Coming Into Site: Identity, Community and the Production of Gay Space in Montréal.

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Abstract

This project explores the question of gay male identity and community formation in relation to the production of social space designated as "gay." What economic, social, political and symbolic resources are involved in the production of gay space? And how can social space be thought of as creating the conditions of possibility for the formation of specific gay identities and communities?

Using a "production of space" analysis adapted from the work of Henri Lefebvre, I examine the case of Montreal's gay village. I argue that the emergence of this space, in both material and symbolic terms, has led to a particular sense of "spatial identity" among many gay men in Montreal. I analyze the implications of these "space-based" identities for queer community formation and conclude that the Village constitutes a compromise with the dominant culture, rather than a radical form of spatial praxis.

Résumé

Ce projet aborde la question de la formation d'identités et de communautées gaies dans le contexte de la production de l'espace social désigné comme «gai.» Quelles ressources économiques, sociales, politiques et symboliques sont impliquées dans la production de l'espace gai? Comment peut-on conceptualiser l'espace social comme rendant possible la formation de certaines identités et communautés gaies?

En m'inspirant de l'analyse de la "production de l'espace" selon Henri Lefebvre, je me penche sur l'exemple du village gai de Montréal. Je propose que l'émergence de cet espace, tant au plan matériel que symbolique, s'est traduite par l'expression d'une "identité spatiale" pour plusieurs hommes gais à Montréal. J'analyse les conséquences de ces identités "spatiales" en rapport à la formation de communautés "queer" pour en arriver à la conclusion que le Village constitue un compromis avec la culture dominante, plutôt qu'une appropriation radicale de l'espace.

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Finally, I reserve my fondest regards for my family and friends. To the wonderful queers who make up my Montréal community, thanks for your love, tireless enthusiasm, and for showing up at all my parties.

À mes parents, qui n'ont jamais perdu espoir en moi, merci de votre soutien moral, de votre amour, de votre patience, et de votre compréhension lorsque rien ne semblait aboutir.

Enfin, je remercie et embrasse mon chum, Neil Hartlen. Tu m'as accompagné dans cette démarche, émotivement et intellectuellement, du début à la fin, ce qui n'est pas peu dire. You worked hard for your acknowledgement. I love you long and hard.

C'est alors que j'ai décidé de tout mettre de côté pour un instant. J'ai décidé de rendre hommage à la vie à travers mon Village où je retrouve mes amis qui l'animent et qui le font vivre.

—Michel D'Amour, Michel, gai dans le Village.

Cependant l'obscurité persiste; plongés dans cet élément nouveau, les habitués de Jupien croyant avoir voyagé, être venus assister à un phénomène naturel comme un mascaret ou comme une éclipse, et goûter au lieu d'un plaisir tout préparé et sédentaire celui d'une rencontre fortuite dans l'inconnu, célébraient, aux grondements volcaniques des bombes, au pied d'un mauvais lieu pompéien, des rites secrets dans les ténèbres des catacombes.

—Marcel Proust, Le temps retrouvé.

Preface

Montreal. February 19, 1994:

As I stand outside Station "C", waiting for our numbers to reach a critical mass, I am struck by the clemency of the temperature. It is well above freezing on this, a Saturday night in mid-February. This can't be happening. Not in Montreal.

I'm about to take part in a demonstration to protest last Wednesday's police raid on a popular Montreal gay bar, Katakombes. By 8 o'clock, about 300 of us have gathered outside the bar. After the requisite speeches and appeals to solidarity, we make our way westward down Ste-Catherine Street. I think about my reasons for taking part in this protest: the arrest of 165 people, charged with being "found-ins" in a "common bawdy-house," punished for being present in a gay establishment. I had been to Katakombes the night before the raid, and somehow, tonight, I feel guilty for not being among those who were arrested. After all, I'm as guilty as any of them.

For a moment during the demonstration, I feel as if we own the streets of Montreal, I feel as though we are reclaiming the space that was violated just last Wednesday. That moment doesn't last very long. Suddenly, the entire march, all 300 protestors, stop and stand motionless, each of us waiting for a sign, some indication of where to go next. I look up to the front of the procession: police have erected a roadblock at Amherst St., the boundary between the Village and the Rest of the World. After some time, the people at the front hold up their bullhorns and begin to shout: "Do we go on to the Police Station? We need to decide." Some protesters, interspersed within the group, answer back: "Return to the Village! We're better off there.
Look! Half the people are leaving!" ...

Chapter 1

The Space of Queer Theory.

Some Place Markers.

There are perhaps three events that have had the greatest role in shaping this project. The first is a criticism levelled at queer academics by AIDS cultural critic Simon Watney during a conference given at the *Université de Montréal* in the fall of 1993. Watney, whose reputation is built on his adept analysis of cultural responses to AIDS, lamented the lack of attention given by queer theorists to issues of social policy in the midst of the epidemic. He argued powerfully that queers in academia, gay men in particular, have a *moral* responsibility to critically engage with the many issues, social, political, ethical, cultural and economic, raised by the advent of AIDS. If nothing else, AIDS has underlined the importance of gay community mobilization as a response to the negligence of governments. It is crucial then, that we begin to understand the role of community interventions in fighting oppression, that we theorize how these communities are formed, what social functions they serve, and how they survive despite the many structural barriers which conspire to limit their effectiveness.

A second event has shaped my political and theoretical sympathies: the police raid on Katakombes, a Montreal gay dance club/bar that I have been known to frequent. This event, and the subsequent response by the gay community, including a demonstration to denounce the arrests of some 175 people, raised for me an array of questions with an urgency that I had never before experienced. These were questions that begged, insisted, demanded that I give them thought. Like many a young queer before me, the police had awakened me into activism.

Shortly after the raid, I was to give a paper at a conference on popular music. I had intended to speak about "club kids, divas and D.J.'s," the culture of Montreal gay dance clubs, but I felt that the events at Katakombes called for a different emphasis. The resulting paper was a tad angry and confrontational: I stated upfront that the voyeuristic exposé of gay club culture I had promised would have to wait because more urgent issues needed to be addressed. This decision, I explained, was based on the realization that the very spaces that make gay club culture possible were under threat. Thus, it seemed clear to me that, at this particular time, it was more relevant, responsible, and logical that a presentation about gay clubs should focus on issues of space, rather than issues of style. The paper was met with a hostile reaction on the part of some audience members and this reaction constitutes the third important shaping influence of this project. I came away from the conference determined to pursue my line of reasoning, if only to figure out why an academic paper presented by a young graduate student could upset that many people.

My paper was part of a panel devoted to sexual politics and popular music. The other queer presenter, who provided an enlightened history of "Queerpunk" music, was received without noticeable hostility. In contrast, my presentation was attacked for being overly provocative, angry, emotional, and irrelevant to the study of popular music. One audience member suggested that the paper sounded like an "extended newscast" and accused me of letting "current events" get in the way of the much more important work of studying popular music apart from "ephemeral" events. Another commentator remarked that I had misrepresented my intentions by submitting a proposal about gay club culture and instead using the conference as a "soapbox" for my political views. Why the angry response?

In the article "The Politics of Queer Theory in the (Post)Modern Moment," Donald Morton distinguishes between two modes of inquiry within cultural studies: the critical, and the experiential. For Morton, experiential cultural studies "'describes' various emerging, suppressed cultural groups and its goal is to give voice to their previously un- or little-known 'experience', to let them 'speak for themselves'" (125). Critical cultural studies, on the other hand, "takes as its radical political project the transformation of the very social/political/economic...structures which have suppressed those groups in the first place and prevented them from speaking" (125). The crucial distinction between the two modes, according to Morton, lies in the political difference between "witnessing" cultural events, and "intervening" in them to produce "socially transformative cultural understandings" (125).

It appears fair to say that the other queer paper, which took as its subject the "Queerpunk" movement, fell under the rubric of the "experiential." It *described* a little-known subculture, much to the voyeuristic delight of the mostly heterosexual audience. My original proposal to the conference was very much in the same category: the proposed paper would have provided its audience a glimpse of the "secret," "exotic" and perhaps even a little "perverted" world of gay nightclubs. In contrast, the paper I delivered to the conference (quite naively I might add) was perhaps closer to Morton's "critical" mode, not limited to "describing" a cultural event but attempting to "explain" what I felt was an injustice and bringing the largely straight audience to question its complicity with the institutions responsible for perpetrating it. Was this relevant to the study of popular music? I certainly felt it was.

Following the raid, I began to search for new theoretical tools with which to speak about gay communities and identities, and the popular music conference provided a forum in which to

try out ideas that felt very new to me. I felt that queer theory could not provide the kinds of answers I felt I needed, or even frame the questions in ways that I found interesting. I wanted to know how this space called the gay village was produced: what symbolic and material resources does it consist of? How are its boundaries shaped and regulated? And how is it experienced by gay men? Why, in short, did the police erect a roadblock at Amherst St. and why were some protesters unable, or unwilling, to cross it?

These are questions that concern the social realm, and I came to the conclusion that queer theory, as it has evolved in the academy, did not provide an adequate basis with which to address them. This is not to say that queer theory has not posed new and important challenges to the traditional academic disciplines. Much as feminism has striven to expose the ways in which societies are structured according to gender imbalances, queer theory is providing fertile ground for the rethinking of sexuality's role in shaping culture and culture's role in shaping sexuality. This new thinking has spawned a new generation of scholars who pay meticulous attention to the role of language in enforcing heterosexual norms in all areas of culture. But this emphasis on language, however productive it has proven to be, tends to obscure other social processes and does not always account for the manner in which linguistic forms become socially inscribed.

Donald Morton is also critical of some of the dominant currents of thought within queer theory. He writes:

> The critique of queer studies, which is undertaken in solidarity, recognizes the importance and necessity of such studies but questions whether their present location in academic and intellectual spaces is productive for the radical change needed to combat exploitation and oppression in all forms. (Morton 122)

In writing this essay, Morton finds himself in the awkward position of wanting at once to position himself within queer studies, as a gay man working in the academy, and on the outside, as a Marxist critic denouncing the largely anti-materialist direction taken by queer theorists.

In insisting that homophobia is "a structure of exploitation linked--not eccentrically, locally, or contigently, but systemically--to other social practices" (122), Morton attempts to distance himself from other queer theorists who have adopted what he calls a "ludic" approach, derived from French-school post-structuralism, which tends to "textualize" social realities and dissolve the material effects of oppressive structures into an abstract system of signifiers and signifieds. He goes on to posit that a "...struggle is being fought out between proponents of textual studies, on the one hand, and cultural studies, on the other" (124), to determine the ways in which it is institutionally possible and acceptable to study culture in the contemporary academic climate.

The current popularity of "textual" approaches to queer theory is reflected in the influence garnered by the work of Judith Butler, whose ideas about gender performativity and the subversion of normative heterosexuality have spawned a boggling array of responses. Butler's Gender Trouble advances a very seductive thesis based on the idea that gender is a performative fiction, produced discursively through corporeal signs. She posits gender as a copy without an origin, a system of signification which is constantly shifting and cannot be said to "belong" to the categories male and female. In her view, gender is constituted through the repetition of gendered acts of signification within an economy of sexual categorization and "has no status apart from these acts which constitute its reality" (136).

Exposed as a "parody," the construction of gender is shown to anchor an oppressive system of compulsory heterosexuality. For queers, who belong to a culture long-associated with butch-femme aesthetics, cross-dressing, and the hyper-masculine appearance of the leatherman or the "clone," this thesis is seductive because it provides us with a rich terrain to search for moments of gender transgression, to decode the intricate system of signs and symbols making up the performance of gender and reveal its parodic underpinnings, thereby somehow upsetting the foundations of hetero-normative sexuality.

The project laid out by Butler, to contribute to the proliferation of certain kinds of "gender trouble," has led us to take a semiotic scalpel to the aesthetics and signifying practices of queer communities in an effort to isolate transgressive moments. The question most often asked by disciples of Butler: "How is the x aesthetic subversive?", where x can be substituted for any number of queer subjectivities and performative styles, leads us to an interesting impasse, which Butler herself addresses towards the end of Gender Trouble:

> Parody by itself is not subversive, and there must be a way to understand what makes certain kinds of parodic repetitions effectively disruptive, truly troubling, and which repetitions become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony. (Butler 139)

In searching for moments of gender subversion, a task taken on by many a queer theorist since the publication of Butler's book, how are we to determine what is truly subversive? When do gender performances disrupt the normative enforcement of gender and sexuality, and when are they contained? In effect, we are given to ask: "What performance where...?" (Butler 139), a question

that leads us right back to social context, which, sadly, Butler's theoretical framework does not explicitly address.

This question, "what performance where?" is the source of an endless array of debates and can perhaps never be satisfactorily answered. I would submit, following Donald Morton's lead, that to ask such a question over and over again can only leave us to conclude that the individual moment of transgression is always/already involved within a wider system of societal forces which seek to contain it .

The problem lies precisely in the attempt to isolate the subversive instance, or to identify the individual transgressive body. This tendency within "textual" approaches to queer studies reduces our shared lived experiences to that of individual bodies inscribed with signs, codes and notions of "power." Thus, queer theory does a disservice to an understanding of ourselves which might probe our histories, our struggles to form communities, and the ways we have sought to resist our shared oppression to come to an understanding of the structural causes of homophobia. In stating this, I do not mean to suggest that interpretive, textually-based approaches to queer studies serve no useful purpose. Rather, I wish to take my departure from what I see as a dominant model of analysis which ultimately leaves us gazing intently at our navels and asking ourselves: "But is it subversive?".

As I have endeavoured to find my place within queer academia, I have found myself asking many of the same questions posed by Morton's essay. Though I cannot follow Morton in adopting the position of a marxist critic, there are many reasons for which I am sympathetic to his call to account for the "materiality" of oppressive structures. If I am to speak of queer cultures, I wish for my discourse to address the lived experiences of their participants and to account for the

societal forces which attempt to suppress their expressions. If I am to participate in the "radical" project of integrating a sexual politics within the academic disciplines, I wish for my contribution to be interventionist and not limited to an interpretative game whose subject is a "text." If I am to be queer in academia at all, I wish my role as a scholar to be in dynamic relation to my other activities as a participant in queer culture, a community organizer, and a budding political activist. That said, there is no need to throw the proverbial baby out with the bath water. Queer theory provides rich tools to explore the role of signifying practices in constituting the social, and acknowledges the extent to which struggles against oppressive structures are linked to issues of queer representation. The task, as I see it, is to develop frameworks that address these issues in ways that are grounded in more highly developed understandings of social and cultural processes.

It is common within queer theory to speak of ourselves as implicated within a framework of identity governed by notions of inside and outside, margin and center. These tenacious binary oppositions, rooted as they are within language and consciousness, are seen to anchor an oppressive system of classification which, to paraphrase Diana Fuss, relegates us to the outside of systems of power, authority, and cultural legitimacy. Poststructuralist inquiries into the discursive construction of sexual identity and subjectivity have endeavoured to bring the overriding hetero/homo binary to the point of collapse by showing how one is always implicated in the other, the hetero, as it were, being constructed in direct opposition to the homo and vice versa. As Diana Fuss points out in her introduction to a collection of essays entitled Inside/Out, "most of us are both inside and outside at the same time" (5). With regard to those within Gay and Lesbian studies who would uncompromisingly remain on the outside of the Academy, she cautions that:

> To endorse a position of perpetual or even strategic outsiderhood (a position of powerlessness, speechlessness, homelessness...) hardly seems like a viable political program, especially when, for so many gay and lesbian subjects, it is less a question of political tactics than everyday lived experience. (5)

As Fuss suggests, our lived experience as queers is characterized simultaneously by our positions at the margin and at the center, inside and out. The boundaries that regulate our relationships to power, to the closet, our friends, our families, our employers, are constantly shifting and under renegotiation. Even the fact of being out, in the colloquial sense of "being out of the closet" is hardly an indication that one occupies a stable subject position. Rather, the condition of being out is one that is in constant need of reaffirmation, a process rather than an end in itself.

I would submit as an initial, fundamental observation that the boundaries that relegate us to the margins of dominant discourses also assert themselves right down to our relationships with the physical spaces we occupy. At no time was this more clear to me than when the demonstration I was taking part in halted at the exact point that makes up the western boundary of the gay village. To my surprise, the admonishments to return the Village were heeded by many who clearly did not wish to cross over into foreign territory, preferring instead to retreat to the relative safety of the Katakombes, like so many Early Christians hiding from their Roman persecutors[1].

I suspect that the sense of transgressing borders felt very real to those of us who dared cross Amherst Street and continue past the strip clubs and by-the-hour hotels which constitute Ste-Catherine Street's most overt displays of heterosexuality. One needed only look at the

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[1]There is an interesting allegory to be constructed from the popular misconception that the Early Christians used the catacombs as places of worship to hide from persecution. One need only substitute fags for Christians and the MUC police officers for Roman soldiers.

incredulous expressions of unsuspecting passersby to realize that the boundary we had crossed possessed much more than symbolic value. Perhaps were they experiencing for a short time a tiny fragment of the sense of violation that queers experience every time a bar or bath-house is raided, every time a queer is harassed in the Village, or every time a queer is bashed or murdered on "home turf."

A raid on a gay establishment is experienced by many gays as a direct threat to the social foundations which underlie the formation of gay communities. Our communities, like the individuals who make them up, are caught up in the struggle between margin and center, inside and out. Therefore, being accused of being a "found-in" in a common bawdy house means very different things to each of the 175 people who were arrested. To the closeted university student who receives a subpoena to appear in court, it might mean being found out and expelled from home by his parents. To the married businessman, it could mean the beginning of divorce proceedings[2]. Any violation of the public spaces we occupy as members of various sexual minorities tears into the fabric of the communities we make up by making it more difficult for us to interact socially regardless of our position, inside or outside, margin or centre. Without gay space, we cannot interact; without interaction, we cannot form gay identities and communities.

Having asserted the manifest importance of gay space, how do we begin to theorize this notion?As James Miller argues in an article entitled "Outscape," the theoretical notion of gay space needs to be expanded and clarified so as not to fall prey to three things. He writes: "I fear a...return to the entrapping spatial determinism of the 1950's and 1960's when gay identity was

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[2]Far from being hypothetical, these "real-life" examples were brought to my attention by longtime Montreal activist Michael Hendricks.

morally fixed and fatally demoralized by the underground spaces...designed to contain it" (78). Secondly, he warns against the temptation to define gay space solely as a marketplace: "Capitalist expressions of gay identity typically articulate a space for easily purchased and quickly delivered erotic freedom in the urban combat zone between the Public and the Private" (78). According to this line of thinking, the gay ghetto is little more than the invention of gay capitalists, and a means of exploiting gay consumers. Thirdly, he argues that "academic opposition to essentialism...has tended to eliminate the concept of gayspace altogether by dissolving its celebrated locuses...into an abstract set of 'power relations'" (78). Far from being entirely spatially determined or entirely institutionally and ideologically constructed, Miller suggests, "gay identities are formed in dynamic relation to the social spaces opened up by the Gay movement..." (76). To circumvent the perceived limitations of the term gayspace, Miller offers an alternative, "outscape," which he defines as those spaces specifically opened up by the emergence of "openly gay" identities.

Miller's theorizing of the term outscape contributes to a further refinement of the conception of gay identities existing in a state of flux between margin and centre. If gayspace can be seen as deeply entrenched on the outside, then outscape might be conceived as the movement away from the margin towards the centre. To return to my previous example concerning the demonstration, our decision to cross the border separating the Village from the rest of the city could be interpreted as a movement away from gayspace towards something which might be called outscape: the desire on the part of "out" protesters to be "out" on the inside, which is to affirm gay identities from within the centrality of straightspace. Such a move from margin to centre, enacted through the transgression of real or symbolic borders, invokes outscape into being, a necessarily temporary disruption of heterosexuality's position at the centre.

Of course, gayspace and outscape do not exist in isolation but rather as mutual reinforcements of one another. One might see outscape as simultaneously effecting a reaching back towards gayspace even as it moves towards the centre, each one making the other possible. As with the hetero/homo binary, outscape tends to be defined in opposition to gayspace, which is itself implicated in the discursive construction of outscape. In other words, in order to move "out," one must first occupy the marginal terrain that is gayspace, learn from its other inhabitants and interact with them within the relative safety of its confines. Gay identities are not formed in isolation but through an intense process of socialization, and to reiterate James Miller's point, "in dynamic relation to the social spaces opened up by the Gay movement."

Such a recognition of the importance of gay space stands in defiance of the widespread ambivalence, if not outright hostility felt by many in the gay community with regards to ghettos. These attitudes are reflected in an article published in Homo Sapiens, a gay and lesbian newspaper based at the Université du Québec à Montréal. Sylvie Audy writes: "Personally, I have absolutely no desire to live within the confines of the gay village. Unconsciously, this is no doubt due to the fact that I do not wish to isolate myself from the rest of society, separated from my fellow men and women who are my friends, my peers, my neighbours..."[translation mine](8). Her attitude, one which in my experience is shared by many gay men, suggests a belief that her sexuality does not place her at the margins, on the outside of the systems of power and influence represented by her friends, her peers and her neighbours. She concludes the article with the statement "We cannot change society's social norms by severing ourselves from it" (8).

A contrasting viewpoint is expressed by Pat Johnson, writing in Homo Xtra, a gay newspaper based in Toronto:

> I have heard that the ghetto is not the "real" world. Given the character of the real world, I can hardly see how this is a criticism. But are we segregating ourselves from the mainstream? Or is this just a myth? We could not escape the real world if we wanted to. Most of us--even those who live in the ghetto--spend most of our lives outside the comforts of the area. Are we in hiding? I think not. (Johnson, 29)

Where Sylvie Audy appears to make an absolute distinction between inside and out, the one enabling of social changes, the other leading to the isolation of ghettoized gays and lesbians, Johnson acknowledges on the one hand the social function of the ghetto as a "safe place" and on the other, that total isolation from the "real world," were one to attempt it, is next to impossible.

I would argue that social change is largely dependent precisely upon the dynamic tension between those opposites, upon the tension born of occupying both positions at once, the constant shift between inside and outside, a movement towards the centre followed by a strategic retreat back to the margins. This is why gay space should be celebrated, not denigrated, as a preeminent condition of our identity formation and of our banding together as communities. Any attack upon its integrity, from within or from without, should be fought as though the very fabric of our lives were being torn.

Why is it then that attitudes towards ghettoization, even from within our communities, run the gamut from ambivalence to outright hostility? I would tentatively offer a few possible answers: 1- attitudes towards sexuality in the mainstream are such that it is impossible to escape the notion that a community formed in relation to erotic dispositions is somehow less valid than a community constituted by other more "acceptable" characteristics such as race, ethnicity or class.

Thus the gay ghetto is always viewed with a certain degree of suspicion by the "outside" world, an attitude which is bound to be reflected in attitudes on the inside.

2- If homophobia is a structure of exploitation, various societal agents work together to advance a perception of queers which is ideological in nature. Raids conducted by police morality squads therefore have very different connotations, depending on whether they occur in gay or straight establishments. Notions of what is acceptable vs. indecent sexual behaviour vary widely according to the perceived sexual orientation of the participants. For these reasons, systematic police harassment of gay establishments have, until very recently, tended to be seen by the courts, by the media and by the general public as a justifiable means of keeping deviant sexualities in check. For queers concerned with being portrayed in the media as "just like everyone else," the gay ghetto constitutes an all-too-visible display of difference. This is why no one was surprised when a gay man stood up at a press conference to say that he supported the police raid on Katakombes. As might be expected, every media outlet in the room quoted him as saying that "there were activities going on in that bar that could not be tolerated." Tolerated by whom? According to standards determined by whom? These questions were not asked.

3- The debate I have staged between Audy and Johnson might be seen to illustrate gender disparities in attitudes towards ghettoization. If the ghetto is a "safe place" to Johnson, a gay man, it may not feel as welcoming to Audy, a woman and a lesbian. The greater economic power enjoyed by men ensures that establishments in gay ghettos cater predominantly to men. These issues of gender and economic clout are inextricably linked and point to the important distinction that not all queers are served equally by the existence of ghettos. This distinction is also true of

other sexual minorities which have an ambivalent relationship to gay ghettos: transvestites, transsexuals and bisexuals.

4- Another issue shaping attitudes towards gay ghettos concerns class and social position. Montreal's gay village is a traditionally working-class neighbourhood which is now becoming increasingly gentrified. Long-established blue-collar taverns are having to compete for space and clientele with newer, more upscale restaurants and pubs. These changes are affecting the class makeup of the Village in ways that produce tensions between the area's traditional base and the emergent professional population. Again, the question of for whom exactly the ghetto is a "safe place" is extremely relevant.

With these observations in mind, it is possible to delimit more closely the nature of this project. What follows investigates the theoretical question of the production of gay space, and more specifically, of gay *male* space. Though some of the analysis might apply more generally to the relationship between sexuality and social space, there is no attempt on my part to engage with, or develop, a general theory of "queer space." Rather, the case study of the Montréal gay village that concludes this work seeks to explore the specificity of a particular group's relationship to space in a particular setting. This choice is partly a result of my own interests and identity practices, which have led me to gain familiarity and share space with gay-identified men. It is also motivated by the belief that the specific nature of different groups' experience of space needs to be preserved at the conceptual level. Thus, I have endeavoured to focus my efforts on the question of the production of gay male urban space. At the same time, I have tried to account for some of the ways in which the production of gay male space affects class and gender relations.

I have argued, by way of an introduction, that queer studies need to be supplemented with a concern for the ways discourses become inscribed within particular social spaces.The expression of this need for other methodologies need not be interpreted as a refusal to engage with theory as a means of understanding current issues affecting sexual minorities. My intention is not to return to old debates which set theory against the active practice of politics. Nor is it to make clear-cut distinctions between the study of "text" and the examination of "material reality." To posit such oppositions is to deny the potential of theoretical models, whatever their ideological lineage, which take as their central goal the transformation of society and explicitly propose strategies to bring about change. As bell hooks writes about racial politics, we need "new theories rooted in an attempt to understand both the nature of our contemporary predicament and the means by which we might collectively engage in resistance that would transform our current reality" (67). Queer theory has made great advances in understanding queer representations and subjectivities, and in shedding light on the pervasiveness of the homo/hetero binary structure as a formative element of Western culture. However, as I have suggested, the study of discourses does not necessarily a social praxis make. Queer theory, as it has taken form in our (mostly American) academic institutions, proposes as its central project to counter the oppressive discourses of heterosexism and homophobia through the creation and dissemination of other, ostensibly "subversive" discourses. While it is no doubt productive to attend to the ways in which gender and sexuality are discursively (re)produced, queer theorists might also develop frameworks that examine more closely the social contexts into which individual sexual and gender performances are inserted. Such a move might better account for why/how certain performances come to be repeated to the

exclusion of other performances, and for why/how queer subjectivities are produced in the first place.

The goal of this project, then, is to develop a theoretical framework that examines gay identity and community formation in relation to the production of gay social space. Chapter 2 lays the groundwork for such a theoretical framework by exploring some of the ways in which social space has been theorized. The following chapter assesses some previous work about gay urban space and specifies the theoretical basis for the case study of Montreal's gay Village in Chapter 4. It is hoped that what follows will argue forcefully in favour of the usefulness of thinking about sexual identities and gay communities in the context of the social relations, symbolic resources, and material forces that produce social space.

Chapter 2

The Production of Space Paradigm: Possibilities and Limitations.

This chapter will explore theories which take as their central object the social production of urban space. As I will argue, none of the theoretical perspectives outlined here provides an adequate basis from which to conduct an analysis of space, identity, and community formation as it relates to gay men in urban settings. However, it is hoped that an examination of the possibilities and limitations of these theories will forcefully argue in favour of a fundamental assertion: that social spaces in capitalist systems are constituted in ways which mimic the logic of the commodity, such that spaces hide the conditions and social relations of their own making. This argument constitutes a fundamental starting point for the study of gay space because identities, and the communities which arise from them, are inextricably bound up with these spatial relations. In short, the production of social space under capitalism is assumed to provide the conditions of possibility for the formation of specific gay identities and communities. The question concerning the role of representation in reproducing these spatial relations will be addressed more fully in the next chapter as the theories outlined here are concerned mostly with the governing role of state-supported capitalism in producing and containing differences among various social groups in space.

The authors whose work I will address here all argue that social change is predicated upon the development of a *spatial* consciousness and a *spatial* praxis. However, they differ significantly in the extent to which they privilege class as the central locus of a transformational politics. Though these authors are aligned similarly with regards to a general orientation to space, I will

argue that their different levels of investment in Marxist and/or Althusserian structuralist orthodoxies have important implications for how we are to conceive of the question of gay space. The authors under consideration are Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja, Manuel Castells and Derek Gregory. Using the work of these theorists, how might we begin to think of space as a the complex interrelation of material, symbolic and institutional forces in a way which can account for the specificity of urban space designated as "gay"?

The Production of Space: a Framework for Analysis.

In The Production of Space, Henri Lefebvre lays the foundation for a general theory distinct from dominant modes of analysis which relegate space to the status of "container" of the built environment and the social relations occuring within it. Lefebvre writes that in much of Western thought, space is conceived as an "empty container", by which he means that the ideological, material, and social conditions which underlie the production of space. in and of itself, are rarely, if ever, examined: "...space is neither a mere 'frame', after the fashion of the frame of a painting, nor a form or container of a virtually neutral kind, designed simply to receive whatever is poured into it" (92). Lefebvre's strategy, in contradistinction to approaches that reduce space to a neutral background for things and human activities, is to foreground space itself and call for an analysis which scrutinizes its "production."

What emerges from Lefebvre's analysis is a conception of space that examines the complex interplay of production (nature, labour, technology, knowledge), structures (property relations) and superstructures (institutions and the state) in capitalist societies (Lefebvre 85). Thought of in this way, space is shown to be the result of the intersection of a variety of human activities,

property ownership relations, and state planning and intervention. Thus, a space in capitalist society is never just the space described by travel guides, road maps, urban planners or real estate agents, but the physical manifestation of a range of social relations, ideologies, functions and structures.

Rereading Marx, Lefebvre argues that since space is produced, ie. that spaces are the product of capitalism, space can be subjected to a marxist analysis of production which aims to uncover hidden signs, meanings, ideologies, labour, and social relations of exploitation and domination embedded in what we experience as material reality, namely space, but which can no longer be thought of *as* reality. The goal of this approach, for Lefebvre, is to "analyse not things in space but space itself, with a view to uncovering the social relationships embedded in it" (89).

Lefebvre contends that a major consequence of capitalism is to destroy social space, understood as the space of everyday existence, by transforming its use value into exchange value. Once subjected to the logic of commodity exchange, once space *becomes* a commodity which can be bought and sold or regulated by the state, space comes to serve an abstract purpose, that of anchoring the system of production and the structures of exploitation and domination associated with it. This process is carried out by the state, "...the enemy of everyday life itself...because it produces the abstract space which negates the social space that supports everyday life and the reproduction of its social relations" (Gottdiener 146).

Lefebvre can therefore be understood to posit an opposition between (a) the state striving to impose an abstract logic onto space in order to further the interests of capital and (b) an organization of space which would privilege the social relations of everyday life, the freedom to

shape social space according to the needs and desires of individuals and groups in society. For Lefebvre this dialectic is a means of situating the class struggle as a struggle *for space*:

> ...the revolutionary transformation of society requires the appropriation of space, the freedom to use space, the existential right to space (le droit à la ville) to be reasserted through some radical version of sociospatial praxis....we need to replace such relations [of economic domination] by liberatory social relations which foster the ability to appropriate space for liberatory social uses. (Gottdiener 128)

Thus, Lefebvre can be seen to recast the classical marxist project in terms of a struggle in which space is ontologically central. Such a struggle would replace the goal of seizing the means of production from the ruling class with the goal of reclaiming space as the fundamental means of putting an end to the exploitation of the working class. At the level of ontology, then, space is seen to prefigure the class struggle such that it becomes impossible to think about meaningful social change without explicitly calling for the appropriation of spaces dominated by capitalist modes of production: "the social relations of production have a social existence to the extent that they have a spatial existence; they project themselves into a space, becoming inscribed there, and in the process producing that space itself" (Lefebvre 129).

The call for the active appropriation of space hinges on the argument that space, unlike other commodities, "has the property of being materialized by a specific social process [and] to act back upon itself and that process" (Gottdiener 129). This dual characteristic of space, the property of simultaneously producing and reproducing the social relations that give rise to its materialization, allows us to envisage the project of "...another space and another time in another (possible or impossible) society" (Lefebvre 92) because we, as social agents or as members of

social groups, are always already implicated in the production of space through the course of our everyday lives. Or, to put it succinctly, social space is a "materialization of 'social being'" (Lefebvre 101) and as such, given the right conditions, can be appropriated to serve the needs of individuals and social groups instead of the interests of capital.

Lefebvre's thesis--that the deceiving physicality of space, the self-evident nature of the built environment, hides a complex web of social relations which make up its production--has sparked a rich array of responses and theoretical elaborations. What are some of the arguments put forward by other theorists of space and how might they advance, or hinder, an understanding of gay space?

Edward Soja and the Socio-Spatial Dialectic.

Edward Soja's Postmodern Geographies builds upon the work of Lefebvre and others to advance the argument that the postmodern condition, which he takes to be a result of social perturbations brought about by the ongoing "fourth modernization" of capitalism, can be understood through a dialectical, socio-spatial framework of analysis. Soja's book constitutes a remarkably broad overview of modern critical thought of the nineteeth century through to the mid-1980s, the period in which he was writing. Soja documents what he terms the:

> "...rise of a despatializing historicism...[that] so successfully occluded, devalued, and depoliticized space as an object of critical social discourse that even the possibility of an emancipatory spatial praxis disappeared from view for almost a century" (4).

As an antidote to the historicism governing critical thought, Soja proposes an "historico-geo-graphical materialism" (51), thereby restoring space to what he considers its proper ontological

and epistemological status at the center of philosophical inquiry. Lefebvre's early (and exceptional) assertion of a "spatialized dialectic" constitutes, for Soja, "the key moment" (51) in the development of what he terms "postmodern" geographies.

Drawing on Lefebvre's conception of space as simultaneously an outcome and a medium of social relations, Soja identifies two "persistent illusions" which have dominated Western conceptions of space:

> The 'illusion of opaqueness' reifies space, inducing a myopia that sees only a superficial materiality, concretized forms susceptible to little else but measurement and phenomenal description: fixed, dead, and undialectical: the Cartesian cartography of spatial science. Alternatively, the 'illusion of transparency' dematerializes space into pure ideation and representation, an intuitive way of thinking that equally prevents us from seeing the social construction of affective geographies, the concretization of social relations embedded in spatiality, an interpretation of space as a 'concrete abstraction', a social hieroglyphic similar to Marx's conceptualization of the commodity form. (7)

These "illusions" concerning space are elaborations on what Lefebvre termed "representations of space", the culturally mediated and materially inscribed conceptions of space that reinforce and legitimate the dominant order (Gregory 403). For Lefebvre, "representational space" is also the space of everyday life, the "space which its inhabitants have in their minds, and which for all its inaccuracy plays an integral role in social practice" (Lefebvre 93). Thus for both Lefebvre and Soja, everyday conceptions of space are infused with power and ideology which render it "abstract" as space is fetishized and made to serve the abstract purposes of capital (ie. the reproduction of modes of production and the consolidation of state power in the interest of

capital). According to this conception, the users of space have no other choice than to "spontaneously turn themselves, their presence, their 'lived experience' and their bodies into abstractions too" (Lefebvre 93). This experience of space leads to the alienation of individuals and groups in society who are rendered unable to conceive of ways to shape space according to their own needs and desires.

However, Lefebvre and Soja differ in the extent to which they conceive of spatial praxis as situated within the class struggle. As Derek Gregory argues, the logic of Soja's argument reduces complex social phenomena (individuals' and groups' experiences of space) to the analysis of a single determining factor (economic forces). According to Gregory, the economic determinism evident in Postmodern Geographies allows Soja to assume the position of a privileged observer of space, able to see what others cannot: spatiality removed of the veil of ideology. Gregory writes:

> In contradistinction to the assumptions of an older school of critical theory, most writers would now recognize that ordinary people often have a remarkably sophisticated awareness of the impingements and encroachments of abstract systems on their everyday lifeworlds. They are not dupes living in one-dimensional societies. (306)

This is not to deny that capitalism advances a particular logic of space, but to suggest that ideology functions in multiple and often contradictory ways. Gregory continues:

> For this reason [the insights and understandings of ordinary people] have a central place in the formulation of a radical democratic imaginary and, according to some commentators, in the construction of a postmodern politics. A project of this kind breaks with what Laclau and Mouffe call the "logic of privileged points" — the identification of a single vantage point from which to map the social order and the enlistment of a unitary agent to

> redraw its contours — and substitutes a scrupulous respect for heterogeneity and difference. (306)

Through a careful examination of the assumptions underpinning Soja's Postmodern Geographies, Gregory makes the claim that Soja's understanding of the "postmodern" is inadequately developed, or at the very least, rests on an understanding of the term which allows an economic analysis to function as a "privileged point" from which to explain diverse social phenomena.

As Soja writes in the introduction to Postmodern Geographies:

> As occurred roughly a century ago, there is currently a complex and conflictual dialectic developing between urgent socio-economic modernization sparked by the system-wide crises affecting contemporary capitalist societies.... Modernization and modernism interact under these conditions...to create a shifting and conflictual social context in which everything seems to be 'pregnant with its contrary', in which all that was once assumed to be solid 'melts into air'.... (26)

For Soja, then, what is currently referred to as the "postmodern condition" has a fundamentally *economic* explanation. However, he argues that the historicist conceptual models of Marxism are not up to the task of interpreting "a shifting and conflictual social context in which everything seems to be 'pregnant with its contrary'." What is required is "the reassertion of space" in critical theory through the application of insights derived by Lefebvre and others whom Soja considers postmodern geographers *avant la lettre*.

Soja identifies one characteristic of postmodernism as the rise of "new social movements" such as feminism and the American civil rights movement, but, following the logic of his central thesis, he is unable to account for their existence in terms other than economic. As Derek Gregory

argues, while the class struggles of one hundred years ago might have required an economic analysis to explain their significance, the cultural workings of contemporary social movements require theoretical tools appropriate to each movement's specific characteristics. To posit that postmodern geography "...be attuned to the emancipatory struggles of all those who are oppressed *by the existing geography of capitalism...*" is not enough (Soja quoted in Gregory, emphasis Gregory's, 308). Such a view attempts to explain inequities of gender, race and sexual orientation solely in economic terms, thus sweeping the struggles of the women's movement, the Black civil rights movement, and the lesbian and gay rights movement under the same rug. As Gregory argues: "Capitalism is of course a constitutive dimension of modernity: but it is not the only one" (308). Space does not follow a single logic, rather, it is constituted by a multiplicity of power-infused social relations which include relations of class, but also of gender, sexuality, and race.

Thus, Gregory demonstrates that Soja's Postmodern Geographies may not be so postmodern after all, insofar as it does not engage whatsoever with the rich conceptual arenas opened up by postmodern thought's relentless attention to questions of difference. Instead, Soja is shown to elevate an *aspect* of "the postmodern condition", the dispersion of capital under the "fourth restructuring of capitalism" and its tendency to create increasingly fragmented spaces, to the status of prime determinant of social relations.

Gregory also argues that Soja's treatment of Lefebvre, like his treatment of postmodernism, is unnecessarily constrained by a reductionist, economicist impulse. Soja is shown to support his claims through an interpretation of Lefebvre which does not render the full complexity of Lefebvre's conception of social space:

> Lefebvre's analysis of the spatial exercise of power as a construction and conquest of difference, although it is thoroughly grounded in Marxist thought, rejects economism and opens up possibilities for advancing analysis of spatial politics into realms of feminist and anti-colonial discourse...." (Deutsche quoted in Gregory, 326).

This distinction between the spatial conceptions of Soja and Lefebvre is perhaps subtle, and it warrants further elaboration than Gregory provides in his analysis. Both Soja and Lefebvre share the basic assumption that the domination of abstract space over social space under capitalism has dire consequences for social life which only the development of an oppositional spatial praxis can overcome. A consequence of this opposition between abstract and social space is the "'explosion of spaces'—the multiple articulation of stratified social relations with space" as individuals and groups struggle to reassert "the uniqueness of personalized and collectivized space" (Gottdiener 126). But the authors differ in the extent to which they privilege economic issues in the elaboration of an emancipatory spatial praxis. As Gottdiener argues, for Lefebvre,

> [t]his explosion of finely tuned spatial distinctions between people and groups in society results in a chaos of contradictory spaces that proliferate the boundaries at which sociospatial conflict appears. *Such conflict cannot be reduced to mere reflections of the class struggle or its displacement into realms outside the work site*, as many marxists contend, but represents instead concrete differences between people as a consequence of the domination of abstract over social space in our present society. Countless spatial irritations permeate social relations at every level: the personal, the communal, the regional, and the global. (Gottdiener 126, emphasis added)

In Lefebvre's theorization, then, class struggle is *one* expression of spatial conflict among "countless" others, none of which is thought to take priority over the others. Contrast this with Soja's concept of spatial praxis:

> ...[C]lass struggle (*yes, it still remains class struggle*) must encompass and focus upon the vulnerable point: the production of space, the territorial structure of exploitation and domination, the spatially controlled reproduction of the system as a whole. And it must *include* all those who are exploited, dominated, and 'peripheralized' by the imposed spatial organization of advanced capitalism.... (Soja 92, emphasis added)

For Soja, then, spatial conflicts not related to class are theorized as *adjuncts* to the class struggle which retains its centrality within his Marxist analytical framework. While both authors advance a thesis whereby capitalism is thought to bring about the domination of abstract space over social space, they differ as to the relative importance of class conflict in bringing about social (and spatial) change. As Deutsche points out, Lefebvre's thesis has important implications for feminist and anti-colonial discourses, and as we shall see, for the study of the spatial dynamics of sexuality as well.

Castells and the New Social Movements

The work of Manuel Castells in The City and the Grassroots constitutes an attempt to move away from an exclusively class-based analysis toward a general theory of urban change, based on the analysis of urban social movements (USM), which he defines as "collective actions consciously aimed at the transformation of the social interests and values embedded in the forms and functions of a historically given city" (xvi). Castells' book, published in 1983, also marks a

slight departure from the Althusserian structuralist paradigm that characterized his earlier work, and something of a reconciliation with the Lefebvrean project. In the theoretical chapter of his book, Castells writes:

> Space is not, contrary to what others may say, a reflection of society.... [S]patial forms...will be produced by human action, as are all other objects, and will express and perform the interests of the dominant class according to a given mode of production and to a specific mode of development.... They will be realised and shaped by the process of gender domination and by state-enforced family life. At the same time, spatial forms will also be marked by resistance from exploited classes, oppressed subjects, and abused women.... Finally, from time to time, social movements will arise to challenge the meaning of spatial structure and therefore attempt new functions and new forms. (311-312)

While this statement reflects a conception of social space which is very similar to Lefebvre's, Castells' emphasis in The City and the Grassroots is not on "the production of space", per se, but rather on the study of urban social movements by which Castells wishes to develop a theory of urban social change. He defines USM's broadly: "...we do not see any reason...for a social movement to be based on a class relationship: either we extend excessively the concept of class or we must reject collective action as social movements" (Castells 301). He is also critical of Marxism's inability to account for the persistence of spatial conflicts not strictly related to class:

> ...[A]ll over the world conscious people have continued to mobilize collectively to change their lives and propose new ones against those who want to preserve the old order.... So although Marxist theory might not have room for social movements other than the historically predicted class struggle, social movements persist. So experience was right and

> Marxist theory was wrong on this point, and the intellectual tradition in the study of social change should be recast. (Castells 299)

This passage also reflects Castells' reconciliation with Lefebvre, whom he had accused in the past of elevating the "urban spatial 'problematic' to an intolerably central and apparently autonomous position [to the detriment of an analysis privileging the study of production]" (Soja 76). In saying that "experience was right," Castells is also suggesting that perhaps Lefebvre was right and he himself wrong on this point, which might explain Castells' focus on the "urban politics of collective consumption and the mobilization of distinctively urban social movements" (Soja 69) in The City and the Grassroots.

Still, The City and the Grassroots cannot be characterized as an empirical application of Lefebvre's project, nor does it fully extricate itself from the structuralist paradigm once privileged by Castells. It seeks instead to develop a coherent theoretical and empirical research agenda and proposes that to "...understand cities, to unveil their connection to social change, we must determine the mechanisms through which spatial structures are transformed and urban meaning is redefined" (301). Castells praises Lefebvre's work on the "urban revolution" as "stimulating" but criticizes him for not "providing instruments of research" and for the "speculative character of his philosophical perspective" (300). Castells' stated aim in The City and the Grassroots is to redress this situation through the empirical analysis of urban social movements, which he considers "...the agents of urban-spatial transformation, the highest level of urban social change" (312).

The classification of urban social movements as "the highest level of urban social change" speaks to a persistent structuralism in Castells' work. Castells was among a group of Marxist geographers for whom a

> ...structuralist 'reading' was particularly attractive...for it provided an apparently rigorous epistemological rationalization for digging under the surface appearance of phenomena (spatial outcomes) to discover explanatory roots in the structured and structuring social relations of production. (Soja 53)

By the time The City and the Grassroots was published, Castells was intimately aware of the critique which denounced the "theoretical inadequacies, overinterpretions, and depoliticizing abstractions of Althusserian structuralism" (Soja 56) and he sought ways to modify his theoretical paradigm accordingly. The result is what might be described as a contingent, or perhaps even an ambivalent structuralism:

> ...the production of the structural formula leading to urban social movements is specific to each national-cultural context, and any attempt to find a general formulation is to resort to metaphysics. Let us point out, at the same time, that we maintain there is a general structural formula in our historical epoch of urban social movements as processes aimed at a given outcome — the transformation of urban meaning. This is because we live in a world-wide mode of production (capitalism) developing through two world-wide articulated modes of development (industrial and informational). Therefore the raw materials of social change (and thus of urban change) are ubiquitous, while the social processes bringing together these raw materials are historically, and so nationally and culturally, specific. (Castells 324)

This passage is indicative of a lingering impulse in Castells' work to arrive at a "general formula" of socio-spatial praxis. While the aim constitutes a well-intentioned attempt to provide the theoretical tools leading to a transformation of the "urban", there is a need to question whether it

rests on sound assumptions. One would want to question the assertion that the "raw materials of social change...are ubiquitous." While it may be true that capitalism has assumed a "world-wide" dimension in the late twentieth century, it has done so within a logic of geographically uneven development[3]. In other words, capitalism does not assume the same forms or have the same impacts in every setting simply because it is a "world-wide mode of production." These differences cannot be accounted for by stating simply that the "social relations" which shape capitalism are locally specific. It appears, then, that the "raw materials of social change" are distributed unevenly throughout the world and are therefore just as historically, nationally, and culturally specific as the social relations of any given area. Hence, Castells appears to be clinging to the "certainty" that capitalism follows a universal "structural" logic which is revealed through the analysis of locally specific social relations and that these contingent social relations, in turn, can be distilled to a "general structural formula" which explains the "transformation of urban meaning."

It is not surprising that against the ideal of a "general structural formula" of socio-spatial praxis, every urban social movement studied by Castells comes up short of truly effecting change because, in every case, it does not (and cannot) fulfill the general structural criteria outlined by Castells. The reason is obvious: Castells is comparing "what exists in the way of political action within the city" (Gottdiener 147) to an absolute conception of what the ideal urban social movement should achieve (as if this could be determined with certainty). He has therefore not abandoned the structuralist claim to the "scientific" status of his methods insofar as he seeks refuge from what he perceives to be the relativism of Lefebvre's "philosophical speculations" in the empirically verifiable "truths" of his structural models.

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[3]See Soja for an extended discussion of David Harvey's notion of geographically uneven development.

Henri Lefebvre: a Starting Point.

Despite the limitations of Castells' attempt to define a general theory of urban change, his extensive empirical work yields a number of valuable insights into the organisation of urban social movements. His study of San Francisco's gay district is an early recognition of the potential of gay spaces to effect changes in the everyday lives of gay men. However, Castells' analytical framework is bound to the project of developing a general theory of urban change which might not provide the best tools for a consideration of the particular issues facing gay communities.

The work of Henri Lefebvre appears best suited to provide a starting point which opens up rich avenues for thought, without imposing an analysis based solely on economic factors or structural models. The fact that Lefebvre did not provide "instruments of research", as Castells points out, or "advice regarding just how a spatial praxis might be articulated" (Gottdiener 154) does not necessarily constitute a weakness. This can be seen instead as a refusal on the part of Lefebvre to ally himself too closely with formalized modes of inquiry which unnecessarily constrain the field of vision. Just as Lefebvre argued "for a flexible, open, and cautiously eclectic Marxism able to grow and adapt without predetermined truncation" (Soja 48), so is his thinking characterized by a malleability and an openness, which, as Derek Gregory argues, is potentially enriching to post-structuralist, post-colonial, queer and feminist theory.

Lefebvre has provided cultural studies with one of its most enduring concepts, the notion of "everyday life", to which numerous scholars have turned their attention in an attempt to theorize how differences based on race, gender and sexual orientation become inscribed within social life. While Castells accounts for differences and inequities within urban settings, he does so

within a fairly rigid framework whose aim is to describe what exists in terms of urban social movements to arrive at a general formulation of the process of urban change. Lefebvre, in distinction to Castells, is less interested in what exists than in "what might occur in the manner of radical political action" (Gottdiener 147). This opens up the field of vision considerably from a reflection on "what is missing" from the existing socio-spatial praxis of urban social movements (Castells), to a reflection on "what is possible" (Lefebvre). The former expresses a lack to which Castells provides solutions according to the stipulations of his "general formula." The latter enables us to envisage any number of socio-spatial solutions to the domination of abstract space over everyday life and the homogeneization of differences which results from this process.

This reflection on the "possible" is indeed abstract, and certainly does not appear to offer "advice regarding just how a spatial praxis might be articulated" but, as Edward Soja writes, "...there is nothing so practical as good spatial theory" (74). Lefebvre himself is emphatic on this point: "The authors of projects do not seem to realize that (a) there is no thought without utopia, without exploration of the possible, and, (b) there is no thought without reference to a practice" (quoted in Gottdiener 151). As Gottdiener explains:

> ...Lefebvre wishes to introduce two modes of reasoning into marxian mental activity, the utopian and the strategic. The former refers to an emphasis...on what is possible, what *might* exist in a humanist society; the latter seeks to address the application of marxian thought to politics in the ontological case, where the former is no longer a science.... [The project, in Lefebvre's formulation, might be defined as] the strategic intervention which overcomes the relativism of philosophy through political calculation...which is

aimed toward a well-defined goal and which proceeds through defensible means. (Gott-diener 151)

It is apparent that Lefebvre, despite the "philosophical" nature of his "speculations," is deeply concerned that his critique of everyday life not be interpreted as divorced from a spatial practice, the active appropriation of space in which differences "would be respected rather than planed into the homogeneities typical of the space of the commodity" (Gregory 360). Gregory reads this critique of everyday life as a "history of the present," by which he means that Lefebvre conceived of the space of contemporary capitalism, the space of everyday life, as carrying within itself "'the seeds of a new kind of space': a *differential* space" (360) which "contains traces and memories of spatial practices that were untouched" (362) by the domination of abstract space over social space typical of modernity.

There is perhaps a sense in which this aspect of Lefebvre's theory of space might constitute a yearning for "lost origins," a desire to return to a supposed "pure" pre-capitalist spatial existence whose origins lie in the distant past. However, instead of stressing the inadequacies of such a conception, Gregory interprets this tendency in Lefebvre's work as an acknowledgement of the need to incorporate an historical element in the analysis of space. Thus, Lefebvre's "traces and memories of [past] spatial practices" function as metaphors for the possibilities embedded in contemporary social spaces and as a recognition of the fact that these spaces are shaped by historical processes. It might be argued, therefore, that Lefebvre is calling not so much for a spatial revolution which would allow humanity to return to an ideal embodied by the past, but for a critique of spatial processes which incorporates a knowledge of the dynamics of other spaces in other times. This knowledge, argues Gregory, would allow us to

uncover "tendencies embedded in the history of the present whose potential realization [is] absent from our anticipations of the future" (360).

Still, as Harvey Molotch writes, it is "not so simple to distinguish [Lefebvre's] valued absolute spaces from his devalued abstract ones" (893). When Lefebvre writes admiringly of peasant houses, igloos or Oriental straw huts as examples of spaces attuned to their environments and to the needs of their inhabitants (Lefebvre 165), one must ask whose needs, exactly, are being served by these ideal spaces and whether other oppressions not particular to the social relations of capitalism are present within or immediately outside their walls. Lefebvre does not provide this analysis, perhaps because his idealization of these spaces serves a strategic rather than argumentative function, not as the demonstration of the fact that they constitute ideal "appropriated" spaces, but as a provocative starting point for anticipating what forms future spaces might take. Lefebvre does not appear interested in "proving" that the pre-capitalist past constituted some kind of spatial utopia to which we should return, but suggests instead that it is useful to think in terms of other, foreign, and distant spatial arrangements which might inform our conceptions of future spaces.

According to Rob Shields, an important limitation of Lefebvre's conception of space concerns his decision "to seek a primarily Marxian analysis of the spatial form, using the model of the commodity form" (262). This, Shields writes, casts Lefebvre's work within an overriding production/consumption dualism which "characterises the whole course of political economy where it becomes the founding and then organising dualism which is applied universally to distinguish all facets of life" (262). Shields argues that this overriding dualism makes it difficult to understand "the *exchanges* between producers and consumers and the productive nature of ludic

activities" (262). This point is important for an analysis which seeks to examine the complexity of the social functions served by gay spaces, whose existence, as many scholars have pointed out, has been made possible partly as a result of capitalism and whose purpose is often to provide entertainment within a marketplace.

Lefebvre's assertion that "The true space of pleasure, which would be an appropriated space par excellence, does not yet exist" (Lefebvre 167) is also deserving of investigation. One is reminded of the situationist credo: "You'll never see the hacienda. The hacienda must be built" (Chtcheglov quoted in Marcus 361). Lefebvre's "true space of pleasure" speaks to a utopian impulse which is productive insofar as it might allow the emergence of new imaginings of spaces ideally suited to human needs. However, there is also a need to consider the real successes that gay men, among others, have had in appropriating certain spaces to serve pleasurable ends. The utopian impulse of Lefebvre's work should perhaps not detract from thinking about such spaces and analyzing their functions and limitations.

With these observations in mind, it is possible to begin thinking of ways in which Lefebvre's critique of everyday life might be applied to the study of sexuality and space. To set the stage for such an exploration, I have endeavoured to distinguish the work of Lefebvre from Edward Soja's conceptualization of space in an effort to demonstrate that theories of social space need not be articulated solely around issues of class. As I have argued in the case of Castells, neither do theories of social space need constrain themselves with highly formalized frameworks of analysis which may lead to over-interpretations, structural determinisms and an inadequate reflection of the contingent, locally-specific nature of social and economic relations. I have

attempted to show that Lefebvre's spatial theory is sufficiently flexible and open-ended to avoid these epistemological pitfalls.

What then, would a theoretical framework appropriate to the study of gay identity, community and the production of space look like, and where would one start to elaborate it? The general conception of space outlined here constitutes a useful starting point, but the emphasis on the capitalist mode of production as the prime determinant of spatial relations needs to be supplemented with a framework which considers the particular ways in which sexual identities are performed within particular spaces, how communities are formed in relation to space, and the role of representations of space in partly determining the meanings of these identities and communities in various contexts. How are sexual identities and communities formed in relation to the possibilities and limitations inherent to the spaces created (and designated) by modern capitalism? And how do these identities and communities act back upon this space to secure particular meanings about gay identities, communities, and spaces? The next chapter will propose a framework for addressing these questions and explore some of the ways gay identity and community has been theorized in relation to space.

Chapter 3

Towards a Theory of Gay Identity, Community, and the Production of Gay Space.

Early Sociology

Early sociological work about gay communities describes the process of community formation among gay males in North American urban centres. Using the social deviance and social organization models of its time, this work documents the rise of gay male communities from their beginnings as loose kinship and friendship networks, to the emergence of gay marketplaces, to the eventual development of full-fledged gay institutions. The authors of this period, many of whom wrote within the urban sociology paradigm, emphasized the economic, social, political, and demographic factors that produce, and sometimes inhibit, the formation of gay male communities. While the authors of this period do not foreground a spatial analysis, they do place a great deal of emphasis on the social functions served by the spaces occupied by gay men.

The earliest known study of an urban gay male community was conducted in Montreal by Leznoff and Westley (1956). The authors set out to describe the language use and social organization of gay men, and document the social and psychological pressures that lead gay men to form more or less secretive cliques, according to whether they are "covert" or "overt" in their homosexuality. According to these authors, the principal gathering places of homosexuals of this period consisted of "specific bars, hotel lobbies, street corners, and lavatories" (195-196). They conclude that "it is the casual and promiscuous sexual contacts between the members of different categories of evasion (i.e., the secret and the overt) which weld the city's homosexuals into a community" (196).

Another important milestone in the academic study of gay communities is the work of Evelyn Hooker, who spent seven years in the late 50's and early 60's observing the Los Angeles gay milieu. She reports that the gay community of this period

> ...is not a community in the traditional sense of the term...in that it lacks a territorial base with primary institutions serving a residential population.... Although homosexuals as a total group do not have a bounded territorial base, they are, nevertheless, not randomly distributed throughout the city, nor are the facilities of institutions which provide needed services and functions as focal gathering places. (171)

Hooker identifies the gay bar as the “most important” gathering place, but adds that “there are also steam baths catering almost exclusively to homosexuals, ‘gay’ streets, parks, public toilets, beaches, gyms, coffee houses, and restaurants” (173). She goes on to describe the social functions served by the gay bar, positing its role as a “social institution” and as a “free market,” in both business and sexual terms.

Writing about San Francisco (1964), Nancy Achilles also conceives of the gay bar as a marketplace which provides goods and services to “deviants” organized into a “subculture.” She writes:

> The goods and services provided by the bar are well adapted to the needs of the homosexual Community [sic]. Its most important service is the provision of a setting in which social interaction may occur; without such a place to congregate, the group would cease to be a group. (230)

Achilles describes the extent to which gay bars are subject to various forms of social regulation, including harassment by police, and concludes that the San Francisco gay bars, because of the

city's relative "openness," are "less subject to underworld control and, therefore, less likely to be involved in police bribery" (233). The author conceives of the gay bar culture as a sort of volatile system that continually renews itself through a redeployment of social and spatial relations, which remain constant despite the ebb and flow of bars opening and closing. In a highly evocative passage, she writes:

> The bars come and go, like a chain of lights blinking on and off over a map of the city, but the system remains constant. When a bar closes, its patrons shift their activities elsewhere. In the new bar, the same music comes out of the jukebox, the same bartenders mix drinks, the same faces appear, and the conversation repeats the same themes. And often, the same policeman is standing by the door. (244)

This article suggests an understanding of the particular, local forms of gay male culture as embedded within larger urban processes ("like a chain of lights blinking on and off over a map of the city") and captures the resilience and exuberance of these communities in the face of constant social regulation, such as by the police.

Several authors in the early and mid-70's shifted attention away from gay bars as social institutions toward the venues for "impersonal" sexual activity, such as baths and public toilets. The classic study in this vein is Laud Humphreys' Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places (1970) which provides an extensive account of the social organization of "tearoom" sex in a particular setting. Humphreys describes the participants, the relations between them, their activities, and their strategies for evading repressive action. A similar study (1975), by the sexologists Martin Weinberg and Colin Williams, sets out to document the "social organization of impersonal sex" in gay baths. The authors discuss the spatial organization of the baths, noting that

the quality and cleanliness of the facilities has greatly increased "in recent years": most, they write, "have a steam room or sauna, and . . . usually contain private bedrooms . . . lockers, shower and toilet facilities, and a 'dormitory' or 'orgy room'" (127). The authors argue that this spatial organization is ideally suited to facilitating "impersonal sex," and that the baths "are seen to provide 'easy sex' in the same way that neighborhood shopping centers provide 'easy shopping,'" (134) a phrase which neatly illustrates the growing commodification of 70s gay male sexual culture.

The increasing development and visibility of gay communities in the late-seventies led some authors to reconsider certain notions within sociology, such as the belief that gay communities were "culturally impoverished." Taking a wide view of gay communities in a variety of North American cities, the authors J. Harry and W.B. De Vall (1978) argued that gay communities everywhere were attaining higher levels of "institutional completeness." Gay bars, they write, lead to a set of gay institutions and eventually, given the right social, political and cultural conditions, gay neighbourhoods will begin to flourish and a "political economy of the gay community develops" (150) as entrepreneurs move in to serve the needs of the gay population. Thus, the authors conclude, "the growth of gay institutions during the last 15 years, the rise of a sense of collective identity, the creation of a sophisticated political culture, and the efflorescence of a variety of gay recreational styles has significantly expanded the content of that culture" (154). Martin Levine's 1979 article "Gay Ghetto" constitutes another acknowledgement of the growth of many North American gay communities. The author examines the validity of referring to urban gay male communities as "ghettos," given a traditional sociological definition of the term. Levine argues that an urban gay community "can be termed a 'gay ghetto' if it contains gay institutions in

number, a conspicuous and locally dominant gay subculture that is socially isolated from the larger community, and a residential population that is substantially gay" (364). His overview of 15 communities in various large American cities finds gay ghettos in various stages of development, and three which satisfy all three criteria: West Village (New York), Boy's Town (West Hollywood) and the Castro (San Francisco). Levine concludes that the phrase "gay ghetto" has sociological validity, especially when it is applied to these three "fully developed" communities (375).

Barbara A. Weightman's 1980 article, "Gay Bars as Private Places," actively avoids the large gay ghetto as a site of investigation. The author is interested in "the average urban gay landscape" (11), where gay communities are characterized by "secrecy and stigmatization," qualities which gay bars "incorporate and reflect" (9). Weightman offers an analysis of the "locational characteristics, structural appearance, and spatial ordering" of sixty gay bars in thirteen cities in the United States and Canada (11). The author's primary contention is that a central function of gay bars is to offer its patrons privacy from the stigmatizing and often hostile presence of straights. This privacy is achieved through a combination of real and symbolic barriers and defence mechanisms that revolve around "location," "imageability," and "accessibility." The gay bar, Weightman argues, tends to locate in "undesirable areas," is generally inconspicuous, and presents many barriers to access, such as fences, double doors, warning signs, and bouncers, which function as a "formidable fence around this private place" (16).

Sexuality and Space: Some Recent Models

The sociological writings about gay male communities of the 60's and 70's were mostly concerned with identifying such communities, describing their characteristics and functions, and documenting their institutionalization as "marketplaces" and "ghettos." However, the theoretical models of this period could not account for the historical emergence of urban gay communities (they are invariably said to be the seemingly spontaneous result of a reaction to "stigma"). Further, the voices of gay men themselves are faintly, if ever, heard in these accounts of "fieldwork," belying the complexity, diversity, and richness of the identities being constructed within these communities. Finally, these early accounts, most of which attempt to generalize, classify, and typologize, pay little heed to individual communities and thus provide little information about social, cultural, and political contexts. More recent work in gay and lesbian studies and queer theory, intersecting with history, geography and cultural studies, has gone a long way toward providing more sophisticated models for thinking about gay male spaces.

The historical emergence of gay communities has been theorized along two major (and intersecting) fronts: the first owes to the thinking of Marx, the other is indebted to Foucault. The marxist thesis holds that gay and lesbian urban communities were made possible as a direct result of capitalism, which supplanted the family as the independent unit of production. In "Capitalism and Identity," John d'Emilio argues that the free labour system fundamentally altered the nature of the nuclear family, freeing individuals to "organize a personal life around their erotic/emotional attraction to their own sex" (470). Under capitalism, the nuclear family is no longer the primary site of production, no longer the sole means of survival, and therefore, it becomes possible to "release sexuality from the 'imperative' to procreate" (470). In other words, capitalism created

conditions under which it was possible for some individuals to no longer experience procreation as necessary for survival, thereby freeing them to act on same-sex erotic impulses. As workers migrated to large cities in increasing numbers, communities began to form along the lines of shared same-sex erotic dispositions. Thus, gay social spaces began to form that could not have existed prior to the advent of capitalism.

The marxist thesis is complicated somewhat by the Foucauldian perspective which holds that modern conceptions of sexuality are the result of a multiplicity of overlapping and often contradictory social forces and configurations of power. From this vantage point, sexuality is not "*determined* by the mode of production, but the rhythms of economic life provide the basic preconditions and ultimate limits for the organization of sexual life" (Weeks 28). Foucault's History of Sexuality documents the rise in the 19th century of new legal and medical discourses of sexuality, which gradually supplanted the moral codes heretofore provided by Christian religions. It was at this time that the "homosexual" was born, in Foucault's famous formulation, as a "species":

> The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. (43)

Foucault describes this push to develop complex taxonomies and typologies of sexual types and subsequent efforts to regulate the activities and behaviours of those labelled as deviant. But, as Foucault argues, the exercise of this regulatory power is often met with unanticipated and contradictory consequences. For example, efforts at classification that gave rise to the

homosexual as a discreet type of being, also "made possible the formation of a 'reverse' discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturality' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified" (101). Thus the Foucauldian thesis argues that the power to define sexuality is not concentrated within any one institution or social factor (such as capitalism, or patriarchy), rather it is dispersed across all fields of social life, leading to different configurations of power and discourse in different settings and different times.

Foucault's argument has important implications for the study of space and sexuality. Because his conception of power is deeply attuned to the notion that power operates in locally specific ways, we are given to ask how spaces come to be intertwined with particular sexual discourses, how spaces reflect and act upon particular sexual constructs. How do spaces come to be associated with certain sexual meanings? Which social actors and institutions intervene in determining these meanings? Given a particular space, what "social practices...construct sexual regulations, give meaning to bodily activities, shape definitions and limit and control human behaviour?" (Weeks 36).

George Chauncey's book Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940 can be read as the putting into practice of Foucault's framework with regards to the historical study of sexuality. Chauncey brilliantly navigates the difficulties of conducting historical research about gay communities, about which little documentation exists, by piecing together such sources as oral histories, personal diaries, police records, reports by urban moral reform groups, legal documents and gossip newspaper accounts. What emerges is a complex portrayal of early to mid-20th century gay life as it existed in New York City, with

particular attention to the ways gay men created social spaces, the possibilities and limitations afforded by these spaces, and the inhibiting and sometimes enabling effects of efforts to regulate gender and sexuality in the public sphere. Chauncey's principal contention is that the gay world which existed in New York between 1890 and 1930 was highly sophisticated and surprisingly visible, but that Depression and World War II era crackdowns on the public side of gay and lesbian culture have made it difficult to conceive of the complexity of the gay world which existed prior to the 1930s.

In making this argument, Chauncey attempts to overturn the assumption that the Stonewall riots of 1969 marked the turning point of a long path leading from repression toward liberation. Rather, he argues, certain conditions existed in New York City at the turn of the century that allowed gay men to form rich social networks, congregate in bars, apartments, and cafeterias, and find opportunities for sexual contact in streets, parks, public restrooms and bath-houses. While the gay world was continually subject to policing, and gay men vulnerable to entrapment for "solicitation," gay men found creative ways of fashioning a culture out of the material and symbolic resources available to them: "gay men devised a variety of tactics that allowed them to move freely about the city, to appropriate for themselves spaces that were not marked as gay, and to construct a gay city in the midst of, yet invisible to, the dominant city" (180). By the late 1920s, Chauncey writes, "gay men had become a conspicuous part of New York City's nightlife" (325). Chauncey proposes that the repressive measures adopted in the 1930s, 40s and 50s were the result of struggles over "bourgeois conceptions of public order, the proper boundaries between public and private space, and the social practices appropriate to each" (180). Many of these struggles had to do with the regulation of gender norms, as New York

society grew increasingly intolerant of the "effeminate" and "degenerate" public behaviour of "pansies" and "fairies," an anti-gay reaction which Chauncey attributes to a "more general reaction to the cultural experimentation of the Prohibition years and to the disruption of gender arrangements by the Depression" (331). The Repeal of Prohibition "served to draw new boundaries between the acceptable and the unacceptable, and to impose new sanctions against the latter. . . . The requirement that establishments be "orderly" proved to have a profound impact on gay bars" (337). Thus, the public side of gay culture was forced into hiding, a development which, ironically, fostered the creation of exclusively gay bars: "while gay life continued to thrive in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, it was more hidden and more segregated from the rest of city life than it had been before" (348).

Gay New York amply illustrates the extent to which the appropriation of social space was a key component in the struggle for gay liberation. Further, the book demonstrates how the contemporary gay world, and new cultural understandings of gender and sexuality, were partly the result of the repressive regulatory measures adopted in the second third of the 20th century. Thus, Chauncey advances an understanding of the exercise of power as productive of multiple, and often contradictory, discourses and social arrangements. While he acknowledges that the exercise of legal and bureaucratic power has different effects in different localities, Chauncey also suggests that New York is "prototypical" of other large urban centres, in that many of the same patterns came to be replicated elsewhere and with similar consequences.

The Study of Contemporary Gay Urban Communities.

While Chauncey's Gay New York provides an account of the historical emergence of a gay community within an urban context, a growing body of research is emerging that attempts to map out the configurations of contemporary gay and lesbian communities. This current work on sexuality and space hails from a variety of disciplines: some studies are similar in approach to the earlier work carried out in sociology and social geography, while many others attempt to engage with more recent theoretical developments in the study of sexuality and culture. As Tim Davis explains:

> Much of the current work interfaces with 'queer theory' and the growing field of gay and lesbian studies, and takes feminist theory and notions of the social construction of space and identity as starting points to study the relationship between sexuality and the creation of identity, community and citizenship. (Bell and Valentine, 286)

Also emerging is what might be termed a neo-marxist critique of queer space which attacks the sometimes uncritical celebration of 'queer spaces' as liberatory spaces, arguing instead that the market logic that animates gay spaces has led to the homogenization and depoliticization of gay culture. Together these three strands--which I will call social geographic, cultural, and marxist--account for the majority of work being done about urban gay communities. After a brief survey of each approach, this chapter will conclude with an attempt to develop a framework for the study of space and sexuality based on those theories and methods that appear most useful for addressing questions of identity, community formation, and the production of space.

Social geographic approaches.

The classic social geographic study of an urban gay community remains Manuel Castells' 1983 study of San Francisco, published in The City and the Grassroots. Castells attempts to map out the space occupied by the gay community, relying on such information as the location of gay establishments, voter lists indicating concentrations of multiple male households, voting patterns for Harvey Milk, and the accounts of pollsters in gay electoral campaigns. The author also traces the historical development of San Francisco's gay community, arguing that gay men created a community by "living in certain neighbourhoods, by operating businesses, by meeting in bars,... by inventing feasts and celebrations; in short by organizing socially, culturally and politically" (143). For Castells, the political power gained by gay men in San Francisco is the result of a process whereby gay men gained control of a space in which they could "transform their oppression into the organizational setting of political power" (157). The resulting space, the Castro, "brought together sexual identity, cultural self-definition, and a political project in a form organized around the control of a given territory" (157).

Many recent studies of urban gay communities similarly document the existence of large concentrations of gay establishments, institutions and/or residences in large urban centres. One such study is Paul Hindle's "Gay communities and gay space in the city," which tries to determine whether Castells' conclusions about San Francisco might apply to the development of Manchester's Gay Village. Hindle describes the recent emergence of a spatial concentration of gay pubs, clubs, shops and some residences in an area of Manchester, England. He reports that "[r]ecognisable gay residential areas like those which are reported in so many of the larger American cities are yet to appear on the British townscape" (13). Consequently, Hindle argues,

gay communities in Britain have yet to gain political power of the kind observed by Castells in San Francisco. Hindle concludes that "San Francisco probably has little to tell us about how Manchester's gay community might develop. It is clear that the same social and political driving forces are not present" (22).

"A sociological pub crawl around gay Newcastle," by Marc Lewis, also examines the particular spatial configuration of a gay community in a British context. This largely descriptive article shows the "variety [of gay establishments] that can be found in one fairly small city" (95). Lewis focuses on the ways Newcastle's gay community intersects with the city's largely working-class culture and observes that the social scene is characterized by an unusual intermingling of gay men and lesbians. The Newcastle scene, he claims, is not made up of distinct subcultures, each with their own venues, as is the case in larger cities such as London or Manchester. He concludes that the "Newcastle gay scene is not only marginalised within its own larger community, which is also peripheral to the British socio-economic system, but it also occupies a marginal place in the British gay scene" (99).

While the development of gay residential areas in large cities does not appear to be a common occurrence in Britain, this dynamic, to which Castells devoted some attention in The City and the Grassroots, is an important component of the success of gay communities in North America. Some studies of contemporary urban gay communities have taken up the question of gentrification as their main concern. The article "Gentrification by gay male communities: A case study of Toronto's Cabbagetown," by Anne-Marie Bouthillette, traces the development of a predominantly gay neighbourhood adjacent to the city's gay ghetto. The author argues that the strength of Toronto's gay community, its high visibility as well as its political clout, is largely the

result of having established in Cabbagetown "firm roots upon which Toronto's gay community could anchor itself" (76). The gentrification of Cabbagetown has its origins in the late 60s and early 70s, at a time when some gay real estate developers identified the potential of this large inner-city neighbourhood to provide affordable single-family housing to middle-income gays, many of whom were ready to move out of their apartments to "realiz[e] their middle-class ideals" (73). As more and more gay men settled there, attracted by the presence of other gay men and by the proximity to the emerging gay ghetto, Cabbagetown's traditionally working-class character began to subside. Today, the area is said to be an "affluent, yet eclectic neighbourhood which mixes all types of households, and houses, rather successfully" (76). Bouthillette proposes that the existence of gentrified gay residential areas fulfills the needs of many gay men, who, as they "proceed through their various life stages,. . . strive to rise above the extrovert lifestyle offered by the ghetto, and settle in a neighbourhood which is more acceptable to their new life-style requirements" (78). This last point brings up an important dimension about which Bouthillette remains silent. In Myths and Meanings of Gentrification, Caroline Mills argues that:

> [e]ach society's 'moral order' is reflected in its particular spatial order and in the language and imagery by which this spatial order is represented. Conversely, the social is spatially constituted, and people make sense of their social identity in terms of their environment. Their place of residence offers a map of their place in society..." (150).

Bouthillette's formulation, that older gay men "strive to rise above the extrovert lifestyle" of the ghetto, contains an implicit moral judgment, no doubt reflected in the words of her gay informants themselves, about the legitimacy and desirability of ghetto spaces versus the "acceptability" of gentrified spaces. This begs the question "acceptable to whom?", to which Mills provides a useful

reminder that "[m]oral orders are also spatial orders"(168), and that gentrification can come with the double coding of stigma and status, both emancipatory and elitist (158).

Marxist Critiques

Lawrence Knopp's article "Some theoretical implications of gay involvement in an urban land market" is careful to point out the implications of gentrification for class and gender relations. Knopp focuses on the development by gay men of an area of New Orleans known as Marigny. The article documents the process by which Marigny came to be gentrified, identifying the social actors and socio-economic conditions that made possible this development. While his findings in this regard are similar to those of Castells or Bouthillette, Knopp differs considerably in the interpretation he makes of the motivations underlying gay involvement in urban redevelopment. He argues that, as a result of gentrification, "the local gay community became increasingly stratified along lines of class interest. Gay home-owners mobilized around home-owners' issues, not gay issues" (347). In other words, Knopp proposes that, at least in the case of New Orleans, gay community development was an indirect consequence of gentrification, not a conscious goal on the part of community leaders, who organized around issues of "historic preservation," rather than the debate over a local anti-discrimination ordinance, for example. Mobilized around issues of historic preservation, gay men in New Orleans entered into alliances with local politicians and businesspeople, and even the Catholic Church, to further their interests. For these gay men, the "issue is therefore not so much one of overcoming discrimination as it is of overcoming institutional obstacles to investment in certain parts of the city" (347). In addition to further dividing the gay community along class lines, Knopp argues that gentrified gay

neighbourhoods also have the effect of "further stratifying gay communities along gender lines, by extending men's economic advantage over women" (349). He concludes that:

> ...in Marigny and other gentrified gay neighborhoods we have examples of a form of social dominance (economic privilege) being facilitated, rather than undermined, by efforts to develop, not oppress, a gay community (albeit for purposes, primarily, of private accumulation). The perpetuation of male economic privilege within the context of a gay community's influence on a land market is thus a testament to the resilience of male social dominance generally... (349)

Thus, Knopp warns that the uncritical celebration of gay male gentrification can obscure important questions of class and gender. While it remains true that gay men face a great deal of oppression by virtue of their sexuality, Knopp suggests that the creation of urban gay neighbourhoods catering mostly to affluent white men can act as a means of removing many of the barriers ordinarily faced by these men. While such efforts can benefit gay community development generally, they can also exacerbate class and gender divisions.

Another, much more polemical, perspective is offered by Stephen Whittle in "Consuming differences: The collaboration of the gay body with the cultural state." The author traces the development of Manchester's Gay Village from a Gramscian theoretical framework, arguing that the Village:

> ...is safe space in which 'being gay' is to be welcomed as a contributor to the state's interests through your social and sexual habits (which of course follow the state directed guidelines on safe sex) and your economic means (which as a gay person, without the

> apparent cost of dependents, contribute towards the gentrification of otherwise run down [sic] and unattractive inner city). (30)

Gay men have been lured by the illusion of safe space created by gay consumerism, which, Whittle contends, is a way for the state to gain the collaboration of gay men in their own oppression. The author asks rhetorically:

> Did the origins of Manchester's Gay Village come from gay people to cater for gay people's needs? Or was it a developmental, commercial and policing ploy to keep lesbians and gay men in a separate, easily surveillance [sic], easily exploited, easily commercialised and easily sanitised environment? (31)

In this environment, queer people "are now seen as cultural consumers, just another tribe amidst and like all other cultural consumers" (37). Gay space is thus homogenized and depoliticized, and, having lost its specificity, becomes open to all, including more or less hostile straights. The Village, Whittle concludes, has provided a safe space, but only for "able bodied, white, beautiful young men" (38), who, in any case do not really need safe and tolerant spaces "because sex is always going to be easy for them; they are, after all, beautiful and desired" (38).

Sexuality and Space: Identity, Culture, Performativity.

Recent work on space and sexuality has begun to engage with the question of how queer identities and communities come to be discursively inscribed in social space. This work tends to assume that the struggle for queer liberation is fundamentally related to the levels of language and signification: "real acceptance can only be created in the cultural sphere" (Davis 284). Understood in this way, the political task is to refigure heteronormative space, to expose its fissures and

internal contradictions, or in other words, to reveal its status as always already *queer*, as containing the seeds of its own subversion. This strategy represents a struggle to resignify space, to claim it as queer and challenge its supposedly natural originary status as heterosexual space.

Much of the work in this vein has made use of theories which explore the "materiality" of discourse to explore how language shapes notions about gender, sexuality and their intersections with space. For example, many studies have examined the urban "semiotic warfare" strategies of such groups as ACT-UP and Queer Nation to reveal how such tactics act to "queer" straight space. In "Queer Nationality," Berlant and Freeman argue that Queer Nation engages in:

> a kind of guerrilla warfare that names all concrete and abstract spaces of social communication as places where "the people" [queer nationals] live, and thus as "national" sites ripe both for transgression and legitimate visibility. Its tactics are to cross borders, to occupy spaces, and to mime the privileges of normality--in short, to simulate the "national" with a camp inflection. (196)

Arguing in a similar mode, Tim Davis underscores Queer Nation's movement away from a politics of spatial concentration, where the goal is to gain power over a gay ghetto, to a queer politics of "we are everywhere," which moves beyond the gay ghetto to "better serve the needs of all gay men and lesbians" (285). He argues that:

> Underlying the 'kiss-ins', mock weddings..., and queer shopping outings is the notion that *all* spaces are sexed..., and that spaces are dominated by the heterosexist assumption. In this regard, Queer politics moves beyond the boundaries of physical gay spaces and a focus on the state, and challenges the heterosexist assumption in a diversity of locations... (293).

This analysis appears well-founded on a number of levels: the strategies employed by Queer Nation, focusing on such "sites" of straight privilege as shopping malls and corporate advertising, clearly succeeded in opening up new discursive spaces for the expression of queerness. However, it is unclear just how these political means work toward the end of, as Davis claims, better serving the needs of all gay men and lesbians. There is little evidence to suggest that Queer Nation achieved much beyond a temporary disruption of the heterosexist assumption whereby public space is prefigured as straight. Today, the movement has all but died out in most cities where it had taken root.

Queer Nation has been celebrated by some theorists as the street-level embodiment of academic efforts to disrupt the edifice of heterosexual privilege, which is thought to have a fundamentally linguistic foundation. Thus, the emphasis placed on "subversive" practices of signification, both in theory and in practice, is understandable. However, much of the academic work of this type still rests on an inadequately articulated conception of the social spaces which are ostensibly being reconfigured by these subversive acts and suffers from a tendency to collapse metaphorical, or discursive, "spaces" with actual, social spaces. In addition, little attention has been paid to the complex ways in which messages intended as disruptive of the social order are received and interpreted. The article "All Hyped Up And No Place To Go," which appeared in the first issue of the journal Gender, Place and Culture, is indicative of these shortcomings.

The article, written collectively by four authors, attempts to theorize the subversive potential of the performance of gay skinhead and lipstick lesbian identities. Drawing on the work of Judith Butler, the authors posit that the performance of hypermasculine or hyperfeminine

identities can "illuminate the 'unnaturalness' of both heterosexual everyday space and the masculine and feminine heterosexual identities associated with them. They claim that:

> The presence of gay skinheads and lipstick lesbians in heterosexual spaces represents a double coding of that space. . . . They may pass as heterosexual, deriving the privileges of heterosexuality, but their presence may signify a different production of space. If, as Butler argues, the parodic repetition and mimicry of heterosexual identities robs heterosexuality of its claims to naturalness and originality, then is the unquestioned nature of straight space undermined and disrupted by a copying of that space--of gay space in straight drag? (33)

Ultimately, the authors are unable to come to a common conclusion: "We remain unclear and unable to agree about what trouble such transgression causes, for whom, and where" (44). They offer on the one hand that the performance of gay skinhead identities creates queer spaces for those "in the know," thus exposing "not only the constructedness of gay identities and gay spaces, but the constructedness of heterosexual identities and heterosexual spaces" (37). On the other hand, they argue that "surely the lipstick lesbian only undermines the 'straight' landscape if heterosexuals are aware that she may be there" (42).

All Hyped Up And No Place To Go represents an important step forward in applying the insights of queer theory to the study of urban space. However, future work will need to further engage with space as more than the container of, or backdrop to, the performance of identities. Taking its cue from the theory of queer performativity, the article attempts to isolate the individual (abstract) body-in-performance, which, as Andrew Kirby points out, "underscore[s] the fragmentary nature of struggle defined outside the context of production" (92). Instead, Kirby

calls for a "focus on systems of resistance" (92) to counteract the tendency to want to isolate the individual moment of subversion. It is ironic, Kirby further suggests, that All Hyped Up is unable to develop a coherent understanding of space as a social construction, a point which Elspeth Probyn also takes up in her response to the article. Probyn argues that All Hyped Up suffers from a kind of placelessness that leads her to state anew her "commitment to thinking about space in terms other than metaphorical" (77). She calls for a theory which "refuse[s] to generalize, ...refuse[s] to stay at the abstract level of sexuality and space" (79). For his part, Lawrence Knopp is troubled by Bell et al.'s refusal to articulate a political project, or even to acknowledge a set of political investments or differences, in the name of preserving a vague "polyvocality":

> ...in failing to offer any conclusions, in celebrating polyvocality, multipositionality and fluidity at the same time as they refuse to identify or discuss any particular voices, positions or fluxes *of their own*, Bell *et al.* come perilously close to abandoning politics altogether. (86)

The criticisms of Kirby, Probyn, and Knopp point to a number of possible directions in the emerging debate over the course to follow as queer and cultural theory begin to intersect with the study of space. In the remaining part of this chapter, I will propose some directions that appear particularly promising for the study of space, gay identity, community and representation. This will make explicit the framework employed in the last chapter, which deals with the social construction of Montreal's gay village.

The Production of Gay Urban Space: a Framework.

As the variety of methodologies represented above demonstrates, the question of gay urban space has been approached in many distinct ways according to the disciplinary, theoretical, and political investments of the authors who have broached the question. Thus far, this study has, of course, reflected some of my own theoretical preoccupations and it is perhaps useful at this point to clarify what these are. In doing this, I am aware that with any theoretical project, the choice of emphasis tends to shed light on certain processes while obscuring others. I do not purport to advance a definitive theory of gay urban space because such a theory does not, indeed cannot exist. Like the notion of "gay community," which many authors have interrogated, the construct "gay space" cannot be said to occupy stable ontological ground. What I mean by this is that there is no single quality or characteristic, or set of qualities and characteristics, that define spaces as inherently "gay," or for that matter, as "masculine" or "feminine" etc.. To attempt such attributions is to fall prey to deterministic schemes of thinking about space that tend to reify social processes that are in fact constantly evolving. This is perhaps especially true of "gay" spaces, because their existence is contingent upon the particular political and social climate that exists in a particular time and place. While it is true that, at least in North America, dominant straight society mostly tolerates the existence of urban gay neighbourhoods, it is also true that straight society still retains for itself the right and the power to shape, limit, curtail, and even eradicate the spaces which gay men have appropriated for themselves. For these reasons, I prefer to think of gay space as the result of a particular set of circumstances, as the physical embodiment of a set of social practices and discourses that evolve over time according to the prevailing social, political, cultural and moral order of a given society.

I take as axiomatic Lefebvre's assertion that "[s]pace is social morphology: it is to lived experience what form itself is to the living organism, and just as intimately bound up with function and structure" (94). In this regard, Lefebvre's analysis of the spatial dynamics of capitalism constitutes, for me, the fundamental starting point of an analysis which takes as its object the spatial existence of gay men in urban settings. This theoretical point of departure acknowledges the extent to which gay urban spaces have developed in the context of, and indeed been made possible by, Western capitalist modes of production. Further, Lefebvre's analysis of space, based on a marxist understanding of the commodity form, can aid in the understanding of gay spaces as sexual marketplaces that conceal the social relations embedded in their realization.

I wish also to consider the implications of this analysis for the formation of gay identities and communities. At this level, it is important to recognize that spaces are produced in such a way as to largely determine what identities may legitimately be performed within particular settings at particular times. As Lefebvre writes:

> . . .for someone who lives and acts in the space under consideration, a 'subject' with a body--or, sometimes, a 'collective subject'. . .the deployment of forms and structures corresponds to functions of the whole. Blanks (i.e. the contrast between absence and presence) and margins, hence networks and webs, have a *lived* sense which has to be raised intact to the *conceptual* level. (132)

Thus, the spatial analysis of urban gay communities will consider the ways in which identities and communities are intertwined with, even indissociable from, spatial processes and attempt to grasp the possibilities and limitations for identity and community formation afforded by particular places at particular times. This is to place space at the centre of an analysis that seeks to understand the

conditions of possibility for specific identities and the communities that arise from them. As Steven Seidman writes:

> Sexual orientational status positions the self in the social periphery or the social center; it places opportunities, legal protections, and social privileges; it places the self in a relation to a range of forms of social control, from violence to ridicule. Locating identity in a multidimensional social space features its macrosocial significance; we are compelled to relate the politics of representation to institutional dynamics. (136)

Here, Seidman raises the question of the "politics of representation," which is concerned with identity practices, in relation to "institutional dynamics." This is a way of formulating the problem that I would like to pursue, albeit from a slightly different angle.

What if the problem were posed in this way: to what extent is the *representation* of space, such as through media accounts of gay urban neighbourhoods, implicated in the *production* of space, identity, and community? And what is the proper emphasis to be placed on such representations in an analysis of gay spaces? On this point, Lefebvre is emphatic that we not reduce spaces to representations, that spaces not be simply "read" as texts. He allows that spaces come to be associated with meanings and that a history of space should account for these representations. However, he argues, the study of spatial representations should emphasize "their interrelationships and their links with social practice" (116). He writes:

> The 'reading' of space is thus merely a secondary and practically irrelevant upshot, a rather superfluous reward to the individual for blind, spontaneous and *lived* obedience.... This space was *produced* before being *read*; nor was it produced in order to be read and

> grasped, but rather in order to be *lived* by people with bodies and lives in their own particular urban context. (143).

I would counter that, far from being "practically irrelevant," the analysis of spatial representations is a key component for the study of urban gay communities. I cannot accept Lefebvre's distinction between, on one hand, the production of space, and the deciphering of spatial codes and symbols on the other. Rather, it appears evident that representations, and the reading practices to which they give rise, are implicated with spatial processes *at the level of production*. To attempt to distinguish entirely between them is to deny the full extent of the role of representations in partly determining the uses to which spaces are put and the identities that can be performed there.

Working within a Lefebvrian framework, the sociologist Rob Shields proposes some useful ways of integrating a discursive dimension within the study of spatial processes. Shields is interested in "not only the manner in which places have been 'labelled' but also how this has found expression and been actualised in locally-specific ways as *places-for* this or that in crowd practice, the built environment, and in regional policy" (9). He offers the term "social spatialisation" to refer to:

> the ongoing social construction of the spatial at the level of the social imaginary (collective mythologies, presuppositions) as well as interventions in the landscape (for example, the built environment). This term allows us to name an object of study which encompasses both the cultural logic of the spatial and its expression and elaboration in language and more concrete actions, constructions and institutional arrangements. (31)

Shields also proposes the term "place-images" to designate the process whereby spaces are reduced to one trait, or stereotype:

> These are the various discrete meanings associated with real places or regions regardless of their character in reality. . . .They result from stereotyping, which over-simplifies groups of places within a region, or from prejudices towards places or their inhabitants. A set of core images forms a widely disseminated and commonly held set of images of a place or space. These form a relatively stable group of ideas in currency, reinforced by their communication value as conventions circulating in a discursive economy. (60)

Collectively, Shields proposes, sets of place-images can cohere into space-myths by which "communities may distinguish themselves from other social collectivities" (62). Together, these three concepts, social spatialisation, place-images, and place-myths, provide a useful basis to more fully consider the discursive dimensions of the production of space, which a strictly Lefebvrian approach might consider "practically irrelevant."

Shields' theoretical advances resonate with the commitment on the part of some gay space theorists to engage with the symbolic aspects of the production of gay urban space. Shields' framework is employed by the Dutch scholar Mattias Duyves in the article "Framing Preferences, Framing Differences: Inventing Amsterdam as a Gay Capital," which considers the emergence of a spatial concentration of gay establishments and institutions in the context of efforts by gay business owners and the city administration to promote Amsterdam as a "gay capital." The foregrounding of issues having to do with representation is also key to Benjamin Forest's "West Hollywood as symbol: the significance of place in the construction of a gay identity." This article documents the dominant symbols used by the gay press to characterize West Hollywood, following its incorporation as a municipality in 1984. Forest's interest in the symbolic aspects of the production of gay urban space is prompted by Lawrence Knopp's argument that

> . . .in the contemporary era, these sorts of symbolic and representational struggles may actually be more important than those concerning the spatial organization of sexual relations. This is because, as [David] Harvey argues, the sociospatial construction of otherness, which has as much to do with representational and symbolic space as with physical space, has become key to the survival of capitalism. (663)

I understand this line of argument to mean that, while we might distinguish between the production of space and the representation of space, the contemporary socio-economic climate calls for an analysis that engages with their significant interrelations. As Knopp concludes, this leaves the student of gay urban spaces to ponder the irony that:

> the often place-based identities upon which [struggles over the representation of space] are predicated owe their existence in large measure to the universality of exchange relations and the spatial dynamic within capitalism that results in the creative construction of new and subtly differentiated 'places'. (666)

In other words, if gay men are able to engage in struggles to claim space, it is because the "spatial dynamic within capitalism" creates the conditions that make possible such struggle. To recognize this is to acknowledge gay men's ambivalent relationship to capitalism: space which is denied us at the level of the ideological privileging of the family within capitalism is then made available by the existence of the free market.

The next chapter will examine the social construction of a particular sense of place in Montreal's gay community between the years 1990-1996. I will argue that the "village gai" is the product of a complex arrangement of material and symbolic forces that have provided the cultural bases for the formation of distinct identities and communities. I will then focus on certain

representational struggles over the "meaning" of the gay village to assess how a specific sense of identity and community is challenged and reconfigured by social practices and representations that pathologize and criminalize gay men and the spaces they inhabit.

Chapter 4

Spatial Belongings: the Rise of the Montréal Village, 1990-1996.

This chapter will provide an overview of the web of social practices and circumstances that contributed to the rise of an identifiable gay village in Montréal. I will begin with an account of the emergence of the Village in geographical, demographic, and historical terms. However, following a theoretical framework suggested by Lefebvre's The Production of Space, these data will be shown to provide a very limited sense of the Village's spatial existence:

> . . .merely to note the existence of things. . . is to ignore what things at once embody and dissimulate, namely social relations and the forms of those relations. . . our understanding is reduced to a confirmation of the undefined and indefinable multiplicity of things, and gets lost in classifications, descriptions and segmentations. (81)

In an effort to avoid reducing the Village to a set of observations and data, I have attempted to widen the field of vision somewhat to encompass the ways in which certain political struggles, many of which revolve around the appropriation and use of space, have contributed to fashioning a particular sense of "spatial identity", and in certain cases, a "spatial consciousness", for many gay men in Montréal. These struggles constitute a sometimes hidden "political labour" that, given the right economic conditions, can contribute to the rise of spaces like the Village. Gay spaces are not simply born of market demands in capitalist systems, they are also the product of struggles with state institutions; the case of Montréal's gay village is no exception. In addition to the impact of these political struggles on the constitution of gay space in Montréal, the analysis will consider some of the effects of the existence of the Village on gender and class relations in Montréal.

Finally, I will examine how a sense of "spatial identity" made possible by the Village is reconfigured by a discourse about gay space that resurfaced following reports of a string of murders whose victims were gay men. This section underlines the importance of struggles over the representation of space: how is the Village implicated within a set of discourses that pathologize and criminalize gay men?

Portrait of the Village as a Young Neighbourhood.

The area known as Montreal's gay village is home to many of the city's gays and lesbians.[4] In addition to its residential function, the Village's bars, nightclubs, restaurants and shops, which are primarily oriented toward a male clientele, serve as the principal meeting places of the city's gay and lesbian communities and as the focal point of Montreal's burgeoning gay tourism trade. Its main thoroughfare is a half-mile portion of Ste-Catherine St., in Montreal's East End, between Amherst St. to the west, and Papineau St. to the east. The existence of the Village in this location is a fairly recent development. In the 70s, most gay establishments in Montreal were concentrated in the heart of downtown, in and around the intersection of Stanley St. and Ste-Catherine. Based on a mapping of establishments advertising in one of Montreal's gay publications, the monthly Fugues, the geographer Frank Remiggi reports that a cluster of new businesses catering to gay men began to appear in the early 80s:

[4] If one accepts the estimate of City Councillor Sammy Forcillo, whose electoral district includes the Village, approximately 40% of the electorate in the St-Jacques/Ste-Marie district is made up of gays and lesbians. This would place the number of gays and lesbians living in the district at approximately 11,000. The documentary Climate for Murder, for its part, estimates the gay and lesbian population of the Village at 20,000, a number that makes little sense, given that according to the 1991 census, a total of 8945 people are said to reside in the Village proper. Whatever the actual number, it is fair to say that the Village is home to less than 1% of the total gay and lesbian population of the Montréal Urban Community.

> Dès lors, et pendant quelques années seulement, l'espace gai montréalais sera plutôt dispersé, voire même éclaté, mais la situation va évoluer rapidement, et de manière dramatique et irrévocable cette fois, vers 1984-1985, au moment justement où le célèbre Bud's fermera ses portes. (9)

Bud's was a veritable institution in Montreal's gay landscape. Opened in 1964, it was the anchor of the Stanley St. cluster of establishments and one of the most popular of the bars of its time. The other principal concentration of gay establishments, prior to the emergence of the Village, was located near the intersection of Ste-Catherine and St-Laurent, also known as "La Main." The most famous institution of this cluster, immortalized in the novels of Michel Tremblay and in the Tremblay-Brassard filmic collaboration Il était une fois dans l'est, remains to this day the hangout of many drag queens and transvestites, the Café Cléopâtre.

The exact reasons for the emergence of the east-end Village are not known and work in this area has been undertaken by a number of scholars. Some speculate that the efforts by the administration of Jean Drapeau in the mid-70s to "clean-up" the downtown core prior to the 1976 Olympics might have had something to do with the move to a less conspicuous part of the city. Another possibility concerns the appearance of a French-speaking gay entrepreneurial class, some of whom might have felt more comfortable opening new establishments in the predominantly French-speaking east end, rather than the downtown core, which is associated with Montreal's historically English corporate structure and with nearby McGill University. Remiggi also points out the east end's historical role as an "entertainment sector", where a large number of movie houses, cafés, and theatres catered to early to mid-20th century French-Canadian "petite-

bourgoisie." The existence of these venues provided entrepreneurs with a large number of sites suitable to the establishment of bars, restaurants, nightclubs etc..

Regardless of the reasons for its development, by 1992, the consolidation of the east end Village had fully been realized. Of 100 establishments that advertised in Fugues in 1992, fully 70 of them were situated within the boundaries of the Village (Remiggi, 8). Data from the 1991 census also provides evidence of the residential presence of many gay men in the area, though it is difficult to determine precisely the extent of this phenomenon[5]. One indicator is the unusually high number of individuals in single person households: 28,7% in the Village vs. 14.7 % for Montreal in general. In the Centre-Sud generally, there are two and a half times more men between the ages of 30-44 living alone than women (CLSC 20). Residents of the area immediately bordering the Village are also much more likely to live with one or more persons to whom they are not related: 22.9% of households vs. an average of 5.2% for Montreal as a whole. As previous studies have argued, this demographic composition is a strong indicator of the presence of a large number of gay men in a residential area, because gay men are thought to be more likely than their straight counterparts to live alone or with one or more persons to whom they are not related. Three of the seven residential sectors that make up the Village also feature the Centre-Sud's highest concentration of men between the ages of 25-59 (CLSC 16). Thus, it is strongly suggested by this data that the Village is home to thousands of gay men.

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[5] The data is taken from the document Profil d'un quartier: Centre-Sud, produced by the CLSC Centre-Sud. Though the area covered by this document exceeds the boundaries of the Village, I was able to surmise information specific to the Village in cases where the data is broken down by residential sector. Thus, the data quoted here corresponds specifically to the residential area bordered by Amherst St. to the west, Ontario St. to the north, De Lorimier St. to the east, and the St-Lawrence River to the south. In cases where Village-specific information was not available, I used data relating to the Centre-Sud as a whole to provide a close approximation of the conditions prevalent in the Village. In those cases, the data is designated clearly as referring to the Centre-Sud more generally.

However, the concentration of a large number of gay men in the Village does not seem to be accompanied by the same degree of gentrification that is evident in other cities such as Toronto. While there is certainly a considerable amount of renovation of the housing stock taking place, and many houses ripe for remodelling (fully 42.4% of houses in the Village were built prior to 1946), the average socio-economic status of Village residents (in 1991) is in fact lower than in Montreal as a whole. While levels of employment and education of Village residents are comparable to those of their Montreal counterparts (25.8% of Village residents hold university degrees vs. 26.5% for Montreal), only 11.9% of Village residents own their homes, compared to 33.5% for Montreal as a whole. Further, 50% of Centre-Sud residents hold jobs in the lower paying service industry, compared to 39.4% in Montreal. Overall, the proportion of Village residents whose income levels fall in the $15,000-$50,000 range is similar to that found in Montreal generally. However, the Village is home to far more people whose incomes are below $15,000 (37.4% vs. 24.0%) and to far fewer whose incomes are above $50,000 (13.2% vs. 27.8%).

This is not to say that a certain amount of gentrification is not taking place, but it is difficult to conclude from this 1991 data that the neighbourhood is home to the same proportion of middle and upper-class gay gentrifiers that undertook the development of many urban areas in North America. Based on incidental reports and general impressions, it seems likely that many well-to-do gay men prefer to live in the decidedly gentrified Plateau Mont-Royal, which is located a short distance away to the north of the Village. It appears then, that despite the recent boom in investments by business interests in the Village, the neighbourhood has largely retained its lower-class character. When the 1996 census data is made available, it will be possible to determine with

greater certainty whether the influx of gay men in the Village has substantially modified the Centre-Sud's unenviable status as one of Montreal's poorest areas. The 1991 data suggests only a slight difference in socio-economic indicators when the Village is compared to the Centre-Sud as a whole. While the presence of gay men in the area certainly has modified the urban landscape and the nature of neighbourhood social relations, it does not seem to have greatly changed the Centre-Sud's socio-economic status, nor has it (yet) led to massive levels of gentrification, with its accompanying displacement effects and class cleavages.

Nonetheless, the most visible, public face of the Village has undergone striking transformations between 1990-1996: new shops and restaurants have opened at a furious pace, and nightclubs and bars seem to be on an endless course of remodelling and expansion. The trend seems to be toward "complexes", huge spaces divided up to serve multiple functions. Gay nightlife in Montreal is divided along three major poles: Station "C", La Track/Le Bourbon, and Sky. Station "C" contains a large dance club, a leather bar, an alternative "queer" bar, and a spacious medieval-themed bar/dance space (formerly integrated with the leather bar). The La Track complex features a hotel, a lounge bar, a cabaret performance space, a sauna, a large dance club, and three restaurants. Sky club is currently undergoing an ambitious expansion that will result in a dance club on two floors, an "alternative" bar, a performance space, and two restaurants.

Besides the big three complexes, the Village is home to a large number of smaller businesses catering primarily to gay men. According to a study of gay entrepreneurship conducted by Jacques Dallaire, three quarters of these establishments are gay-owned, they have generally been in existence for less than ten years and are primarily operated by men under 35 years of age

(RG, June 1996). Significantly, businesses in the Village have yet to form an association which might allow them to petition the Board of Tourism of Greater Montreal to include them in its promotional literature, and to pressure city administrators to make improvements in the Village's infrastructure. Still, the maps on the city's "omni-colonnes", street-corner advertising and tourist orientation billboards, clearly identify the Village on par with Montréal's other neighbourhoods, such as Chinatown and the Old Port. Efforts are also underway to get the city to improve the appearance of, and designate the Beaudry metro station as Beaudry/Village. This follows the successful efforts of some AIDS activists to rename a small park on the corner of Ste-Catherine and Panet as the "Parc de l'espoir", in memory of Montréal residents lost to AIDS. This park is currently slated for a major overhaul.

An important contributing factor to the Village's growth in recent years has been the aggressive campaign to put Montréal on the "Gay Circuit" map, led by the Bad Boy Club, and the Divers/Cité organization, which organizes the annual lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender pride festival. The Bad Boy Club, which describes itself as a group of gay professionals, holds a number of all-night dance parties to benefit AIDS Community Care Montreal (ACCM), the largest of which is the Black and Blue party. Together, the Divers/Cité and Black and Blue events have contributed significantly to drawing gay tourists (and their dollars) to Montréal, a development that has led to increased levels of cooperation with the city, and the Board of Tourism of Greater Montreal. In 1994 and 1995, in the days leading up to the Black and Blue event, the city's streets were adorned with banners promoting the event in ways usually reserved for major festivals such as the International Film Festival, or Montréal's famed Jazz Festival. Since 1995, the Board of Tourism has also lent its support to a Montréal kiosk at New York's City's National Gay &

Lesbian Business and Consumer Expo. Organized by a group of gay businesses, the kiosk is devoted to promoting Montréal as a gay tourist destination, and included, in 1995, a promotional video released by the City of Montréal that had been "queered" for the occasion. "Official" images, such as calèche rides in Old Montréal, are intercut with images from the Black and Blue party and the Divers/Cité parade, leading to sometimes hilarious results: as an announcer's voice declares "This is a city that loves life, and is not afraid to show it", images of Old Montreal are replaced with the sight of a young, well-built go-go dancer who spins around and thrusts his buttocks at the camera.

Police Relations, Political Organizing.

The description of "what exists" in the Village, in terms accounted for by geographical, demographic and historical factors, needs to be supplemented with an analysis of the political struggles that have accompanied the rise of gay space in Montréal. It seems clear that the emergence of a spatially concentrated gay village in Montreal has provided gay communities with a political power base and a basis from which to articulate a number of demands concerning police relations with gay citizens. This history of political organizing and police relations is marked by a series of crises and reconciliations. While there have been moments of dialogue between representatives of the gay and lesbian community, city administrations, and law enforcement agencies, the process is characterized by setbacks, broken promises, and unforeseen circumstances that have impeded the efforts of gay and lesbian activists. Indeed, the advances made by gay and lesbian communities remain fragile and subject to underlying power structures and to the changing political and social climates of dominant straight society. According to

Lefebvre, these power relations constitute a sometimes invisible layer in the constitution of social space, in terms of how space is experienced on a day to day basis. In extreme circumstances, such as when gay establishments are raided, the encroachment of state institutions on social space is experienced more directly. Such moments often lead to greater gay community mobilization around issues that often deal with space, or have spatial consequences. In the case of Montréal, the emergence of a politicized "spatial consciousness" can be said to have contributed to establishing the Village more firmly as the primary site of activism, the space around which resources are organized and in whose name political demands are articulated.

Work is currently underway to document the history of Montreal's early gay social world, which, as in any number of large North American cities, is intertwined with the history of police repression. When this work is made available, it will provide a more extensive account of gay men's efforts to create social spaces than can be provided here. More is known about the history of gay social spaces since Stonewall, which, along with social changes brought about by Québec Quiet Revolution, provided the impetus for the formation of Montreal's Front de Libération des Homosexuels (FLH), whose offices were raided in 1972 during a party held to open the group's new offices. Montreal gay spaces were constantly under the threat of police action under Mayor Jean Drapeau's administration, whose pre-Olympic Games clean-up operation included the raids of three bath-houses, the Club Baths (35 arrests), the Bain Crystal (33 arrests), and the Sauna Neptune (89 arrests). The following year, in 1977, members of the Montreal Urban Community (MUC) police tactical squad (two of whom carried machine guns) raided the Bar Truxx, leading to the arrests of 146 men, most of whom were charged with being "found-ins" in a "common

bawdy-house." This raid marked the first contemporary use of "bawdy-house" laws to conduct mass arrests of gay men. As Gary Kinsman explains:

> The Canadian bawdy-house legislation had originally been drafted to deal with houses of prostitution as part of the movement for sexual purity and defense of marriage. In 1917 the law was broadened to include any place existing "for the practice of acts of indecency"... (206)

Under current Canadian law, "indecency" is defined as "what the contemporary Canadian community is not prepared to tolerate" (206). Kinsman documents the "systematic" use of this law to crack down on gay establishments in Montréal, but also Ottawa, Toronto and Edmonton. Police in Montréal have continued to use this section of the criminal code, against Chez Bud's in 1984 and Station "C" in 1994, even though the charges tend not to hold up in court. Besides raids on bath-houses and bars, other gay meeting places such as parks and public restrooms have regularly been subjected to police monitoring, entrapment practices, and regulation through the arrests of gay men.

The raids on Truxx in 1977, and on Chez Bud's in 1984, met with little in the way of an organized response by the gay community. There were large demonstrations in the days immediately following police action, but the social structures which might have enabled a dialogue to take place, and changes to be made, were not in place. By 1990, the Village was now firmly established, its electoral district represented by Raymond Blain, an openly gay member of Mayor Jean Doré's RCM party and at the provincial level by André Boulerice, also openly gay. The gay and lesbian community, still divided along gender and linguistic lines, was nonetheless in a position to respond more effectively to the abusive exercise of police power.

The summer of 1990 was ablaze with a thriving "warehouse party" scene, well-publicized private parties for groups of 300 or more people, held in abandoned commercial buildings often located in Old Montreal's depleted industrial sector. These parties were highly regarded for their eclectic mixture of young, French and English-speaking gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, as well as straight people familiar with the gay club scene. In the early hours of Sunday, July 15, one of these parties, called "Sex Garage", was raided by police. Those present at the scene reported that many police officers had removed their identification badges, tossed verbal taunts at party-goers, chased many down the streets and proceeded to beat many of them with nightsticks. That morning, 8 people were arrested, some at gunpoint, and many more suffered minor injuries. The police offered no plausible explanations for their actions, at first claiming that they were acting on "complaints" (there are no residents in the area surrounding the site of the party) and eventually saying they were responding to "suspicious comings and goings in a commercial sector" (Comité sur la Violence, 3).

The aftermath of Sex Garage led to one of the most important mobilizations of Montreal gays, lesbians and bisexuals in the city's history. Tempers ran very high two days after the event when, during a sit-in to protest the police's refusal to meet with community representatives about Sex Garage, 48 people were arrested and beaten inside Station 25, which was responsible for the raid. These events led to the formation of LGV (Lesbians and Gays against Violence). Another group, the Comité sur la violence, was formed some eighteen months later at the first public meeting of La Table de Concertation Lesbienne et Gaie du Grand Montréal, an umbrella organization made up of different gay and lesbian organizations. In addition to its concerns about police relations, the Comité wielded a powerful argument: that a serial killer might be stalking gay

men. After witnessing the largely unsuccessful attempts by LGV to establish a dialogue with police, the Comité sur la Violence pressured the city administration to take action, which led to the formation in 1993 of a "Table multipartite" consisting of members of the Comité, the city of Montréal, the provincial Human Rights Commission, and the police, among others. The Comité presented a broad proposal, entitled "Dire enfin la violence", to create a "formal community-based organization aimed at prevention of homophobic violence against lesbians and gays", (Comité, 12).

One of the principal accomplishments of the Table de Concertation and its Comité sur la violence was to convince the Human Rights Commission to hold hearings into violence and discrimination against gays and lesbians. An important factor in this regard was the media attention garnered by the statistics compiled by the Comité. At the time of the hearings, the Comité had identified 15 murders of gay men since 1989, 8 of which had not been solved. Shortly before the hearings, the murder of the Anglican Reverend Warren Eling was brought to light, an event which further intensified media coverage of both the murders and the hearings. Together, these events brought considerable pressure on governments and the Montréal police to eventually respond to the recommendations of the Human Rights Commission, which made public its report in June of 1994. Montréal activists now possessed a long shopping list of demands directed at various levels of government, a list with the imprimatur of the Human Rights Commission.

The recommendations of the Commission were focused on three areas: health and social services, police relations, and the harmonization of Québec laws with its own Charter of Rights, which has included sexual orientation since 1977 (the province was the first in Canada to prohibit discrimination on this basis). Since the recommendations were issued, the federal government has

passed hate-crimes legislation, the Parti Québécois government has implemented the project "Dire enfin la violence" and has announced that it is moving to recognize, and grant benefits to, same-sex couples. For its part, the Montréal police has released information documenting 30 homophobic murders between 1987-1995, is moving towards recognizing the partners of its gay and lesbian employees, and has opened a satellite branch of Station 33 in the heart of the Village.

It appears, then, that the years 1990-1996 are characterized by an unprecedented mobilization of Montreal's gay and lesbian community, especially around issues of violence, discrimination, and police relations. Beginning with Sex Garage, and culminating in the adoption of some of the recommendations of the Human Rights Commission report, this period marks the emergence of a newfound political consciousness, which RG heralded in July of 1993 as "Le retour du militantisme." It seems clear that the concurrent growth of the Village provided activists with a spatial basis upon which to ground their demands, especially in the areas of health, police relations, and violence. This "militantisme", then, is partly a spatial politics, and these efforts help to constitute the Village as the "official" locus of gay and lesbian life in Montréal. For example, a campaign is currently underway to find a permanent site in the Village for the gay and lesbian community centre, currently housed in a narrow office loaned by the city. What are some of the consequences of further establishing the Village as the officially recognized home of gay and lesbian institutions and gathering places in Montréal?

The process by which the Village becomes the "official" site of political efforts to improve the lives of all queers is contentious. It is accompanied by struggles over who has the right and the opportunity to speak on behalf of sexual and gender minorities, and, more to the point, it raises the question: from what position do they speak? Gottdiener writes that "[space] continually

recreates social relations or helps reproduce them" (128). What then is the impact on queer politics of the production of the Village as a predominantly gay male space? The Table de concertation and its Comité sur la violence, which are mostly made up of gay men, have firmly established themselves with the media as the spokespersons for the communities they strive to represent. To some extent, their emphasis on issues dealing with the Village has established them as "Village spokespersons". This can have the effect of further concentrating political efforts around issues of particular concern to gay men, sometimes to the exclusion of lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders. This situation has led to internal divisions and to resentment on the part of some lesbians who feel that gay male community leaders do not sufficiently address gender issues, both within the gay community and in their communications with the media. Compounding the problem is the fact that the report of the Human Rights Commission entirely fails to address issues of particular concern to bisexuals and transgendered people.[6]

Space-Based Identities: Implications for Identity and Community Formation

As I have explained, the relative exclusion of lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders from "official" gay community discourses is reflected in the constitution of the Village as a primarily gay male space. While the gay village is arguably a space of "differences", in so far as it is differentiated from other city spaces and institutionally acknowledged as such, it articulates itself according to the logic of capital, which favors those differences which allow for maximum return on investments. As a result, Montréal gay space has evolved to serve the needs of gay men, who

[6] For a sustained critique of the failure to address the inter-relationship of gender and sexuality in the report of the HRC and the activities of the Comité sur la violence, see the article by Ki Namaste: "Genderbashing: sexuality, gender, and the regulation of public space", in Environment and Planning D: Society and Space. Vol. 14. 1996.

hold more economic power and/or represent greater numbers than lesbians, bisexuals, and transgenders. If it is true that the Village provides a material basis for social and political struggles, it does so mostly in terms of the interests of gay men. The emphasis placed on the gay murders by the Comité sur la violence, for example, led to the deployment of police efforts to solve crimes that affect gay men who congregate in the Village. Meanwhile, lesbian members of the Table de concertation were angered by the Comité's perceived inability to fight for initiatives to combat forms of violence that affect women in particular. Similarly, as Ki Namaste points out, the members of the Comité were largely blind to the gendered dynamics of queerbashing, which disproportionately affects those who publicly perform non-conformist gender identities.

Thus, the emergence of a gay village in Montreal can be seen to further entrench gender divisions. Lesbian spaces in Montreal tend not to be located in the Village, but rather in and around the Plateau Mont-Royal, where many lesbians also live. The production of the Village as a gay male space, where many establishments still have a men-only door policy, has resulted in an alienating experience of Village life for many women. This is not to say that women's spaces do not exist, but it is often the case that special club nights for women become overrun by men, and that bars catering to women are short-lived. In 1994, when Station "C" closed its lesbian bar, G-Spot, it sent out an "open letter to the gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities" to announce that lesbians were still welcome at the complex: "That [G-Spot] remained open for as long as it did, while never being financially self-sufficient, is evidence of our commitment to the lesbian community. **We continue to consider our dyke clientele an essential part of K.O.X.**" (1994, Emphasis in the original). This letter constitutes a reminder that gay clubs are, despite the rhetoric of "safe spaces" and "diversity", businesses which cater to those with the means to frequent them.

The Station "C" letter points to a dynamic whereby gay establishments are expected to "give back to the community" and "be responsible" towards their clientele. Sometimes, these imperatives call for measures which, on the surface, may not make economic sense. Reacting to complaints about its "open door" policy, Station "C" moved to prohibit "hostile straights" from entering the club and announced a new door policy: "K.O.X. is for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders, queer straights, drag queens, butch dykes, leather men, fags, their brothers and sisters, their parents and friends." But this rhetoric of inclusion (prompted by the twin desires to exclude certain people on one hand, and to appease the "community" on the other) masks the reality that K.O.X., as its name implies, is a space produced with the interests of gay men in mind. Here, Lefebvre would distinguish between a discourse *about* space (K.O.X. is for...) and a discourse *of* space, i.e. the signs and meanings embedded in space which "signify" what, and who that space is for: "That space signifies is incontestable. But what it signifies is dos and don'ts--and this brings us back to power... Thus, space indeed 'speaks'--but it does not tell all. Above all, it prohibits" (142). A few months after Station "C" closed its lesbian bar in 1994, Divers/Cité organizers scrambled at the last minute to find an alternative venue for the event's closing party, originally planned for K.O.X.. Many women in the organization had complained that lesbians did not feel welcome there.

With the above reservations in mind, it is possible to affirm that the Village has emerged to serve the needs of a large number of gay men. In a limited sense, then, the Village is an appropriated space in that it provides a basis for the formation and the reinforcement of identities --leather man, club kid, activist, middle-class gay man, etc.--which are otherwise not possible or made difficult in straight space. More specifically, a spatial concentration of gay establishments

provides the conditions of possibility for the formation of space-based identities, identities based on acts of "belonging to" the Village through an active participation in its activities, or perhaps by working in one of its businesses, volunteering at the Community Centre, or campaigning for a political candidate. The Village provides a space that makes possible these activities, and conversely, these acts of belonging act back upon the space by laying claim to it and thus constituting it, symbolically and materially, as "gay." But the question arises, is this active claiming of space by gay men a counterhegemonic force? Does this constitute a "revolutionary" spatial praxis, in Lefebvre's sense?

I would argue that, in and of itself, the Village does little to counter dominant society's power structure. The space has constituted itself as a sexual marketplace, according to the logic by which capital continually seeks out new markets to exploit for profit. The Village is tolerated as an expression of the needs of gay consumers within a capitalist economy; it is not a space of gay liberation or a queer utopia. At best, it is a symbol of some gay men's ability to carve out an accommodating space within a generally hostile culture, without significantly challenging that culture's basic structure, and without suffering a loss of the economic privileges that come with being male. Thus, the Village can be seen to perpetuate unequal relations based on class and gender divisions, even as it seeks to correct other inequalities based on sexual orientation. That said, the Village remains a significant accomplishment. If it constitutes more of an accommodation, rather than a full-fledged appropriation, it is an extremely inventive, culturally rich, and highly successful accommodation. To those whose needs and possibilities it adequately serves, and their numbers are considerable, the Village can be a "true space of pleasure" (Lefebvre 167), a space created to be "*lived* by people with bodies and lives" (143). This particular inter-

relation of bodies, pleasures and space is captured by Michel D'Amour's autobiographical novel, Michel, gai dans le Village. He writes:

> Un jour, je l'ai saisi mon Village. Je l'ai fait mien quelques instants. Oui! j'ai voulu immortaliser une page de son histoire qui, je l'espère, te fera comprendre ce qu'il a réellement été pour moi. A l'époque surtout où l'énergie de mes belles années m'a procuré des joies immenses et inoubliables.... J'ai l'impression de faire corps avec ce secteur est de Montréal... (17)

Here, D'Amour expresses a disposition towards the Village that is presumably shared by many gay men in Montréal, a personal sense of "seizing" a space, of making it one's own. This active appropriation leads to his participation in the "immense" and "unforgettable" pleasures the Village offers and to a feeling of "oneness" with this particular space, expressed as "faire corps avec...", or "being of the same body" with the Village. Thus, D'Amour expresses his sense of an identity inseparable from a sense of place.

While there is cause to celebrate that the existence of the Village makes such an experience of "oneness" with a space possible for some gay men, it is also important to affirm once more that such a space is situated within a broader context, and is vulnerable to changing social and political circumstances. Spaces like the Village are produced, and the conditions of their production are not always in evidence. The Village has been made, and repressive social forces, some of which act upon it on a daily basis, can lead to its unmaking. Thus, the identities that partake in the many pleasures of the Village, also partake of its illusions, of its fragility. As Lefebvre points out: "Appearances and illusion are located not in the use made of things or in the pleasure derived from them, but rather within things themselves, for things are the substrate of

mendacious signs and meanings" (81). The Village may provide a measure of safety for gay men, who experience its space as welcoming of the expression of their identities, but it does so within a social framework that can steal this illusion away from them in the time it takes for 50 armed police officers to raid a bar and place its patrons under arrest. The Village, and its relative safety, is produced, in part, by the constant negotiations of gay activists with the social actors who wield power over it. Only the rise of a widely distributed spatial consciousness, which brings to light the "mendacious signs and meanings" embedded in space, will bring about substantial, structural change. Until this happens, and until gay men learn to build alliances with lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders, the Village will remain merely a limited accommodation within a powerful, and oppressive, social structure.

Worlds Collide: Identity, Community, Representation.

I have argued that the process by which the Village is produced promotes a particular sense of "spatial identity", and, in some cases, a politicized "spatial consciousness", among many gay men in Montréal. However, this sense of spatial belonging was said to be partly an illusion based on the tendency of space to conceal certain social relations of domination: the Village is at once subjected to state institutions and in turn productive of its own exclusions.

This sense of spatial identity promoted by the Village works itself out through the everyday practices of those who live there, but it also has a discursive existence quite apart from the individuals who constitute it. How is the Village (re)produced at the level of discourse, from within the gay community and in the mainstream? What are the meanings associated with the Village, and what is their role in producing this space? These questions operate at the level of

"symbolic and representational struggles over the sexual meanings associated with particular spaces" (Knopp 652). It is important to consider this symbolic dimension of space, because, as Rob Shields writes:

> Properly social divisions and cultural classifications are often spatialised, that is expressed using spatial metaphors or descriptive spatial divisions. As an ensemble, these are incorporated into 'imaginary geographies'. In these recodings of geographic space, sites become associated with particular values, historical events, and feelings. (29)

As Shields goes on to argue, these "imaginary geographies" come to have material effects because they code spaces as "places-for" this or that, thus partly determining what spaces can properly be thought to be for and how they come to be used.

On the one hand, there is the construction of gay identity and community that emanates mostly from the gay press, for which the Village embodies playfulness, joyful hedonism, and, increasingly, friendly neighborhood relations. In the Spring of 1993, a billboard for Kentucky Fried Chicken appeared at the corner of Amherst and Ste-Catherine. It proudly announced: "On a des relations dans le Village" (We have relations in the Village), thereby punningly calling attention to the Village's ability to promote both "familial" and sexual relations. This construction of the Village as a simultaneously friendly and sexually charged destination has also been used to promote Montréal as a North American gay tourist destination. These efforts, bolstered by an aggressive marketing campaign in American and Canadian gay publications, have contributed to an "imaginary geography" of Montréal, and the gay village in particular, as a mythical, idealized queer playground, a mecca of gay consumption and entertainment.

In July of 1995, the gay monthly Fugues published an issue devoted to the question "Montréal, la mecque rose d'Amérique?". The front cover features a young, good-looking male couple silhouetted against the Montréal skyline, their arms interlaced, the image awash in a hot pink hue. The articles describe efforts undertaken by gay businesses to position the Village as a self-contained gay mecca, a city with a concentration of gay establishments that few others can rival. Montréal, Fugues claims, has developed a reputation as the "Miami of the North" or as the "Last Dirty City", and tourists from all over North America are descending on the city to partake of its charms. The Village, it appears, is booming and on the verge of becoming another "St-Laurent" or "St-Denis", Montréal's two trendiest streets.

Lurking under the surface of this discourse about gay space in Montréal is another, competing discourse: the gay village as the seedy, dirty underbelly of the city, a place where drugs, depraved sexual practices, prostitution, and violent crime fester in the night. The history of this rhetoric harkens back to 1950s scandal sheet exposes of Montreal, then known as the "Open City", which set out to document Montreal's "400 year-old heritage of sin" and frequently included sensational accounts of the city's gay and lesbian underground (quoted in Straw, 63). In 1991, just as the current gay village had established itself as a visible component of Montréal's cityscape, the construct which links homosexuality to crime, drugs, prostitution and depravity gradually began to resurface, due in part, ironically, to the efforts of the Comité sur la violence.

In 1990, some Montreal activists began to notice a pattern among media reports of murders of men who were found brutally murdered, alone in their homes (Comité 2). These activists believed that these murders were of gay men, that the motive was homophobia, that a serial killer might be at large, and that the police were ill-equipped, or unwilling to conduct

thorough investigations. The Comité took their suspicions to the media and, in time, forged a collaboration with the police that has led to the resolution of many of these murders. However, an unanticipated consequence of creating a media storm around the issue of gay murders has been to revive a public discourse which articulates ideas about criminality and death with ideas about gay sexuality, ideas that had been in circulation since the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. In effect, the moral panic created around the gay murders provided another *space* onto which to attach a set of meanings that criminalize and pathologize gay men.

On February 11, 1993, *La Presse*, Montreal's largest French-language newspaper, published a story titled "Relaunch of investigation into wave of gay murders." It is instructive to quote from the lead paragraph:

> Two men who were stabbed to death within ten days of each other, one in his Laval residence, the other in his Montreal apartment, were both regular clients of a cruising bar located in the city's south-east end.

The article goes on to state that one of the victims had been seen the day before his murder "sitting with a stranger in a licensed establishment on Ste-Catherine St., in the heart of the city's gay village." Yet another passage points out that all the victims were "men who frequented the gay milieu." This newspaper article, like almost every other article written about the murders, uses language which foregrounds not the sexual identities of the victims, but rather their common affiliation with particular spaces. In other words, according to these accounts, the victims are not "gay men" so much as they are "men who frequent particular places."

The tendency to emphasize the spatial over the identitary is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the 1994 video documentary Climate for Murder by Montreal newspaper columnist and

video maker Albert Nerenberg. This video, commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation at a cost of $75,000, aired twice on prime time in the summer of 1994 on the 24-hour news channel CBC Newsworld. As I will demonstrate, Climate for Murder relies upon a set of "place-images," to use Shields' formulation, that assume on the part of its audience, a prior homophobic understanding of gay spaces as inherently depraved. As CBC's Ann Medina so eloquently put it in her introduction to Climate for Murder: "This week's documentary goes into the world of gays, skinhead gangs, cocaine deals and prostitution. So be warned, it is not a family hour programme." Nor, apparently, is the Village a space for the whole family.

The tone of the video is set up by the opening montage, which describes the horrifying 1989 murder of Joe Rose, a young, well-known Montreal gay and AIDS activist beaten and stabbed to death on a city bus as he was coming home from work. The story, narrated by openly gay CBC television and radio personality Brent Bambury, is set against a haunting, minimalist electronic score and rapidly edited images of night life, violent street scenes, shots of busses, Montreal landmarks and scenes of the gay village. The images are seamlessly edited MTV-style and processed with a creepy blueish hue, adding to the horror of the spoken description. The sequence ends with a still photo of Rose's bloodied body, sprawled out on the floor of the city bus.

As the music suddenly becomes upbeat, Nerenberg's thesis regarding the murders is revealed. Bambury, the narrator, says:

> "Most of the murders revolve around a half-mile stretch that's known as the gay village.... It's a diverse area where bars, restaurants and shops thrive. But it has a dark side, it's one of the city's poorest neighbourhoods, a no-man's land of street kids and prostitutes."

As these words are spoken, the sequence of images progresses, or rather degenerates, from a daytime shot of two men having a casual conversation, to a rainbow flag, a drag queen walking, the facade of a nightclub, followed by night-time shots of an underwear display, a low-angle view of a man begging for money, an apparent transaction between prostitute and customer, and finally, a shot of street kid with his face scratched out electronically. As the images switch from day to night, so does the music revert back to its previous eerie mood.

The central argument of Climate for Murder is that the key to the unsolved murders of gay men in Montreal lies in the village's "dark side," whose border the documentary argues can be situated quite clearly:

> Is the solution to...most of the ten unsolved murders found in the drugs and prostitution that revolve around the corner of Champlain and Ste-Catherine? That connection explains a lot about the murders. All the murders were excessively violent...most victims were over 40, the strip is full of older men seeking sex, often closeted, easy prey for would-be killers...

This explanation posits the intersection of two streets, Champlain and Ste-Catherine, as the collision point of two worlds: it represents "the border between the up-and-coming gay village and Montreal's poorer southeast end." According to the logic of this narrative, gay men who gravitate too closely to this point of collision are liable to get sucked into a "no-man's land" out of which they may never emerge alive.

Climate for Murder's narrative thrust is consistent with newspaper articles which implicitly shift the emphasis from the problem of homophobic attackers to the notion that it is the spaces

that gay men choose to frequent that constitute the real danger. As John Haslett Cuff, the television critic for the Globe and Mail writes:

> [Climate for Murder] suggests that some of the deceased were victims not because they were gay, but because they were *there*, exposed and vulnerable, in some of the seedier haunts of the demi-monde they share with garden-variety street predators. (Emphasis added, A14)

Indeed, Nerenberg's understanding of the Montreal gay murders relies on a set of deeply homophobic place-images that cast the Village as inherently, and inevitably, dangerous and seedy. While there is an attempt to create a balance between these images and a more benign discursive construction of the Village, the weight given to the central argument is such that even the upbeat montage that accompanies the end credit sequence (in which a variety of people are asked "why are people gay?) cannot dissolve the overwhelming impression of doom. Climate for Murder is undoubtedly a well-intentioned attempt to portray gay men sympathetically as the victims of violence, but the documentary is too quick to make sensational use of the homophobic notion that frequenting gay spaces implies some sort of death-wish. Perhaps Nerenberg was more interested in making "sexy" images rather than responsible journalism. The result, sadly, is that Climate for Murder implicitly shifts the burden of responsibility for the murders from the attackers to the victims themselves.

Spatial Belongings

In a recent article entitled "Performativity and Spatial Distinction," Cindy Patton documents a recent shift in emphasis in scientific discourses about AIDS. She observes that medico-scientific understandings of AIDS have moved from a

> fundamentally epidemiologic understanding of the HIV epidemic, which seeks to understand *who* a body is, to one which is fundamentally related to notions of place--to *where* a body is...[This shift] attempt[s] to recodify the *place* of affected bodies...through constituting their *location* as synonymous with disease, which is understood to be already contained. (188-189)

Here, as in the discourses surrounding Montreal's gay murders, the view which posits an individual who possesses a body in need of protection, is replaced by an institutionally sanctioned discourse which makes distinctions among people on the basis of value-laden markers of spatial belonging, of *belonging to* a particular *place*, which is constructed as synonymous with disease (or violence), and as already contained. Thus, it becomes easier to conceive of disease and violence as the proprietary domain of certain groups, who, by virtue of belonging to certain spaces, have already brought doom upon themselves and thus cannot be helped. In this climate, the state absolves itself of its duty to protect all citizens (against disease, against violence) and endeavours instead to protect the "innocent" (read "the general population) *from* those who are most at risk.

Indeed, the police in Montréal act according to a dual mandate: on one hand, there is pressure from within the gay community to protect gay men who frequent gay spaces, and on the other, the police acts to regulate and contain gay spaces, and the identities and communities that

emanate from them, in the name of enforcing public morality. As Cindy Patton writes: "It is urgent to rethink the terrain on which activism occurs, determining whether and how micropractices of resistance can operate in a new land where space...secures identities" (191). This could take the form of further concerted action to abolish antiquated laws, such as "bawdy house" regulations, that criminalize and pathologize gay men for frequenting gay establishments. Further, the discourse by which gay spaces are cast as inherently diseased and depraved must be vigorously opposed. The Village may not be a queer utopia, but it is worth defending as a testament to the richness and diversity of gay culture.

The Space of Queer Theory II

I have provided an account of how a social space is produced by the intersection of political, social, economic, and symbolic factors. This chapter has also suggested ways in which the fates of identities and communities can be said to be intertwined with the production of social space. In the discourse of queer theory, one might say that space can be productively studied as providing the conditions of possibility for certain performances of gender or sexual identity. Such a move situates the question of identity within a social context, in an attempt to answer Judith Butler's question: "What performance where will...compel a radical rethinking of the psychological presuppositions of gender identity and sexuality?" (139).

To begin to answer this question would require attention to the ways in which spaces are produced as "straight" and how they might be appropriated, or re-produced, differently. It is not sufficient to cast all space as prediscursively straight and then focus one's attention on how this space might be "queered" through the disruptive display of a non-heteronormative gender

performance. This emphasis on performance is misleading, for spaces are produced prior to any instance of performance. The configuration of space that exists at a particular time in a given setting will largely determine what performances may occur, and the manner in which these performances will be received. The critical task for queers, then, is not merely to "make trouble," our very existence already achieves this, but to do so in a manner that fundamentally alters the social relations of our existence *in space*. This is not a call to abandon ship, but a call to renew queer theory's commitment to issues of identity, community, and representation in a manner that accounts for their imbrication within socio-spatial processes.

Conclusion

This project constituted an attempt to situate the emergence of gay male identities and communities in relation to broader questions about the production of social space. The particular configuration of gay space in Montréal, whose most visible expression is the Village, was shown to provide the conditions of possibility for particular sets of "space-based" identities and communities. The sense of spatial identity promoted by the Village, I argued, is ultimately contingent upon wider social, political, and cultural contexts and is constantly challenged by persistent societal discourses that pathologize and criminalize gay men and the spaces they inhabit.

However, despite a commitment to exploring questions of identity in a manner that moves beyond the highly abstract conceptions currently popular in queer theory, this work has had little to say about gay men's actual, lived, experience of space. Rather, an analysis of spatial forms was assumed to provide a basis for theorizing about what identities and communities are made possible, and which are discouraged, by a given configuration of space at a given time. I remain convinced that such an approach provides a solid basis from which to think about identity and community formation, but the process should not begin and end with the analysis of spatial forms.

Angela McRobbie has called for "identity ethnography" work to be carried out in cultural studies. She writes that such work is necessary to combat the tendency to treat individuals and groups simply as "audiences for texts" and proposes a renewed commitment to thinking about issues of everyday life. I would add that the study of everyday lived experienced might productively engage with identity and community formation in relation to socio-spatial processes.

One way to go about "identity ethnography" would be to conduct small-scale ethnographic work dealing with experiences of social space in local settings. Such an approach would contribute to an empirically-based understanding of what Lefebvre calls "representational space," "space which its inhabitants have in their minds, and which for all its inaccuracy plays an integral role in social practice" (93). In other words, a socio-spatial "identity ethnography" would study how groups and individuals understand and experience their identities in relation to space. This descriptive dimension, aimed at rendering everyday experience, could be supplemented with an analysis that explores the "inaccuracies" of representational space, by which Lefebvre refers to the social relations embedded in the production of space. Such an analysis might reveal the extent to which individuals and groups can be said to have a "sophisticated awareness of the impingements and encroachments of abstract systems on their everyday lifeworlds" (Gregory 306). What degree of "spatial consciousness" does a given community hold? To what extent does this community define its identity in spatial terms? What are the conditions that lead to a "seizing of space" and a claiming of spatial identity?

Queer Youth and the Promise of the Internet

> ...so we are out of the closet, but into what? what new unbounded spatiality? the room, the den, the attic, the basement, the house, the bar, the university, some new enclosure whose door, like Kafka's door, produces the expectation of a fresh air and a light of illumination that never arrives?
>
> -Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination."

Questions about the everyday experience of space and identity could productively be asked of many place-based communities, such as gay communities, but they could also be extended to the new spatial configurations made possible by technologies such as the Internet. The case of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and queer (GLB/Q) youth is perhaps especially interesting in this context. As greater numbers of young people have begun to self-identity as GLB/Q, social structures (such as youth groups) have emerged to emerge, mostly in large urban centres. These youth face particular difficulties in affirming their sexualities, given the heterosexist and often homophobic environment of schools, and their relative lack of autonomy and isolation from other GLB/Q youth. The high rates of suicide, anti-gay violence and HIV infection among young gay and bisexual men have been well documented. But youth groups are only one response to a complex situation that raises equally complex questions about the responsibilities of the adult GLB/Q community towards its emergent youth subculture, about social constraints which inhibit the ability of the GLB/Q community to meet the needs of GLB/Q youth, and about the difficulty of integrating youth into the social spaces currently occupied by GLB/Q communities. As Gerald Unks writes in the introduction to The Gay Teen:

> The most apparent parts of gay and lesbian culture--particularly bars and social clubs--are highly adult-centered, and there are legal, social, financial, and political barriers that prevent any legitimate adolescent participation in them. (4)

One response to the structural barriers prohibiting adolescent participation in the major institutions of GLB/Q life has been the emergence of Internet youth forums, such as discussion lists, e-zines and chat groups, which have arguably reconfigured the geography of GLB/Q

existence by providing virtual avenues for social interaction and the dissemination of GLB/Q culture.

Given their relative isolation, especially outside of urban centres, might the Internet be to GLB/Q youth of today what the gay bar was to many gay men in the rest of the century? What are the limits and possibilities of the "spaces" created by the Internet? What kinds of identities do these spaces help foster? These are questions that a production of space analysis might successfully tackle, while drawing attention to the process by which virtual space hides the conditions of its production. What are the effects of the growing commercialization of the Internet and of government efforts to regulate its content?

These questions point to many directions in which a production of space analysis might be combined with an ethnography of identity approach. However, there are some difficulties to anticipate: the desire to conduct ethnographic work in virtual space has to be supplemented with appropriate methodologies. What happens to the conception of what constitutes "field" work when time and space are compressed and rendered virtual? How does one apply standards for reliability and validity in cyberspace? These are simultaneously philosophical and practical questions that will gain importance as efforts grow to understand the nature of social interaction in virtual space.

I conclude, then, with a call for a continued commitment to investigating identity and community formation processes in relation to socio-spatial factors. Future work might concentrate on making use of ethnographic methodologies for the study of identity in order to better understand how identities are formed in dynamic relation to social spaces, whether "real" or virtual. These questions appear particularly relevant to the study of GLB/Q youth, for whom a

relative absence of social space has given way to a virtual explosion of opportunities in cyberspace. That said, I would also proffer a warning: there exists a tendency in popular and academic discourses to indulge in the uncritical celebration of the Internet, to fetishize its seemingly "unbounded spatiality," in the words of Judith Butler. Could it be that virtual space "produces the expectation of a fresh air and a light of illumination that never arrives?" As more and more teenagers come out of the closet and enter into virtual space, the need to assess the significance of this phenomenon for GLB/Q youth becomes more pressing. I would submit that the proper way to go about it is to ask the kids themselves.

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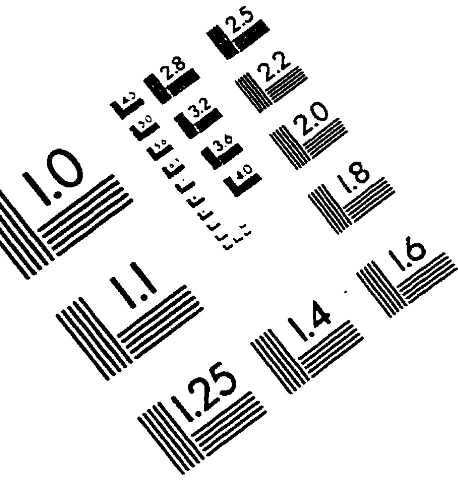
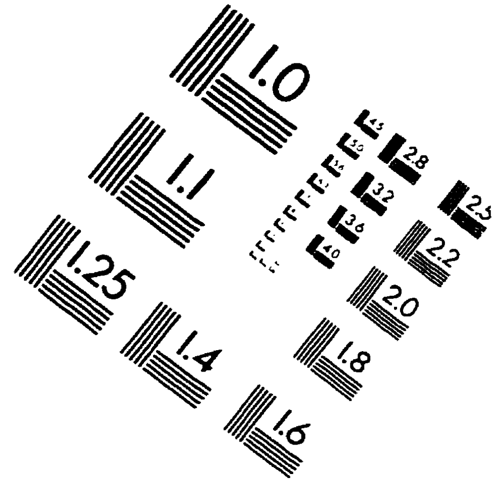
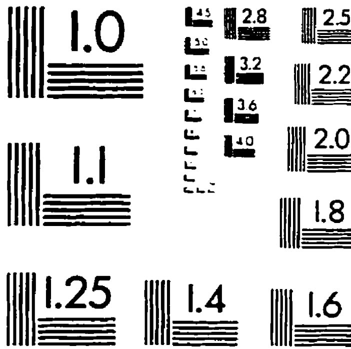
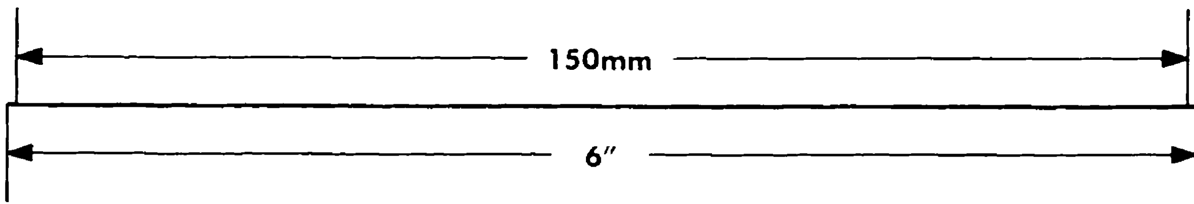

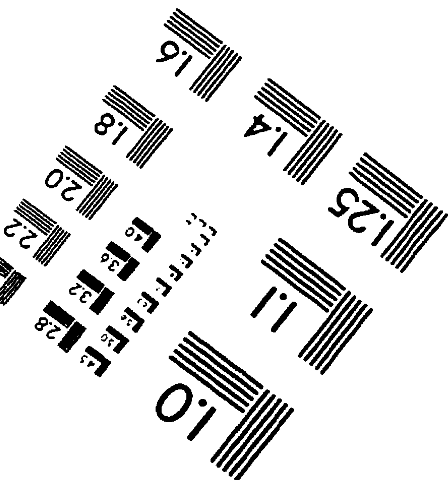

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