spree. This "soul makeover" engages a fantasy of social constructivism developing via Judith Butler and coinciding with *Clueless*' production: Butler defines the performance of gendered identity in 1990's *Gender Trouble* as the "repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (45). "Repeat[edly] re-stylizing" her benevolent self, Cher sets up the most populated kiosk for donations and volunteer enrollment and arranges a room for donated items which attracts Amber carrying a Tiffany bag, Travis with a bong and provokes the questions "Could you please take it to bedding?" and, of the

latter item, “kitchenware, I guess?” Cher also proudly tells Miss Geist of the edible contributions, “I divided them into entrees and appetizers”. The design of this charitable venture manifests Cher’s moral fantasies physically, into the social space of Beverly Hills High. Invoking the methods and makeup of mallspace, her efforts demonstrate that she knows very well she is an ardent consumer, but she still gives things away anyway.

Cher’s earnest interest in understanding society morally rather than materially seems to offer a superficial conclusion to my filmic analysis of Los Angeles. However, *Clueless* completes my chronological trajectory of mallspaces in the city and emphasizes the extent to which these places are manifest as social fantasies—a notion that is intrinsically superficial and facile. In conclusion, I take to the streets myself—not in protest but in *flânerie*, in spying, in scribbling, and, of course, in shopping. I maintain that fieldwork offers a principal, and productive, method of defining and distinguishing representations of space from spatial practice and representational spaces. To experience real social space is to move through it, and to produce it through our own physical patterns. Here, and there, during my work in Los Angeles, I trace movement as it offers opportunity for “challenging the linguistic model... by attending to the somatic, experiential, aesthetic, cultural, and contextual dimensions of gesturing”, explained by Carrie Noland, who “understand[s] gesturing to be an activity that relies both on the singular and the iterative, the improvised and the convention-bound” (xv). As editor of *Migrations of Gesture* with Sally Ann Ness, Noland “propose[s] the study of gesture as a bridge between discourses privileging the

biological body, subjectivity, and somatic experience on the one hand and, on the other, discourses indebted to a deconstructive technique of embodiment as a staging of the body through structures of signification that are not necessarily the body's own" (xv). I put forward another viaduct for this association: discourses critical of space and postmodern social life. While Noland argues, "[a] crucial category for the study of meaning-making as a whole, gesture is at once evidence of the body's implication in systems of signification and a reminder of the body's fragility and resistance to infinite deferral" (xv), Lefebvre confirms, "[f]or the spatial body, becoming social does not mean being inserted into some pre-existing 'world': this body produces and reproduces—and it perceives what it reproduces or produces. Its spatial properties and determinants are contained within it" (199). "In what sense, then," he asks, "does it perceive them?" (199). Discussing the "practico-sensory realm" and how "hearing plays a decisive role in the lateralization of perceived space", Lefebvre's attention to bodies in social space helps me to ground the recent establishment of gesture as "cross-disciplinary vehicle" that Noland and Ness advocate in mallspaces I have perceived (xi). Procedurally, much of my work has been actively "learning from Los Angeles", invoking Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Stephen Izenour's *Learning from Las Vegas*. This research entails efforts of learning how to perceive, standing in and up for mallspace as it is about to change again, or even disappear.

3.3 Architecture V: Groves, Ecology V: Drovers

In order to accommodate [Los Angeles'] extremes, the chapters that follow will have to deviate from accepted norms for architectural histories of cities. What I have aimed to do is present the architecture (in a very conventional sense of the word) within the topographical and historical context of the total artefact that constitutes Greater Los Angeles, because it is this double construct that binds the polymorphous architectures into a comprehensive unity that cannot often be discerned by comparing monument with monument out of context.

-Reyner Banham, Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies 23

Banham's description of his methodology aligns with a "double, or even multiple error" that Lefebvre describes: "[t]o begin with, the split between 'real' and 'true' serves only to avoid any confrontation between practice and theory, between lived experience and concepts, so that both sides of these dualities are distorted from the outset" (95). Lefebvre continues, fuelling a critique of the same modernist architectural context Banham was writing to in 1971:

[a]nother trap is the resort to specialities which antedate 'modernity', which are themselves older than capitalism's absorption of the entirety of space for its own purposes, older than the actual possibility, thanks to science and technology, of producing space. Surely it is the supreme illusion to defer to architects, urbanists, or planners as being experts or ultimate authorities in matters relating to space. What the 'interested parties' here fail to appreciate is that they are bending *demands* (from below) to suit *commands* (from above), and that this unforced renunciation on their part actually runs ahead of the wishes of the manipulators of consciousness. (Lefebvre 95)

"The real task" Lefebvre identifies is executed in Banham's *Los Angeles*: "to uncover and stimulate demands *even at the risk* of their wavering in face of the imposition of the oppressive and repressive commands"; where Lefebvre troubles "architects, urbanists, or planners" as potential "specialists of 'lived

experience” (95) Banham disparages, “most observers” who “report monotony, not unity, and within that monotony, confusion rather than variety, this is usually because the context has escaped them; and it has escaped them because it is unique (like all the best unities) and without any handy terms of comparison” (23). Considering this “unity” vis-à-vis the troubling of totalities undertaken by Deutsche, Gibson-Graham, and Freeman complicates Banham’s next question: he muses, “[h]ow then to bridge this gap of comparability” (23). Lefebvre suggests, “[l]et everyone look at the space around them. What do they see?...all anyone sees is movements” (95). In “bridging this gap of comparability,” Banham would agree:

One can most properly begin by learning the local language; and the language of design, architecture, and urbanism in Los Angeles is the language of movement. Mobility outweighs monumentality there to a unique degree, as Richard Austin Smith pointed out in a justly famous article in 1965, and the city will never be fully understood by those who cannot move fluently through its diffuse urban texture, cannot go with the flow of its unprecedented life. (23)

For his own study, “like earlier generations of English intellectuals who taught themselves Italian in order to read Dante in the original, I learned to drive in order to read Los Angeles in the original” (23). This admission means Banham went one step further than I have, for I have not yet learned to drive at home in Vancouver let alone on the L.A. freeways, and risked denaturing a purist’s approach to ethnography by forgoing a drive-in approach to malls in favour of one traversed by public transit, predominantly busses. Nevertheless, the parallels between Banham and Lefebvre strikingly set the pedestrian’s pace I have

adopted; I contend that new L.A. mallspace begins at the body and wants us to walk it.

Banham demonstrates four ecologies for Los Angeles: Surfurbia, Foothills, Plains of Id, and Autopia. Coinciding with these are four architectures: Exotic Pioneers, Fantastic, The Exiles, and The Style that Nearly... . In his final chapter, “An Ecology for Architecture,” Banham explains, “[t]here are as many possible cities as there are possible forms of human society, but Los Angeles emphatically suggests that there is no simple correlation between urban form and social form” (237). His “ecologies” function to illustrate the complexities and contradictions (again, borrowing from Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour) that necessarily disrupt this “simple correlation”, demonstrating that

[w]here it threatens the ‘human-values’-oriented tradition of town planning inherited from Renaissance humanism it is in revealing how simple-mindedly mechanistic that supposedly humane tradition can be, how deeply attached to the mechanical fallacy that there is a necessary causal connexion between built form and human life, between the mechanisms of the city and the styles of architecture practiced there. (237)

Abandoning this “mechanical fallacy”, Banham alleges that “all such explanations miss the point because they miss out the human content. The houses and the automobiles are equal figments of a great dream, the dream of the urban homestead, the dream of a good life outside of the squalors of the European type of city” or extends back to both “the Victorian railway suburbs of earlier cities” and “the country-house culture of the fathers of the US constitution” (238). In a sense then, achieving a new ecology in Los Angeles involves chasing this dream, and finding fantasy structures in mallspace.

My definition of “Groves” as fifth architecture in Banham’s trajectory engages both the central mallspace within my analysis, West Hollywood’s eponymous Grove, and his own chapter on “Fantastic” architecture. Furthermore, the etymological origin of the word *grove* moves beyond a small wood or group of trees to also signify suburban space. Construction for the Grove began in December 2000, and the center opened on March 15, 2002. My initial exposure to the Grove was likely through paparazzi images of celebrity shoppers; an article in *New York Times* design blog “The Moment” entitled “Malltown, U.S.A” piqued my research interests in September 2008, the same month as I began my graduate study and started work on this project. Benjamin Anastas, the article’s author, describes that “[f]rom my seat aboard the vintage-style trolley that makes a circuit around [new Caruso development Americana, a] \$400 million outdoor shopping mall and residential community, I glide down what reminds me of Rodeo Drive to Rush Street in Chicago, skirt the dancing fountain in Vegas, turn onto Newbury Street in Boston and end up in New Orleans”.

Coinciding closely with my visit in March 2009, a feature published in the *Los Angeles Business Journal* announced that they had chosen Grove developer Rick Caruso “to join its Business Hall of Fame”. The article warrants this decision partially on the successes “Caruso Affiliated boasts”: that “20 million people visit the Grove annually...higher attendance than Disneyland, at 14 million” and “at the Grove and other Caruso centers, shoppers spend more than they do at traditional enclosed malls”. “Caruso’s wealth,” the article reveals, “was estimated at \$1.7 billion in 2008” and the man himself had “entertained the idea of running

for mayor this year, and he hasn't ruled out the possibility next time....As a potential candidate, it's been asked if Caruso would try to apply his Grove aesthetic to the rest of the city. He scoffs at the notion. 'I would never want or expect Los Angeles to look or feel like a retail center I built'.

One should not be satisfied by merely reading about what the Grove "look[s] or feel[s]" like; the *Business Journal* article points out that critics "see the Grove as a sterile environment not unlike Disneyland", quoting residents who write "[d]evelopments like the Grove rip what authenticity L.A. has out of its sunny heart" or "[t]he Grove is tacky, phony and fake, full of monuments to vapid consumerism. It is more like Disneyland than a real place. L.A. does need places where people can get out of their isolating cars and interact with other people. But the plastic Grove doesn't do it for me". Immediately upon setting foot in the Grove, or towards the Grove off Fairfax behind the CBS lot and without noticing the Farmer's Market, I am far less anxious, or awed, by its plasticity than I am by its pedestrian pyrotechnics. I visit Monday evening and am met with a sensation similar to Jameson's "constant busyness," which "gives the feeling that emptiness is here absolutely packed, that it is an element within which you yourself are immersed, without any of that distance that formerly enabled the perception of perspective or volume" (43). However, my repetition of Jameson's statement is here misguided, if only because my guides at the Grove are people, and which take precedence over the postmodern formal effects depicted in the Bonaventure. My first shot on video, filmed the next morning atop one of the "antique trolleys" described in the *New York Times* article, catches a woman

dressed entirely in white, denim and a beater-tank, skipping. The Grove provokes skipping; it is easy street, it is composed of curbs that have been researched and engineered to accommodate a diversity of gait and girths.

Besides my first figure in white, however, most Grove walkers adhere to unimaginative systems of mobility: families of tourists collect in clumps, strollers pretend to be larger, engined vehicles and intersect or criss-cross the central roadway, and heterosexual couples seize the opportunity to perform arm-in-arm affections. I generalize, but necessarily so: the deviations from these systems are seen most frequently, even exclusively, in children. Photos of a young Asian boy reveal an agility and autonomy—no parents nearby?—that attest what the *Business Journal* deems “Caruso Style: clean, safe, and family friendly”. This particular boy might be three or four, and might be wearing authentic Burberry pants that could cost a couple hundred dollars, mismatched with a “Truck” long-sleeved t-shirt. In my first frame, he darts across the bricked center of the trolley track. In the second frame, he is in profile, his right arm and leg raised simultaneously, hands in fists, lips pursed. I film a group of Caucasian boys who might be on spring break, or skipping school, probably aged twelve or thirteen. I do not catch them bounding onto the upper level of the double decker trolley, but I remember them offsetting the weight of the thing, and film them sitting spread out across several seats, one by one. As one boy in orange ceases pumping his right elbow, the fist of which is clasped around the gleaming golden barrier of the trolley, the biggest boy, in a navy hooded sweatshirt and silver knee-length shorts, picks up precisely the same rhythm, but slows it to beat in half tempo.

Rather than restricting his movement to one arm, he is sitting facing into the trolley (and his friends), legs outstretched over the wooden bench, and uses both arms to pull himself back and forth twice before settling with his head resting against the barrier. Along these same lines, thematically, and chronologically, perhaps, according to age, I have a photo of two teenage girls who are likely friends, but their distance from each other defies any accurate categorization. They appear to be the same height, and both wear ankle-length Ugg boots, frayed denim shorts, with one in a purple tank top carrying a Louis Vuitton monogrammed backpack and the other in a white t-shirt with a leather shoulder bag striped in three tones of red, green, and beige. Both have loose long hair and sip from drinks. Sharing so many common physical attributes struck a chord with me, having spent too many teenage days trying to look exactly like my girlfriends. Yet their spatial distance is discordant with this active corporeal emulation, and this friendly span became formative in my experience of the Grove.

So what about the spans, and pans, of the Grove? How do I account for the people I don't notice, the generalizations I take liberties with, and perhaps most importantly, my own position? Filmically, when I do step into the frame, it is speedily so—I held the camera in an unobtrusive manner and walked with my ordinary urgency. In some malls, I wear black patent sneakers and in others I adopt Birkenstocks. Filming my own feet seems sort of kitsch in retrospect, but panning while walking induces both viewerly vertigo and an inimitable rhythm of the space. So what? So am I more Spivak, standing for feminism because I think of my body and trying not to essentialize about anything else? How do I describe

my postmodern position? I try to think abstractly, noting the lines on my striped blouse blow out over the same metal lines of the escalator's corrugated steps. Dear Jameson, look at yourself before you step off. This is an approach that is too many parts "pinch me, I must be dreaming", for it is constrained in its own periplum.

Looking out, and back to the fantastic building, of which Banham describes, particularly of buildings which sell hamburgers, "[t]he building and the symbol are the same thing", adding, "and if this sounds like one of the approved aims of architecture as a fine art, then it can certainly be paralleled in the work of reputable art architects of the period and later...or of almost any Angeleno building where a single idea has been made dominant over everything else..." (113). "Such symbolic packaging within a single conceptual form can impose strains even on a building with only one function to serve, let alone a multiplicity of functions, and there were always needs that drove fantasists in other directions" (113). Of "[t]he other and more interesting area of anomalies" which "embraces the architecture of restaurants", Banham describes, "[f]rom the Brown Derby onwards, through the Velvet Turtle at Redondo Beach, and onwards into a plushly under-lit future of 'Total Meal Experience', restaurants have been the most intensely and completely designed buildings in the area" (121). The architecture of the "total [meal] experience" corresponds to Jameson's expression of "the Bonaventure aspires to being a total space, a complete world, a kind of miniature city" and we can recall, "to this new total space, meanwhile, corresponds a new collective practice, a new mode in which individuals move

and congregate, something like the practice of a new and historically original kind of hypercrowd” (*Postmodernism* 40). Of Caruso, “rival developer Jerry Snyder” says, “I don’t know anybody who pays more attention to detail as a developer, from the lamps on the streets to the painting of the trolley car” (*Los Angeles Business Journal*). Caruso’s outdoor mallspaces, which are based on splices of famous American streets the developer has identified as functional, sample with equal liberty from the European streets Caruso’s family visit each summer as testament to their Italian heritage. This “total space”, or “total meal experience”, then, is totally disorienting in its transnational outreach. Bill Allen, of the Los Angeles Economic Development Corp., argues, “What [Caruso] has done to brand L.A. has helped us...[h]e has brought tremendous revenue into this region. The Grove and Americana are now international tourist destinations. Disneyland is not just a global attraction but a social gathering place where people go and create memories...I feel the same way about the grove and Americana. He’s creating places where people make and share and relive memories” (qtd. in *Los Angeles Business Journal*). This quotation from Allen, who the *Business Journal* recognizes has “known Caruso since high school”, suggests the ecology I have been working towards defining in relation to the Grove as exemplar of new Los Angeles mallspace: droves, a category which should be classified under the subtitle, ‘they’re coming in’.

My ecological category recognizes this arrival, whether it moves in skips, rhythmic echoes, or friendly pedestrian chasms. Droves suggests that new mallspace provides a meeting place that is constructed by the movement of its

visitors and a measure of their congregational production. The physical structures that execute this “providing” are indeed provisional: where the Grove and Americana draw on New Urbanism and old cities, Century City, another outdoor mall a few miles away from the Grove on Santa Monica Boulevard, copies clean modernist lines in concrete. Hollywood and Highland, meanwhile, is a tourist destination on Hollywood Boulevard that includes a huge, debunked ancient Egyptian archway and permits access to elevators or ‘up’ escalators only after the visitor has traversed the entire mallspace. Despite these stylistic differences, my research of recent malls is exclusive to outdoor facilities. The ‘droves’ ecology thus denotes spaces that are open air and can be viewed from a variety of neighbourly perspectives. By no means does this openness make the spaces more egalitarian—my own experiences were characterized by efforts to ‘dress up’ in order to ‘dress the part’, a loose costuming that caused visceral conflicts as I travelled alone by bus—but the outdoor locations indicate an environmental awareness that might be better defined as climactic pride. Nevertheless, new mallspaces champion Banham’s urban or regional context as equal to, if not superior to, architectural content, inviting visitors to move through them while assuming they will stay and spend a while.

*

Continuity is the essence of Junkspace; it exploits any intervention that enables expansion, deploys the infrastructure of seamlessness: escalator, air conditioning, sprinkler, fire shutter, hot-air curtain... -Rem Koolhaas "junkspace" 162

*It is good to give materialist investigations a truncated ending.
-Walter Benjamin Arcades Project 473*

"You Are Here" is not a requiem for malls. Mallspace, as we have read represented, practiced spatially, and lived representationally within Lefebvre's triadic dialectic, means more than malls. My dynamic term defines places that are moving and does not historicize, nor does it capture the afterlives of spaces it produces and represents. It may be that in advocating for representational modes of movement, I am merely gesturing at, as Jameson describes in *The Political Unconscious*, "the imaginary resolution of a real contradiction" (*Political Unconscious* 77). Referring to Lévi-Strauss' study of Caduveo facial art, Jameson explains, "the visual text of Caduveo facial art constitutes a symbolic act, whereby social contradictions, insurmountable on their own terms, find a purely formal resolution in the symbolic realm" (77). Whether or not movement constitutes a "formal" or "social" strategy is a question that motivates my research. Any answer I offer will waver, not out of uncertainty, but rather, pliancy—with the myriad social structures and innumerable aesthetic "resolutions" in which movement is at play.

While Rick Caruso's Grove certainly provides an "imaginary [spatial] resolution of a real [spatial] contradiction", effectively establishing a meeting place for Los Angeles residents and visitors within Banham's disjunctive urban

“Autopia”, the dialectical motion—real and imagined—that sparks controversy in engaging this mallspace is the oscillation that keeps it going. Industrious taking notes on a bench by the Grove’s choreographed central fountain, I realized that interested stares by be-suited passerby positioned me as actively granting the space a certain cultural capital—a young *flâneuse* producing poetry, sketching, and musing near a contemporary *Grande Jatte*. With apologies to French neo-impressionist Georges Seurat, this instance is one of many in which I acknowledge my own activities as they are productive of political situatedness. More poets will not provide the Grove with a remedy for its ostensible plasticity. Yet as we have seen, poets who actively “take note” of the “dimension of ‘real abstraction’” Žižek explains do not render “the ‘effective act of exchange’” impossible (because that would be impossible!) Instead, they experiment with new methods of “taking note”—studying mallspaces through new ethnography, studying language through new listening, and studying movement through new *flânerie*.

Jameson, in all of this, speaks to Los Angeles’ Westin Bonaventure from Vancouver, in a public lecture at Simon Fraser University in March 2010.

“Postmodernism Revisited”, as the talk’s title tells us, is a theoretical framework that presents the body as a last reality to survive lost culture, among nineteenth century emotional notions and rigorous contemporary understandings of affect. Paraphrasing Jameson, I read his awareness of his own body in space as *still* negotiable—emphasizing “still” to suggest that while moving forward from that moment on the escalator towards an embodied understanding of postmodern

space, he happily hesitates, quivering just before an answer. Knowing the next step says it all, I too look forward to more.

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