Mediating Montreal: Constructing Places, Contesting Spaces

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ABSTRACT
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In his later work Michel Foucault argued for the importance of the spatiality of social life; the place in which the actually lived and socially produced sites and the relations between them are negotiated (Foucault 1986). This thesis aims to locate the centrality of such spatial negotiations through critically engaging with some of the recent theoretical writings on contemporary cities and applying them to specifically delineated spaces within the landscape of contemporary Montreal.

More specifically, this thesis observes certain Montreal neighborhoods, namely the Main, the Gay Village, and Parc Extension, which have either been marked as iconic or ignored and ghettoized. The work offers a challenge to the traditional conceptions of Montreal's hybridity which rely on discursive constructions of places such as the Main as an idealized space of uncontested difference. Instead, it focuses on other and othered Montreal neighborhoods which are defined through clearly marked boundaries and the marginal status of their residents. The goal of this research is to examine how social formations are constituted through both official discourses and everyday spatial negotiations, and more significantly, the ways in which such constitutions of space at once re-inscribe forms of social domination and inform a practice of social resistance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction

The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be coloured with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another (Foucault 1986: 23).

Space is not a scientific object removed from ideology and politics; it has always been political and strategic (Lefebvre as cited in Soja 1989: 80).

I know this city. For years now, I've been making my way through its streets and back alleys, its staircases and rooftops and culture and nightlife. I know its people, its history, its meeting points and its dividing lines. For the past decade, Montreal has been my turf and I have defended and displayed it to all those who have been outsiders. However, more recently I've become suspicious of this city. Maybe it had something to do with the appearance of eviction notices in my mailbox, maybe it was the closing down of my favorite bakery on the Main, or maybe it was my academic interest in urban space that ended my romance... but somewhere along the way, both Montreal and I have changed a great deal. This thesis is in many ways a chronicle of that change. As such it weaves together a story of this city based on my personal movements through it. There are, without a doubt, several inconsistencies in this story – unvisited sites, untold histories, unacknowledged negotiations. This is in part due to the fact that I experience these spaces and places in very different ways and to very different degrees. As well, they inform my identity in inconsistent and at times contradictory manners. However, the process of weaving these places and stories together has informed not only my current understanding of Montreal as a city, and myself as a subject that is defined through my

interactions and relationships with and in the city, but also, my capacity to apply critical theory to cultural practice. This, above all else, was the main motivator behind this inquiry. Montreal has constituted who I am and where I belong in a myriad of ways and as such, it is an obvious place for me to begin my exploration of contemporary spatial negotiations. As Doreen Massey has noted in City Worlds:

> The city may be a personal drama, but it is also a social drama... the city like nowhere else brings people together, into a narrative that is simultaneously personal and social (Massey et al. 17).

In order to unpack the personal and social dramas that have constituted Montreal for me, I have chosen to look at three disparate and distinct areas – namely, the Main, the Gay Village, and Parc Extension (otherwise know as Parc X). I chose these locals as the object of my study because they are areas that I have moved through, lived in and experienced intimately. They are also areas in which I have had radically different experiences of my own personal identities, ones which make clear to me the shifting and constructed nature of identity. How and when my body is sexualized and read as queer, how and when my body is raced and read as middle eastern or Muslim, and how and when my subcultural allegiances come to the forefront often depends on where I am located in the city. Furthermore, my body's negotiation of these categories and spaces is a counterpoint to their discursive construction – at times, I feel the least gay in the Village while in Parc X, I often feel a disconnect with the large Muslim population that resides there. For me, this has a lot to do with the ways in which these categories are constituted in the space that is constitutive of them. The term "Gay" has very particular

meanings attached to it when you walk the streets of the Village and as a queer Iranian woman, I often find myself excluded from its scope.

Similarly, although I am read as Middle Eastern and Muslim in other parts of the city, my distance from these cultural communities is all too clear when I roam the streets of Parc X. And then there is the Main – the ever inclusive, ever hybrid space where all Montrealers can come together... and yet, more and more, the Main is a space in which I feel the most alienated from any cultural community. These inconsistencies between the spaces I move through and the identity I embody have provoked me to engage with historical contingencies of these places: how are they constituted and narrativized? Who is included and excluded from these narratives? What conservative forces are at work and what possibilities for resistance are available in such places? These are some of the primary questions with which this inquiry began. Many more have arisen during my investigations.

i.i - Locating the City in Contemporary Cultural Theory

In "Locating Cultural Activity: The 'Main' as Chronotope and Heterotopia," Martin Allor examines the relationship between the politics of place within global capitalism, the social power of media forms in the production of local practices and the degree of agency cultural consumers possess in everyday life. For him, this requires not only a negotiation between the global and the local, but also that of discourse and practice. He states:

> Rather than fetishizing either the domination of global circuits of capital or
> the resistant moment of local consumption, the problematic of space and

place interrogates both the certainties of abstract categories of social relation... and the ways in which we theorize and analyze the contest(s) of the mediation of social life... these lines of inquiry demand that we link the relations of text and audience to the relations of context and conjuncture which specify the field of mediations possible in any domain of cultural activity" (Allor 42).

Through looking at specific spaces of cultural practice, this thesis attempts to explore much more broad theoretical questions in the field's of media studies and cultural studies: namely, what is the relationship between discursive formation and everyday cultural practice, how is locality negotiated within a global context, and how do spatial organizations and negotiations produce and reveal more general social relations in contemporary life.

The problems and possibilities which cities embody are amongst the most pressing issues facing us in the twenty first century. From parades and festivals, to riots and hurricanes, cities have emerged as not only the terrain for global social encounters, but also the site of some of the most intense conflicts, tensions, and crises we face. Today, the majority of the world's population occupies urbanized space with thousands more arriving each day. However, different people occupy urban space in very different ways forming cultural geographies that brings with them both a host of possibilities and problems. As the editors of City Worlds have argued:

> Cities are the crucible of the new, places of mixing and creating of new identities, they are the cradles of new ideas. On the other hand, that very process of the coming together of different peoples can create conflict,

intolerance and violence... Cities are places of particularly intense social interactions, places of a myriad social juxtapositions" (Massey et al. 1).

While there are a multiplicity of identities that occupy city spaces in the twenty first century, the experience of the city will vary from person to person as well as from group to group depending on a series of factors such as where particular bodies are located, what kind of bodies they are, what activities they partake in, and what power relations they encounter. As well, it is impossible to tell the story of any individual city without understanding its connection to global structures and global flows. Yet at the same time, each city has its own specificities.

Montreal has many of the physical features that define contemporary metropolitanism: tall buildings, an underground subway, highways and streets, hotels, museums, libraries, religious institutions, and restaurants, a thriving cultural industry, an open attitude towards alternative lifestyles, a large immigrant population and so on. And yet, as most residents and visitors of this city will attest, Montreal's aura is rarely duplicated. The experience of this city is unique to this city alone and yet connected to a series of discourses about postmodern metropolitanism.

The objective of this project is to critically engage with some of the recent theoretical writings on contemporary spatial negotiations through examining specifically delineated spaces within the landscape of contemporary Montreal. This thesis will observe certain Montreal neighborhoods, namely, the Main, the Gay Village, and Parc X, which have been marked as either iconic or different through the marginalized status of their residents, and the ways in which these residents negotiate their identity, their social relations, and their everyday practices. Through this work, I hope to unveil the multiple

ways in which a variety of urban spaces (both private and public) are occupied by the diverse constituents of this city, the progressive and traumatic effects of globalization on urban communities, and the ways in which these multiple constituents, through their everyday experience within these spaces exercise forms of *resisting power[1]*.

In his later work Michel Foucault argued for the importance of the spatiality of social life; the place in which the actually lived and socially produced sites and the relations between them are negotiated (Foucault 1986). I aim to locate the centrality of such spatial negotiations through an examination of certain Montreal communities who reside in specifically marked spaces within the city. This thesis will challenge traditional conceptions of Montreal's hybridity which rely on discursive constructions of places such as the Main as an idealized space of uncontested difference. Furthermore, this thesis will focus on a set of Montreal neighborhoods which are defined through clearly marked boundaries and the marginal status of their residents: the Gay Village, home to a very particular segment of Montreal's queer constituency, and Parc X, a predominantly working class neighborhood which houses a number of immigrant cultural communities. Through a comparative analysis of these two neighborhoods as well as Montreal's Main, which has often been celebrated as holding the essential character of the city, I will examine the ways in which specific identities are negotiated through everyday practices within urban space and the ways in which they are rearticulated into a conservative construction of urbanism. The goal of this research is to examine how social formations occupy space, and more significantly, the ways in which spatial negotiation at once re-inscribe forms of social domination and inform a practice of social resistance.

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[1] Foucault defines *resisting power* as "that power which attempts to set up situations groupings and actions which resist the imposition of dominating power" (Foucault as cited in Sharp et al. 3).

Some of the specific questions that are of interest to me and inform this project

are: How do conflicting identities co-exit in contemporary metropolitan spaces? What

are the effects of immigration on the composition of contemporary post-colonial cities?

How are issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality negotiated within urban space? How

are collective identities informed by spaces of consumption? How do urban communities

resist the engulfing effects of gentrification? What kinds of possibilities are enabled and

negated through ghettoization? My project begins at the conjuncture of these questions. It

assumes urban space to be a space filled with tensions, fluctuation, power negotiations,

and potentialities.

Central to my argument is the notion, borrowed in part from Situationist theory,

that although capitalism is primarily concerned with the organization and distribution of

space, and as such, urban space is ultimately deigned to replicate hegemonic structures,

the way in which people live, function, and get along within modern spatial organizations

is often counter to capitalist intentions and interest (Debord 1983). Throughout this work,

I engage with some of the effects of modern special organizations, as well as global flows

of populations and capital, in the formation of contemporary metropolitanism. Through

examining a series of loci of cultural practice, my thesis will also focus on the conditions

of possibility which open up within particular urban settings. I will rely on Foucault's

understanding of *heterotopia*[2] to counter the prevailing discourses on globalization as a

purely hegemonic force of domination (Kraidy 458). The relevance of discussions of

space in this inquiry will be in how we can work through issues of identity (including

class, race, gender, and sexuality) as they are negotiated within day-to-day life in an

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[2] Foucault defined *heteratopia* as real spaces and events "whose existence set up unsettling juxtapositions of incommensurate elements which challenge the way we think, especially the way our thinking is ordered" (Foucault as cited in Soja 14)

immediate and engaged manner.

i.ii - Approaching the City

In recent years, a new discourse on place, and space has emerged within the fields

of communications and cultural studies which focuses on a theoretical exploration of how

individual and collective identities, through their use and movement in space, constitute

places while at the same time are constituted by them. This new field of studies, forged

by writers such as Dorreen Massey, Jane Jacobs and Edward Soja, and referred to as the

study of mediated spaces, presents new notion of spatiality which has emerged in the 20th

century and is in many ways connected to discourses of globalization, what Harvey has

termed "time-space" compression. Like much of the work which has been done in the

area of mediated spaces and social geography, this study will rely on an interdisciplinary

approach which will involve an engagement with Marxist notions of capital flows along

with (and to a certain extent challenged by) the Chicago School's theorizing about the

social construction of urban space as well as a series of divergent works in the fields of

cultural geography, and feminist, post-colonial and queer theoretical engagements with

city space.

While this thesis relies in part on an auto-ethnographic account of the spaces it

examines, it is not a strictly ethnographic project in the traditional sense of ethnography.

As Appadurai has noted, ethnography has a "particular lack of reflexivity as a project of

knowledge and reproduction" (Appadurai 182). He argues for a reconstitution of the

project of ethnography which would allow a three fold value: "shifts the history of

ethnography from a history of neighborhoods to a history of the techniques for the

production of locality", "[open] up a new way to think about the complex coproduction of indigenous categories by organic intellectuals, administrators, linguists, missionaries, and ethnologists, which undergirds large portions of the monographic history of anthropology" and "[enable] the ethnography of the modern, and of the production of locality under modern conditions, to be part of a more general contribution to the ethnographic record tout court" (Appadurai 182). While this thesis is far from an ethnographic account of certain Montreal locations, it does aim to explore the ways in which the city has been constituted discursively and contrasts it with the ways in which different communities have created spaces for themselves within the city.

This paper will rely heavily on post-structuralist theoretical understandings of space as its underpinning structure (Foucault, Soja, Howard and Appadurai). However, it will also attempt to combine a rethinking of notions of materialism with a step away from abstract and universalizing concepts of place within cultural studies and towards an emphasis on history, specificity and context of cultural practices and social relations. The two pronged approach which will be employed when examining the specific neighborhoods will include an amalgamation of interpretive discourse analysis - in looking at archives about, and media representations of specific locations, and participant observation and exploratory methods - when doing qualitative field research in the neighborhoods and observing and interpreting the inhabited spaces.

This thesis will take lived experience and social relations in all their materiality (gender, race, class and so on), as a primary site of the experience of space. It aims to avoid some of the more utopic tendencies of conceptualizing post-modern hybridity through an examination of practiced space and city cultural politics. The experience and

meaning of the chosen locations in this context is developed through a reflexive relationship between histories, activities and social groups who have occupied their material environment.

Appadurai has argued for the importance of analyzing the relationship between a neighborhood and its context: "what a neighborhood is produced from, against, in spite of and in relation to" (Appadurai 184). For him, neighborhoods at once require and produce contexts. He argues that neighborhoods provide "the unproblematized setting for the technical production of local subjects in a regular and regulated manner" at the same time "as these local subjects engage in the social activities of production, representation and reproduction... they contribute, generally unwittingly, to the creation of contexts that might exceed the existing material and conceptual boundaries of the neighborhood" (Appadurai 185). This project is an attempt to unpack this contradictory relationship between the production of neighborhoods by their constituents, and the repression of individuals and collectives through institutionalized spatial organizations.

i.iii – Taking Apart the City

Chapter one will begin by exploring contemporary Montreal in relation to some of the theoretical writings on postmodernism and space. Specifically, I will examine the construction of the Main as a hybrid space which is representative of an idealized conception of postmodern metropolitanism.

Located at what has for years been considered the very heart of the city, Montreal's St. Laurent Boulevard, popularly known as 'The Main,' is a street around and on which diverse populations have migrated and settled. Throughout its history, the

Main has been articulated as one of Montreal's most hybrid neighborhoods. This hybridity of the Main has been celebrated as the primary site of the streets attraction and allure, and has functioned as a central motif in the popular imagination of Montreal's identity. In this chapter I hope to both criticize and revise the popular conceptions, as well as discursive constructions of the Main which have, through out the last century, served to elaborate a construction of the city as a utopic space of uncontested diversity. The chapter offers an alternative reading of this section of Montreal; one in which the conservative forces of 'urban revitalization' and gentrification have functioned to contain, suppress and dislocate the complex set of subjectivities which have been, and continue to be produced and re-produced both within the area and throughout the city. This thesis presents the Main as the centerpiece of the happy metaphor Montreal tells itself in public discourses about the city. The following chapters look at two other neighborhoods that have a very different relationship to this narrative.

The emergence of clearly marked queer spaces in Montreal in the WWII era was a result of a series of politicized struggles by the cities multiple queer constituents. Montreal, like most metropolitan cities, bared witness to the great gay migration to its downtown areas in the post WWII era. Over the past two decades, Montreal's current Gay Village has emerged as a place within which the realization of certain forms of a public sexual citizenship can take place. In chapter two, I will examine the constitution of segregated 'queer spaces' within Montreal and the ways in which subjective formation take place within them. Elaborating on theories of ghettoization, many have argued that such forms of queer space have played a pivotal role in the self-definition of urban queers by giving them a space to display and live out their desires, as well as a sense of

legitimation and community (Bell et al. 1995). However, in this chapter I will argue that there are very serious limits to the 'queer' identities which are housed in Montreal's Gay Village. Furthermore, I will argue that the Village, as a space of consumption, has functioned to connect queer identity and desire to capitalist consumerism. This section will offer a critical examination of the tensions, limits, and potentialities within Montreal's Gay Village. It will conclude with a brief account of alternative queer spaces in Montreal's landscape. Specifically, I will look at a local queer community, namely the Ass Pirates, which has recently formed away from the city's Gay Village and as a response to its limits.

One of the legacies of twentieth century urbanization is the formation of ethnic ghettos. While the clustering and isolation of ethnic immigrant population in such areas has functioned to develop artificial barriers that impede critical opportunities for certain segments of urban populations and deprive them of some of the key advantage of living in an urban setting, a number of theorists have also argued that such neighborhoods allow for intimate social bonds and a sense of territoriality amongst the residents. Chapter three will engage with some of the theories surrounding urban ethnic ghettoization, and apply them to Montreal's Parc X district.

Located in the north section of the city, Parc X has been the destination point for many newly arriving immigrants throughout the 20th century making it a neighborhood in which some of the theoretical markers of "multiculturalims" are realized in very material ways. However, Parc X is also the most densely populated and poorest neighborhood in the city with a history of being marginalized in Municipal policies. Furthermore, the area is completely sectioned off through highways, railways, and a fence which quite literally

separates it from the much more affluent Town of Mont-Royal.

Through my examination of Parc X, I will argue that while in many ways, urban segregation or ghettoization is one of the legacies of modernist urban planning which aims at control and containment, there is at the same time a host of political opportunities and potentialities that lie within such spaces and are realized through the "locality producing" activities of the residents (Appadurai 1996). In other words, in the context of Parc X, the segregation of poor immigrant communities to this area has at once produced an isolated space that fosters certain institutionalized forms of disenfranchisement, while at the same time allowed for the opportunity for constituents to build new ways of administrating a less oppressive, less polarized but still heterogeneous community.

Chapter One - Montreal's Main Myth: Retelling the Story of St. Laurent Boulevard

Recently, while biking up St. Laurent Boulevard through the Plateau on a Friday night, I found myself feeling lost in the most familiar of places. This was a section of St. Laurent street that was not only the very center of the city that I have lived in for a decade, but also a neighborhood that I use to call my own. For me, like for many who have narrativized Montreal, St. Laurent Boulevard (otherwise know as the Main) has had a strong allure as the defining space which characterizes Montreal's spirit, embodied in the multiplicity of people, spaces and activities that have resided on and moved through it.

My intimate fascination with Montreal in general, and St. Laurent in particular has motivated both my academic interests in urban space, and my personal, and at times, quite blind sighted commitment to Montreal as the only city in this vast country that I imagine myself living in. And certainly, I am not alone. Montreal is often thought of as a romantic city. Its diverse and multilingual constituency, its leisurely pace, affordable lifestyle and the certain overall spirit of the Quebecois *joie de vivre* have been popular tropes in the social narrative of the city for both outsiders and many of its inhabitants. Indeed, as a decade long resident of the city, I find myself strangely attached to this romanticized myth about the unique characteristics of this city which are materialized along its main artery.

Yet, on this particular Friday night, while I found myself lost in a sea of luxury cars and SUV's', mobs of fancily clad pedestrians, and line ups outside of upscale bars and restaurants, I was struck not so much by the change that the area has undergone in the past few years, which has been quite significant in its own right, but by the consistency of

certain characteristics of the street that I myself have rarely articulated or heard about: that is, the subordination of content to surfaces and local community to places of consumption and leisure. St. Laurent is indeed a space of heterogeneity and hybridity where a series of different spaces exist in one real place, but it is hybridity deployed in a very particular way, for very particular reasons and in spite of a series of tensions that have dominated spatial negations on the street throughout its history. And thinking about these central characteristics of the street, I find myself questioning the enduring interpretation of St. Laurent as the defining metaphor of the greater city. In fact, these days, it seems to me that the Main is about as far away from the discursive construction of itself as can be, and yet, the myth about it has as strong a hold on the local and popular imagination as it ever did[3]. It is this paradox of the Main, a paradox that I will argue, is at the heart of much of the contemporary debates about postmodern urban spaces, that is the subject of this chapter.

1.2 The Main's Story

A whole history remains to be written of spaces – which would at the same time be the history of powers... from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of the habitat (Foucault 1980:149).

Located at what has for years been considered the very heart of the city, Montreal's St. Laurent Boulevard, popularly known as 'The Main,' is a street around and on which diverse populations have migrated and settled. As Martin Allor points out, throughout the past century:

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[3] An article about Montreal in the May issue of Up! Magazine provides a recent example of this sort of narrativiazation. In "A Flaneur In Montreal", Chris Koentages argues that the Main is an ideal site for the *flaneur* to experience the unique mosaic that is Montreal (Koentages 30).

The main has been a kind of liminal zone where the cultural geography of linguistic, ethnic and class differences has intersected with the successive developments of leisure-cultural practices and cultural industry equipment [...] the space of the Main has functioned (and continued) as a hybrid space for cultural performances cutting across the distinctions of high and low (i.e., theater and burlesque), of the 'majority' culture and alterities (i.e., Francophone theater, Yiddish theater of Portuguese Street festivals), and between public-sanctioned performance (*grand cinemas*) and illicit and policed activities (prostitution) (Allor 44).

In order to create a narrative about Montreal as the location of cultural hybridity, one of the essential features of contemporary metropolitanism, the Main has emerged as the defining metaphor which stands in for the spirit of the city in its entirety. As Allor points out, the street is "articulated and rearticulated across an ever expanding archive of public texts which tell the stories of the Main and link them to versions of *l'identitaire québécois*" (Allor 45).

The Main recently celebrated its one hundredth birthday and this ever present theme of cultural hybridity remains at the forefront of the myth about the Main. In fact, one of the local weekly papers featured the street as its cover story this June. In the article "A Century of Story", Richard Burnett, like many others before him, pays tribute to the generations of immigrants, queers, sex workers and freaks who have resided on and moved through the neighborhood throughout the past century (Burnett Online).

It is no exaggeration to argue that the hybridity of the Main has for years been celebrated as part of its attraction and allure, and functions as a central motif in the

popular imagination of Montreal's identity[4]. As Allor's quote suggests, the Main is seen as a street on which different ethnic, racial, sexual, and class lines intersect and create a heterogeneous whole. However, this myth of Montreal in general, and St. Laurent Boulevard in particular, as a space that nurtures a multiplicity of marginalized identities, and fostered through images of the Main's diversity, once interrogated, reveals a different set of truths about both the history of the street and the city it stands in for.

While acknowledging the importance of the history of the Main and the complex sets of relations which have defined its landscape throughout the past century, this chapter aims to articulate some of the problems which arise out of such discursive constructions of "diversity" in the context of contemporary cities. My goal is to criticize and revise the popular conceptions, as well as discursive constructions of the Main which have, through out the last century, served to elaborate a construction of the city as a utopic space of uncontested difference. I hope to offer an alternative reading of this section of Montreal; one in which the concepts of hybridity and diversity, while present throughout the history of the street, have functioned discursively to ignore the significant impact of the conservative forces of urban development, urban revitalization, and gentrification. Furthermore, in the following chapters I will argue that throughout its history, the deployment of this idealized narrative has been in part responsible for the suppression and dislocation of the complex set of subjectivities which have been, and continue to be produced and re-produced both within the area and throughout the city.

1.3 Spatial Histories of The Main

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[4] While there are several narratives of Montreal that are centered around the Main, some important works include Gail Scott's novel <u>Main Brides</u>, as well as the works of Michel Tremblay, Leonard Cohen, and Mordecai Richler to name a few.

Throughout the past century, the Main has functioned both as a dividing line and a meeting point in the spatial organization of the city. Though one could question the enduring interpretations that posit Montreal as a city with a rigid division along the Main between the Francophone and Anglophone populous, it has been a powerful force in the local geographical imagination of Montreal with important material outcomes despite the complexity of relations surrounding the dichotomy[5]. A description of Victorian Montreal, published in an 1882 issue of Picturesque Canada states:

> There is no fusion of races in commercial, social, or political life, the differences are sharply defined, and appear to be permanent...It is easy to trace the two main divisions of population in Montreal. Taking St. Laurent Main street as a dividing line, all that is east of it is French, all that is west of it is English speaking (Marsan 178).

This perception of the Main as a dividing line emerged in the late nineteenth century, when industrialisation caused a social polarisation of the city's two cardinal populations which translated into a symbolic division along class, religious and linguistic lines. During this period, the rapid expansion of the metropolis coincided in great part with an Anglo-capitalist dominance of industry and the migration of rural French farmers to work as labourers in the city. While the Anglophone population settled mostly in the North Western parts of the city, the French populace was predominantly located in the proletarian and petit bourgeoisie areas on the East side (Podmore 4). Because St. Laurent Boulevard was situated approximately at the intersection of this emerging dichotomy, it

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[5] Sherry Simon has noted that Montreal's architecture which is divided into French and British styles is among the most obvious physical expressions of this dichotomy (Simon 24).

became a symbolic dividing line of the bilingual metropolis[6]. However, as Podmore has noted, this dominant discourse masked not only the ethnic diversity of the populations living on either side of the symbolic 'divide,' it also posited a single city dichotomy based on language and class that ultimately functioned to obliterate or marginalise other districts as well as the diversity contained among the residential and consumer populations of the Main itself (Podmore 21).

Since the late nineteenth century, Montreal's Main has been a kind of meeting point that has its own fluid and complex material and social landscape. Beginning in this period, the popular construction of the Main as an unfettered, dual and divided city became simply untenable due to changes in the demographic composition of its population and the host of activities that flourished along the street. The perception of Montreal as a bilingual city was replaced with that of a city with a great deal of ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity. No longer the rigid dividing line of the Victorian city it was once thought to be, St. Laurent Boulevard emerged as the key marker of a series of complex and multiple factors which form the fabric of the city. As Sherry Simon has noted:

> Montreal's human geography for a long time seemed to confirm the most elemental verities of economic domination and cultural difference... But as might be expected in our increasingly hybrid present, neither the neat geometrical divisions nor the polarization of identity they suggest seem quite as certain today (Simon 22).

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[6] For a more in depth look at the history of the Main, refer to Aline Gubbay's 1989 study, A Street Called the Main: The Story of Montreal's Boulevard Saint-Laurent.

In the early part of the twentieth century the street generally served as a key entry place where new immigrants, businesses, cheap and popular entertainment and factories were located. As such, St. Laurent Boulevard became known as a place where a variety of groups of people and activities that did not seem to find a particular niche in either 'half' of the 'dual city' discovered their own space. Julie Podmore has noted, as early as 1911, more than a third of the population of the city had ethnic origins other than French, English, Scottish or Irish, and along the Main, the population of foreign-born inhabitants was the largest in the city (Podmore 23). Similarly, Aline Gubbay notes:

> For more than a century and a half, since the time when Montreal was declared an official port of entry for Lower Canada in 1832, a flow of immigrants has streamed down the Main; Russian, Ukrainians, Romanians, Poles, Czechs, and Slouvaks, Greeks, Moroccans, Tunisians, Syrians, Vietnamese, Chinese the list appears endless (Gubbay 57).

The presence of the red light district in the lower section of St. Laurent has also contributed a great deal to the narratives about diversity in the area. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the lower Main area was a well-known, and very visibly public place representing sexual behaviour in the modern city. In the post-WWII period, bars along the Lower Main, such as the Rialto, the Casbah and Café St. John began to cater to an emerging Francophone transvestite culture, as well as various *other* clientele including homosexuals (Podmore 231). Podmore states:

> As the twentieth century progressed, the Main acquired a reputation for irrepressible complexity, for cosmopolitanism, for anomie, With its red-light district, varied 'ethnic' enclaves, tourist rooms, synagogues,

sweatshops, vaudeville houses, pre-Stonewall 'queer' bars and the presence of visibly different subjects on the street, the area has serves as a representation of differences that are central to the modern urban experience (Podmore 7).

It is precisely because of its physical location in the heart of the city as well as its centrality to places of consumption, work and entertainment, that the Main has always been a popular destination for a variety of people and communities. In recent years however, the Main's closeness to the downtown business core, as well as its historical association with the entertainment industry (including prostitution and the red light district) has meant that the district has been a particular focus, if not target, of radical urban renewal projects and new commercial and residential establishments. However, the rapid gentrification in the area, and the series of dislocations which have occurred as a result of it, continue to be overshadowed by the more glamorous myth of cultural hybridity that dominated the narratives about the Main.

1.4 Hybridity and the City

La ville est depuis toujours le lieu privilégié de l'hybridité. Par ses marches et ses places publiques, elle offre des occasions de rencontre; par la multiplication des circuits et des trajets, elle permet de maintenir des différences (Simon 1999:24).

Streets are the terrain of social encounter and political protest, sites of domination and resistance, places of pleasure and anxiety. Located at the intersection of several academic disciplines, the street is also the focus of many academic debates about the city concerning modern and, more recently, postmodern urbanism (Fyfe 1998:1).

The heterogeneity of contemporary urban space has been the focus of many theoretical debates about the modern and more recently, postmodern condition and a vast body of texts on metropolitanism has developed to address the social and cultural

implications of space rather than its mere geographical elements[7]. Much of this body of work takes its cue from the Chicago School of Urban Sociology, which emerged in the earlier part of the twentieth century.

The Chicago School theorists were amongst the first scholars who examined metropolitan cities beyond their mere physical structure or economic products and cultural institutions, and instead, focused on the social construction of urban space. One of their main contributions was their acknowledgement of urban space as the site of social life[8]. Louis Writh defined the city as "a relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals" (Writh 98). He wrote:

> The city... tends to resemble a mosaic of social worlds on which the transition from one to the other is abrupt. The juxtaposition of divergent personalities and modes of life tends to produce a relativistic perspective and a sense of toleration of difference... The social interaction among such a variety of personality types in the urban milieu tends to break down the rigidity of caste lines and to complicate the class structure, and thus introduces a more ramified and differentiated framework of social stratification than is found in more integrated societies (Writh 100).

While the Chicago School has been legitimately criticized for focusing on only the social elements of space and ignoring the structural inequalities which are inherent in modern capitalism and manifested through spatial organizations[9], their notions of the

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[7] See Soja (1989, 2000) and Massey (1999).
[8] Ernest Burgress's city map which focused on the social topography of Chicago was amongst the most important works produced by the group. Rather than presenting the physical and geographical characteristics of the city, Burgress's map shows sites where real people lived, worked, played and experienced the city through their social life within it (Park 182).
[9] See Castells (1977).

heterogeneity of urban space remains one of their enduring legacies. This idea of cities as socially heterogeneous spaces has become one of the most theorized features of contemporary urbanism. The emergent process of globalization, and the rampant transnational flows of people and capital that have accompanied it, has contributed to the popularization of this theory in urban studies.

One of the defining features of contemporary metropolitanism is the influence of global flows on local conditions. The effects of globalization and global flows on the composition of contemporary metropolitanism has become a central theme in defining the North American urban experience[10]. The rapid change and growth of contemporary cities has been, in large part, the result of global migrations. In reconceptualizing contemporary metropolitanism as a postmodern space, many theorists have celebrated the indeterminacy and heterogeneity of contemporary cities caused in great part by the influence of global flows on local conditions. Urban heterogeneity, it is often argued, causes the rigidity of cultural identities to break down in favor of nuanced differences and multiplicities. As the editors of City Worlds have noted, the presence and proximity of different groups, communities, beliefs and so on tends to problematize stable identities because "there are great opportunities for people to form relationships with others: to meet, to mix – and to change… urban space, like urban social hierarchies, are liable to be fluid, unstable, and contain people with allegiances and affiliations to multiple groups (Massey et al. 48).

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[10] A recent edition of the Canadian journal Metropolis titled "our diverse cities" was dedicated to the study of immigrant and minority communities in the composition of Canadian cities (Andrew 2004).

It is no wonder that St. Laurent Boulevard has been the favored site for numerous investigations about the Montreal experience. In her book <u>A Street Called the Main,</u> Aline Gubbay argues:

> [St. Laurent] is unique in Montreal and rare the world over. It is not a spectacular thoroughfare; there are no great monuments or outstanding buildings to see. What it offers, along with the continuity of its long history, is a parade of city life, human in scale, diverse in its background, through recurring cycles of change, poverty, prosperity, has retained a sense of neighborhood, stubbornly rooted in people (Gubbay 11).

As the most famous street in a city with its own unique reputation, on the surface, St. Laurent quite literally embodies many of the elements that are the defining feature of the heterogeneity of modern urbanism. It is a space in which different socially coherent groups ranging from a host of immigrant communities, sex workers, queers and sub cultural groups have mixed and crossed one another. The street is considered one of the primary sites in the city where multiple sensibilities function to overcome the traditional lines of linguistic and cultural separation. The following account of Montreal by a local journalist is quite typical:

> Forget Notre Dame Cathedral, Mont Royal or the Old Porte, Boulevard St. Laurent epitomizes all that's glorious and venerable about our city. The Main is where we shop, stroll, dance, vomit and fall in love... St. Laurent has long been the place where ethnic, cultural and linguistic arrivals tumble over one another to produce an ever-renewing whirl of Montreal energy (Roberts Online).

Montreal is known as a city of encounters, and St. Laurent Boulevard, more than any other street, has been articulated and rearticulated as the place for such encounters.

While the experience and meaning of the Main is in one sense reflective of the multiplicity of activities and social groups who have occupied its material environment throughout its history, its current status as a celebrated space that defines the city in its entirety is questionable. As Podmore has noted, the interpretation of the Main as a singular site of heterogeneity and multiplicity, "the unique location of 'other' Montrealers... strips this place of the carried and fragmented cultural and social practices that make up its past and present" (Podmore 32). As the next section will demonstrate, looking at St. Laurent as a space of uncontested encounters with difference draws our attention away from the lines of inequality drawn on the street and throughout the city.

1.5 Questioning the Discourse of the Main

In Outside Belongings, Elspeth Probyn describes Montreal as the ideal site for her investigation of notions of belonging. Speaking of the city, she states:

> Because of its bilingual and many-cultured materiality, Montreal
> embodies a constant inbetweenness. This inbetweenness can be perceived
> in any number of ways: from the constant way one is always in between
> two languages, cultures, and histories (even if it "officially" has only one
> language, and hence one culture) to the ways in which Montreal is posed
> as apart from the rest of Quebec (for instance when it comes to "tolerance"
> toward gays, lesbians, feminists, immigrants, etc.) at the same time that it
> functions metonymically for the whole of Quebec (Probyn 26).

For Probyn, Montreal's inconsistencies are precisely what inspire a mode of thinking about how people form social and cultural allegiances, how they get along, how various forms of belonging are articulated, "how individuals conjugate difference into manners of being, and how desires to become are played out in everyday circumstances" (Probyn 5).

I would argue that the inconsistencies along St. Laurent Boulevard also point out some of the mechanisms of power and control which function in contemporary urban space. The Main, rather than generating any singular experience of Montreal citizenship, points to how differences of ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality all mediate and complicate the meanings which have been attached to it throughout its history. It is simultaneously the space of a host of political struggles and expressions, as well as repression and control. Key to this line of argument is the acknowledgement that city officials and real estate investors in Montreal have relied on the Main's symbolic capital as a space of diversity in order to refashion it from a primarily manufacturing and industrial center in the earlier part of the twentieth century, to one of the primary centers of consumption in the city. As Pierre Bourdieu notes:

> The reinvention of city center spaces since the 1980's has involved the pursuit of external sources of investment – jobs, companies, tourists, and wealthy residents... For this to be successful cities have had to accumulate reserves of symbolic capital, for example, blue chip architecture, loft living spaces, public art, aesthetic heritage sites and other gilded spaces, to help create the appropriate 'aura' of distinction with which the providers

of these resources of investment wish to attach themselves (Bourdieu as cited in Phillips 99).

The discursive heterogeneity and hybridity of the Main functions as the source of symbolic capital along the street, creating a symbolic economy, the centerpiece of which is restaurants, bars, shops and other spaces of consumption. The Main shows this shift to a more market-based approach to Montreal urban planning through both demographic and surface changes along its path. As the city competes for investment and tourism revenue by representing itself as vibrant cultural center that is ethnically diverse, and sexually liberated, certain areas, and more specifically certain constituents that are at the forefront of the narrative of diversity which constitutes Montreal, are at best ignored and more likely displaced in the development processes.

The prevailing celebration of cities as a space of uncontested heterogeneity, once interrogated, emerges as a utopic ideal ignoring some of the harsh realities of contemporary metropolitanism. For example, one of the prevailing effects of new forms of spatial organization within contemporary metropolitanism has been gentrification. While gentrification celebrates diverse city streets, it also pacifies and represses them, in order to make them feel 'safe' for a middle class public. As Loretta Lees has pointed out, gentrification "promotes and enlivens the public space(s) of the street at the same time as it encourages and legitimates withdrawal from and control over them" (Lees 238). As such, gentrification creates more spaces for certain people to consume in cosmopolitan areas and excludes and displaces many of those who cannot afford such luxuries.

In Montreal, the Main has been one of the primary sites of non-residential gentrification. The replacement of old family run or independent businesses with a

working class sensibility by new trendy boutiques and large corporate chains has become

abundantly evident in the past decade[11]. One of the paradoxes of this form of new urban

spatiality is that it relies on the history and character of the previous inhabitants for their

reputation while at the same time it is primarily responsible for snuffing them out. In

recent years for example, the municipal government of Montreal has gone to great

lengths to increase police patrol, discourage the presence of homeless people, squeegee

punks and sex workers, and encourage new businesses to set up shop in the area. The

most recent effort has been the launch of a million-dollar anti-graffiti campaign in the

district aimed at scrubbing off much of the art work that covers the wall space on the

street[12].

Since the 1970's there's been a series of economic and demographic restructuring

which many metropolitan cities have been facing. This transformation has been

articulated as a shift from a modernist landscape to a postmodernist one. Much of

celebrating St. Laurent as a space of hybridity takes its cue from a reading of

postmodernism where culture, rather than economics becomes the root of political

identity. However, this version of postmodernism begs a Marxist critique.

In "Subjectivity and Space," John S. Howard argues that capitalism is a

phenomenon that requires the leveling of all difference and "seeks a complete, perfected

unity, constructing on the coded space the leveling homogenization of all human desire"

(Howard 113). He states that "under the impetus of the capitalist machine...we are

reformulated in the hierarchies of commodity production: everything is identical until

value differentiated in terms of the market" (Howard 112). In other words, capitalism

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[11] Among the most recent example of this was the closing down of the 67 year old family run grocery store Warshaw's. The store was replaced with Pharmaprix, a corporate pharmacy chain.
[12] See Burnett's "Manning the Main" (Burnett Online).

enforces an ideology in which there is a flattening of values since the principle icon of value is money - everything is therefore reduced to monetary economics and differences are negated. For Howard, the power mechanisms of post-industrialized societies are fundamentally concerned with the use and ownership of space (Howard 113). Within modern spatial organizations, there is a deliberate attempt to construct and control identities and subjectivity so that individuals are constrained, limited, and sustained within the established order. He states:

> ...overcoding space and retarding areas of smooth space where nomad
> subjects can move from point to point on the trajectory of an emancipated
> subjectivity are directly proportional to the ways that the new world order
> allows or disallows for categories of subjectivity (Howard 114).

In other words, modern spaces are coded in order to ensure that individuals move within certain predetermined limits and that their movements and subjectivity's are confined to the capitalist structure (the new world order). For Howard, the modern metropolitan city is the primary site of a place where capitalist rational production is spatially manifested. Similarly, in his article about the downtown area of Los Angeles, Mike Davis states:

> [the] conscious 'hardening of the city surface against the poor is especially
> brazen in the Manichaean treatment of downtown microcosm... The
> persistence... of street people... sours our image of designer downtown
> living and betrays the laboriously constructed illusion of a Downtown
> 'renaissance'. City Hall then retaliates with its own variant of low-
> intensity warfare (Davis 238).

A brief examination of the recent history of the lower Main is a primary example of such a phenomenon. Beginning in the late 1970s, the urban development plans to gentrify the area led to a resurgence in public discourse of the conception of the lower Main as a place of vice and 'immoral' activity. Over the last few decades, the popular impression of the area shifts between that of a meeting place (when it comes to promoting tourism) and that of a combat zone where prostitutes, pimps and drug pushers threaten the public's safety. In 1985, a Montreal Gazette journalist gives the following account of the lower section of the Main:

> Unlike the principal hunting grounds of prostitutes in other cities, Montreal's Lower Main area -- St. Laurent Blvd. south of St. Catherine St., and St. Catherine between Clark St. and Sanguinet St. -- is not a fashionable residence [...] With its dense concentration of bars, taverns, strip clubs, and restaurants near the intersection of the tow main streets, it is probably, inch for inch, Canada's vilest bit of city (Burke A4).

Over the past few decades, regular headlines driven by a moralistic rhetoric, and focusing on the unseemly state of affairs in the lower Main, have tried to rally business owners, city officials, and citizens alike to periodic action, often instigated by the MUC police, in an attempt to 'clean up' the area. The backdrop to this moralized 'clean-up effort' however, has always been economic interests common to most late-capitalist metropolitan cities. City planners and real-state industry boosters have made several attempts at 'revitalising' the neighbourhood by dislodging its 'undesirables' in the hopes that with their departure gentrification will take its natural course. Their revitalising strategies aim to make the downtown core of Montreal a high-density space of

consumption that caters to the middle-income residents of the city. However, this line of thinking continues to ignore the reality of how enhancing the consumption experience of some citizens comes at the price of social exclusion, and an increase sense of inequality, for others. As Loretta Lees has pointed out, "while gentrification celebrates diverse city streets, it also pacifies and represses them, in order to make them feel 'safe' for a middle class public" (Lees 238).

At the heart of the problem, therefore, is the question of legitimate citizenship. Laurent Berlant points out that "practical citizenship is [...] figured as something available to good people with good money" (Berlant 7). As such, what is at work in the public rhetoric of the 'revitalization' of the Main falls under the "paradox of partial legibility" (Berlant 1). Many of the supposed 'undesirables' of the lower Main also happen to be its long time residents, yet they are not the area's 'legitimate citizens' since the efforts to 'enhance' the spaces they live and work in is rarely intended for *their* benefit.

1.6 Selling Diverse Cities

While a diverse range of people meet on the Main for certain consumer and leisure practices, they often retreat back to their closed communities in other neighborhoods. New forms of urban diversity, therefore, do not necessarily prompt people to interact in progressive ways. This reading of St. Laurent presents us with a very specific form of heterogeneity. The image of a flourishing cultural sector and cultural consumption are used in marketing the city and attracting new investments and tourism capital. The urban planners use the 'local culture' of the Main as a means to

draw in visitors seeking an authentic experience. As John Urry has pointed out in

Consuming Places, "it is the interconnections between [local and global] which account

for the particular ways in which an area's local history and culture is made available and

transformed into a resource for local economic and social development" (Urry 152). He

argues that heritage culture tends to be for the sake of tourist consumption turning

'culture' into 'commodity'[13]. Such forms of heritage culture tend to homogenize

experience even when selling local diversity. On the Main, 'history' and 'culture' get

used to "regenerate" the area into what Guy Debord would call a spectacle. Debord

states:

> The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as all of society, as part of
>
> society, and as an instrument of unification... Considered in its own terms,
>
> the spectacle is affirmation of appearances and affirmation of all human
>
> life, namely social life, as mere appearance. But the critique which
>
> reaches the truth of the spectacle exposes it as the visible negation of life,
>
> as a negation of life which has become visible (Debord 3, 10)

He continues:

> The spectacle presents itself as something enormously positive,
>
> indisputable and inaccessible. It says nothing more than "that which
>
> appears is good, that which is good appears." The attitude it demands in
>
> principal is passive acceptance which in fact it already obtains by its

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[13] In October 2002, the Main was recognized by the Canadian Heritage Minister, Sheila Cops, who declared St. Laurent Boulevard, in its entirety, a federal Heritage site. This label however has not lead to the preservation of residential buildings or local businesses. Instead, it has functioned to further initiate development projects in the area under the guise of urban revitalization.

manner of appearing without reply, by its monopoly on appearance (Debord 12)

The Main has multiple histories: among them history of industries, immigrants, sex workers, and queer culture as well as a history of mass leisure. However, when this history is turned into the symbolic culture of the Main in order to generate its symbolic capital, the Main emerges as a spectacle and much of the progressive possibilities along the street are negated. Instead, on the Main, surface differences are put on display for consumption and a setting of indifference is produced and then articulated as an ideal meeting place. This gesture reiterates one of the most conservative characteristics of globalization. As Jon Tomilson notes in "Globalized Culture: Triumph of the West":

The global culture that is currently emerging is not a global culture in any utopian sense. It is not a culture which has arisen out of the mutual experiences and reaches of all humanity. It does not draw equally on the world's diverse cultural traditions. It is neither inclusive, balanced, nor, in the best sense, synthesizing. Rather, globalized culture is the installation, world-wide, of one particular, privileged historical experience. It is, in short, simply the global extension of Western culture (Tomilson 89).

Furthermore, while many cultural geographers have been all too eager to celebrate the official myth of multiplicity and heterogeneity within contemporary metropolitanism, ghettoization has maintained a ubiquitous presence within such spaces. Urban segregation or ghettoization, one of the legacies of modernist urban planning which aimed at control and containment, has maintained a strong presence in the spatial organization of marginalized communities within contemporary cities. As the following

chapters illustrate, the segregation of queer (chapter 2) and immigrant (chapter 3) communities to specifically bounded areas notes a counterpoint to such celebrations of hybridity.

1.7 A Progressive Sense of Place

In his later work, Michel Foucault argued for the importance of the spatiality of social life: the place in which the actually lived and socially produced sites and the relations between them are negotiated[14]. Using Foucault's theories of heterotopic space in relation to the Main, some writers have offered an alternative reading of this section of Montreal; one in which the conservative forces of 'urban revitalization' attempts at gentrification have not been able to contain and suppress the complex set of subjectivities which have been and continue to be produced and re-produced in the area[15]. Foucault argued that, in contrast to utopias, "sites with no real place [which] present society itself in a perfected form," heterotopias, are real spaces and events "whose existence set up unsettling juxtapositions of incommensurate elements which challenge the way we think, especially the way our thinking is ordered" (Soja 14).

Disrupting monolithic and narrow interpretations of the Main as a space of uncontested difference, the concept of heterotopia allows us to acknowledge the progressive practices that resist the conservative forces along the Main. In "Of other spaces," Foucault described heterotopias as spaces of juxtaposition and heterogeneity, but

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[14] In his essay "History: Geography: Modernity", Edward Soja presents us with a comprehensive and critical reading of some of Foucault's most influential work on the subject of space and spatiality including his 1986 essay "Of other spaces".

[15] Martin Allor's "Locating Cultural Activity" is an excellent account of the resistance to institutionalized conformity along the Main.

their most important feature, he argued is that they are counter-sites "a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites... are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault 24).

The mere presence of diversity does not ensure resistance to hegemonic norms. In fact, as has been pointed out, diversity can function discursively to allow for the primacy of such norms, serving as a discursive utopia against which conservative urban planning can be fostered. Heterotopias represent a kind of resistance against the hegemonic discourses which on the one hand touts the diversity and openness of the Main in order to foster economic interests, while at the same time, calls for police clean-ups.

Susan Fainstein has pointed out that a progressive poststructuralist reading of urban space includes "a mapping of the ways in which spatial relations represent modes of cultural domination, searching out the 'silence' and exclusions in the practices of planners and developers" (Fainstein 145). Such a reading of space takes to heart Foucault's argument that space embodies power, but also, people usage of space is their negotiation of power. While this form of poststructuralism acknowledges the progressive possibilities of diversity, it also highlights exclusivity and sterility as the blighting effects of capitalism on the urban form. As such, a socially and politically conscious version of poststructuralism would "condemn the contemporary city as the product of a hegemonic elite "imposing order on other groups with potentially unruly lifestyles" (Fainstein 145)

This is in a sense, a rejection of referring back to the history of the Main, which posits St. Laurent as a space of uncontested heterogeneity. It is a refusal of enterprises (including city planner, tourism boards, and Heritage Canada) that simulate a progressive

notion of urbanism while creating the image of safety in order to foster consumption. Instead, what a progressive reading of the Main would look for is the moments in which resistance is performed; in other words, its heterotopic moments.

Along with being a space of consumption, St. Laurent Boulevard is also a residential street, since above almost every storefront, bar and coffee shop, there are a host of lofts, apartments, and rooming houses which are occupied by local residents. At times, these spaces double as artist and/or music studios, offices for emerging independent business initiatives, independent galleries and so on. In the evenings and on weekends, it is not rare for these semi-private spaces to open their doors to the public as they transform into venues which are the locus of the cities underground scenes. In fact, St. Laurent lofts are notorious for music shows, independent film screenings, community group meetings, craft fairs, large parties, as well as a host of other events. This use of private space functions as a means of mediating the sharp division between public and private sphere. As well, these self-generated activities, in a sense, exist outside of their commercial significance since they are uncharted by the official mechanisms of surveillance and control. Instead, the focus is shifted to co-operative practices where shared values and attitudes, as well as practices of friendship and sociality are experienced by a variety of individuals and groups. This is not to say that these individuals, practices and spaces exist outside of commodified culture, since such a complete break with capitalist structures is impossible. It is only to point out that forms of commodification and capitalist participation function along side a host of other forms of human interactions and social formations which allow urban space to be experienced beyond its consumer-centered intentions. St. Laurent has also been the site of numerous

marches, protests, and political intervention. As I write this essay, a new graffiti slogan graces a brick wall on the street in the Northern part of the plateau that reads "Yuppie Pig Die". Such transgressive practices function to decontextualize the discursive constructions of the Main through an assertion of its heterotopic potentials as a counter-site. In heterotopias,

> ...the random juxtaposition of disparate objects, activities and people not normally found together challenge hegemonic modes of regulating and representing space. The convergence of such miscellaneous and discordant sights erode epistemological and ontological security... This transgressive potential infers that heterotopias continually speak back to dominant modes of power-in-spacing, interrogating the normatively of their disciplinary regimes and functional purpose (Edensor 218).

Although we cannot ignore the images of commercial culture and capitalist commodification which exist along this street, we must acknowledge (and participate) in the numerous interventions that take shape within and beyond it and function to disrupt the institutionalized version of the Main. Individuals are neither simply passive participants in consumer society whose spatial negotiations are confined to commodity culture, nor mere victims of oppression who strike back at 'civil' society through deviant behavior. Instead, we are all continuously involved in processes of production and re-production which exist both within and in opposition to the capitalist order.

The public space of any street is produced only through control, contestation, and social negotiation in order to accommodate the needs and demands of the spectrum of its citizens. The challenge is to find ways to appreciate and participate in these complex

modalities while resisting the elements of repression and control which will no doubt

continue to plague its landscape.

Chapter Two - The Village People and the Construction of Gay Space

As queer teenagers growing up in Ottawa, the nations dull and dreary capital, my friends and I had the sort of utopic image of, and relationship with Montreal that one often has as an outsider. Montreal to us was a city with the kind of rhythm we dreamed of moving to, where there was the possibility of an infinite number of sexually charged social interactions and a stage where all kinds of elaborate stories could unfold. Indeed, Montreal has often been narrativized as a unique space of social encounters with sexuality and difference, where multiple queer identities co-exist and thrive in a harmonious manner. More specifically, Montreal was infamous as a place with very visible and public representations of sexual behaviour.

In those days, my experiences of Montreal centered around its Gay Village with its public façade of queer sexuality. Whenever we had the chance, my friends and I would take the two-hour bus ride and dance away the entire weekend. As Gordon Ingram points out, "for most people whose sexualities have been "marginalized" through some experience of same-sex desire, who therefore feel or are made to feel "queer", we travel great distances in order to live in the ways that enhance fuller contact with one another" (Ingram 27). Now, having lived in Montreal for a decade, I realize that the sense of utopia I experienced in Montreal's Gay Village before I moved here was only in relation to a serious lack of accessible queer spaces in Ottawa at the time. Since living here, the Gay Village has maintained its status as a distant place that I occasionally visit, but never really belong in. As a twenty-something year old resident of the city, over the last ten years, the queer spaces where I have experienced a sense of belonging have rarely been in the Village. My recent academic interests in the significance of space in the formation of

identities has lead me back to the origins of my relationship to Montreal and it is from there that I wish to begin this inquiry.

2.2 Queer(in) the City

The relationship between sexualities and space are made clear when we begin to think about the power of particular landscapes as either libratory or oppressive sites for the performance of our sexed selves (Bell et al. 1995:99).

One of the major contributions of the growing field of queer geography within urban studies is the acknowledgment of cities as sexed and sexualized spaces. It is no surprise that the emergence of queer neighborhoods in major metropolitan centers, or gay-ghettos as they are sometimes referred to, is among the most popular objects of study within the field[16]. In the later part of the twentieth century, queer people have emerged as a large enough demographic that institutions of queer culture have become a part of public life in most major urban cities in North America. As Lawrence Knopp, one of the key figures in this body of literature, has noted:

> The density and cultural complexity of cities...has lead to frequent portrayals of sexual diversity and freedom as particularly urban phenomena. As a result, minority sexual subcultures, and the communities and social movements sometimes associated with them, have tended to be more institutionally developed in cities (Knopp 149).

Elaborating on theories of ghettoization, many have argued that such forms of queer space have played a pivotal role in the self-definition of urban queers by giving them a

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[16] In my work, I will use the terms gay and lesbian to refer to men and women who engage in homosexual behavior while the term queer will be used to refer to individuals who practice homosexuality as well as those who engage in multiple transgressive sexual practices (including transsexual and transgendered people, bisexuals, and certain forms of transgressive heterosexual practice). Queer here, denotes a variety of people who are *othered* based on their sexuality.

space to display and live out their desires, as well as a sense of legitimating and community (Bell et al. 1995).

Using Montreal's Gay Village as the site of my investigation, this chapter critically engages with some of the writings in the field of queer geography in order to examine the possibilities as well as limits to queer subjectivities within such spaces. More specifically, while acknowledging the importance of delineated queer spaces for the production of a queer identity for some, I will argue that there are very severe limits to the kinds of identities that are allowed within the boundaries of the Gay Village. This chapter moves beyond representations of urban diversity through gay life in such spaces to consider what kinds of queer identities are allowed and disallowed within them. I will argue that while the presence and acceptance of certain iconic gay, and to a much lesser extent, lesbian figures are celebrated as symbols of diversity, many other and othered queer identities are excluded form such landscapes. Furthermore, since most queer neighborhoods are predominantly populated by gay men, much of the theoretical writing on queer geographies which focuses on such neighborhoods has in fact only produced geographies of gay men, and very specific kinds of gay men at that.

I will conclude with an account of alternative queer spaces in Montreal's landscape as the site of a more radical and politicized constitution of queerness in relation to urban space. Specifically, I will look at a local queer community named the Anti-Capitalist Ass Pirates, which has recently floated away from the cities gay village and temporarily infiltrated a series of other spaces throughout Montreal. Pirates have always been seen as being on the outskirts of mainstream capitalist culture, often associated with sexual deviance and debauchery. The Ass Pirates have followed in the proud tradition of

these outlaw figures through a series interventions which, I will argue, challenge the current conservative trends within mainstream gay culture that are exhibited in the space of the Village. I will also argue that the straightness of the non-Village parts of the city is not a natural characteristic of such spaces and queer events such as Ass Pirate parties make that clear through queering such spaces. I will begin with a discussion of Montreal's Gay Village.

2.3 The History of Sexuality (in Montreal)

Throughout its history, Montreal has been known as an 'open city' referring to the very visibly 'public' representations of sexuality and sexual behaviour within its urban setting (Podmore 177). Since the mid-1980's, thanks in great part to the development of the Gay Village, Montreal has been specifically narrativized as a city open to all forms of sexual diversity (Ray 73)[17]. The following is a typical account taken from a tourist website about Montreal, that circulates about this supposed 'open' city:

> One of the most tolerant and open-minded metropolises in Canada, Montreal's Gay Village is also one of the largest gay neighborhoods in the world, offering gays and lesbians from all walks of life a safe, friendly and community-orientated lifestyle that feels just like home no matter where you come from! (Montreal Plus Online)

While there is an undeniable presence of sexual diversity within the city, the simple act of recognition and celebration of such forms of sexuality have not lead to the elimination of processes of exclusion and subordination of Montreal's queer constituents.

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[17] In his study of the area, Frank Remiggi notes that a 1996 issue of the publication *The Guide*, there are 59 Montreal gay establishments which are listed, a figure that supersedes that of other North Amercian Metropolitain cities such as Toronto, Boston, and even San Fransisco (Rimiggi 269).

In this section, I will examine the ways in which Montreal's Gay Village has itself been developed and constituted as a space of exclusion.

Beginning in the post WWII era, Montreal, like most metropolitan cities, bore witness to the emergence of a gay constituency in its downtown areas. During this period, a great body of literature emerged which focused on homosexuality, and by extension, the places where such deviant practices took place. In her study of urban space and sexuality, Catherine Nash notes that theorists at the time believed that "the fact that such places existed only compounded the problem of homosexuality, allowing people who were "mentally ill" to have a false sense of normalcy and safety in numbers" (Nash 236). She sites Daniel Cappon's 1965 work, Towards an Understanding of Homosexuality:

> [A] person may live within the protective confines of a small, esoteric, social group which tolerates homosexual behavior; within a sphere or orbit of life with remarkable sameness: same sex, same bars, same bohemianism or dandyism, same abstract painting, same delicate interior decoration, same "beat" music, "beat" poetry, same sporty cliques, same gossip." (Cappon as Cited in Nash 236).

However, despite this backdrop of social, institutional, and medical condemnation, Montreal's gay community, much like many others throughout North America, continued to develop and flourish throughout the 50's and 60's through private realms as well as bars and other establishments that allowed for certain forms of homosexual sociality[18].

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[18] For a thorough and insightful account of Montreal's gay life in the 50's and 60's, refer to Ross Higgins dissertation "A Sense of Belonging: Pre-Liberation Space, Symbolics, and Leadership in Gay Montreal"

Nash points out that later research in the 70's and 80's was more accepting of homosexual behavior and believed that the true problem of homosexuality and deviant sexual behavior was societies bigotry and condemnation. As such, within the body of research, homosexual spaces were reformulated and portrayed as "a broader coping strategy resulting from assuming the homosexual role assigned through the labeling process, a tactic successfully employed by deviant groups to protect themselves from mainstream censure" (Nash 237). As homosexuality gained more acceptance during this period, a series of physically identifiable gay spaces emerged in many metropolitan areas. The language used to describe such spaces shifted from focusing on them as spaces of deviance to looking at them as protective, safe enclaves for a marginalized group. Nash sites Barry Adams 1979 study, "A Social History of Gay Politics" as an example of work that "recast gay spaces as representing the tactical appropriation or colonization of space as part of political action by an "oppressed" minority" (Nash 237). The history of the formation of Montreal's Gay Village can certainly be narrativized in this manner.

Formerly a poor working-class neighborhood, part of the Centre-Sud area located in the Ville Marie Bureau, Montreal's current Gay Village was occupied by the gay and lesbian community in the early 70's after the expulsion of gay businesses from an area closer to Saint-Laurent Boulevard. This was part of Montreal Mayor Jean Drapeau's campaign to "clean up" the downtown core of the city for the 1976 Olympic games and the tourists that would come along with it. The campaign was successful in forcing "seedy" establishments which housed gambling, drugs, prostitution and the gay community to the east through constant police harassment. As a result the gay

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(Higgins 1997).

community, along with other "seedy" characters relocated to the east of the city and became residents of Centre-Sud[19].

This period also marked the rise of gay activism in Montreal which lead to the Quebec government becoming the first major jurisdiction in North America to protect the civil rights of homosexuals. As Ross Higgins points out in his study of the gay rights movement in Montreal, the period was a historical moment when a collective Montreal gay identity emerged: "gays had succeeded in replacing the old language of oppression with a new discourse of civil rights and self-affirmation" (Higgins 11). He states:

> ...gay men grew increasingly unwilling to accept the treatment they
> received at the hands of moral, medical, and juridical authority. By
> innumerable small steps, they moved to transform the position of
> homosexuals in society." (Higgins 12).

Higgins argues that the use of public space was central to the emergence of Montreal's gay community. He states:

> In discursive practices which formed the core of social interaction in gay
> space, the significance over time of the increasing availability of gay
> "places" was that they permitted the growth of specifically gay schemata
> (Higgins 393).

Higgins, along with a host of other queer scholars view gay neighborhoods as essential to, and inseparable from the development of the gay community as a social movement.

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[19] Although this is the most popular narrative about the formation of Montreal's Gay Village, it is also a contested one. In his study of the area, Frank Remiggi notes that the majority of establishments in the downtown core of the city which were frequented by gays and lesbians were still around for several years after the Olympic games. He notes other factors such as economics, language, and the physical nature of the area which contributed to the emergence of the Gay Village (Remigg 276-277).

The emergence and open presence of communities identified by their sexual identity in urban space was one of the key markers of a transformation in the social discourse of queer politics in the later part of the twentieth century. In <u>Gay Politics, Urban Politics</u>, Robert Bailey argues that the move to delineated gay urban neighborhoods allowed gay and lesbian constituents an affirmation of their identity, a sense of community, as well as economic opportunities (Bailey 3). He states:

> These urban domains of sexual identity are the most conspicuous expression of the change brought by the cultural and political movement of city-dwelling lesbians and gay men. They are much like other urban spaces defined by cultural or ethnic affinities, with small merchants offering socialized services for the community, entertainment establishments, community service organizations, and even religious and customized government services... They are bounded by identity signifiers: "rainbow flags"... billboards advertising same-sex vacation packages... street fairs during June celebrating "Pride Day"... or even homeless gay men and youth (Bailey 50).

Over the past two decades, Montreal's Gay Village, like many other neighborhoods throughout North America and Europe, has served the city's queer constituents as a playground for sexual experimentation and a space where the realization of certain forms of a public sexual citizenship can take place. One of the main characteristics of such forms of queer space is that they allow for public visibility of queerness. This visibility is important in the constitution of a queer identity because as Joan Scott has pointed out, "making the movement visible breaks the silence about it,

challenges prevailing notions, and opens new possibilities for everyone" (Scott 23). As such, these forms of queer space emerged as a challenge to the institutionally sanctioned and enforced public silence on alternative forms of sexual practices that were previously suppressed.

In his discussion of Washington DC's Dupont Circle district Wayne Myslik also notes:

> By exhibiting a degree of social control by the gay community, queer [neighborhoods] create the perception of being 'safe spaces'... as sites of cultural resistance with enormous symbolic meaning for [queer people], such spaces provide cultural and emotional support for a political movement comprised of an increasingly diverse and geographically scattered community (Myslik 167).

Central to the celebration of such forms of queer urban space is the notion that these sexualized spaces are profoundly democratic spaces of representation – that they represent and are open to all, or at the very least, to all sexual dissidents. However, as Doreen Massey has pointed out in City Worlds, "when segregation takes on a spatial form, the marking of difference takes the form of boundary lines etched in city space" (Massey 86). Massey argues that although such acts of spatial segregation may be intended to preserve certain marginalized communities, they can also be a hallmark of intolerance as internal differences are rejected for sameness and ultimately, there is a block on diversity. Similarly, Lawrence Knopp has pointed out that when gay neighborhoods stand in as the sanctioned space for a marginalized sexual identity in an urban context, it is to the exclusion of other forms of sexuality:

...heterosexualieties, bisexualities, sexualities organized around practices that may be only contingently related to gender... and radical self consciously fluid sexualities which reject association with such notions as 'identity' and 'community' altogether (Knopp 150).

The term 'gay ghetto' itself was created during the gay liberation movement of the early 70's when gay and lesbians across major cities in North America, transformed certain geographical spaces into a refuge that symbolized their solidarity and difference with and among each other. Gordan Ingram notes, "the notion of reconstructing what often is still referred too as "ghetto" is usually based on experienced and perceived threat to our bodies in public or commercial gay spaces..." (Ingram 27). However, as Dave Serlin points out in his discussion of New York City's Chelsea area, such spaces have come to embody a reactionary shift in late twentieth century gay politics, which has eschewed more traditional activism –such as gay rights legislation or funding for aids research – for domestic partnership, legalized marriage, or adoption rights (Serlin 37). All issues that are relevant to the more affluent segment of the gay population who also happen to be the current residents of such neighborhoods. In fact, many of the conflicts and contradictions within contemporary queer culture seem to find a material expression in urban gay neighborhoods. Serlin points out that middle class gay couples have had a long history of using real estate as a tangible bond or proof of their commitment, especially in the face of institutional resistance to the recognition of same-sex relationships. As such, real community diversity or political inclusion are often sacrificed to the "quality of life" interests of neighborhood residents who are more concerned with increasing their property values than in promoting a communitarian ethos.

In the case of Montreal, all of this became abundantly clear a few years ago with the emergence of debates over a pilot project which aimed to partially legalize prostitution in the Centre-Sud area in the hope of better protection for sex workers. Much of the resistance to enhancing the condition for prostitution in the red-light district actually came from gay property owners in the Village, many of whom were very vocal in their support of an anti-prostitution campaign arguing that the presence of street prostitutes was an infringement on their quality of life. The campaign against the pilot project was headed by André Gagnon who at the time, positioned himself as the leader of the gay community, but who was in fact a right-wing representative of gay property owners. [20]. This is particularly ironic considering the shared history of both prostitutes and the gay community in relation to Centre-Sud. As noted earlier, both communities migrated to the area in the mid-seventies partially as a result of the repression they faced by city officials at the time. However, much has changed in the last three decades. In the case of Montreal, city administration, backed by the police and a number of gay business owners have gone to great lengths in order to 'clean up' the image of the area. The result has been the exclusion and alienation of many queers from their supposed Village.

2.4 Maginalizing Lesbos, Homogenizing Homos

Although the development of urban queer spaces such as Montreal's Gay Village remains significant in terms of increasing visibility of gay, and to a lesser extent, lesbians in the city, it is important to acknowledge that such spaces are off-limits to those who

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[20] For a more detailed account of the incidents refer to "Dirty Business" (Pourtavaf 2000).

either can't afford it or are excluded if they don't conform to a certain conception of what a 'gay lifestyle' is. In his sociological study of Montreal's Gay Village, Brian Ray notes:

> In the city's post-industrial economy in which "exotic" cultural landscapes are embraced as integral components of the new cultural economy, as well as symbolic and material expressions of societal openness to diversity and difference, the Village is a paradox. It is symbolically significant as an expression of openness and as a challenge to heterosexual masculinity norms, but in many important and quotidian ways the Village is an urban social landscape where *boys can be "boys"* and women can be too often relegated to the margins (Ray 75).

The marginalization of lesbians, not to mention a host of other queer identities, from Montreal's Gay Village is also a phenomenon common to gay ghettos across North America. Although there is usually some form of lesbian presence in most gay neighborhoods, the majority of such spaces are secondary and peripheral sites within a predominantly male space.

Earlier queer geographers argued that the inherent difference between men and women structures their relationship to space. In other words, since men tended to occupy more public space while women inhabited private realms, lesbians' exclusion from queer urban space was merely a result of more general gender differences in relation to space. A primary example of this essentialist interpretation is Manual Castells' 1983 study of San Fransisco's Castro district. While Castells insists on the necessity for public urban space for the social organization of gay men, lesbians are left unproblematically spaceless. He states:

Men have sought to dominate, and one expression of this domination has been spatial... Women have rarely had these territorial aspirations: their world attaches more importance on relationships and their networks are ones of solidarity and affection. In this gay men behave first and foremost as men and lesbians as women. So when gay men try to liberate themselves from cultural and sexual oppression, they need physical space from which to strike out. Lesbians on the other hand tend to create their own rich, inner world and a political relationship with higher societal levels. Thus they are 'placeless'.... Lesbians tend to not acquire a geographical basis for their political organization and are less likely to achieve local power (Castells 140).

Since the Gay Village is seen as a sexual market place, it is thus gendered as male space, "an environment that does not interest lesbians who, as women, [crave] romance and long term relationships" (Nash 237). While many more recent feminist and queer geographers have challenged this enduring interpretation of an inherent gendered difference in urban space usage, it is important to acknowledge that the idea maintains a strong presence in discussions about lesbians and urban space. For example, recently, Louis Charron, the president of Montreal's Gay Chamber of Commerce stated that the lack of women on the Chamber's board and in general Montreal gay life was due to lesbians' lifestyle choices: "A lot of lesbians I know live outside of Montreal, in the country. They don't especially like the urban atmosphere" (Charron as cited in Lejtenyi 10).

Judith Halberstam has pointed out that there has been a severe absence of gender as a category of analysis in works on sexuality and space. She states:

The literature on sexuality and space is growing rapidly, but it tends to

focus on gay men, and it is often comparative only to the extent that it

takes white gay male sexual communities as a highly evolved model that

other sexual cultures try to imitate and reproduce (Halberstam 12).

Halberstam argues that the absence of women in the discourses of sexuality and space has

functioned to exclude them from the world of public sex as it is manifested in delineated

gay spaces (Halberstam 15).

One of the primary ways in which such spaces are reproduced as male space is

through the commercial activities. Looking at Gay Village section of St. Catherine Street

in Montreal, one finds that almost all bars, saunas, retail stores, and the relatively small

number of community services cater primarily to gay men, with lesbians as a distant

second target market. In his sociological study of the district, Brian Ray conducted a

series of interviews with gay and lesbian residents of the area. He concluded the

following:

> While several of the gay men place considerable importance on the
>
> neighborhood as a relatively safe and comfortable place where they can
>
> explore their sexuality and identity, lesbian residents seem to point out
>
> their awareness of the visibility of masculinity and the masculine gaze on
>
> the neighborhood streets (Ray 74).

More recent theories which address the lack of lesbian culture in gay neighborhoods

point to structural oppression, such as lesbians' limited access to capital, as the real

reason. Lawrence Knopp, for example, has argued:

> Lesbians' ability to cope with oppression through entry in the housing
>
> market (and hence the middle class) is more limited than gay men.
>
> Residential concentrations of lesbians tend to resemble the patterns and
>
> processes of segregation that characterizes other marginalized groups
>
> more than they do gay men (Knopp as cited in Nash 349).

As a result, lesbian culture, though present, is less visible and without clear and formal

geographic boundaries. Deborah Wolf's study of San Francisco lesbian culture also

illustrates this point:

> Women do tend to live in certain ethnically mixed, older, working-class
>
> areas of the city... These areas bound each other and have in common a
>
> quality of neighborhood life, low-rent housing, and the possibility of
>
> maintaining a kind of anonymity (Wolf 98).

Indeed, much of the research on urban lesbian culture has demonstrated that identifiable

lesbian neighborhoods do exist, but they are not primarily marked as lesbian, are not

overwhelmingly controlled by lesbians, and do not have a lesbian commercial focal point.

Furthermore, as several of the researchers have noted, residential areas where there are

lesbian concentrations are usually found in countercultural neighborhoods (Adler and

Brenner 1992, Nash 2001).

This is certainly the case in Montreal. In her article "La conquête d'un espace

public" Line Chamberland argues that Montreal lesbians have not had the same access to

public spaces in the Gay Village as their gay male counterpart, but queer women and

institutions of queer women culture have flourished in other parts of the city

(Chamberland 130). As of last year, Magnolia, the very last lesbian bar in Montreal's

Gay Village closed down. However, events such as the monthly lesbian party Meow Mix, which began in 1997 and has made several moves throughout the North part of the city in the Plateau and Mile-End area, continues to grow in popularity, but only outside the context of the Gay Village.

The fact of the matter is that most gay neighborhoods in North America and Europe are predominantly populated by middle class gay men and dominated by institutions of gay male consumer culture. As such, those who benefit from the presence of such spaces are those whose particular sexual practices and preferences are privileged in the coding of such places. Ray, through a series of interviews with lesbians who reside in Montreal's Gay Village makes the following observation:

> The women emphasize that men are ever-present and that the neighborhood is marked by masculinity, as well as gay male aesthetic... The description that the women use to label the Village are particularly revealing – "boys town", "gay", and "masculine". They also describe gay men as "owning" the space and creating the images and narratives that structure how people know and imagine the Village (Ray 75).

Women are not the only demographic who feel excluded from the space of the Village. At the recent *Out in Color* conference (a conference which addressed the needs of Montreal's lesbian, gay, bisexual an transgender people from First Nations and different cultural communities), several participants commented on the racial homogeneity of the Village. For example Peter Flegel, a queer black Montreal activist argues that the Gay Village is extremely limited when it comes to representing queer people of color:

The places in the Village are open, but they do not give an adequate space for black youth to express themselves. There is a visible minority and black youth presence at Village events, but they tend to be valued for their exotic contribution rather than real representation. When I think of who is in a position of power and who the decision makers are in the gay community… black people are totally absent (Flegel Interview).

Flegel cites a poster campaign which appeared in the Gay Village a couple of years ago and showed a large muscular black man sitting on a black cannon, as an example.

It was a reference to how black men are supposedly well endowed. Sadly, that tends to be the norm in gay culture – to exoticize black people rather than engaging with their reality, their point of view and their culture. This is as true in Montreal as it is in many other parts of the Western world (Flegel Interview).

The exclusion of people of color (as well as lesbians and other gender and sexual deviants) points to the ways in which Montreal's current Gay Village privileges certain forms of gay experience, while other queer identities are absent or underrepresented in its landscape. This exclusion works against the notion of the Village as a place for diverse forms of sexual experimentation and serves to repress the plurality of queer identities in favor of an all-pervasive middle class white gay male identity. As Ray points out:

The media, city administration, police and a number of gay entrepreneurs have, overtime, done much to erase the grittier qualities of the neighborhoods' industrial past. At the same time, gay, lesbian and … other queer identities have been conflated to create an iconic landscape

that is widely regarded as "gay"... but in important ways [the Village]

may be one of the cities last public landscapes of male privilege (Ray 73).

2.5 Spatializing Homocapitalism

In Fear of a Queer Planet, Michael Warner states:

> In the lesbian and gay movement, to a much greater degree than in any
>
> comparable movement, the institutions of culture-building have been
>
> market-mediated: bars, discos, special services, newspapers, magazines,
>
> phone lines, resorts, urban commercial districts... This structural
>
> environment has meant that the institutions of queer culture have been
>
> dominated by those with capital: typically, middle-class white men
>
> (Warner xvi-xvii).

Similarly Lawrence Knopp points out that while a vibrant gay commercial and

entertainment scene has attracted a great deal of popular and institutional support,

> ...these scenes have been developed primarily by and for white middle-
>
> class male markets, and have been financed by 'progressive' (often gay)
>
> capital eager to colonize new realms of experience and to undermine
>
> potential threats to its power (Knopp 158).

Such a consumption driven model of a queer identity turns it into just another

manifestation of late-capitalism where subversive social practices are incorporated into a

lucrative economic model - in the case of queers, the mighty pink economy. Again, to

quote Michael Warner who I think offers some of the most poignant critiques of

mainstream gay culture:

> Gay culture in [its] most visible form is anything but external to advanced
>
> capitalism and to precisely those features of advanced capitalism that
>
> many on the left are most eager to disavow. Post-Stonewall urban gay
>
> men reek of the commodity. We give off the smell of capitalism...
>
> (Warner xxxi).

What is left out of this version of gay culture is those queers who do not fit the model:

women, working class people, people of color, transgender people, disabled people and

so on. As such, this current model of gay culture, which is prevalent in spaces such as

the Gay Village, mimics some of the most oppressive and hegemonic characteristics of

normative culture. As Knopp points out:

> ...relatively privileged sexual non-conformists (e.g. white gay men) have
>
> forged networks and institutions which facilitate the practice of their
>
> particular sexualities as well as the perpetuation of other structures of
>
> oppression.... These movements have taken their own alternative coding
>
> of space 'out of the closet' and into the public sphere, but usually within
>
> racist, sexist and pro-capitalist discourses" (Knopp 158).

While in Montreal's Gay Village there is a claim to, and a celebration of difference

within the boundaries of the space - much like the main - there is simultaneously an

exclusion and erasure of identities in their multiplicity. This invisibility of multiple queer

identities in the space of the Village serves to repress the plurality of what queer is and

can be in favor of an all pervasive gay identity (and here, gay stands for gay white man

with a discretionary income). This gay identity is in large part constructed through the

commodities offered in the space of the Gay Village and the structure of the pink

economy. As Lisa Duggan has pointed out:

> ...new neoliberal sexual politics... might be termed the new
> homonormativity – it is a politics that does not contest dominant
> heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains
> them, while promising the possibility of a semobilized gay constituency
> and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and
> consumption (Duggan as cited in Halberstam 19).

It is no wonder that such a model is both institutionally sanctioned and supported.

Over the past 10 years, the Gay Village, unlike other parts of Centre-Sud, has had a tremendous face lift thanks in part to ample funding provided by city officials in the hope of attracting more tourists to the area. As Ray notes, "the most significant consumers of the iconic hyper-masculine representations of the village may be affluent and English speaking foreign male tourists, not Montrealers" (Ray 75). International gay tourism to Montreal has been a well-established trend for a number of years. Part of the attraction is the city's more liberal regime towards sex reflected in the wider availability of strip clubs, peep shows, porn, and saunas.

Currently, all three levels of government are aggressively promoting the Village, the accepting climate of Quebec, and gay life in Montreal as a tourist attraction[21]. Signs of this promotion are everywhere from the recently rebuilt entrance to the Beaudry metro, decorated with rainbow pillars, to the Village being specifically marked on official city maps. Gay tourism has become the big business of the Village and the government could

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[21] Among the biggest benefactors of generous government support is the Quebec Gay Chamber of Commerce whose specific mandate is to develop the tourism industry of the Village (Quebec Gay Chamber of Commerce Online).

not be more supportive of the new gay cause. However, while the supposed liberalism of Quebec culture in relation to sexuality peaks when it comes to supporting lucrative cultural events such as the Pride Day parade and the Gay Olympics, many local queer groups and their needs remain marginalized.

Judith Halberstam has argued that in order to critique the homogenizing effects of contemporary discourses about sexuality, it is necessary to unpack the role of capitalism in queer culture. She states:

> If we destabilize the meaning of capitalism using poststructuralist critiques of identity and signification, then we can begin to see the multiplicity of noncapitalist forms that constitute, supplement, and abridge global capitalism, but we can also begin to imagine, by beginning to see, the alternatives to capitalism that already exist and are presently under construction (Halberstam 12).

The Anti-Capitalist Ass Pirates have presented such an alternative in the landscape of contemporary Montreal.

2.6 Pirating the Movement

Given the lack of representation within the Gay Village, it is no surprise that many of Montreal's queer constituents have chosen to carve a space for themselves outside of the Gay Village, among them, the Anti-Capitalist Ass Pirates[22].

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[22] While in this secion, I will be specifically focusing on the Ass Pirates, the phenomenon I am describing is by no means limited to this group or this city. It is a phenomenon that is happening in most major north American cities. For example, in a recent article in Fab Magazine titles "How the Queer West Was Won", Rolyn Chambers describes a fairly similar phenomenon that has taken shape in Toronto over the past decade (Chambers Online).

The Anti-Capitalist Ass Pirates formed in 2003 as a response to the corporate take-over of Montreal's Pride Day parade. Holding placards that read "Skip the corporate sponsors and grab the booty" and "Pillow-bite your way to the revolution" the Ass Pirates infiltrated the Pride Day parade in order to provide a radical political edge to current market-driven excesses of the parade. As one of the founding members states "We didn't see anything other than big circuit parties and corporate sponsors. And we were not satisfied with a commercialized gay identity that denies the intrinsic links between queer struggle and challenging power" (Michelin Online). Creating an alternative to the big Pride Day event, the Pirate's intervention also included the first Montreal Shame night, which was held at a Greek bar in the northern edge of Mile-End the day after pride[23]. The flyer for the event read:

> caught in the riptides of gay...
> soon to drown in capitalism
> the anti-capitalist ass pirates present a gay shame
> this is not a gay marriage party
> think of it more as a debaucherous queer wake
> in honor of those we're losing.
> cause while members of the gayegeoisie are ploughing ahead
> with their so-called struggle (to win the same rights and privileges that
> other yuppies have), and lining up at the altar to celebrate being just like
> all the straight people, people who can't or won't hide their difference,
> are still getting killed ...
> In the past month alone, the murders of three transgender prostitutes have
> been reported:
> In honor of the transsexual women of color at Stonewall who kicked off a
> party, a riot, and a movement with a well-placed stiletto heel to the head.
> In honor of the motley crew of pirates of different races who sabotaged
> slave ships, made off with the booty and vowed to live short but merry
> lives. The ass pirates say, give 'er. don't get married, get even.

Since then, the Ass Pirates have hosted free monthly queer events throughout the city (usually in bars, sometimes in residential lofts), but always away from the Village,

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[23] Again, throughout the last decade, there have been several Gay Shame events which have taken place throughout North American and European cities.

showcasing music, art, and a host of theatrical performances by a diverse range of Montreal's queer constituents. These events incorporate themes, costumes, video projections, and set decorations into each venue. A noticeable feature of the Ass Pirate events is the expression and performance of social taboos such as beastiality, and sexuality in sports or the military. Through a parody of these kinds of social taboos, participants take on an empowered position in relation to them and exercise forms of queer desire that have been deemed deviant. Although the specific Ass Pirate events warrant critical analysis for the ways in which they play with notions of queer performativity, for the purposes of this section, such an exploration would be a digression. Rather, what I find important in the context of my work is the forms of queer spatiality that takes shape in the context of the Ass Pirate events.

Judith Halberstam has defined queer space as referring to "a set of place-making practices within postmodernism in which queer people engage" as well as "the new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer counter-publics" (Halberstam 6). She argues that queer uses of space develop, at least in part, in opposition to the normative intentions of the places in which they occur and as such, they enable an alternative relationship to such spaces. Under such conditions, queer spaces allow for the location of sexual subjectivities to emerge "within and between embodiment, place, and practice" (Halberstam 5).

One important feature of this form of queer spatiality is that it is event based and performative rather than spatially bound. Taking to heart Doreen Massey's argument that our sense of space is not determined by territorial boundaries, but by the social interactions that take place within them, Ass Pirate events allow for a greater range of

possibilities of what constitutes a queer space (Massey 1994). These events take place in "non-queer" zones, in the spaces of ordinary public culture that are usually perceived as heterosexual in nature. Within such locals, the Ass Pirates, through their capacity to manipulate and queer everyday situations and spaces, are capable of creating realms of autonomous action. By occupying public spaces that are not marked as queer, there is a deliberate and political act that puts into question the straightness of everyday life and public space. As David Bell and Jon Binnie have pointed out:

> Queering [public space], is an enunciative act, a moment of transgression, when the pseudo-public realm gets reinscribed as a site of possibility... this possibility has been seized upon by activists intent on destabilizing the assumed heteronormitivity of urban public space with the theatrical displays of queer affection, desire and community (Bell et al. 131).

To mark the difference between this form of queer space and the one described in terms of the Village, I find myself returning to Foucault's notion of heterotopia in "Of other spaces." Foucault used the concept to refer to unsettling or ambiguous social spaces, what he called 'counter-sites' (Foucault 1986). He argued that by contrast to 'utopias', which present society in a unified and perfected form, or else society turned upside down - there exist 'heterotopias', real spaces and events whose existence sets up unsettling juxtapositions of incommensurate elements that challenge the way we think and the way our thinking is ordered. For Foucault heteretopias refer to actually lived and socially created spatiality – they are the space of counter-social practice. He states that heterotopias "are sites in which individuals whose behavior is deviant to the required mean and norm are placed" (Foucault 25).

In his reading of Foucault, John Graham defines heterotopias as contested spaces which have the following characteristics:

> 1.   They are primarily spaces of 'otherness'... They are destinations for expatriates of, and exiles from, the parent culture. Marginal centers, axes of 'DiY culture', they are communities of resistance wherein 'displaced and rejected knowledge' is celebrated.
>
> 2. They are 'heterogeneous' spaces. Indicating 'a complex juxtaposition and simultaneity of difference', heterotopias accommodate a variety of alternatives (Graham 51).

It is this second characteristic of heterotopias that Ass Pirates events allow for in a way that the Gay illage does not. Although I am not claiming that the Ass Pirates create a utopic queer space where all forms of queer identity are present and celebrated, I do think one of the fundamental aspects of these events that are taking place outside of the gay neighborhoods of major cities, is the inclusion of a more diversified queer constituency – of different kinds of queer bodies (and here I am talking about size, race, gender, sexual orientation and so on – in other words, they are not predominantly white, middle-class, gay men).

This reconceptualization of queer space rejects ghettoization in favor of locations for the encountering of difference. Through creating queer spaces outside the officially sanctioned Village, the Ass Pirates offer a radical alternative for queer cultural resistance, "a model of cultural resistance that works by subverting the pervasive imagery of 'straight' urban space into a site for queer pleasure (Binnie 136).   As Halberstam has pointed out:

...part of what makes queerness compelling as a form of self-description in the past decade or so has to do with the way it has the potential to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space (Halberstam 2).

As such, queer space, in the way that it is realized through queer practices in specific locations, uncovers the contradictory results of global capitalism in terms of the forms of oppression that are enacted, as well as the forms of resistance that are enabled.

Chapter 3 - Difference In the City: Ethnic Ghettoization and the Production of Parc Extension

"It's like we are living in a third world country," said Jeff. We had only been living in Parc Extension for a few weeks, but my roommate Jeff and I were already well on our way to discovering its alleys, its good diners, the cute house on St. Zotique that I decided I would grow old in, and the cheap Indian food. This was our new neighborhood and we were excited about the prospects it held for us. While walking through the streets and back alleyways near our house, we discovered abandoned yards with old school buses, decrepit and condemned buildings, garment factories, low budget auto mechanic shops and more dollar stores than we could count. It was a romantic image of urban decay that was consistent with our punk rock aesthetic. I remember feeling excited about my new neighborhood. After all, I had moved North and left behind the high rents, threats of eviction, and the rapid gentrification that was engulfing the Plateau and Mile-End. That was four years ago and to this day, when I walk around certain parts of Parc X, it really does feel like I have left Montreal far behind (no more lattes', no more micro breweries, and certainly no Montreal fashion chic). But thinking about Jeff's highly problematic reading of the area as a "third world country" today, I realize that one of the biggest differences that we experienced moving up here was the sight of the bodies that occupied the neighborhood – the predominantly and decidedly non-white immigrant and refugee bodies that dominated the area. While in other parts of the city that I frequent, cultural diversity is presented for the most part in digestible commodities (ethnic restaurants, hip hop record shops, cultural festivals and so on), Parc X is a space where difference is lived in very material ways. It is indeed a space where many "third world"

bodies live out their lives under very different circumstances and with very different conditions then other Montrealers that Jeff and I were use to encountering.

And yet, in certain ways, Parc X is more consistent with the discursive construction of Montreal than many of the other sites I have thus far examined. One of the main arteries of the area, Jean Talon street, is lined with a series of cultural imports; from Mosques and Sikh temples, to sari shops, Greek bars, Vietnamese subs as well as a wide range of ethnic restaurants, the street embodies the most literal connotations of multiculturalism. Parc X is a neighborhood where different differences co-exist for the most part in a harmonious manner. It is also a space where a communal ethos has become realized in very visible ways.

Despite this, Parc X has rarely been a part of the official discourses of diversity and multiculturalism in the city and has consistently been marginalized when it comes to municipal funding. This was made most evident to me when I began to do my research about the area. Unlike the Main or the Gay Village which have been written about extensively in a variety of academic texts, fictional narrations, journalistic studies and tourism guides, aside from census data, and a few articles in the local paper, there is virtually no written history of Parc X that is available. And despite the intense history and multiple stories that have been localized in the district, there is virtually no written record or official discourse about the area. Given the insistence of much of the writing on the city about its multiculturalism, and given the central role of Parc X as the space for the lived experience of multiculturalism, this begs the question, why and how are some spaces and constituents neglected, while others are celebrated in the official discourse and how does that neglect carry on to official policies in relation to such areas? This

chapter engages with this question and poses others such as how does the process of ghettoization effect the individuals' and communities' relationship to urban space and why is ethnic ghettoization often affiliated with poverty and violence while other forms of ghettoization are articulated as community preservation? These questions also lead me to explore the possibilities of resistance and subversion within Parc X and the ways in which the concept of heterotopia can be deployed in this particular local.

3.2 Difference in the City

As the previous chapters noted, one of the common features of modern industrialized cities which is often articulated in the writings of urban social studies is the presence of "diversity". In Cities of Difference, Jane Jacobs and Ruth Fincher argue that urban diversity has been a contentious idea within the field with "some rejoicing at the energy it injected into everyday life in cities; others blaming it for a loss of community – what they saw to be the modern condition of alienation" (Jacobs 1). This tension is present both in the official discourse of urban diversity and in the urban policies that address it. As we have seen in previous chapters, the municipal government in Montreal has vacilitated between celebrating and promoting the notion of diversity on the one hand, and regulating, repressing and displacing it on the other. Despite this tension, difference and diversity remain an undeniable feature of contemporary social theory in general and urban space in particular. While the previous chapters focused on a critique of discourses around diversity and urban space, I took to heart Foucault's insistence upon hidden but unmistakably progressive possibilities for active and constructive

interventions within contemporary cities[24]. And while I have acknowledged the potential of such interventions in any part of the city through the ways in which constituents use them (See Chapter 2 for my discussion of the Ass Pirates), in this chapter, I look at a site that embodies these possibilities in a very different way and under very different circumstances - namely, my current place of residents, the district of Parc Extension.

Parc Extension, otherwise known as Parc X, is one of Montreal's poorest and most densely populated neighborhoods, and home to 75 different nationalities. In this chapter, I will use contemporary theorizing about the socio-spatial divisions within metropolitan cities, the process of urban ghettoization, and the production of locality in neighborhoods in order to explore the complexity of one of Montreal's most marginalized districts. The aim of this chapter is not only to critique the social differentiations within urban space which emerge as a result of relations of domination and subordination among different social groups and institutions, but also to exult the potential of marginalized groups to create their own autonomous realms of progressive possibilities despite institutionalized and systematic oppression and repression.

3.3 A Different look at Difference

Differences are constructed in, and themselves construct, city life and spaces. They are also constituted spatially, socially, and economically sometimes leading to polarization, inequality, zones of exclusion and fragmentation, and at other times constituting sites of power, resistance, and the celebration of identity (Bridge and Watson 2000:551).

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[24] In "Space, Power and Knowledge" Foucault argues "no matter how terrifying a given system may be, there always remains the possibilities for resistance, disobedience, and oppositional groupings" (Foucault 135).

The discourse of difference is not new to the field of urban studies. Cities have for centuries been described as spaces of difference. Some of the factors that contribute to this characteristic of cities include the concentration of people, the juxtaposition of different activities and land uses and the potential for encounters and interactions that city space allows for. As well, more recently, the extensive global flows of people and materials has lead to a rise in the range of identity groups within metropolitan spaces.

Within urban studies, residential segregation along class, racial, ethnic and sexuality lines has been well documented. Traditionally, many urban scholars have been content with documenting the ways in which social divide are inscribed in the settlement patterns of urban dwellers and the constuitive role of urban planners in such divisions. More specifically, urban scholars have tended to focus on analyzing class and racial divisions within cities as one of the defining features of modern urbanism[25]. Much of this work has been informed by a Marxist perspective which sets up a dualistic framework for explaining social and economic divisions and inequality. Such an approach allows for the emergence of the idea of a dual or divided city and socio–spatial polarization theories that link the social relations of production under capitalism with the sense of alienation, and the segregation of working class people. Bridge and Watson point out, this Marxist tradition has continued with more contemporary urban inquiries which examine social inequalities. They state:

> In this discourse social polarization was posited as an inevitable effect of global capitalist restructuring which was seen as an uneven process affecting cities and regions, and the people in them, in different ways,

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[25] The work of Rex and Moore on housing sectors in 1960's Birmingham is an example of a class based analysis of city space while William Julius Wilson's work on ghettoization in the U.S. focused on racial difference.

including some localities and groups while pushing others to the margins and spaces of exclusion (Bridge et al. 254).

Looking at Montreal in general, and Parc X in particular, it is easy to impose such an analysis on the neighborhood in relation to the city.

Located in the north section of the city, Parc X has been the main destination for many newly arriving immigrants and refugees throughout the twentieth century. Beginning in the early seventies, the demographic of the neighborhood became specifically representative of a large Greek and Indian population as well as immigrants who arrived predominantly from Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean Islands. Today, these ethno-cultural communities make more than half of the population of the area.[26]

Lash and Urry have argued that throughout the past several decades the new urban underclass has been composed largely of immigrant and ethnic minority populations (Lash et al. 145). The fact is that within North American cities, the poor are disproportionately people of color and class differences are completely intertwined with race and ethnicity. Looking at the demographic of Parc X, this link between race, ethnicity and class is very clear. Amongst the most multicultural and densely populated areas of Montreal, Parc X is also the poorest neighborhood in the city with the lowest family income per capita and 50% of its residents living below the poverty line (Groupe de Travail Sur Les Portraits des Quartiers Villarey, Saint-Michel Et Parc- Extension 8). In many ways, Parc X is a typical urban ethnic ghetto with many of the same features, and problems, associated with urban ghettoization. The area is characterized by low social economic status, a high immigrant constituency, and social and spatial segregation.

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[26] Groupe de Travail Sur Les Portraits des Quartiers Villarey, Saint-Michel Et Parc- Extension, 2004.

In Cities in Space, David Herbert and Colin Thomas argue that ethnic segregation in urban space is a result of two simultaneous factors: discrimination and protection. They state: "ethnic groups, often disadvantaged and unable to compete effectively in work and housing markets become residentially segregated into less desirable parts of the urban area" (Herbert et al. 240). At the same time, they argue that such areas allow for "the maintenance of ethnic minority groups as a distinctive social and spatial entity" (Herbert et al. 239). As such, they are able to retain some level of group cohesion and protect a collective cultural identity. This second feature of ethnic ghettos serves an avoidance function, emphasizing the self-supporting role of ethnic or cultural minority groups as a means of resisting assimilation into the dominant culture. As Herbert and Thomas point out:

> the ethnic area serves as a place of initiation and familiarization where traditional values, costumes and perhaps language are retained and these processes are easier to accomplish (Herbert et al. 241).

In Postmodern Cities and Spaces, Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson also cite a number of authors, such as Diane Austin-Broos, who have argued for the progressive possibilities within ethnic ghetto as "a site of unique cultural production"(Watson et al. 7). Austin-Broos's claim is that such spaces occupied by specific marginalized groups may in many instances represent exclusion and domination, but they also offer forms of protection, possibilities for resistance, and a space in which minorities can establish themselves as a community (Austin-Broos as cited in Watson et al. 7).

In the context of Parc X, the segregation of poor immigrant residents to this area has allowed for the opportunity to build new ways of administrating a less oppressive,

less polarized but still heterogeneous community. As such, many newly arriving immigrants gravitate towards the area and are often helped along by the community networks which have been established in the area. There are over 40 community-based organizations, many of which are amongst the most active in the city and cater specifically to immigrant and refugee communities[27]. These organizations are often founded and administered by members of the cultural communities that they target. For the many immigrant and refugee communities that live in Parc X, such forms of communal spatiality allow for a sense of belonging, and a place where mutual support can be established through ownership and administration of institutions, businesses, social networks and community organizations. Such institutions also contribute to the process of chain migration with earlier migrants maintaining flows of information and aid to those who follow.

While it is easy to praise neighborhoods like Parc X for offering a space for cultural preservation to minority groups, an uncritical and joyous celebration of ethnic ghettos is highly problematic. As Herbert and Thomas state, "the ideologies of racism underlie all aspects of the emergence of ethnic areas" (Herbert et al. 242). For example, as their research shows, members of ethnic minorities are typically unemployed, in less skilled jobs, at lower job levels, and are concentrated in particular sectors of the labor market. As such some of the underlying factors of ethnic ghettoization include the fact that ethnic minority groups hold positions of least advantage in the workplace and housing markets (Herbert et al. 242). For example, in Parc X, the unemployment rate is

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[27] La Maison de L'Inde, PEYO (Parc Extension Youth Organization), CHAISE (Centre Haïtian d'Animation et d'Intervention Sociale, CLAM (Centre de Liaison et d'Aide Multiethnique), Afrique Feminin and PEQS (Parc Extention Quartier en Santé) are examples of such organizations.

double that of other areas in Montreal, the majority of the population work in the manufacturing and service industry, most residents do not own their own property and rent small apartments instead, and the annual income of individuals and families is about half that of the average annual income of Montreal residents (Ville de Montréal). Furthermore, the residents in Parc X are not only symbolically excluded from the standards of living that many other constituents in the city enjoy, they are also confined to the boundaries of the neighborhood in very material ways.

One of the most visible signs of spatial segregation in Parc X is the sight of a fence that was erected 45 years ago and runs along L' Acadie Boulevard from Rockland to Jean-Talon Street and quite literally separates Parc X from the more middle-class Town of Mont-Royal district. Prohibiting automobile and pedestrian traffic to travel from one side to the other, this fence physically delineates the limits of each area. While the official discourse states that the purpose of the fence is to protect children and pets from running into the busy street, many Parc X residents contend that the fence was in fact built to maintain a rigid class division between the two districts. The extreme variation in land use on the two sides of the fence is a clear sign of how spatial segregation functions along class lines, as well as how class is often a raced category. While there are very few written sources that document the building of the fence and its contested history., there are several stories that circulate about it in the neighborhood and amongst Parc X residents[28].

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[28] To this day, the fence is a source of controversy as residents and city officials representing each side of the fence argue over its legitimacy. In 2001, the city was forced to remove the gates which were originally built into the fence after it was discovered that officials from the Town of Mount Royal had locked the gates on Halloween in order to prevent the children of Parc X from trick or treating in TMR.

The official discourse about Parc Extension tends to portray it as a site of physical and moral decay (inflated crime rates, decrepit buildings, and economic and social disorganization) [29]. As such, the fence provides a form of protection for the residents of Town of Mount Royal. At the same time, this enclaving of Parc X builds on particular discourses of fear which seek to protect the residents of one neighborhood, while limiting the mobility of those in Parc X[30]. As Massey has pointed out, one of the ways in which people reject difference in an attempt to protect themselves and their advantages is through the construction of both literal and figurative walls (Massey 85). She states: "when segregation takes on a spatial form, the marking of difference takes the form of boundary lines etched in city space" (Massey 86). The fence along L'Acadie is not only an economic boundary, it is also a hallmark of intolerance and a clear negation of the lived experience of diversity and difference.

3.4 Mixing It Up In Parc X

While the clustering and isolation of the cities poor immigrant and refugee population has functioned to develop an image of the Parc Extension as a Montreal ghetto[31], the reality of Parc X, much like that of most contemporary cities, is far too complicated to be captured by a dual model which homogenizes binary categories based on race and class so that differences within groups such as "rich" and "poor" or "white" and "ethnic" are rendered invisible. The model also neglects the fact that under the current global flows, the intersections of migrant cultures in spaces like Parc X have

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[29] In a 2003 *La Presse* article, Eric Trottier refers to the area as "Le Bronx de Montréal" (Trottier 6).
[30] Parc X residents have complained that the fence blocks them from having adequate access to the many parks that are located directly on the TMR side.
[31] See *La Presse* article (Trottier 6)

produced a series of heterogeneous, and hybrid cultural geographies. Unfortunately, it is rare that these cultural geographies are acknowledged or celebrated as the sites of urban diversity in the same way that the Main is.

The concept of' 'ethnic ghettos', as its been theorized under a Marxist framework, tends to reduce if not erase the complexity and multiplicity of the identities which exist in such areas. For example, there is virtually no cultural cohesion in Parc X. Instead, members of radically different ethnic and cultural groups, not only co-exist, but also collaborate in ways that counter any unified notion of a particular ethnic group. While maintaining "cultural values" certainly plays a role in the construction and administration of many of the institutions within the area, it is important to note that these cultural values reflect new and complex understanding of the traditional values of any specific group. For example, while traditionally, there is a great deal of tension between members of the Indian, Pakistani and Bengal populations based on their nationality, religion and cultural affinity, in Parc X, all three populations work along side each other and form a collective network of South Asians. As Abul Sher, the director of the Société Internationale du Bangladesh (SIB), a Parc X community organization that offers services such as translation and general support to Bengal new comers, points out, while there are ongoing tensions between India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, "Ce qui se passé là-bas reste là-bas" (Cauchy A8).

A responsible engagement with urban diversity and difference needs to move beyond a Marxist dichotomy and negotiate notions of power, inequality and politics in the constitution of urban space. This is what Massey refers to as a "located politics of difference" – and engagement with identity, power and place (Jacobs 2). Such a located

politics of difference reveals the complex processes that produce the arrangements of privilege and marginalization evident in urban space.

One of the main characteristics of Parc X that differentiates it from the previous areas I have looked at is the ways in which its very different constituents have managed to collectively negotiate the hegemonic forces at work within the district through their production of locality in the neighborhood. In order to analyze the complexity of this situation, I will use Arjun Appadurai's work on the production of locality under modern condition of globalization.

3.5 Producing Locality in Parc X

The many displaced, deterritorialized, and transient populations that constitute today's ethnoscapes are engaged in the construction of locality, as a structure of feeling, often in the face of the erosion, dispersal, and implosion of neighborhoods as coherent social formations. This disjuncture between neighborhoods as social formation and locality as a property of social life is not without historical precedent... what is new is the disjuncture between these processes and the mass-mediated discourses, practices (including those of economic liberalization, multi-culturalism, human rights, and refugee claims) that now surround the nations state. (Appadurai 1996:199)

In Modernity at Large, Appadurai distinguishes between *locality* and *neighborhood*. For him, locality is a relational and contextual aspect of social life, while neighborhoods are substantive social forms, "the actual existing social forms in which locality... is variably realized" (Appadurai 179). Appadurai argues that the production of locality requires the "complex and deliberate practices of performance, representation, and action" by the constituents which leads to the production of local knowledge (Appadurai 180). Neighborhoods on the other hand are produced in great part by city officials and as a result of institutional knowledge. As such he argues that:

> neighborhoods exist primarily to incubate and produce compliant national
>
> citizens – and not for the production of local subjects. Locality [under

these conditions]... is either a site of nationally appropriated nostalgia, celebration, and commemorations or a necessary condition of the production of nationals (Appadurai 190).

He concludes that within contemporary cities, the reality and lure of economic opportunity for city officials and administrators often trumps the production of locality by and for local subjects.

Looking back at the Main, it seems to me that "local knowledge," to the extent that it has been narrativized in the texts that I analyzed, is more a product of municipal discourse than that of the practices and actions of its constituents. In other words, much of what passes as local knowledge in the discursive construction of the Main, or for that matter, the Gay Village, is actually institutional knowledge of how to produce and reproduce a sense of locality that fosters consumption, tourism and other material conditions that are conducive to a capitalist agenda. As such, in these circumstances the supposed "local knowledge" has less to do with producing local subjects and local neighborhoods within which such subjects can realize their identities, and more about producing conditions which foster consumption and capital. This is in part the reason why Parc X emerges as a more appropriate site for my inquiries into the production of locality. Since Parc X is not (yet) a place that is conducive to such forms of conditioning, there is less investment by the municipal government is the area and as such, the institutionalized discourse tends to either ignore the district all together, or present it as a problem zone in need of surveillance, control, and segregation.

Appadurai argues that such conditions are often undermined by the constituents of an area, for whom the work of producing neighborhoods is "constituted by relatively

stable associations, by relatively known and shared histories, and by collectively traversed and legible spaces and places" (Appadurai 191). For him, the production of locality is always historically grounded and thus contextual to the practices of those who occupy the space rather than those who produce and manage it. Unfortunately, in the case of the Main, many of the constituents who produced the neighborhood that is celebrated, have now been displaced and pushed out as a result of gentrification. Since Parc X has fallen outside of the discursive construction of the city as a whole, the same mechanisms of power are not at work in the construction of locality in the area. Instead, Parc X is a place where some of Appadurai's theories about the production of locality are realized in every day life. More specifically, the intersection of migrant cultures in the area, and their negotiation of these intersections, has produced a series of differentiated, hybrid and heterogeneous cultural geographies. Appadurai argues that within spaces with such forms of cultural geographies, local subjects are continuously reproducing their neighborhood through their "locality-producing activities" (Appadurai 186). Looking at Parc X, I would argue that one of the most prominent spaces in the area where locality-producing activities have taken place over the past few years has been the Parc X library.

In 2003 the Parc X library was opened in response to the growing demand of the constituents in need of a facility where specifically local resources could be housed[32]. Reflecting the multi-ethnic reality of the borough, the library is a unique site for examining the production of locality in the district. Unlike the ostentatious nature of Montreal's new Biblioteque Nationale which aims to be an all encompassing site of

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[32] Previous to this, Parc X was the only district in Montreal that did not have a municipal library and residents had been lobbying for one for over 30 years (Angelis 3).

cultural production, knowledge, and Quebec identity[33], the Parc X library complex is small in scale, but able to fulfill very specific needs of the community it serves. The library houses a modest number of documents (about 65 000), but these documents, produced in a multiplicity of languages, address a series of local needs including a collection of resources in 12 languages that deal with resettlement and integration of different refugee and immigrant peoples, a collection of French and English language learning tools that is disproportionately large for the size of the library[34], as well as a multi-purpose center that includes a kindergarten, an adult education center, a sports center, the offices of a series of non-profit and grass roots community organizations and a cultural center that hosts a diverse range of events, all free of charge. Most of these organizations are founded and administered by local residents. In fact, community participation and action has been an established tradition in Parc X. The building of the library itself was a result of voluntary community associations which mobilized to influence municipal decisions in the district. Today, most services in the complex target very specific and localized groups[35]. In this sense, unlike the Bibliothèque Nationale, which is a site of a generalized Quebec identity, the Parc X library, in its shabby ordinariness, is a place where residents of the area come together and produce and administer their own institutions.

It is important to note that as Appadurai has argued, the production of locality defines the context of the neighborhood only to a certain extent. In other words, there are

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33 The Bibliothèque Nationale website states that the goal of the complex is to "offer all Quebecers unprecedented access to their heritage and to contemporary culture from here and elsewhere" (Online).

34 Over 50% of Parc X residents' first language is neither French or English (Groupe de Travail Sur Les Portraits des Quartiers Villarey, Saint-Michel Et Parc- Extension 8).

35 Some examples of this include, P.E.Y.O. (the Parc Extension Youth Organization), Comité d'Action de Parc X (a housing rights organization), Resource Action Alimentation (a grassroots community kitchen), the South Asian Community Network and the African Women's Center.

also many circumstances that individuals encounter in a neighborhood that is beyond the scope of their locality producing activities. For him, this is a matter of "social power and of the different scales of organization and control within which particular spaces (and places) are embedded" (Appadurai 186). In the case of Parc X, one can argue that although the practices and projects of Parc X residents are context producing, the practices of municipal officials and power involve harsh forces of intervention, surveillance, and exploitation that residents encounter and confront on hugely unequal terms compared to other parts of the city. There are several examples and instances that demonstrate the repressive forces at work in the neighborhood, from the fence which I mentioned earlier, to the excessive police surveillance in the area. One of the most disturbing sites that I witness on a weekly basis as a resident in the neighborhood, is the increase in police surveillance around the several mosques in the area each Friday evening[36].

While residents in the area generate contexts in the neighborhood by producing and reproducing locality through their collective activities and practices, they are at the same time bounded and repressed by the context-producing activities of the municipal government, the police and more recently, by the conservative forces of urban development.

The municipal government in Montreal varies in the nature and extent of its interest in the local life of different parts of the city as well as the cultural practices in which they invest their identity on the one hand, and their paranoia on the other. The lack of investment in Parc X on the one hand, and the extreme mechanisms of

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[36] A neighbour informed me that the increase in police surveillance occurred with the discovery that the millennium bomber frequented a mosque in the neighborhood.

surveillance and control on the other, are some of the main characteristics of the neighborhood that contribute to its continuous maginalization.

3.6 Complicating Parc X

In recent years, the range of identity groups whose urban circumstances have been examined and theorized has been extended beyond class and race to include gender, sexuality, ability and so on. Many urban theorists have continued to map differences in city space, taking these pre-given categories of distinction as stable ones. However, as Jane Jacobs points out:

> The processes that work to construct gendered, radicalized, or classed identities are embedded in frameworks of power. Structures of difference are encoded with certain assumptions that variously apportion measures of legitimacy, civility, or authority to the socially constructed subject. Furthermore, through processes of regulation and repetition, these unevenly empowered differences are made to appear natural (Jacobs 6).

Feminist, postcolonial and queer studies has thought us that a critical study of difference rejects any fixed category and instead, takes into account the socially constituted subjects and the means by which their subjectivities are variously centered and privileged or marginalized and disadvantaged. Applied to Montreal, such an approach would reveal the ways in which different spaces have been narrativised, privileged and co-opted (the Main and the Gay Village come to mind here), while others such as Parc X have been ignored and marginalized.

Susan Fainstein has pointed out that a progressive poststructuralist reading of urban space includes "a mapping of the ways in which spatial relations represent modes of cultural domination, searching out the 'silence' and exclusions in the practices of planners and developers" (Fainstein 145). Such a reading of space takes to heart Foucault's argument that space embodies power, but also, people usage of space is their negotiation of power. While this form of post structuralism celebrate diversity, it also highlights exclusivity and sterility as the blighting effects of capitalism on the urban form. As such, a socially and politically conscious version of poststructuralism would condemn the contemporary city as the product of a hegemonic elite "imposing order on other groups with potentially unruly lifestyles" (Fainstein 145). At the same time, there would be an acknowledgment of difference, and the various ways that social and spatial specificities can transform such structures of power and privilege, or as Jane Jacobs points out, "the ways oppressed groups can, through a politics of identity and a politics of place, reclaim rights, resist and subvert" (Jacobs 2).

Both Fainstein and Jacobs are not interested in looking at cities through a traditional cultural or economic perspective. Instead, both acknowledge that processes of representation, signification and performativity are fundamental components of the way identities are constituted and articulated in urban space, and "these processes of defining difference are in a mutually constitutive relationship with the uneven material conditions of everyday life" (Jacobs 3).

While acknowledging that urban dwellers are not fully determined by structures of racialization, class, colonialism or bureaucracy, I also want to emphasize that individuals do not live outside these processes either. Rather, they occupy in-between

spaces in which it is possible to negotiate the categorizations by which they come to be known. In the case of Parc X, this open contingency of identity is felt in the most profound ways on the streets and in the public institutions which house radically different ways of living. Ignored by the rest of the city and the municipal government, the residents of Parc X have managed to create their own ways of dealing with and thriving on the multiplicity of identities that they encounter on a day-to-day basis. In the streets of this neighborhood, the practices of social relations are different than those in other areas. Streets corners, and corner stores as well as the library complex and the few parks and squares in the neighborhood are all quasi-public spaces where social encounters take place. These semi-public sites where such encounters take place are at once local to the area, and situated in a liminal space of global city where complex configurations of identity take shape. In other words, these spaces are at once local, and transnational. As such, despite physical boundaries (such as the fence), in many ways Parc X is also amongst the most unbounded spaces in the city. As Doreen Massey has pointed out, boundaries are always permeable since current global flows are constantly reconstituting the local (Massey 1994).

In chapter one, I argued that contemporary government and real estate development agencies have grown attracted to difference. Cultural artifacts and cuisine have been disassociated from the original referents and turned into commodities and spectacles and a commercial appropriation of their meaning has taken place. This argument, however, does not hold the same weight when applied to Parc X. While Parc X is a complex site of difference, unlike St. Laurent, it is not a space where culture is commodified outside its original context. To me, Parc X stands out as a space where the

localized struggle for a racialized underclass to control and define more fully the terms of its own living conditions has become materialized. In a sense, the area is what De Larrentis's would describe as an in-between space:

> a site of racialized poverty where structural tensions of communities incorporates within the structures of race, class, politics, and administration reside, but not fully determine them: communities shaped by but not wholly assimilated to colonialism's cultures (De Larrentis as cited in Anderson 216).

Parc X is a meeting place for ethnically diverse peoples. There is a sense of familiarity within the blocks. It is at once an example of the spaces and voices of difference opened up by a decentered human geography and, on the other hand, the complex faces of power and inequality that condition metropolitan cities.

Having said that, Parc X remains an economically marginalized neighborhood in Montreal which has not yet been fully 'developed' partially as a result of its demographic. Mike Davis has pointed out that gentrification is underwritten by the same utopian images of urban public space and the streets upheld by its critic:

> The street is celebrated as a kind of permanent festival. The diversity and variety of lively downtown streets are favorably contrasted with the sterile homogeneity of the suburbs. But as middle-class security anxieties demonstrate, celebration of difference only goes so far. While gentrification celebrates diverse city streets, it also pacifies and represses them, in order to make them feel 'safe' for a middle class public (Davis 238).

It seems clear that part of why Parc X has not yet become a target of an extreme "urban revitalization" project, is the fact that it is not 'safe' enough for a middle class public. In the past few years, there has been a slow leakage of artist and student residents, myself included, which have left behind the high rents of Mile-End and made the move north to Parc X. As a result, the looming threat of gentrification is ever so present in the area, disguised by the municipal government as the promise of "urban renewal."

As I write this chapter, two large condominium complexes are being built across the street from me. These condos are some of the first signs of the homogenizing effects of gentrification in the area. Their modernist design stands in stark contrast to the humble architecture of the buildings that surround them. Furthermore, there has been 24 hour security guards present in the building before it has even become occupied by tenants and this "security" is advertised as one of the selling features of the condos (along with the "diversity" of the neighborhood). Speaking of urban gentrification, Pratt has argued:

> As the white residents whose gentrifying impulse is prompted by the ideals
> of a type of multiculturalism (bracketing the material consequences of this
> impulse for their neighbors across the street and the responsibility that they
> may bear for any disinvestment on the part of the landlord), burrow into the
> security of their private homes, a vision of urban living that seeks out
> difference is lost (Pratt 43).

This is precisely what is at stake in the urban revitalization plans that are being formulated in relation to Parc X.

Parc X is a space where segregation, separation, zoning and spatial severing of

certain people from certain places are realized in very material ways. But it is also a place where class and immigrant based alliances cut across certain racial divides, and where cultural practices produce new forms of locality. Throughout the past few decades, Parc X has been stigmatized with a history of poverty and marginalization. However, an undocumented history of cooperation amongst residence and resistance towards oppressive municipal policies has also taken shape in this small neighborhood[37].

This chapter aimed to explore the multiple facets of this complex neighborhood while staying clear of an irresponsible celebration or romanticization of poverty or ghettoization. Instead, there is an insistence that the possibility of a progressive sense of heterogeneity can and is in fact realized outside of institutionalized discourses about urban diversity. Looking at the social construction of Parc X, on the one had prompts me to pose the question of how urban dwellers negotiate their variable positioning in urban society and how they might chart strategic points of political commonality. On the other hand it compels me to consider how disadvantage is made and remade by empowered institutions such as the municipal government, and the morally laden discursive field by which specific subjectivities – like "ethnic" "immigrants" and "poor" come to be known. In order to do a more complex analysis of issues surrounding difference and urban space, we need to look at the multiple axes of difference and numerous social identities that occupy space. While Parc X can easily be classified as a poor ethnic ghetto that houses a predominantly working class immigrant and refugee population, a more responsible reading of the area would point to the far more complex set of identities and relationships

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[37] Amongst these undocumented histories is a story I was told by some residents about a group of students who tried to take down parts of the fence collectively one summer night a few years ago. They were stopped by police before they could get very far, and the only evidence of this action is a torn section of the fence a block North of Jean Talon.

that are held within the district, as well as how these identities function to produce locality in the context of the neighborhood. In other words, in addition to race, class and religious identities which form the central nuclei around which communities are built and social lives of groups are organized, Parc X also houses a multiplicity of spaces where power relations are continually contested.

Conclusion

There is never one geography of authority and there is never one geography of resistance. Furthermore, the map of resistance is not simply the underside of the map of domination-if only because each is a lie to the other, and each gives the lie to the other (Pile as cited in Halberstam 2005:1).

Our relations to place, like our relations to people, are studded with bias, riven with contradictions, and complicated by opaque emotional responses (Halberstam 2005:22).

A few years ago, after I was evicted from my last Mile-End apartment, I made a stencil as a contribution to a zine that a friend and I were working on. The stencil read "CONSIDER YOUR PLACE" in large and bold lettering. Underneath, there was a caption that stated "suggested serving: cut out and spray on sidewalks in front of homes". The stencil was a reaction to the rapid gentrification that the neighborhood of Mile-End was facing at the time. It was also an order issued to myself: consider your place. This thesis emerged as my response to this self-imposed order. Working through a series of spaces that I have moved through in my negotiations of both my identity and this city, this project aims to fulfill my attempt at considering my place through a theoretical, historical and experiential engagement with it.

The city is the backdrop and context within which we shape our everyday lives. City space however, is not neutral – it is historically, institutionally, and socially produced. As well, city space has multiple histories and a myriad of ways in which people use and occupy it. The city is also discursively constructed and many of the narratives about it are aimed at benefiting city investors, the municipal government and the tourist industry whose main interest in urban culture is in locating and promoting practices that contribute to a commoditized version of "vibrant city life". This project has been an investigation of the ways in which identities are constructed, articulated and

performed through encounters with difference as it is discursively constituted, and as it is experienced in everyday spatial negotiations. While acknowledging cities as sites of production and containment of identities, and encoders of economic realities, the project is an attempt to map out a different and more complicated understanding of urban space, one that is initiated by the experiences of particular bodies and collective identities and their patterns of movement within everyday life. In a sense, I have attempted to create a genealogy of certain iconic and marginalized spaces in Montreal through relying on a series of social geographies, institutional and oral histories and experiential knowledge. More specifically, this work is an attempt to quite literally map out a history and a story about the spaces within this city which inform my personal understanding of it, and in return constitute my own identity in a myriad of ways.

Traditional maps are the epitome of a modernist understanding of urban space where differences are flattened out in favor of a measured and orderly understanding of space. This map on the other hand destroys any notion of imposed order by relying on my own negotiation and experience of these disparate spaces as a starting point for the exploration of Montreal as a whole. This thesis does not aim to provide an accurate depiction of these spaces, as much as it aims to be a marker of a different way to imagine them in relation to official discourses about the city. It is by no means a definitive analysis of the social geography of Montreal. Instead, it is more a mediation on, and mapping of certain parts of the city and the ways in which they inform the constitution of it as a whole.

One of the defining features of modernity has been the tendency of modern spatial organizations to emerge as totalizing landmarks for socio-economic strategies. Among

the basic assumptions of modernism was the idea that humans are rational, ordered, and disciplined subjects. As such, the aim of modernist urban geography was to impose a systematic and structured order on people's movement within the city. Repetitious blocks, office buildings malls and girded streets are some of the characteristics of the modern city which are indicative of this type of urban homogenization (Lefebvre 1991). While postmodernism has been celebrated as an era of discontinuity, disjuncture, and transformation of the structures of modernity, the material effects of the postmodern era within cities, or more specifically, late capitalist urban space, has also been subject to interrogation and critique. As I have demonstrated, one of the prevailing effects of new forms of spatial organization within contemporary metropolitanism has been gentrification. While gentrification celebrates diverse city streets, it also pacifies represses and dislocated those who in fact constitute differences in the city. As the case of the Gay Village and the Main point out, engaging with difference in urban studies does not mean a joyous celebration of urban diversity. Such an uncontested representation of difference is problematic and ultimately serves the economic needs of a few while marginalizing and ignoring those who make up the supposed multiplicity of identities that constitute the city. Furthermore, the official narratives about the Main and the Gay Village is less a representation of the histories and lived experiences of their constituents, and more a result of the discursive constructions about the areas articulated by city officials in order to foster those spaces as places for capitalist consumption. In such discursive constructions, these spaces emerge less as neighborhoods where locality is produced through the everyday negotiation of inhabitants, and more as representative

spaces where the myths about the city are on display through a series of sites of consumption and spectacle.

The predominant image of Montreal put forth on an institutionalized level is that of a hybrid space of cultural performance which multiple identities inhabit. However, as this inquiry has demonstrated, this conception of Montreal as a utopic hybrid space can be challenged through an examination of the cities multiple and competing narratives. As Martin Allor has pointed out in his discussion of the Main, while a series of public texts have functioned to link the spirit of the city to "l'identitaire québécois" as a unified category, such stories can also function to "map the Main into different temporalities, different boundaries, different distinctions and different communities" (Allor 45). Allor argues that the key concepts through which Quebecois culture is articulated is *metissage* and *transculture*. The former refers to the mixing of difference within a pluralistic conception of Quebec where such differences are incorporated into the whole. This is a utopic understanding where the unified identity of Quebec is not challenged, but enriched by the incorporation of minority cultures. Transculture also refers to a similar relationship between the dominant and minority culture, but more from the perspective of immigrant intellectuals. It refers to the complex relations of language, culture, race, religion and class in the formation of a post-colonial Quebec culture. In both instances, "the 'present' past" of the different communities are "subsumed within more or less foundational or ontological groupings of one cultural history" and the Main stands in as the sign of this cultural becoming (Allor 49). However, this is a form of reductionism which defers the less resolvable questions of difference in favor of a unified identity. As my examination of the differing narratives about Montreal points out, the narrative of

difference in this city, as in most contemporary metropolitan locations is in fact a very contested one.

Exclusion of groups of residents from access to all that the city has to offer on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexuality, income, national origin and other markers of difference has been and continues to be a pressing issue in cities throughout the world. As globalization continues to bring people from different parts of the world into closer contact and as the pace of immigration increases the issue of exclusion becomes ever more pressing. Given this fact, we need to ask who is seen and heard in the narratives about Montreal's diversity, and how are forms of inequality realized in these representations of the city? The issue of whose stories come to the foreground is directly related to that of power and the ability of certain groups to superimpose their stories on Montreal's landscape.

Despite some of the negative effects of late-capitalism on urban communities however, and without falling back on utopic understanding of postmodernism offering us heterogeneous spaces of subjectivity and representation, it is important to explore the possibilities for a progressive politics in relation to contemporary metropolitans. Foucault's concept of heterotopic space offers us an alternative reading of the structures and meaning of contemporary metropolitan locations. Such a form of theorizing would give weight to both economic and non-economic factors in the processes of urbanism and allows for the realization of people's power to resist hegemonic structure.

The city is not a space of uncontested difference. In fact, Montreal has been and continues to be a battle ground where various peoples, constituents and administrators fight over the right to live, work and prosper in a multiplicity of ways. Unfortunately,

those who often end up on top have always been its more affluent residents whose identity counter the institutional discourse of diversity that prevails in public discourses about the city. The city has had a non-reciprocal relationship with those who make up its supposed diversity, taking from them not only a source of cheap labor, but also the material circumstances which enable the city administrators to build an image of a postmodern and pluralist utopia, an image that is far from the lived reality of many of the cities inhabitants.

The divergent issues of race, class and sexuality in the city are interconnected and linked to the widespread and ever expanding shift towards a neo-capitalist urban economy, and the polarization, isolation and destruction of urban communities. There are several issues that emerge out of this shift, some of which I have addressed, many of which require further examination. They include: the ways in which different and marginalized people are accepted and rejected, the continuing rise in social, economical and cultural exclusion of marginalized communities, the continuing commercialization of city space and the spectacularization of its symbolic places and spaces, the growth of urban subcultures and counter cultures, the change in the use of public spaces and their emerging privatization to name but a few. Under these circumstances, networks and actions that foster local knowledge, and resist the dominating forces of institutionalized policies and discourse are essential for the survival of local subjects.

My entryway to theorizing about space in general, and Monreal in particular came from a series of progressive academic texts on the subject. I was inspired by Elspeth Probyn's poetic tales of Balconville in <u>Outside Belongings</u>, Martin Allor's exploration of heterotopia along the Main, and Ross Higgins genealogy of gay Montreal, to name a few.

However, somewhere along the way, I have come to a new understanding of what it means to be different in this city from a non-academic perspective. From where I stand today, the city no longer holds the charm it once did. Not with thousands of non-status people who live and work in my neighborhood, always under the threat of deportation, not with transgender friends who have to leave this province in order to have some semblance of access to a health care system that recognizes their identity, not with a "progressive" art community that continues to lead the way in urban gentrification and ignores the numerous sites of struggle localized outside the coffee shops.

As I write this, many of my friends are moving up to Parc X. In some ways, the familiar faces in my neighborhood is nice, especially with the approaching winter season of hibernation, it is comforting to know that my people will be close by. But as Elspeth Probyn points out in "Travels in the Postmodern", "in creating our own centers and our own locals, we tend to forget our centers displace others into the peripheries of our making" (Probyn 176). I moved into Parc X not knowing much about it. I moved here because it was easy, affordable, and still close enough to what was familiar. That was a few years ago. Back then, I didn't have an analysis of the power structures at work in the creation and maintenance of urban space, or the process of gentrification and my role in it. Back then, I never stopped to think about how my presence had contributed to changing the neighborhoods that I had lived in, or why it was that I could be living safely and comfortably in certain areas and not others, or who else got to live with the same level of comfort near me. Since that time, I've witnessed this neighborhood begin to change and more recently, I've come to understand the role that I have played in this change. Now, I think about these factors a whole lot more. Proximity means a lot to me.

I try to have an understanding of what and who I am near and what my relationship is to them. More importantly, I invest myself in the history of the spaces I reside in and move through. Who was here before me, and who will come after are indicative of how and why it is that I am here now. As well, I have become conscious of the fact that all my movements (within a city and throughout the world) leave a trace and that those traces stay and effect the spaces of my past and the people who reside in them. This is particularly important to me because I have a highly mobile lifestyle. Others don't. Many can't. The process of writing this thesis has indeed forced me to consider my place.

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