

ABJECT AMERICANS: WASTE, OBSOLESCENCE, AND STRATEGIES
OF RECYCLING IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

By

DEREK SCHWARTZ MERRILL

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2006

Copyright 2006

by

Derek Schwartz Merrill

Dedicated to those fighting the 5 year plan.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Seclusion is necessary to complete a project such as this. During the writing and revising stages it is easy to forget the social aspect of knowledge. To this end, the University of Florida has proven invaluable. My time spent at UF was highly rewarding thanks to the energy and enthusiasm of the faculty and graduate students. The MRG provided the intellectual space and focus necessary to maintaining a critical edge throughout these years. Special thanks goes to the Chair of the Department, John Leavey, whose vision makes this department a dynamic place to study. Thanks to him, the MRG has a national presence of organizing highly engaging conferences. I also want to thank the staff for all their help over the years: Carla Blount, Loretta Dampier, Melissa Davis, Kaaren Moffat, Jeri White, and Kathy Williams. Finally, I want to acknowledge the students in my classes who have contributed to help me understand the finer aspects of literature and culture.

More specifically, I thank my friends in California for their generosity and unflinching support: Carla Hamby, Kris Melberg, Chris Tow, and Rosalia Valencia-Tow. I will always be thankful for their enduring friendship. My family, of course, has also played a vital role in my life by supporting me throughout. I thank my sister Jennifer Merrill, and my brother-in-law Kevin Sinarle for all those burritos and pizzas; my grandmothers, Mary Merrill and Ethel Schwartz for all those card games; I especially want to thank my Mom and Dad who have helped me unconditionally in so many ways. Without their psychic and financial support, this dissertation would have never been

finished. From Florida, I thank Anton P. Janulis; Brian Meredith and his mother and father, Alice and Mike; Liz Graham; and Fred Young. Their friendship has opened my world beyond what I could have imaged.

My committee deserves special thanks for all their support over the last 4 years. They are instrumental in guiding how I think about not only my own work, but also my relationship to this discipline. I thank Alex Alberro for the semester chats that always proved inspiring, Marsha Bryant for all her professional advice since my first semester at UF, and Susan Hegeman for her scholarly advice that always brought me back on track. My chair, Phil Wegner, provided continual encouragement and had faith in my project when I was certainly unsure of its merits. His kindness will forever be a model for which I will try to emulate.

And finally, to the brave world of new forms of kinship: Maria, Manual, and Guillermina. They reminded me of what is at stake in my project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	8
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	9
The Politics of the Washroom	9
Strategies of Recycling in Literature and Visual Culture	11
2 PRODUCING WASTE, PRACTICING RECYCLING	14
The Over Production of Waste	14
Throwaways.....	16
Spatial Closures	19
Repair.....	24
From Repair to Recycling.....	26
Remaking Waste	29
Cultural Studies on Waste	40
3 THE MASS PRODUCTION OF WASTE	55
The Antiseptic Frederick Taylor.....	58
From The Sterile Factory to the Dirty Streets	71
<i>The Great Gatsby</i> and the Dream of Reinvention	72
Taylor's Body	75
Pre-Taylor	76
Success as Lifestyle	82
Manhattan Fantasy Land	86
The Violence of Waste	88
<i>The Day of The Locust: The Mass Production of The American Dream</i>	91
Slumming as Performance.....	94
The People Who Would Rule Los Angeles after Its Destruction.....	101
The Violence of Dreaming	104
The Cheated: A Body Beyond Taylor	108
4 THE SOCIETY OF STERILITY	116

The Schlemihl.....	118
Lefebvre and The Everyday.....	121
Situations towards a Production of Space	126
Pynchon’s Fiction	128
“Low-lands”	128
<i>The Crying of Lot 49</i>	133
<i>Vineland</i>	140
<i>Mason and Dixon</i>	151
Projections of Waste.....	164
5 UNREPEATING THE COMMODITY FORM OF WASTE	172
Gleaning Waste.....	175
The Spectacle that is <i>White Noise</i>	177
The Spectacle of Waste and The Airborne Toxic Event	182
The Collective in the Supermarket.....	189
<i>Underworld</i>	198
Architects against Waste	198
Recycling, A New Way of Life.....	203
Everyday Recycling.....	205
Wasted People	207
The Art of Waste	208
The Aesthetic of Recycling	213
The Haunting of Recycling	220
6 LUMPENPROLETARIAT OF THE WORLD . . . SWARM!.....	223
Toward a Waste Collective.....	226
The Lumpenproletariat and Multitude.....	228
<i>Almanac of the Dead</i>	235
Lecha	242
Angelita	246
From an Almanac to Paradise.....	253
<i>Paradise</i>	255
Preserving the Past	255
The Convent	261
Spatial Recycling: <i>City on a Dump</i>	267
From the Washroom to the Dump.....	270
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	272
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	279

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

ABJECT AMERICANS: WASTE, OBSOLESCENCE, AND STRATEGIES
OF RECYCLING IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

By

Derek Schwartz Merrill

December 2006

Chair: Phillip E. Wegner
Major Department: English

This project examines the social and spatial category of waste. It argues that waste is something actively produced in the present, not something leftover from the past. Beginning with the great eradicator of waste, Frederick Taylor, this project argues that his method of scientific management, while eliminating waste from the factory, impacted the social and spatial realm. His process of elimination defined waste in sharper terms, dividing people and places into abject realms. I turn to literature to examine how it represents the processes of making things obsolete. More importantly, however, literature, art, and architecture present possible solutions to the processes that make people and places waste, what I call recycling. Recycling in this context means re-using what is considered to have no value. Because it is concerned only with use-value, recycling avoids the vicious cycle of production-consumption. This in turn devalues social and spatial relations formed by the commodity.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The Politics of the Washroom

Where else but in the washroom would the specter of communism threaten to incite sedition? In a telling 1930's advertisement about the interrelationship among class, cleanliness, and politics, the manufacturer of Scot Tissue towels asks: "Is Your Washroom Breeding Bolsheviks?" They have a good reason to believe this could happen since they warn: "Employees lose respect for a company that fails to provide decent facilities for their comfort." According to the advertisement, rough paper towels prove the gateway to discontent workers: "Try wiping your hands six days a week on harsh, cheap paper towels or awkward, unsanitary roller towels, and maybe you, too, would grumble." It is not low wages or poor working conditions that will inspire the worker to become a member of a revolutionary party, but unacceptable, unsanitary, and unsavory tissue towels. This ad connects concerns of hygiene and the consumption of quality goods with social and political stability, warning that if overlooked, one may *produce* a negative result: Bolshevik workers.

My project examines just such a negative result of economic, political, and social processes. The washroom is not the only place that produces or eliminates waste. Waste is produced on various spatial scales. If cleanliness is politically aligned with capitalism as the advertisement suggests, waste is the equivalent to communism. The paradox here is that for capitalism to maintain a healthy state, the circuitry of production and

consumption must continually produce large amounts of waste, such as the throwing away of tissue towels. But as we know, through planned obsolescence, this process of making waste accelerates through the continual transformation of new products into old ones. In addition, this process of overturning value not only applies to things, but to people, people who suddenly find themselves obsolete in the global economy and who occupy a social and cultural position similar to useless objects rotting in a dump. However, as my project argues, thrown away objects are not silent; they speak and tell a competing story to capitalism's self-affirmative one. Waste tells a story about capitalism that it cannot tell on its own.

I use the word *waste* throughout my dissertation to refer to people or places that the dynamics of commodification have defined as worthless. Waste is a flexible term that reflects the malleable nature of garbage—it can be remade into many things. Waste is socially and spatially fragmented, divided from the processes that make it. Conversely, I reserve the term *recycling* to mean the social practices that transform value. Recycling overturns the forces that make people or places waste, while it also avoids relations based on mercantile exchange. Moreover, a project of recycling produces alternative conceptions, practices, and relations of a social collective. Both key terms, *waste* and *recycling*, help identify forces that divide people into social categories of winners and losers. Waste is a negative relation produced by a dominant class; however, waste, both as a material and conceptual category, marks the site of class struggle. Spaces of waste, places where capital either does not flow readily or where garbage collects, are a privileged space where strategies of recycling are built.

Strategies of Recycling in Literature and Visual Culture

In the following chapters, I use the work of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Nathanael West, Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Toni Morrison to elaborate the processes that produce waste populations and places, and to propose strategies of recycling. At the end of Chapter 3, 4, and 5, to explore further a strategy of recycling based on issues opened by the novels discussed, I refer to the work of particular artists, specifically, the architecture of Acconci Studio and Lebbeus Woods, the earth projects of Robert Smithson, a film by Agnes Varda, and the site-specific urban art of Krzysztof Wodiczko. While each artist critically engages with the social and spatial dimension of waste, they *detourn* the formal relations that produce waste. Recycling is a highly visible practice; thus, art becomes a primary device to articulate an aesthetics of recycling. Through literature and visual culture, I identify the collective practices that emerge from spaces of waste as moments constituting agency.

My dissertation spans a time of 75 years, beginning with *The Great Gatsby*, published in 1925, and ending with *Paradise*, published in 1999. My dissertation does not attempt to construct a linear progression of how waste is made, or develop strategies of recycling in a similar manner. Instead, I map the various strategies of recycling against the specific mechanisms that make people waste from that specific historical moment. No single model of recycling arises; instead, what we learn is that different methods and practices of recycling are developed to build collective relations.

Chapter 2, “Producing Waste, Practicing Recycling,” establishes what is at stake in both making people waste and enacting strategies of recycling. The value of space, maintaining it as a commodity, requires the elimination of waste. Theories of resistance, specifically various forms of subcultures, elaborate methods of construction agency

beyond the value of the commodity. But waste as a site of resistance is, in turn, resisted by some cultural theorists. They demonstrate that waste still has value. Other critics claim the opposite, that waste can eliminate its own commodification through producing alternative social relations, a position that I elaborate throughout my dissertation. The political significance of this Chapter is elaborated in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3, “The Mass Production of Waste,” examines the social impact of Frederick Taylor’s theory of scientific management in *The Great Gatsby* and *The Day of the Locust*. Taylor’s closure of an outside social space is met with two forms of resistance. The first is practiced by the emergent post-Taylor body who transcends class relations by performing class-as-lifestyle. The other person is trapped within the class position of waste. This figure enacts the only strategy left: violence.

Following the closure of an outside, Chapter 4, “The Society of Sterility,” identifies in the work of Thomas Pynchon the thriving alternative lives in spaces of waste. I rely heavily on Henri Lefebvre’s theory of the everyday and everyday life, and theories of movement developed by the Situationist International. Both frame space as a potential site for change. Pynchon’s characters explore among the detritus of society different ways to live a better life. Most noticeably, spaces of waste and the people who live in them are not located on the margins of society, but exist in horizontally produced zones. The “projections” of Krzysztof Wodiczko and the architectural sketches of Lebbeus Woods examine the crucial aspect of space in building a collective.

In Chapter 5, “Unrepeating The Commodity Form of Waste,” I examine how the commodity form organizes peoples’ relation to space and to one another in Don DeLillo’s *White Noise* and *Underworld*. This chapter is divided into two sections. In the

first section, I recover Guy Debord's political intent in theorizing the spectacle. I then offer an alternative reading of events and spaces in *White Noise*. In the second section, I read *Underworld* as a novel of recycling. Using waste in innovative ways in the novel unrepresents reified spatial practices. Seeing the art projects in the novel as a continuation of the earth art of Robert Smithson frames them as disruptions against commodity relations. An aesthetic of recycling emerges from these projects that look forward to full articulation in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6, "Lumpenproletariat of the World . . . Swarm!," argues that both Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* and Toni Morrison's *Paradise* disrupt the "proper" model of politics and identity. They build different relations to one another that, when framed within Fredric Jameson's notion of cognitive mapping, project an aesthetic of collective formations. Both novels elaborate a class of people that resemble what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have called the multitude. Subjectivities are developed further away from being waste through practicing alternative kinship relations. As these novels explore the use of narratives for recycling, they also imagine a different organization of space, one that can contain the temporal and spatial dynamics of a practice of recycling. As Silko and Morrison demonstrate, a narrative of recycling must accommodate the always-changing terms of social obsolescence as a means to place the practice of recycling into a story we can all understand and begin to engage collectively on a global level.

CHAPTER 2
PRODUCING WASTE, PRACTICING RECYCLING

Victory will be for those who know how to create disorder without loving it.

—Guy Debord, “Thesis on the Cultural Revolution”

The Over Production of Waste

Perhaps more than ever, waste has taken on a new role in a global context. The need for recycling becomes clear when looking at the production of waste on a global scale. Embracing every country on every continent, globalization shapes the way people live and affects the environment they inhabit. The forces of globalization have both creative and destructive elements, and while bringing great prosperity and better standards of living to some people, its consequences are less fortunate for others, and they suffer negatively from the effects of a globally-connected world. Thus, in an era that creates a great amount of both economic and cultural wealth, a vast amount of waste—useless materials and people—also accumulates. The socially obsolete confront recycling as an imperative to change their situation since they are always *within* the forces that define them as waste.

Rationalized modes of production help organize the global market. The history of efficient modes of production is understood as a series of advancements in a narrative of progress. The history of consumption follows suit, since it is a continuous acceleration of purchasing and owning goods superior to their predecessors. Even though human

societies have always had to deal with waste, capitalism is the first form of social organization that massively transforms beings, places, and social relations into waste for the sake of exchange and not through use. The presence of waste, however, disrupts the fantasies of a future based on continual production and consumption. Under a global market, production and consumption accelerate, producing high levels of material and social waste. In this sense, the “new” produces waste on a variety of scales. From the new car, to the most advanced household cleaning products, to the outsourcing of labor to various countries, the new replaces the old. Once turned into waste, obsolete objects have no exchange value for the market. The urban scholar David Harvey makes clear the connection between globalization and waste:

Globalization entails, for example, a great deal of self-destruction, devaluation, and bankruptcy at different scales and in different locations. It renders whole populations selectively vulnerable to the violence of down-sizing, unemployment, collapse of services, degradation in living standards, and loss of resources and environmental qualities. It puts existing political and legal institutions as well as whole cultural configurations and ways of life at risk and it does so at a variety of spatial scales. (*Spaces* 81)

The power of global capital lies in its ability to quickly move into or out of specific spaces, and to colonize anybody, anywhere, and at anytime. As Harvey suggests, even workers who have knowledge of the latest technologies are not guaranteed job security. A stunning example of the global market making waste is Muang Thong Thani, a city built in the early 1990s in Thailand to accommodate over 700,000 people. Responding to the burgeoning Thai economy, the builders of Muang Thong Thani could only sell a portion of its housing units before the bubble of the Thai economy burst. The planned city transformed from the new to waste even before people could consume the space. Years after the crisis, Muang Thong Thani sits empty and useless.

Throwaways

This dissertation owes much of its conception of waste and recycling to Evan Watkins. With his notion of “throwaways,” or people who are made obsolete, Watkins encourages us to think of obsolescence not as something denoting the past, but as a social relation produced in the present. Watkins argues that people who occupy the social category of a throwaway have been produced as such by a complex process that he calls “technoideological coding,” educational narratives that circulate in mass culture and influence how obsolescence is culturally and economically produced. The ideology of technology defines the present, explains social change, and determines social position; thus, technology, like capital, “requires a continual production of new terms defining the social field” (2). The new produces a relation to one of two social categories: winners or losers. Being able to command the new links one to social mobility. Social mobility leads to living class-as-lifestyle, a privileged social practice that I identify in *The Great Gatsby* and *The Day of the Locust*. According to Watkins, technology and ideology, as they manifest themselves in consumer culture and the service industry, determine the political field on which oppositional politics is largely formed. Therefore, technoideological coding supports a system that necessarily produces winners and losers since people either have a command over technology or they do not. Because the political playing field is already determined, an oppositional politics enacted by “losers” that accepts the terms “winners and losers” is already doomed from the beginning. It is unable to make change since its position can be easily co-opted or resisted, and thus rendered obsolete. Throughout this dissertation I explore several instances of this political position. Called “re-invention” and “survival,” these strategies signify the performative aspect of

commanding the new. And as I will show, they do little to form collective social relations within waste populations.

Those people who are excluded from participating in the market are thus coded as relics from the past, and they appear “naturally” obsolete. Yet, a person’s or a population’s obsolescence does not unfold according to natural cycles or the linear progression of time. Obsolescence only appears as natural because the processes that produce it use notions of time:

There is a relation [between obsolescence and time], to be sure, but in specifically structured ways, which marks out the utility for dominant positions of making obsolescence what determines time, and not the other way around A displaced white working class is a survival from the past because it is obsolete; a culturally “stagnant” urban class as likewise a survival, because likewise obsolete, and so on. Obsolescence splits and divides up the social field by producing its temporalities as structurally coexistent layers. (36)

The presence of obsolete populations in a specific location—slum neighborhoods in the United States, poor countries, or environmentally wasted regions—encourages thinking of these spaces as zones indicating specific times, rather than social relations.¹ Watkins suggests that we think of obsolescence as a relation produced by the uneven development of capital. Thus, to think in relational terms helps to identify obsolescence stemming from spatial issues. Wasted spaces, those useless and barren territories where the socially obsolete live, do not erode from entropy. They are not only made as such, but for waste populations, these spaces are ripe for producing change.

A politics that focuses on how certain policies marginalize people does little to address the problem of obsolescence. The process and practices aimed at eliminating

¹ Here, we can think about depressed cities in the rust belt, for example. Dilapidated brick factories surrounded by weed-infested parking lots signifies another era. It is only when capital returns and remakes these factories for consumers in the form of lofts, for example, that these spaces have value again. The factory-turned-to-lofts acquires the time of the present while maintaining traces of the past.

one's "unfortunate" obsolescence cannot rely on merely exposing the ideological or political rationale that make people useless. Even if one were to develop a critical political analysis that did expose the ideology that renders people useless, one would still have to account for the problems of who enforces these ideas and the various cultural and social practices that maintain them. Watkins argues that "oppositional politics, like oppositional demystification, faces a very different set of mobile, shifting conditions of hegemony" (4). The forces that make people obsolete, or losers in the game of newness, continually change. A politics that creates winners and losers happens by and across various fields so that it becomes difficult to create a political opposition that can follow these shifts. In this sense it becomes clear that anyone who develops a political reaction against these forces can be made into a throwaway at anytime, since the forces that produce people as waste continually shift, thereby making a certain politics obsolete as well.

The discourse that sustains the concept of throwaway frames people as "throwbacks" to another time. The dominant discourse that defines poverty, which connects, for example, the poor's lack of education to a time of the past, works to neutralize the real reasons for people being poor. As Watkins explains,

there's every reason dominant ideological productions work very hard to endlessly construct itineraries of the obsolete as survival narratives, to flood so-called mass culture with nostalgic reproductions of a fading past—because obsolescence when reproduced as nostalgic object is no longer dangerous. (39)

By defining the terms by which the poor are represented, dominant ideologies are reproduced on a variety of scales, such as in mass culture. Reference to poor white culture in film and TV, for example, repeats a nostalgia for a "simpler time." This culture is safe to talk about precisely because the economic policies that made and continue to

make people poor are effaced. The space of the poor country town or trailer park does not challenge a system that produces the poor; it represents America as it once was.

Spatial Closures

The politics that shape space also orchestrate human activities. Spaces without waste are made clean and sterile, much like a commodity, while spaces of waste are seen as useless and worthless. For this reason, waste is managed in zones. Concealing social waste by restricting the movement of certain people to a specific scale serves to naturalize the social order. This theme of spatial scales is crucial in my analysis of Pynchon's work in Chapter 4. We can see how both space and peoples are (dis)invested of value in the work of Harvey and Mike Davis. As urban scholars, Harvey and Davis explore the organization of Baltimore and Los Angeles, respectively. Their work uncovers the processes that naturalize the living conditions and the everyday lives of the socially obsolete. Both show how people within zones of poverty find repressive spatial structures that make their movement into more affluent zones or efforts to improve their living conditions almost impossible. Both theorists situate the dynamics of social and spatial waste within the framework of globalization, which I also argued above, is key to apprehend the rationale behind the (re)production of waste.

Rejecting the idea that time makes people obsolete—as if a person or population can be forgotten or passed by time—Harvey argues that globalization necessarily produces pockets of disenfranchised populations, contained and excluded from entering and participating in the social sphere of the market, and denied the power to shape their immediate reality. The result is what he calls “uneven geographical development,” a theory consisting of two components: production of spatial scale, and production of geographical differences. Production of spatial scale refers to spatial scales “at which

human activity can be orchestrated” (*Spaces* 76). Production of geographical development refers to how an “examination of the world at any one particular scale immediately reveals a whole series of effects and processes producing geographical differences in ways of life, standards of living, resource use, relations to the environment, and cultural and political forms” (77). Geographical differences are produced in the same way as Watkins’ throwaways. Harvey mentions that geographic differences “are perpetually being reproduced, sustained, undermined, and reconfigured by political-economic and socio-ecological processes occurring in the present” (78). Such unevenly developed geography reveals the contradictions of capital. Harvey argues that, against the discourses that naturalize progress, uneven development “helps redefine possible fields of political action” (81).

Harvey suggests that capital’s influence crosses national borders and cuts across class boundaries in cities, and thereby precludes the spatial design of marginalization. Under the impulse of globalization, no longer do outcasts sit at the edge of town since entire towns, sections of cities, and the people who inhabit them are vulnerable to losing their labor value. The financial collapse of Enron or WorldCom in recent years, for example, in which thousands of people lost their jobs overnight, illustrates this point. Harvey’s concept of uneven geographical development helps to place obsolescence as a site contributing to the larger networks of spatial processes.

Mike Davis argues in *City of Quartz* that the built environment systemically excludes people from certain spaces: “we live in ‘fortress cities’ brutally divided between ‘fortified cell’ of affluent society and ‘places of terror’ where the police battle the criminalized poor” (224). The city of Los Angeles, Davis argues, fragments and

delineates the population into sectors, thus eliminating the formation of crowds or the mixing of classes. The city is splintered by “urban design, architecture, and the police apparatus [merge] into a single comprehensive security effort” (224). Like Harvey, Davis shows the production and existence of waste within the city, not on its borders. The classical dichotomy of poor/affluent, inside/outside is replaced by the concept of zones, micro-spaces of poverty existing among, yet made invisible to, the affluent. Along with gated, public neighborhoods, walls, and bunker-like buildings, smaller measures have been taken to contain waste to specific zones of the city. To deter the homeless from loitering or sleeping in public, barrel shaped benches make it impossible for anyone to sleep, let alone sit on them. Overhead sprinklers in public parks drench people at random intervals at night to ensure that no one uses the park to sleep. Other areas of town adopted this method of deterrent to keep the homeless in their “proper” place. The built environment discourages people from entering or using certain sections of the city, emphasizing spatially the city’s division of classes. If people do enter these areas despite these barriers, they are instantly marked as outsiders who have violated the “natural” borders traced within the city. The “separation of different humanities” limits free-flowing movement across public spaces, and by so doing the hegemonic space simultaneously creates and criminalizes waste populations.

Methods of containment give way to waste management. Davis further examines how social policy produces uneven social space. Beyond the small waste zones in the city, Davis chronicles the way terror induced by the military-type tactics of the Los Angeles Police Department on its poor and non-white citizens contributes to producing and managing waste. In response to the rising gang population and skyrocketing

availability of rock cocaine from these gangs, the authorities stepped up their efforts to police this problem. Programs like Operation HAMMER—“full manpower reserves of the Department [LAPD]” (274) making massive sweeps on “suspected” gang members—combat not only specific crimes, but also specific populations. Rather than curb crime, programs such as HAMMER target and code certain populations (and races) as criminals. In order to permanently code certain sections of the city as dangerous—and hence obsolete, a space consisting of unproductive, throwaway citizens—the LAPD sealed off a 27-block area with barricades and erected police check points (277). Besides isolating those defined as social waste, the barricades on the one hand project a nostalgic view of social relationships. In the turmoil and unpredictable global market, relations that appear fixed and permanent in the social imaginary conjure reassuring images of a natural, social order. Barricades, walls, and check points counter global capital’s instability. On the other hand, separating people spatially further dramatizes antagonistic relationships. The continual criminalization of the poor creates “an imaginary class relationship, a terrain of pseudo-knowledge and fantasy projection” (270). The manifestation of this idea can be traced to a desire for cleanliness, of a city free of material debris and social trash. In other words, a city transformed into a commodity.

In the desire for a clean, ahistorical space, the urban planner plays the role of urban hygienist. Davis’ *Ecology of Fear* best articulates this drive toward social sterility. By creating literal waste-free zones, urban planners create a “clean” city, free from the permanently unemployed, homeless, and lumpenproletariat, people who tarnish the otherwise sparkling social landscape. This is realized in Universal City’s “City Walk,” an “idealized reality” of Hollywood in “easy, bite-sized pieces” of real Hollywood, minus,

as master designer Jon Jerde states, “the excitement of dodging bullets in the Third World country’ that Los Angeles has become” (397). People will not grumble when strolling through City Walk.

The parallels traced by Jerde between certain areas of Los Angeles and the Third World remind us of Harvey’s uneven geographical development and the different social-economic levels that it produces. Designer Jerde uses the discourse of geopolitics to naturalize social difference. His version of the First World embodied in City Walk materializes a specific politics of sterility. Eradicating waste can only happen through the production of the commodity called “City Walk.” City Walk, made for consumers, not citizens, is yet another product that signifies all that is clean, new, and free from contamination. Sterility is a common factor in these types of spaces as they attempt to not only clean the spaces of social debris, but also maintain a homogenous space. The tension between clean space and waste is furthered developed in my discussion on DeLillo’s *Underworld*. Finally, a space built upon concerns with sterility and the value of the commodity creates a territory in which deviance, like dirt, is easily exposed. These spaces make ideas of properness—behavior, appearance, practices—the standard to which people hold themselves and others.

Any discussion of the containment of waste and its management inevitably leads to a conversation about value: who makes it and how it is sustained. Davis shows that value and aesthetics are tightly bound concepts ultimately linked to the notion of the commodity. Indeed, the process of erecting barriers to create “clean zones” is much like wrapping a commodity in packaging. Susan Willis provides the link between value and product packaging. By noting that types of packaging ensure that the product is pure, she

brings the notion of “sterility” into the study of devices that eliminate waste. Willis proposes that the supermarket symbolizes high standards of hygiene, which is always associated with progress, expected from the First World (2–3). In addition, Willis argues that packaging is also linked to security. When a product is sealed by plastic or shrink wrap the consumer knows the product is new, clean, and safe. Similar to commodities wrapped in plastic, the gates and walls that surround ghettos or affluent areas produce, preserve, and enhance value and suggest a form of progress, whether it is the progression of techniques of security or the organization of communities to sustain property value.

Producing sterile space by concealing waste generates narratives about the type of people granted access to these spaces. One must buy his/her way into them. In this sense, the person mimics the commodity he/she purchases. They too must look as shiny and bright as the homes in the gated communities in which they live. These boundaries, both physical and psychic, multiply and surround throwaway populations, who are left with the task of remaking their lives.

Repair

From the survival skills of throwaways, Watkins argues, hints and suggestions emerge on how to live differently. For Watkins, “the shifting survival skills of obsolete groups continue to create conditions of revolutionary possibility, precisely by their inventiveness in repair” (11). Watkins uses the notion of “repair” to think in different ways about overcoming the forces that make people obsolete. Repair has two functions. First, it makes use of what is obsolete, thus rejecting any tendency for the production of the “new” to guide its politics. Secondly, repair for Watkins means “a mode of understanding and a multiple set of practices whose aim is to construct possibilities for a different politics altogether, where there are no winners or losers at the game of newness

dictated by technoideological coding” (10). “Newness” is determined by who has the authority to define something as new, and any obsolete population pursuing this route will always lose since something deemed old may be revived and made new again for consumption.²

The economic market, or space of the market, fails to offer insight into how people can remake their lives. Watkins argues that a central problem throwaways encounter in trying to repair their situation is that they “don’t have access to the cultural freedoms to generate brilliantly new simulations and excesses of this postmodernism” (39). However, even if they could participate, the idea that generating “brilliantly new simulations” falls short of remaking one’s relation to the social and political order that defines one as waste. All one would accomplish is to temporarily “win” at the game of newness. Denied the possibility of playing in the field of the market, throwaways have to use what is available to them. This means that they reuse what is old or broken.

One of repair’s main functions is to reestablish value, specifically the use-value of an object or person. If repair aims to make something or someone exchangeable, that person or thing would once again have to struggle at the game of newness. Watkins avoids aligning repair with “newness” by making a distinction between innovations derived from dominant and obsolescent groups:

the repair of the obsolete can be strategically inventive, even if the invention will never count as “innovative” in the dominant coding of obsolescence/innovation. . . . [N]o alternative educative process can work without first creating a space for its operation in existing territories. (214)

² Taking an old object and making it new again depends to a certain extent on context. Here we are reminded of another novel by Nathanael West, *A Cool Million*. The house that Lemuel Pitkin and his mother rent is sold to an antiques dealer who “planned to take the house apart and set it up again in the window of his Fifth Avenue shop” (69). The house becomes more valuable as an antique representing the past than actually performing the task of housing people.

Watkins places “innovation” in a paradoxical situation. He indicates that while people must be creative in their approach to constructing spaces or ideas for oppositional politics, these ideas or spaces must avoid being innovative in terms of the newness that the market requires. “Constructing conditions of possibilities” relies on using a space in which a strategy and practice of repair can be elaborated. Innovation—a crucial element in repair strategies—is a type of labor. The labor of innovation *produces* strategies of repair. Indeed, re-instating use value into waste while simultaneously avoiding the social forces of the market requires a large amount of labor. That said, repair does not attempt to make something valuable by placing it back into the production-consumption cycle from which it originated and make it available for everyone to purchase. This does not mean that a strategy of repair, however innovative, cannot be appropriated by the market or put to use by mainstream politics. The threat of appropriation mandates waste populations to always think innovatively about repair. Strategies must continually evolve. With the proliferation of disparate obsolete groups come multiple strategies of repair that attend to specific, local issues. The task of making social, economic, or spatial change must identify a commonality among disparate waste populations.

Watkins outlines a project requiring the assemblage of different ideas and practices that disrupt the seemingly natural way people are divided into social groups. Social space proves invaluable in the fight to repair since its educative narrative can unfold in the reshaping of public space.

From Repair to Recycling

Elaborating on Watkins’ work, my analysis focuses on waste populations and spaces of waste as potential agents of change. People develop their agency through critical practices that I call “recycling.” From the outset, Watkins indicates that the notion

of “survival” seems inadequate to describe what these populations do. Survival assumes that one salvages scraps to live, and that one lives on a day-to-day basis.³ It also connotes a lack of power to change the rules that structure one’s existence. As an alternative, Watkins describes the concept of repair as a way to think of waste populations possessing the capacity to change their situation. Lastly, survival lacks the political critique that repair and recycling have; to explain the strategies that one uses to survive is to only describe the living conditions of waste populations. Recycling, on the other hand, means not only describing, but projecting a better way of life.

I have chosen to use the term “recycling” instead of “repair” for several reasons. The term “recycling” does share similar characteristics to repair; however, to isolate and elaborate key characteristics of repair—inventiveness, oppositional politics, educative narratives—I find that recycling is a more useful term. Turning to the Oxford English Dictionary clarifies how each term relates to remaking waste. The OED defines “recycling” in this way: “To reuse (a waste material), to convert (waste) into or *into* a usable form; also, to reclaim (a material) from waste.” “Repair” has a similar meaning: “The act of restoring to a sound or unimpaired condition; the process by which this is accomplished; the result attained,” and “Restoration of some material thing or structure by the renewal of decayed or worn out parts, by refixing what has become loose or detached, etc.”

Both words are closely related, and each exemplifies the act of making something useful again. Repair, however, hints at the need to fix the integrity of the original structure, something I do not think Watkins intends in his use of the term. Repair is an

³ Because it dramatically highlights the basic needs to live, “survival” indicates the biopolitical aspects to strategies of repair and recycling. Survival recalls Giorgio Agamben’s notion of “bare life.”

attempt to create an oppositional politics, but the term also suggests that this form of oppositional politics is aimed to keep the old forms of political relations intact. This is why I believe “recycling” is a better term for this dissertation, since it more effectively captures the process that I am describing. Recycling emphasizes the constant innovative practices of taking pieces from different things and recombining them in different ways. And to “convert waste into a usable form” foregrounds innovation, an essential part of any project of recycling. Finally, in an examination of waste, “recycling” is both conceptually and semantically consistent with re-using and remaking what has been defined as useless.

It is important to introduce a caveat: the term “recycling” as I am using it should not be mistaken for supporting or being part of the *cycle* of the commodity; as I see it, the term recycling breaks the cycle of commodification, for it does not improve waste for resale, but makes it useful by reusing it outside the rationale of commodification. An example of the former can be seen in the television series, *Antiques Roadshow*. Bringing items of questionable worth for appraisal, people arrive at the show with an object. A monetary value is then attached to the object, and people leave with a commodity, since the object now has entered the social relations of the market and acquired exchange value. People may learn that the lamp they bought at a yard sale for 25 cents is worth thousands of dollars. My version of recycling focuses on social relations beyond the alienating and divisive force of the market. Indeed, recycled objects may still appear as waste to the market if they do not respond to the market’s terms.

Practices that do not reproduce the commodity form need to be highly inventive. Anyone can engage in a project of recycling, and it can be used to liberate or repress

people. However, as I will show, the liberating aspects of recycling come from innovative and inclusive practices that can only be performed collectively. Innovation is a highly regarded skill for recycling since the people who do want to rearrange a social order must evade co-optation.

Remaking Waste

The act of transforming waste into something dangerous proves a difficult thing to do since the forces of capitalism continually seek ways to appropriate and absorb dissent. The dangerous kernel of any project that aims to remake hierarchical social relations lies in the activity of innovation.

Looking at some instances and theories of cultural formations gives us an idea of how recycling as it is practiced by different groups can be dangerous. As will be made clear, innovation is a key component in the formation of cultural groups, and necessary for any oppositional practice of recycling. Specifically, the influence of recycling practiced by the self-organization of waste populations can be traced to methods used by the avant-garde and subcultures. Critical methods developed by the Situationists International (SI), which I will elaborate in Chapter 4, such as *detournement*—combining parts of text and images in ways that subvert the text’s or image’s original meaning—and *derive*—wandering excursions in the city meant to discover spaces of liberation—illuminate the recuperative activity of each method. I see practices of recycling as encapsulating the SI’s critical engagement with space and images, especially as they are explored in my discussion on Pynchon. Their aim was not to (re)supply culture with new images and ideas to consume, but to destroy the market relations in which images circulate among people. But these images were not meant as an isolated activity. Astrid Vicas reminds us that *detournement* is primarily a social activity. The significance of

their work, she argues, depended on “Collective action [that] generates significance by turning upon itself, taking outcomes of past interactions and setting them up for ongoing uptake by others in a process of bootstrapping that creates new patterns of organization” (382). This perpetual recycling of useless items by different people at different times binds invention with collective action. The practice of detournement is a type of recycling of items, and as Vicas reminds us that this practice evolves out of a culture with a “massive supply of cultural productions . . . already available” (391). Recycling then depends on the accumulation of (useless) cultural material. The aesthetic engagements of the SI illustrate that people can critically use cultural items for political ends. This also suggests that through these methods people gain agency on a variety of social and political levels. As with all things “old,” the methods of the SI live in a mutated form that appears as something unique in culture.

On an elementary level, people’s reusing of items in different ways echoes a type of “resistance” articulated by John Fiske in his notion of popular culture. Fiske portrays the production of popular culture as people’s creative relation to culture, and in turn illuminates an aspect necessary for recycling. Fiske appears to place faith in the politics of resistance practiced in the everyday.⁴ He cites a study that examines how unemployed youth use shopping malls. Instead of buying goods, youth groups would idle around or window shop. Fiske claims that the youth “consumed images and space instead of commodities The positive pleasure of parading up and down, of offending ‘real’ consumers and the agents of law and order . . . became an oppositional cultural practice”

⁴ I am less interested in the objects of Fiske’s study, Madonna or the shopping mall, or in the fact that he theorizes a form of resistance that comes from consumption, and more intrigued with how he sees communities forming around a popular culture that they create.

(17). As Fiske notices, “Popular culture is made by various formations of subordinated or disempowered people out of the resources, both discursive and material, that are provided by the social system that disempowers them” (1–2). Re-forming the resources that disempower people suggests that people have agency and that they can overturn the meaning of language or objects. He presents popular culture as something subordinate groups “produce at the interface of everyday life” (6), and that the relevance of an object or practice is produced by the people. In this sense, how and what people produce as having meaning moves in a horizontal manner; it is not imposed from the top by an authority. From these relations comes a type of resistance that is, according to Fiske, performed on local, or micro, scales. Fiske underscores the importance that innovation plays in these expressions: “The ability to think differently, to construct one’s own meanings of self and social relations, is the necessary ground without no political action can hope to succeed” (10).

Fiske’s version of politics is played out in the field of signs. His insights contribute to understand the construction of resistance established through channels or networks from which oppositional resistance communicates and builds power. However, waste populations are not welcomed into his understanding of resistance through popular culture. Indeed, Fiske’s analysis remains confined to middle class groups who want nothing to do with systemic changes.

I mention Fiske primarily to establish a version of acts of resistance against which this dissertation argues. Throughout my project I mention many literary critics who apply a similar idea of Fiske’s theory of popular culture in their reading of works by authors I discuss in this dissertation. What constitutes an act of resistance and its significance for

these critics amounts to I have called strategies of “survival.” In this context, Fiske argues in favor of strategies that reproduce the logic of “winners and losers.”

More promising for waste people wanting to invent forms of resistance, Dick Hebdige’s analysis of the style of punk rock shows an affinity between subculture and detournement. Hebdige explores punk rock “style” as one of bricolage. It combines elements from previous traditions that, when placed side by side, do not seem to match. According to Hebdige, punk’s genesis evolved from the glam rock of David Bowie, American proto-punk from bands like the Ramones, London pub-rock, and Rhythm and Blues (25). Their clothing style borrowed heavily from diverse contexts, to which Hebdige compares Duchamp’s ready mades—ordinary objects made into art. Punks used safety pins and lavatory chains for jewelry, PVC and plastic for clothes, and fetish wear such as straps and chains. These items were taken from the bondage shops and worn on the streets. Taking ordinary objects and using them in others ways than originally intended creates what Hebdige calls “‘in place’ and ‘out of time’” (26). The item at hand, like S-and-M wear, disrupts the rules of public space since these items are intended for use in private. Recycling styles to produce an ensemble of “diverse and superficially incompatible musical traditions” produced both visual and musical disharmony (26). This “out of time” ensemble suggests that borrowing styles from various rock movements from different historical periods detaches them from their original historical and cultural context and thus creates a different meaning all together.

This reassembling of different items to give them new meaning is a defining factor of subcultures. Subcultures, in general, engage in highly inventive activities. The act of re-signification is achieved through “combining things borrowed from one system of

meanings into a different code, generated by the subculture itself and through subculture use. Another way was to modify, by addition, things which has been produced or used by a different social group” (Clarke, Hall, et al. 55). Subcultures underscore the idea of transformation and malleability of an object’s meaning, which then open up a social transformation. This means someone could “pass” as a member of another class, or social group, one for which they do not have the necessary credentials.

From Hebdige and Fiske we can gather the highly creative aspects involved in subordinate group’s redeployment of cultural items for their own use. Remaking something, giving it a different meaning, shows us that they have agency. Importantly, Hall addresses a fundamental aspect of subcultures, class:

In addressing the “class problematic” of the particular strata from which they were drawn, the different subcultures provided for a section of working-class youth (mainly boys) one strategy for negotiating their collective existence. But their highly ritualized and stylized form suggests that they were also attempts at a solution to the problematic experience: a resolution which, because pitched largely at the symbolic level, was fated to fail. The problematic of a subordinate class experience can be “lived through”, negotiated or resisted; but it cannot be resolved at that level or by those means. There is no “sub-culture career” for the working-class lad, no “solution” in the sub-cultural milieu, for problems posed by the key structuring experiences of the class. (47)

Hall problematizes the significance of subcultures reusing cultural material. He recognizes that on one level subcultures are expressed primarily through signs and that, while remaining significant to each group, signs do not resolve the forces that structure their lives. A style can be invented, but a practice that undoes the “structuring experiences of their class” proves challenging, even outside the design of subcultures in general.

Subcultures, the authors continue, cannot solve homelessness, poverty, or unemployment. Instead, subcultures continue to “reproduce the gaps and discrepancies

between real negotiations and symbolically displaced ‘resolutions’” (47). We can imagine that as a youth in a subculture grows older, he/she realizes there are no jobs outside of a subculture where he/she can work. Subcultures create markets for their commodities, an act that is fundamentally grounded in market values.

Countercultures, according to the authors, offer a type of solution to the subculture dilemma of not addressing the structural conditions that shape their lived experiences. Countercultures, like waste populations who recycle, express their dissatisfaction through ideological and cultural forms: “they directed their attack mainly against those institutions which reproduce the dominant culture-ideological relations—the family, education, the media, marriage, the sexual division of labor” (62).

The authors see counterculture as the negative dialectic of the emerging middle class during capitalism’s “uneven and incomplete transition” (65). Yet, for all their insistence on not reproducing hegemony, Hall argues that countercultures never break cleanly away from their class position. Countercultures may question social values, like monogamy, but this does not address class. The significance this has on recycling is explored in Chapter 4. Countercultures help capitalism survive, and therefore remain susceptible to co-option by it. Their resistance lived as a lifestyle anticipates a late capitalist service society in which “lifestyle” acts like a safety valve. Indeed, one may perform as a bohemian and have trust fund. For Hall, “revolutions in ‘life-style’ were a pure, simple, raging commercial success” (66). Regardless of their position within society, countercultures “prefigure, anticipate, foreshadow . . . emergent social forms They prefigure, among other things, the increasingly *social* nature of modern production, and the outdated social, cultural, political and ideological forms in which this is

confined” (69–70). Social relations, their production and maintenance, is a central issue addresses in the chapters to follow.

Countercultures offer a vivid example of the potential that waste populations have to disrupt the very forces that have rendered them useless. Counterculture strategies, if less focused on style and more on politics, could serve as a model for an emergent social form of waste, which could represent the contradictions of capitalism while resisting co-option.

There is a significant connection between the SI and sub and popular cultural forms of resistance. On the one hand, the SI’s methods of innovation, of taking parts of ideas and material items and recycling them in new ways, are similar to the various mixings of influences of punk rock.⁵ On the other hand, the arena differs in which opposition is built. While the political field on which subcultures reside easily makes them susceptible to being recuperated by the market forces, the Situationist International were not so easily co-opted since they created a space hostile to relations of capital. (Although, I will show, especially in Chapter 4 on DeLillo, how literary critics continually empty their political content.)⁶ A style such as punk rock is easily co-opted since it resists on the level of signs. Adding to this resolution is the media who, by its representations of punk, made it a safe for consumption. Hebdige argues that “it is through the continual process of

⁵ On the connection between punk rock and the Situationists, see Greil Marcus’ *Lipstick Traces: The Secret History of the Twentieth Century*. In it, Marcus describes the SI’s influence on Malcom McClaren’s creation of the Sex Pistols.

⁶ Here I want to stress that during their existence the politics of the SI were not easily co-opted. Thirty plus years after their demise, however, the SI, as represented by critics using Debord, seem to have lost their political significance.

recuperation that the fractured order is repaired and the subculture incorporated as a diverting spectacle within the dominant mythology from which it in part emanates” (94).

Clarke, Hall, Heddige, and Fiske all indirectly describe the process that I call recycling as a significant aspect of the production of subcultures or popular culture. They highlight how making something from available cultural material brings people together, which I consider a fundamental aspect to recycling. None of them admits that these lead to a radical form of politics. However, the inventiveness of counter, sub, or popular cultures is crucial to locating liberating moments within everyday life. Heddige and Fiske offer examples of alternative readings of objects or ideas, and show that the recombination of them requires, as Watkins’ argues, the endless task of innovation. The inventiveness of recombining objects and ideas described by them directs attention to this process of discovering another social order. Their work can be read alternatively as locating the revolutionary possibility in everyday life, a notion explored in Henri Lefebvre’s *The Critique of Everyday Life*, and one I elaborate further in Chapter 4. Lefebvre argues that the way people live on a day-to-day basis is not static or random. Everyday life is shaped by capital, yet there is a repressed radical dynamic to it. Capitalism’s mode of production shapes how people live and therefore severely limits ruptures in its order. Yet Lefebvre saw everyday life as dialectical, where revolutionary possibilities are always present.

I see waste populations as constituting a type of subculture that radically critiques everyday life. They are a subculture that responds to their situation through similar creative methods. This similarity notwithstanding, waste populations cannot be completely subsumed into the concept of subcultures for they occupy a position of radical

exclusion. Waste populations are not afforded a space to display their style, as Hebdige sees punk rock doing, nor do they measure their resistance through consumption, as Fiske's popular culture does. Waste is the residue of the class structure. Their daily engagements with the forces that make them waste takes place on the plane of everyday life. These engagements combine the inventiveness of subcultures with the critical edge of the SI. In this sense, waste populations considered as sub and popular cultures perform a type of resistance necessary to rethink everyday practices and habits.

Among many things, these different cultures share in common their critique of existing bourgeois relations. As a response to this type of life, another radically marginalized group remains to be discussed. Turning to Judith Butler's discussion of drag helps elaborate the production of alternative relations. In her examination of the documentary, *Paris is Burning*, Butler poses a key question for my dissertation: "If one comes into discursive life through being called or hailed in injurious terms, how might one occupy the interpellation by which one is already occupied to direct the possibilities of resignification against the aims of violence?" (123). Asserting that the hail "seeks to produce a lawful subject, produces a set of consequences that exceed and confound what appears to be the disciplining intention motivating the law" (122), Butler suggests that there are always moments to produce an alternative trajectory from within the law. The hail produces *someone* as *something*, but that person can intentionally misunderstand and become something else beyond what the law intended to create. This play between two different versions of production—one of power, the other of the person subverting power—happens across social realms. The one being hailed can embody the "excess of that production" (132).

Paris is Burning is set in Harlem and is about poor gay men who compete against one other in balls. The categories of drag vary: from military to school boys, from businessmen to fashionable women. The goal, however, is to pass as “normal.” They stress that in a homophobic society it is crucial that gay men perform heteronormal codes accurately. They must be who they appear to be. This means that if a man cross dresses in public, he must appear convincingly as a woman. One knows he is successful if he arrives home without having been assaulted by other people for his transgression. The balls replicate this performance of fitting in.

How does the performance of fitting in register socially, politically, sexually? Butler addresses two modes of cultural analysis—celebration and critique—that read drag and balls quite differently. Celebrating individual agency to transgress gender or class roles resonates with John Fiske’s model of resistance. The gay man who imitates a straight lawyer shows that he understands the cultural codes he violates. His parody would suggest that he subverts the codes that restrict who performs as a straight lawyer. But, to merely celebrate this drag misses the larger point of power: Butler argues that drag “is a site of certain ambivalence, one which reflects the more general situation of being implicated in the regimes of power by which one is constituted and, hence, of being implicated in the very regimes of power that one opposes” (125). Although drag imitates and disputes the naturalness of identity, Butler sees this reading of drag as returning the subject to “normal” (125).

Butler then turns to bell hooks, who critiques the film and filmmaker, Jennie Livingston. Seeing male drag as misogynist for its “imitation based in ridicule and degradation” (126), hooks sees all drag performances as being against women. This

position takes seriously the notion of “natural.” The subject who engages in drag violates the realness of women. On the subject of validity, hooks accuses Livingston of approaching “her subject matter as an outsider looking in” (qtd. in Butler 133). hooks suggests that Livingston’s presence in the all male community is like the ethnographer documenting “natives.” Livingston, it seems, has also violated the barriers that “naturally” separate a “white women/lesbian filmmaker” from black men and Latinos.

These two modes of analysis miss, Butler argues, a crucial element to the film: the production of kinship relations. The men compete in balls as members of houses. As each house is named differently—for example, House of Extravaganza, House of Ninja—the men use the house name as their last name. Each house has a designated mother and father figure who essentially serve as the “children’s” parents. Shifting her focus onto the social relations the men have produced in their houses, Butler understands the balls as

an occasion for the building of a set of kinship relations that manage and sustain those who belong to the house in the face of dislocation, poverty, homelessness. These men “mother” one another, “house” one another, “rear” one another, and the resignification of the family through these terms is not a vain or useless imitation, but the social and discursive building of community, a community that binds, cares, and teaches that shelters and enables. As each competes in a ball, they compete in the name of their house. (137)

Rather than focus on how men imitate straight men or women, Butler examines how these men imitate kinship relations similar to the ones they have rejected. This production that sustains these relationships is ultimately what waste populations aspire to achieve through recycling. I elaborate the importance of kinship relations in my discussion of Toni Morrison’s *Paradise*. Building alternative kinship relations takes advantage of the excess the hail produces in its subjects. The reiteration of family, Butler reminds us,

is not an appropriation of dominant culture in order to remain subordinated by its terms, but an appropriation that seeks to make over the terms of domination, a

making over which is itself a kind of agency, a power in and as discourse, in and as performance, which repeats in order to remake—and sometime succeed. (137)

The kinship relations that overturn dominant forces is a strategy of recycling I have outlined in this chapter.

Cultural Studies on Waste

Waste is a curious thing. While commodities shine, waste withers away, out of most people's sight. Cultural studies has turned its attention to this hidden phenomenon, producing narratives about the significance of waste. My study of waste differs from most since I understand waste to be a highly flexible series of relations. The value of an object is only created in relation to other material items. In our society, the value of an object or space cannot be created outside of capital; a commodity is always, as Marx reminds us, a social relation. That people's labor force or production has value rests on their exchangeability for money. If a commodity loses its exchange value, it can still be useful, but it is outside the commodity-exchange process, and stops being a commodity. An item that only has use value no longer communicates with other objects in the mercantile sphere. An item having only use value could thus be said to be in reserve, ready to be exchanged in the market at any given moment. Perhaps only the garbage dump symbolizes lost hope, since the items that fill the dump are seen as both absent of exchange and use value. They are dead. But recycling campaigns and memorabilia trends prove that things thought useless can recuperate a great amount of exchange value.

Furthermore, these objects may be recognized as having use value even if their exchange value has been lost, for as Marx makes clear, use value exists independently from exchange value. Reinstating use value that rejects commodified forms of exchange

value is the concern of this dissertation. In trying to make waste dangerous through recycling, this dissertation implicitly asks: what is the value of uselessness?

My project enters a discussion on waste that has been going on for several years in cultural studies. The literature mentioned below elaborates certain aspects of waste and recycling. What constitutes waste varies, and how these authors view the productive nature of waste also varies. These studies view waste as a highly malleable object, something that can be remade into something else. The underlying, flexible nature of waste suggests that its social position is also highly volatile. It can easily travel from the dump as a useless thing to one's windowsill as an art object. For my purpose, reviewing literature about waste helps shape my view of a general practice of recycling. This review also suggests that recycling has been a practice and is growing as a cultural practice. The practices of recycling, although highly temporal and site-specific, have common denominators.

In his book *On Garbage*, John Scanlan examines how Reason divides phenomena into categories of useful and worthless: “we might see this habit of separating the valuable from the worthless within a whole tradition of Western ways of thinking about the world”(8). For Scanlan, “the surprising core of all we value results from (and creates even more) garbage” (9). Thus the act of disposal—the disposal of “things, people, or activities that are separated, removed and devalued”—is the focus of Scanlan's work (10). He covers a wide-range of territory on garbage, from the jettison of rubbish thinking from Western metaphysics, to American and European artists use of garbage, to the uncanny nature of garbage in people's lives.

In his chapter on art, Scanlan refers to the work of Joseph Cornell, Marcel Duchamp, and Robert Rauschenberg to examine how the idea of refinement, an offshoot of Reason, “organizes experience into the graceful and the gauche, the tasteful and the kitsch. Refinement separates, withdrawals, and distills a sphere of value from the cruelty of existence”(89). He recognizes in Cornell, Duchamp, and Rauschenberg the continual blurring of the “distinction between artistic materials and object world . . . forcing the reassessment of object” (102). The artist walks through a dump, or scours the city sidewalks for material. Cornell and his box constructions hold everyday, banal objects such as a wooden cube, ball of foil, and a sea shell; Duchamp’s readymades are men’s urinal, shovels, and combs; and Rauschenberg’s boxes hold pieces of thrown away lumber, rocks, and scrap metal found in the streets of New York. This act of recycling foregrounds both the active role one undertakes in remaking something, and the fluidity of the object. A found, discarded object can be used for any reason or in any way in an art piece. For Scanlan, artists reuse garbage as if it were a new medium. Looking at the aesthetics of garbage represented in art, Scanlan underscores the viewer’s role in making meaning of these pieces. He suggests that garbage, both as it is used by the artist and viewed by the public, produces an active response from people. Unlike a commodity, the meaning of garbage is not a given.

Scanlan argues that with the division of labor also came the increasingly privatization of waste processes. As industrialization isolated the individual through labor, society increasingly separated itself from its bodily wastes through rationalized systems of waste removal. Plumbing, which brings water into one’s house, allows for a separate room for defecation, the water closet. This room exemplifies the “individuality

on habits of cleanliness and in establishing a ‘private’ space brings us to a recognizable present where bodies are separated one from another as a matter of social and personal development from early age” (124). Scanlan refers to the work of Ralph Levin to highlight the link between technology and the persistent drive to privatize waste removal. Levin argues that the invention of the self-sterilized public toilet captures the total privatization of this act. He mentions recent innovations in public toilets, such as the “disposable plastic covering that can be renewed automatically by pressing a button, and a device for the irritation of the toilet seat with ultraviolet light” (Levin 61). Referring to Levin, Scanlan makes a brilliant connection between privatization and what I will call the commodity of the washroom: “the latest [toilet] inventions attain their unique effect on total *newness* through the integration of technological means and urban camouflage to present the appearance that every use is possible the first-ever time” (my emphasis 128). In order for a toilet to remain a commodity, it must eliminate all traces of past use: traces of waste can potentially make the toilet useless. The presence of waste makes a toilet waste. In this sense, the toilet must continually be recycled into something that is new; a toilet must always appear new for each new user. We can further the connection between Scanlan’s argument about the newness of a toilet and society’s re-production of value by considering the paper sanitary strip around the toilet in hotels and motels. This thin white strip of paper gives the impression to the guest that he/she is the first one to use that toilet. Reminiscent of Susan Willis’ argument about how packaging represents the freshness and sterility of the commodity, the sanitary strip is there for us to take off, thus “opening” the product for the first time. People may sit down with the assurance that the seat and surrounding area are clean. The strip also effaces the toilet’s past. Through

rationalization, even the toilet reminds us of the presence of the commodity. As discussed above with Davis and Harvey—and as I will elaborate with the figure of J. Edgar Hoover in *Underworld*—this sanitary logic extends to the level of spatial and social relations.

Gates, walls, and barriers serve as a more solid form of the paper sanitary strip.

Scanlan’s work reminds the reader that garbage cannot be totally destroyed.

Garbage serves as a valuable residue. This residue—either in material or ideal form—has its uses as something else. William Rathje and Cullen Murphy use garbage to unveil this “something else.” Their book *Rubbish*, chronicles the work done by the Garbage Project, started in the 1970s at the University of Arizona. The Garbage Project consists of examining garbage, sorting, and then classifying it according to “150 specific coded categories” (21). Once coded, other data are recorded such as the date the item was collected, the weight, brand, and cost.⁷ Part of this obsessive collecting and sorting of garbage builds an alternative narrative about the way we live. By investigating garbage dumps, garbage cans, and landfills, we can learn more about “insights not into the nature of some past society, of course, but into the nature of our own If we can come to understand our discards, Garbage Project archaeologists argue, then we will better understand this world we live in” (4). Garbage Project provides a model from which I will elaborate Klara Sax’s art projects in *Underworld*.

Rathje and Murphy ask whether “our garbage tells tales about us that we as yet do not suspect?” (11). They argue that garbage reveals consumption habits, and that what we

⁷ The significance of The Garbage Project’s work of collecting, sorting, and in general giving order to discarded objects can be compared to Paul Auster’s “City of Glass.” In this story Peter Stillman walks around New York collecting broken items such as an umbrella missing its protective fabric. Since the object cannot function as an umbrella, Stillman argues, it needs a new name: “What happens when a thing no longer performs its function? Is it still the thing, or has it become something else?” (93).

learn about them can tell us a lot about the way we perceive ourselves. The narrative of garbage reveals the dirty side of people's habits. One methodology used by the Garbage Project is to have the people whose garbage is collected record in a diary what they buy and consume. Their garbage is then compared to their perceptions about the amount and type of garbage they generate. The Project found that this usually "reveal[s] some telling human quirks. Foremost among them . . . is the tendency of people to be unreliable sources of quantitative information about their behavior" (67). What people buy and consume hardly corresponds to the remains found in their garbage cans. While certainly telling, garbage is a marketer's and a consumer researcher's best friend. Learning about how much and how often people consume a product could help, Rathje and Murphy suggest, local businesses make a decision as to what items to place on sale. If a grocery store wanted to advertise a discount on a specific brand of detergent, by knowing what size, type, and how often detergent is thrown away, the supermarket could select the brand and size of detergent most likely to sell (135).

Garbage tells a story. Scanlan's account of artists using garbage in their works suggests this. By telling a story about garbage, the garbage archaeologists tell a story about themselves, one that reveals their assumptions about loss and value. They remake the commodity by piecing it back together. Garbage is reinserted, through their activity, back into a system that recovers loss. They recycle garbage as a means to squeeze, to find that last ounce of value.

The story of Rathje and Murphy's garbage is cleansed to such an extent that it does not disturb people. Rathje and Murphy's own narrative about the story of garbage

ultimately relies on people to grasp how a society understands vast amounts of useless waste. For them, the market solves all:

We don't have to be passive participants in the marketplace, buffeted by forces beyond our control. Markets respond to value, and value is something over which human beings have influence. Recycled art has been commonplace in flea markets and swap meets for generations, but it is now breaking into art galleries and catching the attention of the glittery clientele. At the exhibit of garbage art at the Works Gallery mentioned earlier, a set of four coffee mugs fashioned from discarded Maxwell House coffee cans was priced at \$400—a price conditioned solely on a perception of value. (xiv)

The example of coffee cans becoming valuable would get a warm reception from the editors of the book, *Culture and Waste*. In their introduction, Gay Hawkins and Stephen Muecke propose that the collection of essays in their book indicates the drive in cultural studies to recuperate waste: “waste, far being the degree zero of value, can be exchanged as recyclable resource, antique, tourist landscape” (x). They see waste as being a crucial part of culture by examining its potential value:

Waste isn't just the uselessness that sustains utility, or the place where only the symbolic is in play; it has a complex role in formations of value Beyond utilitarianism's narrow cost-benefit analysis, waste is the necessary part of the formula that opens the door to other factors—cultural ones—in late capitalist economies. (x)

Rather than remain the negative other of useful things, waste can be used to express many things. Two essays in the collection are of interest to my discussion. One, by Gay Hawkins, favors seeing the disruptive potential of waste. The ideal of purity is always derailed when waste returns. Hawkins seizes this moment for its

political possibilities. Encounters with the ugly face of what ends unsettle cultural boundaries These encounters can also trigger circuits of intensity that scramble stable domains of politics and authority The hint of shit in a public space doesn't just call the self into question, but technologies of governance, *faith in infrastructure*. (emphasis in original 40)

Shit returns in uncanny form, and can never be totally eliminated. Thus, when waste returns it also signals the inefficacy of larger systems to control it. How secure could one feel knowing that the world could not fully manage waste? As I have discussed above, the anxiety of the return of waste motivates such repressive forces examined by Davis and Harvey. And it is this force that attempts to eliminate waste that obsolete people must confront.

Closer to my concerns here, Patricia Yeager focuses on the function of waste in American literature. She argues that “debris as vision, as violence, and as an alternative site of reading history and what it demands becomes a surprisingly constant theme in postmodern American literature” (106). She refers to Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* and Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony* as examples of works that turn trash into “an instrument for refashioning or rediscovering an unassailable past; it becomes an archive or instrument of historical reinscription” (109). Yeager views waste as a site from which alternative narratives spring from marginalized peoples. Part of the value of waste lies in its ability to generate a story on the behalf of people who lack one. Waste is also a constant in people’s lives since it serves as an archive. We can formulate from Yeager’s assertion that the constant production of people as waste necessarily and simultaneously produces alternative stories.

So far, these works on waste have mainly focused on the cultural aspects of garbage. However, there are other ways of examining the significance of waste. The practice of making waste useful as an expression of the economy can be better understood through Dominique Laporte’s *The History of Shit*. Laporte provides an historical account of the relationship between the rise of State capitalism, standards of

hygiene, the bourgeois subject, and the utility of human waste. Beginning with the cleansing of the French language, the State extended its purified discourse over its territory. The Edict of 1539 called for citizens to build latrines in the homes and to carry their urine and feces to a river once a week. There would be no more dumping waste in front of one's house. Laporte calls the State domesticating waste the "politics of shit" since this Edict "introduced the policing of waste and the privatization of excrement" (44). The separation of filth from the public and the accumulation of filth in one's house forms attitudes about and behaviors towards waste: it must be isolated and expunged. This attitude clashes with capitalism since waste thrown away is pure loss and something unproductive. Laporte notes that "Throughout the seventeenth century, the purifying, healing, and beautifying virtues of shit were sung by alchemy, medicine, chemistry, and the perfume industry. These virtues eventually receded from sight as they became less profitable" (97). Human shit's value came in the form of fertilizer, and the purification of urine into a potable liquid. This re-using of waste recovered the original loss to produce "great harvests—of threefold, sixfold, fourteenfold yields" (123). This person who uses waste, the one who Laporte names the hygienist, produces a "discourse, although synchronous with capitalism, is not the discourse of capitalism, but its symptom. Their fear of lack was not the poor man's fear As mean of means, they embodied a frugality that only later would be foisted on the people as pious" (124).

Finally, in an even more productive theory of the usefulness of waste, the nineteenth century French socialist Pierre Leroux saw human waste as ending poverty. According to Leroux, the State could collect people's feces and use it as fertilizer to help

crops grow. This utopian scheme, Laporte concludes, places “shit at the heart of his dream of the universal gratification of human needs” (133).

Laporte’s account of human shit, of its uses and various types of exclusions, ultimately sees waste as a produced relation, something Scanlan, Rathje, and Murphy do not. Laporte argues that the history of shit is the history of subjectivity, and the desire to make waste serve a utilitarian end “can only be understood within the context of their own bodies—bodies inscribed in a new political economy and redefined in terms of profit and loss” (123). As Rathje and Murphy’s *Garbage Project* illustrates, the body is caught within an economy that seeks to discover the “new” in what is considered useless. The resulting relation to waste is thus of a capitalist who expands the commodity form into new territory. Laporte’s work introduces other relations to waste that make it useful for useless people—the poor, the unemployed, the hungry. The subjectivity of the recycler in this scheme could be seen as complementing capital’s drive to appropriate things for profit; but this body also introduces an activity performed without the hope for profit, and thus emerges a radical body against capital. This body performs the type of recycling I explore in my project. The person recycles the obsolete in an attempt to break the production-consumption cycle that divides people into social categories of what Watkins calls “winners and losers.”

Architects and artists who resist the reproduction of these categories offer the most articulate model of a practice of recycling waste. The architect Lydia Kallipoliti proposes the study of “dross,” “a residual substance that emerges in transitional material stages” (30). Dross is a by-product, she argues (via Donna Haraway), of social reality. Seeing dross as containing energy, Kallipoliti seeks to find the “generative potential of obsolete

objects and spaces” (30). Here is where Kallipoliti’s work overlaps with my study of waste and recycling. Using dross as her guiding concept, Kallipoliti attempts to remake it through what she calls a “tactic of reuse,” which is a “psycho-spatial position, ‘fueling a reality of change, motion, action’” (31). A tactic of reuse falls under the practice of “dross post-praxis,” which combines the artistic practices of collage and molding to make something different out of useless materials. She gives the example of installing in a corridor a “second skin” on the wall, comprised of obsolete computer circuit boards. In being redeployed as something else for a different use, the circuit boards are seen as “an enhanced mosaic of new and preexisting properties” (35). Kallipoliti’s ultimate objective is to free the obsolete object from what would be thought as a rational reuse, such as reusing a computer circuit board in an electronic device. Kallipoliti argues for the potential value of dross, suggesting that people avoid the

stasis of reuse geared towards specific needs, places and purposes. Withholding the burden of precise future predictions for a “natural” or metabolic, closed-loop material reuse, composite graft could be useful in dealing with a new genealogy of materially intricate waste objects, so that they can be reused as they are; launched by the drive of material synthesis, rather than the task of cautiously segregating materials into the constituent components. (35)

Kallipoliti identifies useless materials and redeploys them as something else through a practice similar to recycling since dross post-praxis combines and molds different objects together to make a plastic art that is entirely different from the parts that make it. Thrown away objects and empty, deserted spaces are the material and sites of transformation into something different. For Kallipoliti, as for Hebdige in his discussion of the combination of items that make the style of the punk rocker, the user actively engages in a practice of bricolage. But for Kallipoliti, her focus stays within the realm of industrial design, which one would suspect a larger practice of dross post-praxis could emerge. Kallipoliti

emphasizes creativity in the user even more so than the previous authors mentioned. The void in her project is the lack of a political aim. The industrial designer is given the task to reshape space, while it is our job to experience its ambiance. There is no collective practice in dross post-praxis. One can imagine how our space could be transformed if people started to reshape it together through a dross post-praxis whose aim was to explode the dialectic of everyday life. My discussion of the architecture of Lebbeus Woods in Chapter 4 pushes a similar idea into a radical other social space. Variations in surface and design would be everywhere. And these designs could respond to a group's lived experiences. One can understand the vast potential of this when considering what would happen if countercultures, waste populations, or avant-garde collectives began engaging in dross post-praxis. It would be a dangerous activity since it would attempt to articulate the political aspects of a dominant culture, something which Kallipoliti's project does not, but has the potential to do.

For Kallipoliti, the resultant remainder of a chemical process is dross. We can imagine a similar result of what is leftover in the shift of global capitalism, where people unexpectedly find themselves the useless byproduct of an economic transformation. Kallipoliti's stress on the malleability of the material object reminds us of the flexibility of the waste subjectivity. When dross returns via post-praxis, it is not identified as an original object serving a new role. Instead, its new function defines it as a different object. This gives us insight into how dangerous this practice can be since when one emerges as something entirely different, he/she complicates the social relations that previously defined him/her as waste.

Offering another approach to waste and obsolescence, the journal *October* devoted an issue to the theme of “obsolescence.” The editors’ introduction to the issue outlines the potential of the obsolete by their questioning the future of studying photography and film, the journal’s primary interest, when considering the increasing popularity of “new media” and the digilization of art. Will new media displace the study of celluloid film? Referring to Walter Benjamin, the editors make their answer clear: “Benjamin found a liberating potential within the experience of the obsolete, or, as he called it, the ‘outmoded’—liberated because it offers a point of view outside what some see as the totalizing ambitions of each new technological order” (3). Key to their focus on obsolescence is the belief that examining its *production* in relation to technology is a more radical way of theorizing sites of resistance than “how consumption has been positioned (within Cultural Studies) in relation to the spectacle” (5). Waste, therefore, serves as the primary site from which people can create and elaborate practices of change.

In her provocative essay concerning the screen saver and the future of collective leftist politics, Nancy Davenport argues that like the “debased and outmoded phenomena” of screen savers, leftist political protests today consist of a “monotony of conventional protest strategies, the repetition of generic chants and nostalgic symbols” (65). She refers to a picture of a protestor, a young man who displays all the necessary signs of the Left. He is waving the anarchist flag, wearing a Che Guevara T-shirt, and looks unkempt (65). We have seen this person a thousand times before, and we can probably guess correctly what he is chanting. A politics like this is a repetition of sameness. It is a political position that keeps the everyday running smoothly. To begin

thinking differently about political strategies, Davenport points to a project initiated by the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence Institute (SETI) called Project Serendip. This project relies on the thousands of idle home computers to “process radio receptions from space”(66) and then send that information to the Serendip offices. The information collected by others enables SETI to use their resources for other things. Noting that many computers have an idle screen saver function, SETI reuses a formally obsolete technology in a different way, a way that “evokes a new melancholy of accelerated obsolescence in this culture, but also an older (perhaps obsolete) optimism regarding both the potential of new technologies and the latent possibilities of collectives” (67). Elaborating on the collective aspect, Davenport frames Project Serendip within anti-WTO and IMF protests. She sees this project as a figure offering possible other collective engagements vital to recycling the obsolete politics of the left. Project Serendip organizes people by what they share in common. This commonality could translate to thinking about how to reorganize predictable political protests through a figure of obsolete technology. Even more important, an obsolete form of technology like screen savers helps Davenport identify the residual force of leftist politics, one she can only identify after seeing it through the lens of an obsolete form of technology. (Indeed, what would a political form look like inspired by the 1980s video game Asteroids?) The liberating potential of a leftist politics emerges from recycling this technology. Even after being recycled, the screen saver’s value is no different than before it was utilized by Project Serendip; screen savers have not made a comeback. Its meaning and use changes, all the while avoiding being made back into a commodity.

Davenports' essay proposes that to recycle political forms we should think problems through obsolete technologies. My project proposes something similar: recycling is a strategy that recombines obsolete people, spaces, and things, to produce a different form of collective politics.

My discussion throughout this chapter, and the ones to follow, of the people who engage with the problematic of creating collective relations, culminates in Chapter 6 with the figure of the multitude who practice alternative kinship relation.

CHAPTER 3 THE MASS PRODUCTION OF WASTE

Cooperative experiments have failed, and, I think, are generally destined to fail, for several reasons, the first and most important of which is, that no form of cooperation has yet been devised in which each individual is allowed free scope for his personal ambition. Personal ambition always has been and will remain a more powerful incentive to exertion than a desire for the general welfare.

—Frederick Taylor, *Shop Management*

How does the production of commodities contribute to practices of recycling? We can argue that just as any assembly line of mass production endlessly produces new commodities, it simultaneously produces a pauperized community of the underemployed: Eliminating wasteful production practices, mass production produces people as waste. The process that turns people useless overnight is to be found in Frederick Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management*. Taylor relentlessly advocated transforming manual labor from an inefficient, pre-modern, and wasteful process to an efficient, productive modern one. To successfully achieve this, Taylor realized a new type of human was needed. This person's body would become embedded within forces beyond his/her control. This new human must synchronize his/her movements to time. Ridding the factory of wasteful practices, Taylor effectively cleanses the factory of its waste—of its waste of time, motion, and production. Sweeping the factory of waste, he makes the street a depository for waste. While the people at work are told how to move, people out of work are left to discover on their own how to fit within an increasingly rationalized world. As Taylor argues throughout his book, it is not just that the unemployed do not

possess labor skills of a previous era, or have a pre-industrial mindset that cannot adopt to mass production; rather, they are redundant, simply not needed.

The need to recycle springs from the scientific production of waste. The social application of Taylorism implies the total saturation of public and private space with ideas and codes that influence people's behavior and assumptions. Just as practices of elimination happen in the factory, they find new modes of expression in social space. The division of labor separates people from one another; the *social* division of people follows a similar trajectory that separates and individualizes people. This process of separation breeds competition between people while also deepening their estrangement from one another, all of which F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust* examine. Both novels can be read as exploring the impact that scientific management makes on in the social. The characters in the novels experience a form of removal from other people, social space, or society. The people who have become obsolete in these novels reveal social relations of obsolescence underwritten by Taylor's theories of efficiency.

To counter and reposition oneself in relation to society, characters from these novels enact strategies to re-invent themselves.¹ The majority of the characters fail for the simple reason that they continue to embody and thereby reproduce the cultural values that made them into waste in the first place. In other words, re-invention becomes a nascent form of self help. One character in each novel, however, responds to the impact of social

¹ I use the term "re-invention" instead of "self-invention" or "self-made person" to describe the desire for class advancement. "Self-invention" and "Self-made person" suggest that one creates oneself from nothing, leaving no trace of the past. "Re-invention" reminds the reader that the creative act of producing oneself into a different person comes from a social position of waste that has been successfully reinserted into the commodity-consumption circuitry. This is not recycling.

Taylorization. Nick Carraway in *Gatsby* and Tod Hackett in *Locust* move between two worlds, between an (ir)rationalized and a wasted one. Because Nick and Tod are able to represent and understand both worlds, they intuit strategies of recycling necessary to *unmake* the relations that produce waste. Yet, to undo the social codes that stratify people into uneven social relationships would mean to challenge the hierarchical organization of labor and, by extension, the social relations formed by capitalism. Nick and Tod do not challenge these relations because they practice class-as-lifestyle.

I begin my discussion with an excursion into Taylor's theory of scientific management. I examine the relationship between managers and workers proposed in *Scientific Management* and unearth Taylor's assumptions about social relationships and practices of exclusion. In addition to time as the obvious marker of efficiency, space also becomes an important aspect to maintaining an orderly workforce. A worker is assigned to perform a specific action in a specific place at a specific time. Any deviation from this holy trinity—movement, time, space—would mean the worker violates the tenets of efficiency. The worker's performance is demanded by the space he/she occupies. Containing action within a specific location keeps wasteful movements from creeping into the process of production. This has significant repercussions not only at work but also in public space, where space is defined and managed against waste.

My discussion of Taylor reveals the blind spots in scientific management. Theories of efficiency only focus on the employed; they cannot explain the realm of the unemployed, nor can they address issues of social dominance through which people are produced as waste. Contrary to Taylor's "new human," *Gatsby* and *Locust* reveal another type of human that challenges the foundational principles on which Taylor creates his

vision. Marginalized and eliminated from production, the figure of the unemployed haunts society through its return as a recycled subject, one who transcends social and spatial restrictions. The unemployed who destroy repressive spaces begin the widespread practice of recycling.

The Antiseptic Frederick Taylor

Frederick Taylor's theories of organization split people into two groups: those associated with work and those who are eliminated from it. In Taylor's world view, as with Adam Smith's earlier one, work is the privileged site where individuals realize their potential as humans, where they can seek and satisfy their inner drives. In the idealistic world of work and capital, people from different classes would get along. Since the common good, not profit, is the goal of these capitalists, according to Taylor, social harmony can happen only once people maximize production and profit through scientific management.

In order to maximize profit, however, the pre-modern residue of waste needs to be eliminated. Taylor identifies waste as *the* national crisis. He recognizes that "our forests [are] vanishing, our water-powers going to waste, [and] our soil being carried by floods to the sea" (5). Even more sinister than the destruction of the environment is "our larger wastes of human effort, which go on everyday through such of our acts as are blundering, ill-directed, or inefficient, and which . . . are less visible, less tangible, and are but vaguely appreciated" (5). A denuded forest is easily spotted, whereas inefficient labor is more difficult to perceive. A more disciplined, trained way of observing labor would identify what the untrained eye cannot. Scientific management, therefore, makes work more efficient by first training managers how to observe the production process, and then having managers teach workers how to move efficiently. For this reason, a manager and

worker no longer approach their job “naturally.” For any job designed by scientific management, managers cannot assess accurately and workers cannot work properly prior to training. They must change fundamentally how they see and perform their jobs. To maintain employment, a manager and laborer must re-invent him/herself according to the new demands made by scientific management. This practice of re-invention eliminates waste.²

Taylor proposes a radical transformation of a worker’s relation to labor. As part of this process, Taylor makes it clear that eliminating waste—both the useless movements made during the labor process and the people who cannot adopt to the new standards placed on them—requires that managers must take a more aggressive position in regards to work and their workers than before. To sterilize the workplace from inefficiency, managers must agree to act as hygienists by eradicating waste. Before scientific management the woefully inefficient “initiative and incentive” set the standard for the manager-worker relation. This system of management left each “workman to bear almost the entire responsibility for the general plan as well as for each detail of his work, and in many cases for his implements as well” (37). Under this system, the laborer would plan the job based on his/her own experience or information handed down through the years by other workers. Workers owned this knowledge and therefore had a certain amount of power over the pace of their work. This means that two bricklayers could lay bricks at entirely different speeds. What they shared in common, however, was the power to decide when to take a break; they did not have to wait for a whistle that forces them to

² Taylor’s insistence on training and re-training the worker to perform a job resonates with today’s common practice of staying competitive in the labor market. It also connotes the need to re-train oneself for an entirely new type of job due to the violent economic swings of global capital.

rest. This method of “initiative and incentive,” Taylor concludes, gives too much discretion to the worker.

Scientific management makes the initiative and incentive process obsolete by “establish[ing] rules, laws, and formulae which replace the judgment of individual workmen” (37). Systematizing labor means applying a method of movement and enforcing it. There are only a limited number of acceptable ways to move one’s hand, arms, and legs. Management becomes more important as it is responsible for the synchronization of the worker’s body to the rate of production. This synchronization implies a harmonious relationship between different parts that make the whole—between workers and manager, unions and manager, and even between workers. But for the workers, this synchronization literalizes the individual aspect of work through the subdivision of labor. If two workers doing the same job know what they need to accomplish in a work day, then they would not compare their pace to each other but instead to the clock. Moreover, if the rate of production was down for the day, managers could trace who is to blame. Thus each man/woman working beside another is isolated from others since what matters is their own individual task. Of course, a worker’s task relies on others, and on the assembly line a worker can perform a task only if the people before him/her formed their tasks. Each worker constitutes a separate part, yet all rely on one another. Because the movement of workers must move according to the clock, they must override any physical desire to rest if they are tired or urinate if their bladders are full. Under scientific management, a worker’s body does not belong to him/her. If one were to succumb to needs of his/her body and be fired for it, a new worker could easily

fill the space. Thus, rather than empathize with another worker's predicament, a worker could take advantage of the other's misfortune.³

To further naturalize this new form of production, Taylor underscores the importance of the workers' psychology. To ensure the best fit between a person and a particular task, Taylor notes that some psychological types are better suited for specific jobs. While this screening can be seen as a way to find the best person to perform a certain job, it also serves as a way to eliminate strife. If workers can competently perform a job both mentally and physically, then they would, in theory, be less likely to complain about their working conditions since the activity they must perform would be a "natural" fit for them. Taylor uses workers at a ball bearing factory as an example. The women who inspected the bearings underwent a test so that management could select the women deemed psychologically fit for the job. Women with a "low personal coefficient," having a "quick power of perception and reaction," were best suited for the job of inspecting ball bearings. Taylor laments, however, that

for the ultimate good of the girls and the company, however, it became necessary to exclude all girls who lacked a low "personal coefficient." And unfortunately this involved laying off many of the most intelligent, hardest working, and most trustworthy girls merely because they did not possess the quality of quick perception followed by quick action. (90)

It seems contradictory that some of the hardest working women could actually be less efficient than other women. Even if the women who were let go did get more work done per day, the decision to fire them underscores the decision-making process based on scientific management. Taylor prioritizes efficiency over trust. This prioritization would

³ This discussion of the process of dividing work into sections and disallowing the worker the decision when to break addresses directly Marx's "estrangement of labor." Rather recount Marx's theory, my focus on Taylor and the novels of Fitzgerald and West tacitly addresses this theory.

naturally result in the worker coming under the managers' scrutiny even more than before by automatically labeling workers untrustworthy.

After this initial psychological screening the managers then begin addressing issues that stemmed from spatial arrangement. Seated close to one another, the women would talk too much. Taylor's solution was to place the women far apart. Talking was to take place only during their prescribed ten minute breaks, which they were force to take every 75 minutes. Filtering and then separating women increased production so much so that "thirty-five girls did the work formerly done by one hundred and twenty" (95). This increase in production by each worker happens, however, only through further isolating and individualizing the laborer. Scientific management clearly separates people both physically and psychologically into individual machines. Scientific management begins the process that first divides and then pits people against each other.

Taylor's example of the ball bearing inspectors reveals more than one way in which workers were made useless. Aside from the fired 85 women, the 35 left to work experience another form of the way scientific management makes people waste. Prior to the reorganization of the factory, the women worked ten and a half hours for five days, and five hours on Saturday. A quick assessment of this work day revealed "that a very considerable part of the ten and one-half hours during which the girls were supposed to work was really spent in *idleness* because the working day was too long" (my emphasis 87). Idleness here means mixing leisure with work to the point where no clear distinction could be made between the two. In other words, by talking to one another while they worked, the women inspected the bearings at variable speeds throughout the day. Taylor identified the long work day as the root of this problem. To have the women only work

while at work, the day would have to be shortened to eight and a half hours. But when this offer was given to the women to vote upon, they refused it. This was a clear violation of Taylor's scientific and modern sensibility, and he scoffs, "they wanted no innovation of any kind" (88). Eventually, the executive decision was made to shorten the work day to eight and one-half hours. Democracy at work be damned.

If the women were to make the same amount of money for working two fewer hours a day, it is curious why they did not immediately take the offer. Were their living conditions or personal lives that terrible? Did they enjoy the décor or smell of the factory? Did they derive great satisfaction from looking closely at round steel balls? Probably not. We can infer that the women wanted to work the longer day under the current working conditions precisely because labor did not preclude interacting socially. Work and socialization were one and the same. With no minimum quantity of steel balls to inspect, the women had some modicum of control over their bodies, time, and work. This situation would certainly encourage positive or negative emotional relationships to grow between workers; nevertheless, it ties the women together as people, not just as workers.

Scientific management does not consider human relations when designing ways to work; it therefore must destroy them. The selection and production of workers make it clear that managers *made* people into workers: "it is only when we fully realize that our duty, as well as our opportunity, lies in systematically cooperating to train and to make this competent man, instead of hunting for a man whom some one else has trained, that we shall be on the road to national efficiency" (6). The production of a new type of worker fit to follow the mechanical rigors of labor also meant that the converse was

true—it also produced people unable or unsuited for certain jobs. A worker must remake him/herself into a different type of human: one without a mind. As the example of the ball bearing inspectors illustrates, scientific management cuts time into discrete categories and makes it clear that there is a proper time and place for everything.

Making the competent worker does more than provide efficient labor; according to Taylor it eliminates class antagonisms. Taylor claims that he

has attempted to show that these matters [of labor between workers and employers] can be much better determined by the expert time student than by either the union or a board of directors, and he firmly believes that in the future scientific time-study will establish standards which will be accepted as fair by both sides. (*Shop Management* 1448–1449)

Eliminating class antagonism means eliminating institutions holding onto antiquated ideas about production. As a means to avoid the “tyranny of some of our misguided bricklayers’ unions that the great waste of human effort is going on” (82), scientific management smoothes over labor relations since it can assess logically the abilities of the workers. Thus the tiered system follows: scientific management, owner, manager, worker/waste. This approach to mediating relations between the managers and workers, according to Taylor,

has for its very foundation the firm conviction that the true interests of the two are one and the same; that prosperity for the employer cannot exist through a long term of years unless it is accompanied by prosperity for the employee, and *vice versa*; and that it is possible to give the workman what he most wants—high wages—and the employer what he wants—a low labor cost—for his manufactures. (*Scientific Management* 10)

Scientific management understands itself as eliminating the vulgar exploitation of workers. For Taylor, waste is the basis of class conflict. Thus, eliminating class conflict means establishing a system to eliminate waste. Notice that for Taylor eliminating class

conflict does not mean eliminating class differences; for him the more clearly classes are divided and made different, the more inter-class relationships stabilize.

Taylor's sweeping reforms of labor relations and standards create a world where one has no choice but to participate. He allows no outside to exist in his organized world. This is evident in the mandatory firings done for efficiency; Taylor cannot concern himself about who has been thrown away once someone leaves the space of labor. However, the unemployed remain within a system shaped by wage-labor that has excluded them. In this respect, Taylor's space is the total closure of public space, as spaces outside work increasingly become highly rationalized spaces that reproduce practices of exclusion borne in the factory.

Excluding and making people waste have no significance for Taylor. His fantasy of social harmony between the various classes conceals Taylor's distaste for workers. Taylor appears to make an argument that equally favors both workers and managers. Such statements as "the true interests of the two [employer and employee] are one and the same" (10), overshadow his basic view of workers and the working class. Fundamentally, Taylor distrusts workers because, according to him, workers inherently tend toward waste; that is, they are prone to loafing, as he shows in his example of the ball bearing inspectors. For Taylor, loafing, or "soldering," directly "affects the wages, the prosperity, and the life of almost every working-man . . . and of every industrial establishment in the nation" (14). According to Taylor, soldiering may be caused by either biological or social factors: "the natural instinct and tendency of men to take it easy which may be called natural soldering. Second, from more intricate second thought and reasoning caused by their relations with other men, which may be called systematic

soldiering” (19). Both types of soldiering threaten respectable levels of production.

Therefore, as seen with the ball bearing inspectors, the mind and body of the worker must fundamentally change. Once accomplished, the workers’ inanimate bodies are sufficiently pliable for the manager’s

enforced standardization of methods, *enforced* adaptation of the best implements and working conditions, and *enforced* cooperation that this faster work can be assured. And the duty of enforcing the adaptation of standards and of enforcing this cooperation rests with the management alone. (emphasis in original 83)

Taylor’s methods that enforce efficiency also eliminate unnecessary workers. Taylor glibly suggests that with the proliferation of new jobs or businesses, an unemployed worker could get hired somewhere else. Elsewhere in his writing, however, Taylor turns this sentiment around, and celebrates the elimination of waste from the factories:

The feeling, instead of being one of pity for the inferior workmen [who were fired], should be one of congratulations and rejoicing that many first-class men—who through unfortunate circumstances had never had the opportunity of proving their worth—at last were given the chance to earn high wages and become prosperous. (*Shop Management* 1364)

Clearing waste from the labor pool leaves a worker, according to Taylor, who can finally realize his/her real potential. A disproportionate increase in wage—workers may receive a 100% raise, while companies make over a 300% profit—is about the only thing a worker can expect from this system.

This wage increase, however, celebrates profit, not the worker. Any thought that Taylor actually is concerned with the fate of the worker should be quickly dismissed as he claims workers are disposable objects. He claims that “the man who is suited to handle pig iron cannot possibly understand [the science of handling pig iron], nor even work in accordance with the laws of science, without the help of those who are over him”

(*Scientific Management* 48). When describing men who move pig iron, Taylor admits that

this work is the crudest and most elementary form of labor which is performed by man. This work is done by men with no other implements than their hands The work is so crude and elementary in its nature that the writer firmly believes that it would be possible to train a gorilla so as to become a more efficient pig-iron handler than any man can be. (40)

He continues to refer to workers as “incapable (either through lack of education or through insufficient mental capacity) to understand this science” (41). Workers are “the mentally sluggish type” (46). In case the reader misjudges Taylor’s view of workers when he claims primates can do the work better, he continues characterizing workers: “a man who is fit to handle pig iron as a regular occupation is that he shall be so stupid and so phlegmatic that he more nearly resembles in his mental make-up the ox than any other type” (59); “a man so stupid that he was unfitted to do most kinds of laboring work” (62); and “the man handling pig iron is too stupid properly to train himself” (63).

In portraying the worker inferior to a gorilla, Taylor suggests that even after eliminating waste from the factory its residue remains: the worker. Taylor recasts the worker as social waste, thus widening the social and personal divide between classes. The fact that a person has a job does not seem to make a difference in social status when compared to the person who is already unemployed and thus categorized as useless. By painting the workers as mentally incompetent, Taylor tacitly suggests that since power now lay with the “benign” management, then any complaint or resistance to a work day by the worker is naive, based on ideas from the past. Moreover, through Taylor’s scheme, the intelligent worker is made stupid through scientific management. Whereas a worker may understand how to perform a job, by complicating it, by taking away their decisions and re-describing a job in a discourse familiar only to people in the field of motion study,

scientific management produces then organizes this new type of person onto the margins of society.

Since management must agree to oversee every movement the worker makes, and workers must agree to perform their tasks, a contract is struck between them that binds them in this relationship during working hours only. But Taylor does not stop at the factory. Taylor sees this relationship blossoming into other areas:

It is hoped, however, that it will be clear to other readers that the same principles can be applied with equal force to all social activities; to the management of our homes; the management of our farms; the management of the business of our tradesmen, large and small; of our churches, our philanthropic institutions, our universities, and our governmental departments. (8)

Who are the managers and who resembles the workers in social space? That people are labeled “worker” outside the factory underscores the importance of organizing bodies in space.⁴ While the factory eradicates the waste of time, it also eliminates waste from space; bodies fit properly in place. This would mean that when measuring performance, the position of the workers’ bodies in the space of the factory acquires significance. At a specific time, a body needs to be in the right place. The manager, looking out onto the factory floor can instantly assess who has transgressed this order. Applied to areas outside of the factory implies that people of different classes have a specific, proper place. The social and economic production of social space define the people who inhabit

⁴ Deciding how workers move their bodies is one aspect of scientific management. But this primarily social relationship between workers and managers sustains itself through spatial relations. In Michel Foucault’s discussion of Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon, we are reminded that in addition to putting “beggars and idlers to work,” the Panopticon “is a type of *location of bodies in space*, of distribution of individuals in relation to one another, of hierarchical organizations, of disposition of centers and channels of power, of definition of the instruments and modes of intervention of power, which can be implemented in hospitals, workshops, schools, prisons” (my emphasis 205). No doubt that the division of labor allocates to the manager the power to punish. Foucault’s quote, in the context of Taylor’s newly produced worker, indicates that the spatial relationship between worker and manager has been implemented through a network of institutions that organize their social relationship in areas in addition to work.

specific areas. This division of space and its consequences on people recalls the work of Mike Davis and David Harvey from Chapter 2. Their work identifies a Taylorized space: across different zones, social codes and laws vary wherein people may behave or think differently. This also means that people must follow these rules or be dismissed by other people. In other words, people behave as managers by presenting social zones from being contaminated by waste.

The principles of scientific management applied to areas outside of work would mean the continuation of the manager-worker relationship. Aside from making other activities, like cleaning house, more efficient, Taylor's proposal suggests that scientific management, after eliminating what is waste from work, would also eradicate waste from the social space. These people do not have a place at work, so it follows they have no place in society. By creating a reserve army of labor, Taylor creates an underclass supposedly too incompetent to make decisions on their own, or too competitive to coordinate as a group. Since the production of Taylor's competent worker is the simultaneous production of the useless human, how would people who are already excluded from labor be produced as waste? How would these be people be identified? As with the worker, his/her every movement can be predicted, measured, and calculated in advance. Applied to social relations, people would have specific rules and codes of behavior and appearance to follow.

I explain in length the ideas of management offered by Taylor because so much of what he proposes forms the basis for general practices of exclusion. What Taylor ultimately shows is the active process of making people waste on multiple levels. Taylor emphasizes work as the privileged activity by which to define people's worth, or

usefulness as citizens. These citizens would focus their attention to giving their best effort at work every day. This means times spent outside of work should be used for the sole reason of recharging one's strength to go back the next day and work. Living life only to work effectively eliminates dissent since one's focus would be entirely on labor. Taylor's emphasis on defining people as either managers and workers easily splits the population into people who either create or obey rules. It would follow that social managers such as lawyers, police, or policy makers "train" and then observe citizens.

In social activities, however, it is much more complicated. People who follow narratives of success reproduce these ideas so that they can achieve success. More important, as I will show in my discussion of *Gatsby* and *Locust*, people who believe in this narrative will not dissent. Images of success serve as their guiding principle. Scientific management promises a payoff for working hard. This payoff is the American Dream.

When probing the social implications of Taylor's ideas we can look to literature of the early twentieth century to examine the processes that socially divide people. West and Fitzgerald elaborate aspects of Taylor's scientific management unanticipated by him. Since scientific management can be applied to other areas outside of work, then what happens to the people deemed too "stupid" to make their own decisions? What happens to people already defined as social waste by labor standards? What does it mean when people are "let go"? Where do they go? How do they continue living when they have been cut off from civilized quarters? Most of the characters in Fitzgerald and West are outside Taylor's work place of efficiency, and because of this they offer a critique of it.

However, their critique comes from the outside: the people are either wealthy and do not have to work, or they are poor and excluded from the market.

The remaining part of this chapter completes the second part of scientific management, the part that it cannot reveal to itself: how the elimination of waste unfolds in the social, how people are made waste, and the strategies they enact to reverse their situation.

From The Sterile Factory to the Dirty Streets

Gatsby and *Locust* reiterate the bias towards Taylor's organizational principles, and suggest an even more sinister side to scientific management: the characters who wish to advance their class position by re-inventing themselves are punished by death or violence. Since Taylor's ideas transcend the factory and organize social relations, people who do not work lack a narrative to follow or to define themselves as meaningful members of society. People labeled as waste lack a positive identity, and this leaves them struggling to re-invent themselves.

Both *Gatsby* and *Locust* explore the unseen disorder of the world beyond labor. *Gatsby* mixes people from different classes to show the tumultuous and violent reactions of people who differ from each other. While Nick Carraway experiences these peoples' world, and is even part of it, we are reminded that he is above it; he is emotionally touched, yet financially, psychically, and most importantly, spatially undamaged. Nick is an entirely different subject from anyone else in the novel since he does not reproduce Taylor's work ethic. His character is an incipient version of someone enthralled with the spectacle. Tod Hackett in *Locust* parallels Nick in similar ways. He also drifts among different classes, and shows a fascination for the spectacle as well, as it is more developed in this novel.

The production-consumption model of social relations drives people's ambition to succeed. People in *Gatsby* are ambitious to the point of turning against and ruining each other. In *Locust*, people either possess (and are possessed by) ambition, or they lack it altogether. Ambition found in Taylor is characteristic of the individualism that violently separates people from one another. The problem for strategies of recycling is how to attend to individual problems without individualizing the source of the problem—a systemic problem that extends far beyond the individual.

***The Great Gatsby* and the Dream of Reinvention**

Americans, while occasionally willing to be serfs, have always been obstinate about being peasantry.

—*The Great Gatsby*

Set during the Jazz Age, *The Great Gatsby* follows the lives of several people of varying backgrounds whose lives intersect tragically. We are told the story by Nick Carraway, a man of upper class origins and who sells bonds in New York. He spends the summer in Long Island, specifically West Egg, living next to Jay Gatsby, a man who rose out of poverty by mysteriously acquiring great wealth. Jay Gatsby's love for and desire to win back Daisy Buchanan, whom he dated five years prior to the time of the narrative, drives the story. Across the bay from West Egg, in East Egg, live Daisy and her husband Tom, both of whom come from Old Money. Between the two Eggs and New York lies the dismal valley of ashes, a dumping ground for ash where the desperately poor George and Myrtle Wilson live in an apartment over their garage and gas station. Nick ties the story of Gatsby, the Buchanans, and the Wilsons together and serves as a witness to their lives.

Ambition brings together and tears apart these characters. The violence done against other characters should be read not as a deliberate attempt at destroying one another, but as a result of their desperation to realize success. The characters interactions with one another correspond to the isolated survival skills laborers practice in the factory. The characters adapt to a standardized form of living imposed by their class position, something they must continually impose against others or else be defined as waste. Thus the social relations in the novel are encounters of competition, much like a sport. Success in the novel is ultimately bound within the complex dynamic among romantic relationships, class, and personal re-invention. This re-invention has one goal: to enter a higher social class. Both Jay Gatsby and Myrtle Wilson strive to re-invent themselves so they can win the love of a Buchanan. But here, class advancement threatens the illusion of class purity. For Gatsby and Myrtle to attain their goal would mean Tom's social status would be contaminated by Myrtle, and Daisy would have to cross over to the gaudy world of the *nouveau riche*.

The tension between the two upper class cultures complicates the idea that Gatsby is inherently superior or inferior to Tom. In her article on *The Great Gatsby*, Meredith Goldman compares Gatsby's passing as a rich man to novels wherein African-Americans and immigrants attempt to pass as white. She claims that to transcend their race, the characters, like Gatsby, "perceive 'personality' as an 'unbroken series of successful gestures' . . . , gaining access to leisure-class America by adapting their appearances and manners to an Anglo-American ideal" (445). Goldman makes a fascinating connection between upward mobility and race, arguing that those not considered white had to imitate the manners and aesthetics of the upper class. "Passing" requires that one understands the

social, behavioral, and aesthetic codes of the upper class. Performing class suggests that no one “owns” these codes practiced by the rich. This issue of passing and subjectivity becomes fully developed for the characters in *Almanac of the Dead* and *Paradise*. *Gatsby* and *Locust* illustrate that “fitting in” requires a fluid identity.

Who passes in *Gatsby* is determined by not only class, but the performance of class. Like Taylor’s spatial dynamics, waste must be identified and then eliminated. Neither Gatsby, Tom, nor Daisy possess this power by the end of the novel to own these codes. As capital continues to materialize into different spaces and place new demands on people, we find that Gatsby, Tom, and Daisy are rendered obsolete. The social laws dictated by Taylorism would appear to favor Gatsby, since he is the disciplined, orderly character in the novel. Yet, in an ever shifting social economy, signs signifying the dominant class are unstable and always ready to be redefined or appropriated by others. Another form of capitalism is evolving in the novel, which Nick represents, thereby avoiding obsolescence. Nick emerges from this historical moment as a subjectivity able to negotiate the tensions created between people of different classes. Part of Nick’s character contradicts Taylor’s social divisions. He practices inclusive social relations, but for reasons that complement his lifestyle, not class sympathies.

One’s identity is also bound within space in *Gatsby*. As certain characters attempt to re-invent themselves, they can only do it in the alternative space of New York, where the social laws governing an ordered life are momentarily suspended. This is a real space, yet it is experienced as a possible other existence for all except Nick and George Wilson. For Nick it represents the possibilities of consumption, while for George Wilson it promises a better life.

Outside of New York, people inhabit a space that marks their relation to Taylorism, and by extension, success. Of course, Jay Gatsby best represents this version of success. But this culture of success is strongly questioned by other characters, notably Tom, Daisy, and Nick. The Buchanans resist the market by adopting a pre-Taylorist mode of life that is free from the temporal demands of labor. Nick is just as free, but his freedom is found in the increasing production of images. Wilson, however, is excluded from either social position and is labeled waste. He responds with his only option he has left, violence.

Taylor's Body

Gatsby is the man by whom success is measured. Aristocratic Americans cannot compete with the class of new moneyed people. Jay Gatsby, according to Nick, has a “heightened sensitivity to the *promise* of life It was an extraordinary gift for *hope*, a romantic *readiness* such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again” (my emphasis 6). Gatsby embodies change. His “sensitivity to the promise of life” seeks the many ways one can rise from the middle to upper class. Gatsby’s re-invention must be total. It begins with his change of name, from James Gatz to Jay Gatsby, and develops into a conscious practice of what can be called “continual improvement.”

Part of Jay Gatsby’s process of re-inventing himself away from his family begins with what looks like an early version of self-help therapy. After Gatsby’s death his father arrives and shows Nick a childhood book of Gatsby. In it, Nick observes a daily schedule Gatsby created for himself. It included such activities as working out with weights, playing sports, working, and “practicing elocution, poise, and how to attain it.” After that is a list of reminders, including: “No wasting time,” “Read one improving book or

magazine per week,” “Save \$5.00 [crossed out] \$3.00 per week” (181–82). This disclosure about Gatsby’s Taylor-inspired schedule for an orderly life indicates the level of production in every aspect of his life. His conscientious attention to improving his mind, body, and chances for success tell us that he had a heightened sensitivity to *time*. Indeed, Gatsby’s self improvement parallels that of the businessman under the influence of scientific management: how can something be produced better, faster, and cheaper? Gatsby was not to be productive only at work, but in all areas of his life. He could not risk spending his evenings relaxing, as do Tom and Daisy. Physical and mental stasis in Gatsby’s (and Taylor’s) case means obsolescence. The total re-invention of his life must be his work.

Although the re-invention of Gatsby requires him to constantly improve, it mandates that he not change his approach to achieving success. To be successful he must always practice the logic of Taylorism. Achieving one level of success, Gatsby must not dwell in the past or present. He must continue to accumulate. This is one explanation for why Gatsby is such an enigma to other people; he has no past. His life is like the stock market, people speculate on it. Among other stories, Gatsby is rumored to have killed someone, or been a German spy during WWI (48). We learn that one of Gatsby’s goals is to win back Daisy. He remains driven to achieve this, yet he is inflexible in his pursuit of her. He has one goal, and he has adopted the performance of a rich man and cannot deviate from the culture of new money.

Pre-Taylor

Tom and Daisy both reject the Taylorist logic of success. We can detect this in the description of their house in East Egg. The house stands aloof from worldly influences and problems. It is detached from the rest of society. The house and its inhabitants

occupy a different mode of time, a time unaccounted for, separated from the speed and pace of a world set to the money economy:

Sometimes [Daisy] and Miss Baker talked at once, unobtrusively and with a bantering inconsequence that was never quite chatter, that was cool as their white dresses and their impersonal eyes in the absence of all desire. They were here—and they accepted Tom and me, making only a polite pleasant effort to entertain or to be entertained. They knew that presently dinner would be over and a little later the evening too would be over and casually put away. It was sharply different from the West where an evening was hurried from phase to phase toward its close in a continually disappointed anticipation or else in sheer nervous dread of the movement. (17)

There is no intense affect associated with time in East Egg. Daisy and Jordan can predict how the evening will unfold, which, when compared to the chaotic and unstable moments of West Egg, indicates a life leisurely led and one unconcerned with the accumulation of money. The easy pace indicates that time is of no concern; there are no surprises or expectations from the evening. Dinner is not a time to incite scandals. East Egg sits beyond the limits of space formed by industrialism and the commodity. The description of the house also indicates its association with leisure:

The windows were ajar and gleaming white against the fresh grass outside that seemed to grow a little way into the house. A breeze blew through the rooms, blew curtains in at one end and out the other like pale flags, twisting them up toward the frosted wedding cake of the ceiling—and then rippled over the wine-colored rug, making a shadow on it as wind does on the sea. (12)

The passage offers not so much a clear picture of the house, but of hollow spaces. The house appears untouched by the new model of time. But if the house sits beyond it, then we can conclude the house also has no influence over the emerging culture of new money. In other words, the Buchanans do not stand at a point above this emerging culture from which they can critique it. Instead, the Buchanan's occupation of the easternmost location in the novel suggests the waning influence of old money in the newly forming culture.

This is apparent when spaces are compared. Sitting across the bay, West Egg emerges as the antithesis of East Egg. Evenings do not leisurely unfold; they lurch from moment to moment. Between these lurches people anticipate forms of alcohol-fueled entertainment. Although the time is not used in what could be considered “efficient” in Taylor’s use of the word, it is more of an issue for West than East Egg. While Daisy and Jordan Baker lounge in their house, the fast pace of evenings in West Egg would shatter their pastoral setting. Nick comments that people at Gatsby’s party “conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with amusement parks” (45). Nick runs into a man who “has been drunk for about a week now” (50), and toward the end of the party Nick witnesses older men seducing younger women (56). We can consider Gatsby’s parties “events,” where the absurd or scandalous takes place. The excess of free time saturates the evening. Gatsby’s parties are the inverse of work, yet mirror work in its awareness of time.

Because Fitzgerald intersects these two classes, he makes it possible to explore the competition for social dominance between them. The love interest between Gatsby and Daisy complicates a clean division between these two groups. The ambition story provides the motivation to examine the intrusion of one class into the cultural space of another. It seems that the one who can survive these moments in foreign territories is the one who can best adapt, in Taylor’s sense of the word.

Walking with Tom and Daisy, Gatsby guides them around his party. What happens is more of a clash than harmonious meeting between people from two different moneyed backgrounds. The people Tom and Daisy meet, Gatsby suggests, “are the faces of many people you’ve heard about” (111). Celebrities litter the crowd at the party, even further

complicating any reconciliation between old and new money. These people turn tragic in Daisy's mind since their very mode of life violates her sense of social order:

She was appalled by West Egg, this unprecedented “place” that Broadway had begotten upon a Long Island fishing village—appalled by its raw vigor that chafed under old euphemisms and by the too obtrusive fate that herded its inhabitants along a *short cut from nothing to nothing*. (my emphasis 113–14)

For Daisy, West Egg culture destroys the genteel tradition of inoffensive discourse.

Indeed, disrupting “old euphemisms” suggests these people, unaware of any sense of tradition, substitute crass language for witty banter. This “place” stands against East Egg, whose proximity to West Egg is appalling. The differences marked by the two places easily contrasts the two cultures. But for Daisy, an aristocratic Southern woman, the space of West Egg holds nothing but extravagant waste. These people came from “nothing,” and would remain nothing. Their “short cut” accumulation of riches equally appalls her sense of decency. Although her response could be read as her defensiveness towards these people whose lives and personalities she could not understand, it nonetheless protects her against the waste of new money culture. Tom shares her perception of West Egg. Confronting Gatsby about his relationship with Daisy, Tom bursts out: “I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife” (137).

Tom, however, uses a similar term to describe himself at Gatsby's party. While introducing them to famous people, Gatsby is at a loss on how to describe Tom since he does not work. That is, how does one describe a man who does not have to work for a living and whose last name, “Buchanan”—undoubtedly impressive in circles of old money—fails to be recognized by or even impress this crowd? After being introduced as “the polo player” (111), Tom insists that he not be identified as anybody, that he wishes

to “look at all these famous people in—in oblivion” (112). Tom’s request to remain unknown, a nobody, or even forgotten, parallels Daisy’s criticism of these people. Tom willingly excludes himself from participating simply because he yields no significance and therefore no power over these people. In this space he is obsolete.

To protect himself from obsolescence, Tom willingly retreats to an era prior to Taylorism. He turns against a form of technology, specifically the automobile, that is associated with Gatsby.⁵ Tom retreats and admits that “I’m the first man who ever made a stable out of a garage” (125), and seems singularly against all aspects of the emerging society of new money. Tom shares similar strategies with the artisan who resists the deskilling of labor. Both are against mass production. In his own defense, Tom relies on sacred, traditional institutions to steady his dominant place in society:

Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions and next they’ll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white . . . I know I’m not very popular. I don’t give big parties. I suppose you’ve got to make your house into a pigsty in order to have friends—in the modern world. (137)

Tom’s reaction against the “modern world” is also a defensive ploy that reveals an underlying fear of his becoming obsolete. As we know, Tom possesses none of the values he talks about. He is merely a man who is losing control over his social status.

Because Tom comes from a wealthy, established family, his obsolescence is culturally rather than economically produced. Prior to meeting or even hearing of Gatsby, Tom already interprets the prevailing trends in society as threatening his social position. In the name of protecting civilization, Tom is concerned for the white race, which will

⁵ Tom’s rejection of Gatsby and the automobile suggests a connection between Fordism and the methods employed to acquire large profits quickly. Furthering Tom away from not only Gatsby, but also capitalism, this sentiment firmly places him in the pre-capitalist/pre-Taylor aristocracy.

soon be “utterly submerged” (17). The veracity of these theories, Tom claims, is based on science. Tom tells Nick that it is “up to us who are the dominant race to watch out or these other races will have control of things” (17). To keep the Nordic civilization “clean,” Tom turns to bad science and thus becomes a perverted version of the manager found in Taylor’s factory. Tom wants to rid society of waste, yet instead of turning to science (as if science could validate his theories), he retreats to myth. Tom takes it upon himself to police the spatial boundaries of where people should exist. Tom is in favor of maintaining an antiquated social structure that produces and keeps people, like Gatsby, waste. His insistence in protecting that which should remain “as is” stands in direct opposition to a strategy of recycling. Tom cannot recycle himself, nor from his cultural advantage does he find any reason to attempt to re-invent himself. Instead of becoming someone different, Tom wishes to vanish to nothing. Tom’s “nothingness,” however, has force. Tom responds to the ever changing social world using emotion and physical strength. His violent outbursts equally express frustrations like that of George Wilson’s, and foreshadow the more destructive violence of the lower class in *The Day of the Locust*.

Daisy and Tom’s negative reaction to Gatsby’s party sets them against a culture of people who have become something other than a recognizable upper class. This is a growth of culture stemming from new or quick ways of acquiring wealth. Rabid ambition replaces the placid lifestyle of Tom and Daisy.

We can read Tom and Daisy’s flight from East Egg at the end of the novel as their desperate attempt to survive. Seen from Nick’s point of view, Tom and Daisy’s quick departure from East Egg after Daisy kills Myrtle appears to contradict this: “they were

careless people, Tom and Daisy—they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made” (187–88). Nick treats them as privileged people untouched by the bad history they create for or impose on other people. But what Nick fails to note is that Tom and Daisy must leave. They must escape their past since they cannot manipulate their situation favorably through their influence. Fitzgerald makes it clear that all classes, all people representing various classes and cultures, have been pushed to their spatial limits and to the limits of the success they can achieve. They have played out their dreams and hopes to their full extent. For this reason Nick’s encounter with Tom in New York after Tom and Daisy depart East Egg suggests that they now live in a space where their future is uncertain. As readers we are left to surmise the fate of Tom and Daisy since they exist in a space where only temporary respite from the world is granted. Their obsolescence has expelled them from the east.

Success as Lifestyle

Nick is the origin for the narrative’s order since he not only tells the story, but also establishes equilibrium between the different class interests in the novel. For Taylor, equilibrium between worker and manager could only be established through a scientific approach. If Nick took this approach in his relationships with people, then he would, as seen with Taylor’s views about laborers, favor the class with the most influence. Nick partially avoids this by trying to understand both upper class groups equally. We see this towards the end of the novel when Nick talks to Gatsby for the last time. Referring to Tom and Daisy, Nick yells: “They’re a rotten crowd . . . You’re worth the whole damn bunch put together.” Nick then confesses to the reader: “I’ve always been glad I said that.

It was the only compliment I ever gave him, because I disapproved of him from beginning to end” (162). Why would Nick compliment Gatsby while disapproving of him? Is it because of Gatsby’s extravagant parties, his questionable business practices, his class advancement? This appears puzzling since he first condemns Tom and Daisy’s ruining of people’s lives, then confesses he never approved of Gatsby. By not favoring either one, Nick establishes a distance which gives him the appearance that he can maintain an objective stance toward different cultures. However, Nick maintains this distance primarily because he has his own culture to which he belongs: post-Taylorism.

Nick’s description of his family’s lineage emphasizes the emerging logic of post-Taylorism. Nick confesses something that may be considered just as scandalous as Gatsby’s desire to be with Daisy. He admits that his family is well known and established in the Midwest: “The Carraways are something of a clan and we have a tradition that we’re descended from the Dukes of Buccleuch, . . . the actual founder of my line was my grandfather’s brother who came here in fifty-one, . . . and started a wholesale hardware business that my father carries today” (7). Describing one’s family as a “clan” certainly brings to mind established families before capitalism, when wealth was measured by the amount of land, livestock, and peasants one owned. Indeed, it would seem that Nick’s name “Carraway” has a bedrock foundation in the Midwest. Admitting he has not descended from aristocracy, Nick’s presence around Daisy or Tom is not scandalous precisely because he knows the cultural codes and customs of old money: he, not Gatsby, inherited the promise and hope of life. Nick has a “past,” but, more importantly, he can “pass.”

Nick's sensitivity to how he appears to others is revealed early in the novel. After living in West Egg for only a few days, Nick gives directions to a lost man looking for West Egg Village. Nick confesses: "I told him. And as I walked on I was lonely no longer. I was a guide, a pathfinder, an original settler. He had casually conferred on me the freedom of the neighborhood" (8). Nick finds this freedom by performing as the knowledgeable "original settler." Passing as a long-time resident, Nick displays his ability fit in with an occasion. Indeed, Nick goes from the elegant dinners of Tom and Daisy, to Gatsby's extravagant parties, to a grotesque event at Tom's secret apartment. In every setting he fits in. This trait is unique in the novel. He does not have to reveal openly his disapproval of anyone. Instead, Nick can act nice towards people while secretly disliking them.

Nick can also play the "worker." His stories of parties and meeting people during the summer, Nick tell us, does not belie his work ethic. In fact, he interrupts the narration to clarify his priorities:

Reading over what I have written so far I see that I give the impression that the events of three nights several weeks apart were all that absorbed me. . . . Most of the time I worked. In the early morning the sun threw my shadow westward as I hurried down the white chasms of lower New York to the Probity Trust I took dinner at the Yale Club . . . and then I went upstairs to the library and studied investments and securities for a conscientious hour. (61)

The fact that Nick is a bondsman, a job which varies greatly according to the speculative market, signals that his mind and personality are finely in tune in with the world that shapes and gives backdrop to violent class disruptions. Nick is the prototype subject that performs class-as-lifestyle. Nick has the ability to command the "new," as he moves between old and new money. He is the "winner," while it will turn out that Tom, Daisy, and Gatsby are "losers" in the game on newness. His relationship to these people

anticipates the larger consumptive practices that develop out West, in the city of the spectacle, *Locust's* Los Angeles.

Nick marks the shift of class-assigned positionalities that Watkins sees as proliferating. Watkins argues that this shift from “production to consumption allows class itself to be transformed from a stable social category into what I call class-as-lifestyle, which features instead a mobile, performative individual agency as its central term of identification” (48). Even though Nick mentions the history of his family name and his job, two sources that traditionally give one an identity, he demonstrates that neither defines him. Instead, his westward shadow in his morning commute also points in the direction where he can flourish, the new land of consumption, Hollywood. His shadow casts him beyond the western limits of Manhattan and into the future.

The people who grasp onto the stable social categories are eliminated from the social playing field. Tom and Gatsby share the belief that because they are beyond financial constraints, they cannot “lose.” Gatsby and Tom’s class confrontations attempt to establish who will be identified as superior. Their struggle would suggest that the field on which they negotiate is fixed. Either man may occupy this position just as easily as they can lose it, but only one can be at the top. Ultimately, at the end of the novel, both men cancel each other out: Gatsby dies and Tom and Daisy flee.

Because Nick rejects a fixed notion of subjectivity, he emerges as the new version of the successful person of this historical moment. He can survive the violent social, cultural, and economic forces that easily make one obsolete. His body is not bound to a particular social space, nor does it need to be. Other characters, such as Gatsby or Daisy, can only function and thus feel comfortable in their own space. When Gatsby goes to see

Daisy he admits that “I can’t say anything in this house, old sport” (126.). Tongue-tied, Gatsby is clearly out of place.

Manhattan Fantasy Land

The Great Gatsby spatializes class differences. At the extremes are the valley of ashes and East Egg. Whereas the valley is the location of abject poverty and labor, the more east one travels the more detached inhabitants are from labor. Conversely, the most western location visited in the novel, Manhattan, stands as an island where one can escape. West Egg represents new money; these three spaces represent degrees of American capitalism: poverty, money, and vivid dreams of a better future found West. These spaces also figure a type of body that resists the strict parameters of Taylorism.

In addition to characters, space prefigures practices of recycling. Manhattan sits separate from but not outside of the spatial dynamics that transpire between the valley of ashes and East Egg. Manhattan allows people’s fantasy to come true temporarily by neutralizing class differences. The city represents a direction and space where characters transgress the forces of Taylorism. Crossing over the Queensboro bridge to New York, Nick thinks “anything can happen now that we’ve slid over this bridge . . . anything at all” (73). During their afternoon get away, Gatsby reveals to Tom that he and Daisy are in love. The confrontation with Tom is the culmination of five years of planning by Gatsby. And this is the time when his and Daisy’s life should change for the better. Indeed, New York seems like a natural place to reveal secrets or pursue illicit desires. What one wishes should come true in this space. New York allows people to get away from the constraints of their lives, as indicated by Jordan when she responds to Gatsby’s inquiry about meeting Daisy: “Of course, I immediately suggested a luncheon in New York” (84). But

as soon as they leave New York and travel back to West Egg tragedy strikes when Daisy hits and kills Myrtle while driving.⁶

Compared to the natural setting in East Egg, Tom's secret apartment in Manhattan mocks high culture. While Nick travels from a penniless James Gatz to wealthy, new moneyed Jay Gatsby, and while Nick's family creates its own family story, Tom Buchanan de-creates himself by crossing between high and low culture, between the proper upper class and what we could only call the grotesque lower middle class. Tom's apartment is more than waste since it shows a fundamental lack of being able to reproduce the style of his place in East Egg, or the new money of Gatsby. The apartment consists of

a small living room, a small dining room, a small bedroom and a bath. The living room was crowded to the doors with a set of tapestried furniture entirely too large for it so that to move about was to stumble continually over scenes of ladies swinging in the garden of Versailles. The only picture was an over-enlarged photograph, apparently a hen sitting on a blurred rock. Looked at from a distance however the hen resolved itself into a bonnet and the countenance of a stout old lady beamed down into the room. (33)

The aesthetic and spatial violence of the apartment directly corresponds to Tom's physical outbursts. If Tom's violence is the action of a desperate man, the apartment reveals why. He has no sense of creativity, nor does he understand where he comes from. However, his reaction against the newness of Gatsby's mansion, guests, and lifestyle cannot be supported by his willing occupation of this apartment. Tom is just as crass and undignified as the people he despises. The company he keeps in the apartment, a small time photographer and his wife, along with Myrtle and her sister, are a cheaper, poorer

⁶ It is ironic that Daisy hits Myrtle with a car since Jordan Baker is supposed to be the "rotten driver." Jordan is a careless driver, one time passing "so close to some workman that our fender flicked a button on one man's coat" (63).

version of Gatsby's elegant guests. Tom can survive in this crowd since he can dominate without having to compete. The interior of the apartment represents Myrtle's failed attempt to climb the class ladder.

At the apartment in New York, however, Myrtle is able to pretend she is not poor by having small parties. She momentarily ascends to her understanding of what it means to be upper class. With her change in location Myrtle also changes herself. She

had changed her costume some time before and was now attired in an elaborate afternoon dress With the influence of the dress her personality had also undergone a change. The intense vitality that had been so remarkable in the garage was converted into impressive hauteur. Her laughter, her gestures, her assertions became more violently affected moment by moment (35)

While Myrtle can momentarily escape from the poverty of her life by re-inventing herself into what she believes urbane, she cannot violate the rules of make-believe by bringing into the world her and Tom's escape. At one point Myrtle challenges Tom on "whether [she] had any right to mentions Daisy's name" (41). After repeating Daisy's name several times Tom breaks her nose, thus violently shutting the door to the world they left behind. This suggests that Manhattan is a fragile space. This apartment is just as important for Tom as it is for Myrtle since he can maintain the illusion that his dominant social status is not threatened. Westward is the direction of realizing one's fantasy.

The Violence of Waste

The movement west partially fulfills dreams. But it also promises violence. The move west does nothing to change the structure of things. It allows people, if they can afford it, to enjoy the pleasures of the market. It is no surprise that George Wilson never experiences this since he stays mostly in the valley of ashes. Indeed, George's status is defined in his first appearance in the novel. He enters the room "wiping his hands on a piece of waste" (29). His social position resembles the unemployed worker who has been

excluded from the factory. His occupation, a car repairman, limits his possibilities to change his life. His socio-economic position and spatial isolation situates George as another figure that critiques Taylor.⁷ But this critique comes from the outside as a violent intrusion.

Wilson argues that his only hope for a better life is to “get away” and “go out west” (130). Wanting to leave a staid life in the East to join others in the land of sunshine and oranges, George prefigures the poor in *Locust*. Because of his exclusion from the market, George would not find a better life. Nowhere to go, George reacts in the only way left: his option is not to remake life, but to destroy it, by first killing Gatsby then himself. This explosion of violence is similar to Tom’s, only Tom uses violence to control his grasp on the world, to keep things the same. George resorts to violence to strike against the order of things. George reacts against a culture where labor is seemingly absent. Indeed, George is the only laborer in the novel. His violent outburst, argues Susan Hegeman, “affirms that the depthless surface of consumer society is illusionary—that the reality of work in the person of Wilson will come back, tragically, to get the guy who believes otherwise” (533). She sees labor, and George’s effacement from society as the reason for Gatsby’s death: “Gatsby is ultimately underdone by the secret operations of labor within consumer society” (533). Indeed, Gatsby’s conspicuous consumption places him as reaping the largest rewards from his wealth. But there are other people who benefit from the same system that marginalizes George. Tom and Daisy do not need to work. They rely on the work of others to make their life comfortable. Nick’s immaterial labor clearly

⁷ George Wilson’s status as waste is compounded by his spatial isolation in the valley of ashes. Even the road from the Eggs to New York avoids the valley. The road “hastily joins the railroad and runs beside it for a quarter of a mile so as to shrink away from a certain desolate area of land.” George, as Harry Greener says of himself in *The Day of the Locust*, “Stank from hunger” (50). No one wants to touch him.

sets him apart from the realm of wage labor. While Nick, Tom, and Daisy are born with money, Gatsby has to earn it. As someone loyal to Taylorism, Gatsby's death is logical since he most clearly represents George's inability to improve his life. George's violent act can also be read as the only means by which he could enter spaces of money. George leaves the valley of ashes to kill. Waste must violently assert itself to disrupt these clean spaces. George's violence is a more powerful intrusion than Gatsby or Tom and Daisy into the space of another class. His outburst imitates the violence that excludes people. But George's explosion offers no alternative.

George Wilson's intrusion into the space of wealth makes apparent even more that the East was always tainted. The American Dream could never be realized in East or West Egg, or even Manhattan. That possibility has been exhausted by the end of the novel. Nick tell us:

And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes—a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of his content, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder. (189)

The sailor's aesthetic contemplation, as Robert Seguin points out, happens immediately “before the frenzied plunge into the continent which will inaugurate that very historical dynamic destined to vitiate the aesthetic dream, namely the stupendous eruption of human labor aimed at extracting as much wealth as possible” (937). Nick's nostalgia for a romantic past casts this fertile land outside of capitalist relations. The land is pure. Europeans traveling west toward the New World discover it as seductive as the commodity, evident in the clearing of trees for houses. To repeat the sense of wonder

means to reproduce a dream that can only yield aesthetic consumption. This points west to Hollywood.

The Day of The Locust: The Mass Production of The American Dream

Schmidt started to work, and all day long, and at regular intervals, was told by the man who stood over him with a watch, “Now pick up a pig [pig iron] and walk. Now sit down and rest. Now walk — now rest,” etc. He worked when he was told to work, and rested when he was told to rest, and at half-past five in the afternoon had his 47 ½ tons loaded on the car.

—Frederic Taylor, *Scientific Management*

“I’ve worked as an extra, but I haven’t had a real chance yet. I expect to get one soon. All I ask is a chance.”

—Faye Greener, *The Day of the Locust*

Published 14 years after *The Great Gatsby*, and 20 years after Taylor’s *Scientific Management*, Nathanael West’s *The Day of the Locust* explores a social world that Taylor’s scientific management cannot acknowledge: social disorder and social waste. *Locust* explores the tragic lives of people living in Los Angeles. Set in the 1930s, the novel records Hollywood’s looming influence over the imagination and ambition of Americans. Hollywood projects a new way of achieving success. But instead of focusing on the people who have reached stardom, the novel chronicles various figures of struggles. Part of these people make up the anonymous crowd, people who consume the images and stories that the film industry produces. Other people, such as Tod Hackett, the main character, is an acute observer of the poor and the social illness that plague them. He associates with various people: Harry Greener, a retired vaudeville clown; Faye Greener, Harry’s teenage daughter who is determined to be a movie star; Abe Kusich, a

mean-tempered midget who works as a bookie; and Homer Simpson, an ex-hotel accountant from the Midwest recovering in California from an illness.

The people who West writes about cannot be imagined by Taylor as other than “stupid gorillas.” Such disregard for the people reiterates that Taylorism produces people as only workers who are waste. West sees people for how they struggle. He is less concerned about the social status of his characters than with the social conditions that ail them.

All of West’s characters share in common their marginal relationship to the labor force. Rejected from work, West’s characters do not formally organize their efforts to make life better. At a moment in American literature when writers shared sympathies with the working class, West chose to write about people without ties to labor or working class political parties. In his biography of Nathanael West, Jay Martin outlines the differences between West’s work and novels that adhered to the political orthodoxy of the American left:

But West, in taking for his subjects exactly the same mass materials as proletarian writers did, continually had to justify himself his way with fiction against theirs. While West was interested in mass mind, the new novelists were advised to treat collectives; while he was investigating American myth, they were investigating American economics and politics; while he was concerned with suffering, they were acutely conscious of exploitation. (256)

Focusing on the down and outers, West imagines that change in the structure of things will happen through not the committed working class, but the discontent lower-class. Change will happen through waste. The lower class for West, as I will illustrate below, is a symptom of the structural power of economics, and their discontent eventually results in a spontaneous collective reaction against their source of exploitation. Unfortunately, their response fails to politicize their act. It does, however, attempt to resolve their

double-bind of living one life while the spectacle of another one is continually promised to them.

West's sympathetic eye to the Left is not apparent when considering his characters. West confesses to Jack Conroy that "If I put into *The Day of the Locust* any of the sincere, honest people who work here [Hollywood] and are making such a great, progressive fight, the whole fabric of the peculiar half-world which I attempted to create would be badly torn" (Madden 172). Indeed, West's "half world" is composed of waste people and we would be hard pressed to like any of them. This is precisely the point. Theodore O. Masson, Jr. and Gary Lee Stonum note William Solomon's argument that "West ironizes the relation between audience and spectacle: in West, the carnivalized attraction is the site of the figurative dismemberment of the working class, those who frequently sit in the audience" (432). This dismemberment of the working class emphasizes the erasure of their identity as strictly workers. Instead, we are given the cheated. Despite the vile personalities or violent imagination of these characters, the reader can objectively empathize with what haunts them: unrequited love, dead-end jobs, loneliness. We do not have to like the characters, but in any case we can understand their suffering. The people struggle for recognition or an advantage over their situation. The characters we do know are unsympathetic towards each other and have been driven toward competing against each other.

By not using labor as a topic for change, West questions it as the primary site or privileged subjective position to enact change. West's critique directly engages with the negative result of Taylor's ideas outside the factory. People under Taylor's system are subservient to the overwhelming power of labor organized through strict hierarchical

relations. They have no control over their situation. He simultaneously questions the strict hierarchical order of work as a means to undo hierarchical social relationships. In so doing, West's critique of working class politics turns against the centrality of Taylor's hierarchical relationships.

Slumming as Performance

My examination of *The Day of The Locust* departs from many critics in that I do not privilege one character as socially superior to others, nor do I position any one character between the competing cultural standards of high and low. Critics argue that such a rift exists between Tod and the others. Some critics look to Tod Hackett as representing high culture, and therefore suggests that he is superior to other characters. A graduate of the Yale School of Fine Art, Tod moves between classes. Working as a set and costume designer, Tod's Ivy League background and stable employment set him apart culturally and economically from the company he keeps in Los Angeles. Lavonne Mueller argues that Tod

is caught between two cultural standards—the aesthetic and the popular . . . In the end Tod “sells out.” As he is being crushed in the final mob scene, Tod forgets his art and with cinema-like magic creates his own kind of vengeance. While lapsing into a reverie about his canvass, he enacts his escape by imagining himself in the role of a showbiz director in his own creation. (226)

Clearly, Tod's education in fine art makes him vulnerable to such praise. It assumes that because of his education he should not succumb to the mob mentality. Mueller grants Tod a superior status: even after being taken over by a mob, he occupies the social status of “director.” Calling Tod both “artist and prophet” (276) for his painting that anticipates the riot scene at the end of the novel, Donald T. Torchiana argues that Tod's influence by great artists such as Goya and Daumier creates a critical distance for both Tod and West to render “persistent themes—the betrayal of dreams, the inherit self-destructiveness of

man in a world of animal violence, and the bankruptcy of the middle class” (250). Some critics, however, disagree with the amount of cultural power given to Tod. Susan Edmonds takes seriously Faye Greener’s aspirations to become an artist. This allows Edmonds to read *Locust* as:

No longer the story of a single artist’s stand against the undifferentiated field of mass culture, it becomes instead the story of a fierce competition between several artists and several kinds of art to shape the dominant terms of modern taste and culture. Two artists—one lower-class, uneducated, and female, the other middle-class, highly educated, and male—emerge as the leading players in this competition. (305)

Edmonds pits class, culture, and gender against each other. Like most critics, Edmonds sees these relationships as battles to be won. To follow this line of reasoning reproduces social antagonisms found in Taylor. One critic, however, dampens these social differences. In his critically persuasive essay about the avant-garde and mass culture in the novel, Matthew Roberts grants Tod authoritative status in the text only because the narrative is told mostly through his perspective. But Roberts denies Tod a privileged status by implicating him as one of the cheated: “Tod’s personal entanglement in mass-mediated desire—the desire for ‘Faye’—has actually enabled his critical acuity, by forcing him (against his own class and professional affiliations) to identify with the desire and race of the Cheated masses” (67). Identifying Tod’s sympathy with the cheated focuses the discussion on not the differences but the similarities shared between characters from different classes. A discussion that includes the middle and lower class allows a more thorough analysis of how people are produced as waste. Rather than create differences between Faye and Tod—who has the real talent, who does not—focusing on class collapses individual stories of struggle into a discussion about the structures that produce people as waste.

Tod can be considered the “not-Taylor” since he concerns himself with the excluded classes. Tod recognizes the poor, referred to as “the cheated” in the novel, as a force that could undo restrictive Taylorist’s relationships. They will be his object of study. Tod’s physical distance and class difference from these people eventually collapses. He experiences their troubles. From them Tod recognizes a general condition of people being made into social waste. He draws inspiration from their struggles, and recognizes their tendency toward violence. As he sees it, a predilection for violence is a force against rational organization in his canvass. Tod’s painting, *The Burning of Los Angeles*, demonstrates this. He goes through several renditions, but the general theme of the painting is Los Angeles burning in the background while a mob chases people Tod knows, like Faye. This depiction of people out to murder someone recognizes their anger and their inability to channel it to a more proper target. Tod’s painting offers one possible option of what these people have left after leaving their jobs to live in California. Detached from a narrative of work that previously defined their subjectivity, the cheated signify only a continual sense of obsolescence since they cannot attach themselves or create a narrative to which to belong. Tod recognizes that these people do not need new jobs to cure them. This would only “re-invent” them as workers. Tod replaces that elusive end with what people continually confront and experience on a daily basis—the violence of the American Dream. The values of this dream—the rags to riches story—emphasize aggressive competition and narcissistic individualism. Tod’s painting offers a negative critique, suggesting the only solution is to start over by having the people destroy the system. Violence at the end of the novel will be more productive than Tod could ever imagine.

Tod is both a part and apart from the crowd. His character has multiple aspects. West describes Tod as: “a very complicated man with a whole set of personalities, one inside the other like a nest of Chinese boxes” (22). We can assume that Tod can be many things and his subjectivity is not as overdetermined as the other characters. His complexity suggests a variety of positions from which he can appear to and approach people. Tod’s insight into the social malaise of the crowd has to do more with his “whole set of personalities” than of having the resources and references to high culture. On the one hand, his degree from the Yale School of Fine Arts suggests that he is from the upper class. But while in Los Angeles he lives in rundown apartments and lusts after Faye Greener. And even though Tod can associate with the upper class, he spends most of his time with people who are down and out, with the people who have come to California to die. Tod’s set of personalities gives him the performative knowledge to adapt to and belong among many types of social groups. Tod shares this characteristic with Nick Carraway in *Gatsby*: the ability to fit in with people of different classes.

Two separate instances stand out as showing Tod’s expertise at sliding from high to low culture, in which he illustrates his perception of the different manners of speech and behavior of other people. Tod attends a party at the successful screen writer Claude Estee’s house where men talked “shop,” the picture business. The party then travels to Audrey Jennings’s “sporting house” to watch “*Le Predicament de Marie, ou, La Bonne Distraite*,” a pornographic film. Jennings’s call house was strictly upper class, for “men of wealth and position, not to say taste and discretion” (42). What distinguishes this crowd from other people in the novel is that they have steady paying jobs and that they are in the film industry. They possess a safe distance from waste, which enables them to be

entertained by it. Indeed, a dead horse made of rubber at the bottom of Estees' pool is there "[t]o amuse" people (39). Placing something as abject as a dead animal in a pool allows these people to "experience" the negative safely. Similarly, Joan Schwartzen must ask people to talk obscenely to her (38). Faye, on the other hand, has no problem with men acting obscenely towards her. These people are entertained by things other than what they find in their daily lives. This class can afford to be exposed to waste.

The party in the hills Tod attends is unlike Claude's. Tod goes to a camp that "consisted of little more than a ramshackle hut patched with tin signs that had been stolen from the highway and a stove without legs or bottom set on some rocks" (101). There, Earle prepares the birds he has trapped for dinner. Around a campfire they eat grilled bird and drink tequila from of a jug. Tod even imitates their style of speech. When greeting Earle, Tod mimics cowboy slang, saying "Lo thar stranger" to Earle's greeting of "Lo, thar." The narrator mentions that, "Even when Tod talked about 'cayuses,' 'mean hombres,' and 'rustlers,' Earle took him seriously" (96). In this respect Tod is perhaps the most accomplished actor in the novel. Tod adopts different manners of speech, which are not difficult to master, but, extrapolating from this example, Tod eagerly exposes himself to a class to which he does not belong.

Being able to fit in with different classes, Tod demonstrates a crucial distinction between class-as-lifestyle and recycling. Although he displays qualities that resemble strategies of recycling, Tod shares with Nick Callaway a fascination for the spectacle. Tod's marveling at the people around him positions him as a consumer; he travels to different spaces to collect people with intriguing problems. Tod's performances seamlessly negotiate between these various fields. Performing lifestyle, as Watkins

defines it, is the “capitalization of always changing conditions of resources” (70). Class-as-lifestyle means being able to consume, and understand how to perform it. This divides class “across mere possession of consumer resources on the one hand and the performance of consumer resources on the other” (71). Yet this division, argues Watkins, “both obscures a great deal and at the same time evidences often intense contradictions that must be accounted for ideologically in some way” (71). Tod’s participation in the spectacle reenacts the values of “winners and losers.” Having poor friends is not the same as being poor.

Understanding people means understanding their stories. Because of his insight into other people, Tod can first read then offer a narrative to solve people’s suffering. This is another aspect to a strategy of recycling, articulating stories of struggle. For example, although Faye has a vague sense of how she would like to live, she knows not how to achieve it herself. She proposes a writing partnership between her and Tod so they could “make some real money” by selling their stories to the movie studios. Her story for a film follows familiar plot: rich girl falls in love with a sailor below her class, her yacht sinks, the sailor saves the girl from a snake on an island, they fall in love (90–1). Her plan to write the script “was very vague until she came to what she considered would be its results, then she went into concrete details. As soon as they sold one story, she would give him another. They would make loads and loads of money” (89). Making and then spending this money Faye understands best. As far as endings to her stories, Faye has confidence that Tod could “work [the ending] out easy enough” (91). Faye’s half-realized stories of the American Dream cannot be completed since her story is perpetually open-ended. But as Jonathan Veitch mentions,

the resulting hermeticism [of Faye's stories] is such that Tod will imagine violence as the only possible response. West understands that what makes this seemingly innocuous story so problematic is its insistence on its own innocence as constitutive lens. It neither allows nor understands a world beyond its own making. (115)

Faye's self-referential story fails to consider the external social forces that shape her desires. Her story reveals the desire for the upper to accept the lower class. From Veitch we can elaborate that Tod's solution of violence is necessary since Hollywood produces stock stories about dreams and success that will never happen.

Homer Simpson, on the other hand, does not seem to possess any dream. After a party at Homer's house during which Abe and Earle fight, Tod sits with Homer; he wants to talk to Tod about "something," but instead "they sat there for a long time without speaking. Several times Homer started to tell Tod something but he didn't seem able to get the words out. Tod refused to help him with a question" (166–67). Tod's refusal to place Homer's confusion within a narrative withholds from Homer an understanding of his own problems. Just as Tod were to complete Faye's fantasies, he was also supposed to help Homer complete his thoughts. They need his help. If Tod were practicing recycling, he would articulate their problems within the larger social structure. Tod, however, does not complete these stories partly because Tod's narrative is one of destruction.

Tod cannot offer anything else other than destruction since he is, in one respect, part of the cheated. His multiple sets of personalities can view many aspects to life, but he cannot transcend the social limits of what is possible. Tod is defined and framed by a power beyond his reach. Tod can change himself within a limited range. He too is stuck within the social space of and defined by Los Angeles. As in *The Great Gatsby* and *The Day of the Locust*, solutions that consider only the individual are always already

implicated in a failed approach to make structural change. Tod suggests that to overcome the dismal life of LA, one has to destroy it. This is not a bad idea. To destroy LA would begin the destruction of Taylor's overarching hierarchy.

The People Who Would Rule Los Angeles after Its Destruction

The characters the reader knows by name show interest only in their own problems; they have hope for a better future. Faye Greener, for example, believes that her talent will make her famous. For those who have lost hope, like Homer Simpson, the only activity is to wait to die. Both Faye and Homer are waste, but they still wait for other people to make them worthy. They can do nothing to change their situation for the better. They have to wait and be told what to do. This recalls Taylor's stories of success, which sound a lot like a movie executive telling the story of how he/she found a movie star. Taylor gives an account of a worker successfully adapting to scientific management to demonstrate the process of how people are made "worthy." Observing over 75 men for an experiment, Taylor and others studied their character, habits, and ambitions. A man Taylor calls Schmitt was chosen from many workers to shovel a large amount of pig iron for one day through the scientific method. After establishing that Schmitt was the right man to do the work, a manager tells him: "[Y]ou will do exactly as this man tells you tomorrow, from morning till night. When he tells you to pick up a pig and walk, you pick it up and walk, and he tells you to sit down and rest, you sit downAnd what's more, no back talk" (45-6). Schmitt successfully loads 47 1/2 tons of pig iron, an unheard of amount, into a boxcar in one day, thus receiving his 70 cents an hour increase. Re-invention for Schmitt and the people in *Locust* means reliance on others to tell them what to do. Before that can happen, however, people must want to learn; they must possess a significant amount of ambition. This ambition precludes doubt about the system. The

person who has ambition in this scheme would naturally assume a subservient position. Thus, this ethic of individual persistence only works when other people allow it. Schmitt, like the characters in *Locust*, would not have been able to increase his quality of life without help from someone else. But help in this context is arbitrary, and worse, it is a type of enslavement. When people accept this as a legitimate process of eliminating their own waste, then drastic measures are required by people whom understand they will never be given this chance.

We learn from these characters in *Locust* the way that people willingly reproduce the forces that make people obsolete. Their relations toward one another are violent. Their waiting around for anything to happen to them, borne from their complete boredom and frustration, is a violence that undoes stable, sympathetic relationships. This inability or even unwillingness to sympathize with the suffering of other people reproduces this hostility. As a labor force, they continue to divide among themselves. In waste communities there is a finer gradient of waste than in the stratosphere of success. This micro-division within waste is seen between Faye Greener and Homer Simpson. Looking at their relationship, Faye appears more successful and therefore more powerful than Homer simply because she treats him badly. After moving in with him after her father dies, Faye continues to abuse Homer. At one point Faye, Homer, and Tod go out to a night club, where Faye continually belittles Homer by forcing brandy down his throat because “I don’t like people who don’t drink. It isn’t sociable. They feel superior and I don’t like people who feel superior” (145). She then proceeds to call Homer such names as a “slob” (145, 146), “hick” (147) and “Sloppy-boppy” (148).

Everyone is despondent and they turn against one another as a way to solve their problems. For some people, such as Harry and Faye Greener, their problems would be solved by reserving the gaze. Faye's singular reason for existence in the novel, it seems, is to encourage people's gaze, as the reader is told, "Faye enjoyed being stared at" (73). Harry seeks an audience to perform his vaudeville act, so he sells his silver polish door-to-door. Instead of looking at people on the screen, they want to be looked at. Being seen would solve their issue of being waste in this novel since it is the star system—a system that produces spectacles—that prevails. Moreover, once an object of people's gaze, Harry and Faye attain the status of a commodity; they sell their talent and beauty on the open market of entertainment. The reality of their situation, however, is that this desire is a strategy of survival. To be seen would mean to rise out of the anonymous crowd, to bathe in the light of success, and to be no longer excluded from the American Dream. But the drive to achieve this dream, as West shows, destroys people. Harry Greener, an ex-clown who frequently collapses due to bad health, cannot stop performing even though he has been retired from this profession. When Harry first meets Homer Simpson, he pulls his vaudeville act of being sick, but then really gets sick, although we are told by the narrator that he does not know the difference (69). As a testament to his helplessness, Harry assumes the "clown" persona since it protects him, as he thinks that people do not harm clowns (48). Harry's talents are based on vaudeville, something he cannot translate well in to film. It is an obsolete form of comedy. Harry can only use his "talents" to survive economically.

Suffering becomes a form of entertainment, not just a condition of poverty. People enjoy the pain and suffering of others. When Tod goes to see Earl, his friends tease Earl

to get a rise out of him. After a while it works and Earl kicks one of them. The narrator comments that Earl goes from apathy to anger in a short time, with no transition. This sudden change in temperament also happens with Harry, who can only permit the “furthest degree, not degrees of feeling” (109). Same goes for the child actor, Adore, who is eight years old and “dressed like a man, in long trousers, vest, and jacket” (137). He is pushed further from his age when his mother forces him to sing “Momma Doan Wan’ no Peas,” during which “his buttocks writhed and his voice carried a top-heavy load of sexual pain” (139). Adore moves from boy to man in a matter of seconds so that he could entertain people. This lack of nuance, of not being able to live with a range of emotions, suggests the harshness of this world, where extreme behavior is a symptom of their frustrations. These people are ready to explode, but they do not, precisely because they manage their anger through discrete doses of violence.

The Violence of Dreaming

West thought violence existed under the surface of America, ready to release at any moment. He elaborates his ideas on this subject in a brief essay, “Some Notes on Violence.” He mentions that

in America violence is idiomatic. Read our newspapers. To make the front page a murderer has to use his imagination, he also has to use a particular hideous instrument. Take this morning’s paper: FATHER CUTS SON’S THROAT IN BASEBALL ARGUMENT. It appears on an inside page. To make the first page, he should have killed three sons with a baseball bat instead of a knife. Only liberality and symmetry could have made this daily occurrence interesting. (capitals in original 50)

A screen writer in Hollywood at the time he wrote this essay, West is also sensitive to people’s desire to be famous. Thus, West pairs violence with one aspect of the American Dream: celebrity. Collapsing violence with fame, West makes the tacit assumption that people want to be famous. Acts of violence become a way to achieve it, whether by using

a baseball bat on someone's head or through the exclusion of other people from competing for recognition. West also recognizes the necessity for "imagination" to grab people's attention. Regular violence grows mundane. To capture people's attention requires that violence also become a spectacle. In addition to shocking the public, violence must also entertain. West elaborates American's predisposition to violence in the interpersonal and social relationships in the novel, where people resent others who can participate in the American Dream.⁸

Part of this violence is seen in the relationship between the middle class and the cheated. Out on the street, Tod encounters a group of people who are disparately dressed as actors:

A great many of the people wore sports clothes which were not really sports clothes. Their sweaters, knickers, slacks, blue flannel jackets with brass buttons were fancy dress. The fat lady in the yachting cap was going shopping, not boating; the man in the Norfolk jacket and Tyrolean hat was returning, not from a mountain, but an insurance office; and the girl in slacks and sneakers with a bandanna around her head had just left a switchboard, not a tennis match. (22)

Their dress indicates they have a lifestyle. We can assume from their clothing that they participate in that great activity of consuming images, since they themselves have turned themselves into an image of someone performing an activity. The ability to change appearance through dress is a form of re-invention. The only character in *Gatsby* to change appearance is Myrtle Wilson when in New York. Yet her transformation takes place in private, suggesting that at this historical moment such transgressions were

⁸ There is a crucial difference between participating in and actually achieving the American Dream. It is far better for the majority of people to participate in it, i.e., consume commodities. While West uses the "cheated" for specific purposes, the novel would certainly read more cynically if the cheated still had hope to achieve the American Dream through the market. As I suggest, when considering the cheated as an experience, people transcend class borders.

unacceptable. Bringing this type of change into the public in *Locust* celebrates the flexibility of appearance.

Serving as background for these people are those of a “different type” (23). Their clothes are “somber and badly cut, bought from mail-order houses.” Nor do they move with the purpose of those passing. Instead, they “loitered on corners or stood with their backs to the shop windows and stared at everyone who passed. When their stare was returned, their eyes filled with hatred.”⁹ According to Tod, these people have come to California to die. Compared to the movement of the stylish people, these people observe the spectacle of something they cannot have. They have relocated to a new place but cannot participate in the life that California promises. Unlike the more well-to-do citizens, these people with their bad clothes and somber look are the lower class, and even more so, their inactivity—or activity of watching people—isolates them from participating in the American Dream. Their role is to observe, just as they would while in the movie theater. They are a reserve army of labor to be enlisted as an audience.

However, the crowd’s angst should not be considered entirely negative. The cheated acquire a larger significance when framed as an evolution of Walter Benjamin’s ragpicker. About the ragpicker Benjamin states that,

When the new industrial process had given refuse a certain value, ragpickers appeared in cities in large numbersThe ragpicker fascinated his epoch. The eyes of the first investigators of pauperism were fixed on him with the mute questioning of where the limit of human misery lay. (19)

West uses these people to mark the depth of human misery. Instead of moving to cities to collect garbage off the streets, they are to collect images that represent their dreams, only

⁹ The “cheated,” who are unemployed and from the lower class, resemble Marx’s “lumpenproletariat,” a class of people I explore further in Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*, and Toni Morrison’s *Paradise*.

these images vanish when the house lights come on after the movie. The emptiness of their faces and despair in their eyes tell the observer that another dream is needed to pursue. The middle class have yet to acknowledge their own sufferings in such a profound way. Tod Hackett's obsession with the cheated stems from his fascination with the pauperism of the American Dream. As the ragpickers represented a shaking of the foundation of nineteenth century French society (20), the cheated are meant to shake the foundations of an ever increasing rationalization of capitalism in the twentieth century.

Violence registers this pauperism on smaller scales in the novel. From seemingly innocent acts of aggression such as kicking a friend in the pants to more serious instances such as squeezing a man's testicles, characters respond to and communicate through violence. Examples of violence: Faye hits her father in the face (77), Tod dreams of raping Faye (91–2), Earle hits his friend over the head with a piece of wood (106), movie extras crash through an unstable scenery "hill" (131), a chicken dies in a gruesomely detailed cock fight (158–60), Earle Shoop's friend Miguel throws Abe against the wall (172), Homer kills the child actor Adore (196), the mob tears Homer apart (196). Violence becomes a common language to communicate frustration and struggle. It also communicates what does not register with characters except Tod: the desire to change one's life, yet not knowing how to do it.

In *Gatsby*, violence articulates individual expressions of rage. George Wilson's murder-suicide, and Homer's murder of Adore at the end of the novel are examples of this. These individual acts of violence do not incite a "civil war." The individual violent explosions reveal the double-bind of people's situation. Slavoj Žižek's discussion on violence and revolution focuses the significance of violence in *Locust*. In his discussion

about Andrea Yates, a Texas woman who in 2001 killed her five children, Zizek sees her violent act as a way to resolve a double-bind of the “ideological deadlock” of the family. On the one hand, the stay-at-home mother fills her role by attending to others. On the other hand, realizing she could never fulfill the other’s demands, Zizek argues that “the more [Yates] tried to comply with the demand to serve her neighbor, the more she felt inadequate” (223). Violence became the only way out of this double-bind. Zizek calls this type of violent outburst the *passage a l’acte*, a “blind” act with a suicidal dimension. In general, the *passage a l’acte* waits to be properly politicized; no guarantee exists that the underlying reasons for a violent explosion is revealed. Rather than address the social aspects of Yates’ actions, people explain it away as an atypical outburst. According to Zizek, the *passage a l’acte* contains a “hidden liberating potential,” a potential the mob in *Locust* addresses. Yet single acts of violence repeat what people already know. The *passage a l’acte* fails to organize people into a political body.

The Cheated: A Body Beyond Taylor

At the end of the novel the cheated gather for a movie premier. The emcee of the event announces that there must be over 10,000 people waiting for the movie stars to arrive. As the police arrive to control the growing crowd, the announcer describes the scene in the only terms he can: as if this were the suspenseful climax of a film: “It’s a bedlam folks. A veritable bedlam! What excitement! Of all the premiers I’ve attended, this is the most . . . the most . . . stupendous, folks. Can the police hold them? Can they? It doesn’t look so, folks” (ellipses in original 191). The announcer rightly sees these people as an audience meant to build the drama and tension of the event before the movie stars arrive. But as a collective, the crowd realize their power. This description of the crowd, as a frenzied group of people eagerly awaiting stars to arrive, attempts to make

invisible their despair by assigning them a natural role to play. Instead of seeing them as discontent, the emcee sees them as excited. If they did not riot, the crowd would merely be a mass of passive people. The crowd, insofar as it represents the unemployed of Taylor's scheme, returns with a vengeance. Their suffering can no longer be contained.

The cheated have been excluded from both the rewards of success and the idea of the American Dream itself. Described as having "come to California to die"(23), these people expect a better life in the West, yet nothing improves. Their situation echoes George Wilson's in *Gatsby*: neither have the access to work, nor do they possess the skills to perform class-as-lifestyle, as do Nick and Tod. They have prepared for only one thing: leisure. But they learn that all they have available to them is consumption. The poor cannot afford to consume conspicuously. Like T.S. Eliot's Prufrock who measures "his life out with coffee spoons," the crowd's life gains meaning though such things like collecting autographs of the famous (121–22). For these reasons, the lower-middle class reacts against its situation in ways the middle class would not.

Of the people in the crowd at the premier, Tod notices "very few people who looked tough, nor could he see any working men. The crowd was made up of the lower middle classes, every other person one of his torchbearers" (191). West mentions that the source of their anger and boredom is that these people came out to California where the weather and land were a paradise compared to the small towns or farms of the mid west. Their disappointment tastes even more bitter since the West Coast is the land of sweet dreams, a place to where people can retire to seek the good life:

All their lives they had slaved at some kind of dull, heavy labor, behind desks and counters, in the fields and at tedious machines of all sorts, saving their pennies and dreaming of the leisure that would be theirs when they had enoughWhere else would they go but California, the land of sunshine and oranges. (192)

The people who have come to California to die are already dead since they have no control over their lives. West mentions that people, to fill in their resentment, “read newspapers and went to the movies” (192). They have a vacuum of time to fill, as “they don’t know what to do with their time. They haven’t the mental equipment for pleasure . . . what else is there?” (192). Seen as a type of Taylorism, the crowd has been conditioned to organize their life around capitalism.

Tod’s different versions of *The Burning of Los Angeles* capture what he felt were the cream of all those in the US who felt cheated. The riot scene in the picture captures a tendency already existent. West comments that “The Angelenos would be the first [to riot], but their comrades all over the country would follow. There would be a civil war” (107). This civil war will only be ignited through the collective; individualized struggle does nothing to articulate or inspire the desire or need to make change. The crowd at the movie premier represents the class struggle of waste populations. For West, activating waste populations’ burning desire for a better life suggests a path to change.

Before the movie stars arrive, the crowd slowly works itself into a riot. The “arrogant and pugnacious” crowd needed an incident to ignite them, and Homer stomping on Adore starts the riot. The crowd moves like a unit, surging in one direction, then another, with people tightly packed together. The people in the crowd are not working class heroes, nor do they seem aware of what they could become as a political entity. Indeed, Lavonne Mueller goes so far as accusing the crowd of being “American Philistines” and “pathetic because of their inability to accept the humanness of their heroes; they clutch desperately to the hope that men can become Gods” (229). The crowd does contain some undesirable people, but because there are perverts among them. One

man has one of his hands inside a young girl's dress and bites her neck; another man wraps his arms around a woman. From West's description of the crowd it is clear he does not champion them or find merit in their gathering per se. Rather than read this scene as yet another example of the violent and dangerous minds of the masses, we can read the riot as a figurative response against the dominant organizing forces in the novel. Given the circumstances of their lives, these people respond inevitably the only way they can.

Crucially, the mob scene conceptualizes an alternative version beyond a life they presently live. Considering the crowd as part of mass culture in West's work, Rita Barnard argues that it "is not a regrettable sign of the demise of culture but a sign of need: of what is lacking at the hotel desk, at the switchboard, in the insurance office To say this is not only to shift the debate from the psychological and cultural to the social and political" (20). Indeed, as Tod is swept up in the riot, his mind wanders to the social as he thinks of the innumerable sketches he made of people who had come to California to die:

the cultists of all sorts, economic as well and religious, the wave, airplane, funeral and preview watchers—all those poor devils who can only be stirred by the promise of miracles and then only to violence. A super "Dr. Know-All Pierce-All had made the necessary promise and they were marching behind his banner in a great unified front of screwballs and screwboxes to purify the land. No longer bored, they sang and danced joyously in the red light of the flames. (201)

Inspired by violence, the mob's actions resemble a pagan ritual, a primitive or unconscious reaction against the order that has excluded them. This would horrify Taylor since the mob's destruction challenges the power of managers while it also destroys the image of the docile worker. The mob has temporarily created a response that cannot be contained by power or reason. They have turned on Taylor's process of eliminating waste by purifying themselves of his order. People in the crowd identify their condition among

each other, and this brings them together. Their “spontaneous” outburst is an explosion of their uselessness. This solidarity can be re-contextualized as a political entity, an expression for another type of politics that would remake social space and its relations.

The riot displays the mob’s tendency toward liberation. The violence of the lower class articulates collectively what has been previously expressed individually. The motivation for the mob to riot is located in their feeling cheated, yet they do not destroy the sources that produce the illusionary American Dream. Significantly, they turn on themselves.

Turning to Zizek’s discussion on violence in the film *Fight Club* avoids condemning these people as “pathetic.” Zizek reads the fighting in this film as a strategy adopted by people who have nothing to lose (252). Self-inflicted violence is the “first act of liberation” that rids the oppressed of their oppressor. Not asking for reform, the characters in *Fight Club* gesture towards a “transformation of the oppressed victim into an active agent” (255). According to Zizek, from this specific practice of violence, “the pure subject emerges only through this experience of radical self-degradation, when I allow/provoke the other to beat the crap out of me, emptying me of all substantial content, of all symbolic support which could confer a modicum of dignity on me” (252). Zizek admits that this self-inflicted violence does not produce instantly a radical subjectivity: “we cannot go directly from capitalist to revolutionary subjectivity” (252). Another way of saying this is that the lower class in *Locust* cannot go from being disorganized waste to collectively practicing recycling. A new subjectivity to emerge through violence cannot rely on a specific explosion that somehow reveals the authentic breakthrough to another society (259). Asking what is the criterion of the political act

proper, Zizek replies that it emerges “through the repetition of previous failures” (259).

The failures of George Wilson, Homer Simpson, Faye and Harry Greener, and their bouts of violence, are evoked in the mob’s recognition that they have nothing to lose by rioting.

To properly politicize this moment, however, would mean that the mob would be acting

as if the utopian future is . . . already at hand, there to be seized. Revolution is experienced not as a present hardship we have to endure for the sake of happiness and freedom of future generations, but as the present hardship over which this future happiness and freedom already cast their shadow—in it, we are already free even as we fight for freedom. (259–60)

The riot in this context offers a vision of a better future. They have found freedom by realizing they have nothing to lose. They see themselves as waste who need to be destroyed. The mob at the end of the novel temporarily suspends itself between its past, present, and future. Their willingness to destroy themselves tells us about the other characters in the novel as well.

The cheated recognizes it has nothing to lose, whereas Abe, Faye, Harry, Homer, and Tod cannot rid themselves of the belief that life could be better if only their individual problems could be solved. This reveals Tod as existing in a voyeuristic position in relation to others. He cannot relate to the mob’s self-inflicting violence. He does have something to lose: his job, his pursuit of Faye, his lifestyle. Tod recognizes the desperation and anger in the crowd, but he does not share it. Indeed, once in the crowd, Tod desperately tries to extract himself from it. His unwillingness or inability to participate in the riot reveals Tod’s class sympathies. He can understand the lower class, he can eat their food, but he cannot live like them. Similar to Nick Carraway, Tod’s privileged class position allows him to experience the lower class as a spectacle. In addition, Tod’s instinct for self-preservation in this context means he favors current social relations.

The mob's self-inflictive violence begins to break them from the spectacle. As it grows in number, the mob instinctively acts against the system that organizes their lives, the star system and the very people who embody the elusive promise of California. This fundamentally foregrounds what is suppressed by the narrative of the American Dream:

New groups, whole families, kept arriving. He [Tod] could see a change come over them as soon as they had become part of the crowd. Until they reached the line, they had looked diffident, almost furtive, but the moment they had become part of it, they turned arrogant and pugnacious. It was a mistake to think them harmless curiosity seekers. They were savage and bitter, especially the middle-aged and old, and had been made so by boredom and disappointment. (191–92)

The mob violence suggests a type of closure to one story, and the beginning of another.

The space of the mob's transformation into political subjects happens while in the street.

The individuals in the mob recognize in others their suffering through “eyes filled with hatred” (23). Their collective cooperation in destroying Los Angeles challenges Taylor's claim about collective work destined to failure. For Taylor, collective work discourages the individual from pursuing his/her ambitions: “Personal ambition always has been and will remain a more powerful incentive to exertion than a desire for the general welfare.”

As seen in *The Great Gatsby* and *The Day of the Locust*, personal ambition is a very powerful motivational device, and as we have seen, one's own interest can be violently opposed to the general welfare of other people. Taylor accepts this since he naturalizes ambition and competition through science; to not make people waste would mean to deny the natural evolution of progress. The body conforms to this story by repeating it, repeating behaviors, attitudes, and values that insistently prioritize the individual's interest over all else. A person fits like a piece of a puzzle into rationalized spaces built from these narratives. To question this organization of space or these human

traits appears a waste of time. Instead of directly confronting them, *Gatsby* and *Locust* represent the interests of the general welfare, a side conveniently unaddressed by Taylor. We see in these novels how narratives of success, primarily fueled by the “American Dream,” individualize people to such a degree that they find it difficult to find a common bond with other people. Yet neither novel politicizes the violent explosions. Instead, violence is naturalized through the narrative of personal loss and suffering, as seen with George Wilson, or it lingers mostly as an unresolved act, as in *Locust*. Mobs, a collection of twentieth century “spectacle collectors,” tell us about not only the depths of human misery, but also the possibilities to build another relation to space through its destruction. The mob mind and body in *Locust* produce a human that surpasses Taylor; it creates a collective incapable of prioritizing individual “personal ambition” over their desires to live a better life. The body beyond Taylor, rather than reproduce the production-consumption circuitry that makes people waste, looks forward to a strategy that begins to recycle obsolete people and practices as a means to undo the domination that Taylor’s epistemology has over the social.

The figure of waste in these novels transform into a another body in the work of Thomas Pynchon. Waste people are more marginalized in Pynchon’s work. The move from Fitzgerald and West to Pynchon leaves behind class-as-lifestyle as a strategy against obsolescence, and moves ahead to the promise of collective struggle emanating from spaces of waste.

CHAPTER 4
THE SOCIETY OF STERILITY

The search for the key among the wastes is urgent, lest we too become waste.

—Joseph Slade, *Thomas Pynchon*

As necessarily as it produces machines and men-machines, the bourgeois world produces deviants. It produces the Tramp, its *reverse* image.

—Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*

Thomas Pynchon's work has always exhibited a deep concern for useless people, making them invaluable in the effort to theorize the critical social and spatial practices of waste populations. Throughout his work, his main characters remain distant from the successes and awards available in mainstream culture. Losers, deadbeats, burnouts, or slob, each of Pynchon's main characters—referred to generally as “schlemihls”—weave in and out of acceptable and marginal society. It becomes clear that rather than having to deal with “mainstream” culture, many of his characters would rather conduct themselves on another social level altogether. In this respect, his characters respond to their situation much differently than the waste people in Chapter 3, such as George Wilson in *The Great Gatsby*, and the Cheated in *The Day of the Locust*. From Pynchon's characters we can detect his affinity for the easy-going attitude and laid-back lifestyle of the counter-culture of the 1960s, making him seem a champion of the alternative society and collectivity that these movements momentarily built. If anything, however, Pynchon's fiction—from his

early short story “Low-lands” through his most recent novel, *Mason and Dixon*— instructs us to forget trying to drop out and escape the problems of the world. His fiction insistently explores strategies of recycling social and spatial practices that refuse to reproduce a world structured by both mainstream and countercultures.¹

In this chapter I explore the significance of Pynchon’s schlemihl characters in the context of the space that shapes their experiences. Space is central to examining Pynchon’s fiction since it reveals structures that produce waste, and, conversely, social practices that inform strategies of recycling. I use the notion of “sterility” to describe the spatial and social order that foregrounds Pynchon’s fictional worlds. The word sterility is intended to have two meanings: One, “free of pathogenic elements,” that is, having no waste; and two, “infertility,” of being unable to reproduce life. As a society comes closer to eradicating waste, it is unable to produce other forms of living. I contend that strategies of recycling found in each of Pynchon’s works build from the tension between structural forces that attempt to eliminate waste and populations who persist against such forces. Because social space has dual characteristics, and to better articulate moments in Pynchon’s fiction that reveal practices of recycling, I draw in my analysis upon Henri Lefebvre’s theory of the “everyday” and “everyday life.” Lefebvre’s contribution to thinking of space as dialectical, rather than static, brings motifs in Pynchon’s fiction of space—levels, scales, zones—into better focus. Because spatial practices are crucial to strategies of recycling, I also use concepts developed by the Situationist International (who originally collaborated in close conjunction with Lefebvre) to read specific events in Pynchon’s novels as interventions in the everyday. The strategies elaborated in this

¹ Here I use the word “counterculture” as defined in chapter one. The term refers to groups rooted in lifestyle choices, rather than practicing structural changes in society.

chapter are further developed in Chapter 5 on Don DeLillo, where the spectacle acts as the primary organizing force over people's lives.

In what follows, I first discuss the privileged position of the schlemihl character in Pynchon's development of recycling strategies. I then discuss Henri Lefebvre's concept of the "everyday" and "everyday life." After this, I focus specifically on the work of Thomas Pynchon, arguing that Pynchon's short story "Low-lands," and his novels, *The Crying of Lot 49*, *Vineland*, and *Mason and Dixon*, challenge the sterile order of the everyday and contribute to strategies of recycling as enacted through everyday practices.² Finally, I take some key ideas on the recycling of waste developed in this chapter and use them to read the site-specific urban art of Krzysztof Wodiczko and the proposed architectural designs of Lebbeus Woods. Both Wodiczko and Woods practice what I outline in this chapter as recycling. The work of both artists intervene in the everyday and reveal the relation between agency and space. I see their work as a visual representation of my argument and as highly suggestive for thinking about future interventions in the everyday.

The Schlemihl

The entirety of Thomas Pynchon's work can be read as exploring the hidden possibilities to live another life within a world ostensibly sealed closed by capital. Contradictions in the social order reveal cracks, which are eventually found and opened through the deviant character of the schlemihl. The schlemihl reveals the hidden worlds of waste populations. Produced as waste by forces that clean the social body, schlemihls

² I skip discussing Pynchon's two other novels, *V.* and *Gravity's Rainbow*, since in the context of this chapter *V.* elaborates without producing significant insight into the theme of the underground examined in "Low-lands," and *Gravity's Rainbow* extends in a more complex narrative the enclosed ideological and spatial terrain explored in *Lot 49*.

represent the unevenly developed economic and social landscape. This type of character reveals more than just an inability to conform to the codes of behavior of middle class society. The schlemihl unravels the existence of spatial orders of another kind within the bourgeois world. In an antagonistic relation to established order, the schlemihl practices a form of recycling that questions social norms and values embedded in the everyday world. In his earlier fiction these values are expressed through the aesthetics of 1950s domestic culture. In his later fiction, underground movements still signify resistance but we see them more suppressed by the dominant culture. In addition, the presence of unaccounted-for undergrounds, groups who are not acknowledged or even known by mainstream society, keeps open the possibility of another way of life appearing in the future. A sterile social order is primarily defined by surfaces in Pynchon's novels. Central to achieving cleanliness is making waste invisible, for waste not only represents the pathological, but it also connotes traces of the past that mandates that things improve.

Those elements that are defined as socially pathological must remain on the margins of society, unseen, unwanted, and repressed. Thus, even marginal tendencies—behavior, ideas, and practices—are systemically suppressed. The act of designating a person, group of people, or an entire population as waste remains a violent one, since clean and sterile places can only be made through a process of elimination, which necessarily requires the literal or figurative death of that which threatens the purity of a space.

In his seminal work on Pynchon, Joseph Slade identifies the various literary allusions and scientific and religious themes in *V.*, *The Crying of Lot 49*, and *Gravity's Rainbow*. One such theme is the conflict of the Elect and the Preterite, or of those who in

the tradition opened by Calvin are imagined to have been elected and those who have been entirely denied entry into the kingdom of heaven. Slade argues that this distinction creates dual worlds: “The Elect, which includes all those predestined, and the Preterite, those passed over, form two separate worlds, made up in each case of the living and the dead” (144). While the Elect in Pynchon’s work occupy positions of power, the Preterite take the form of the schlemihl, who does not even have a chance to live a better afterlife. Pynchon despises the former and champions the latter. However, instead of following Calvin and understanding their waste status to be assigned to them by God, we can gain better insight into the politics of Pynchon’s work by focusing on the social and spatial structures that produce these people as waste. Slade suggests—and I focus on this in more detail—that within any singular space are dual worlds. This means that there are at least two realities in which people’s activities, codes of behavior, and relationships are organized. In a peculiar position, the schlemihl has access to and understands both sets of rules, whereas the Elect in Pynchon’s fiction must assert a tremendous amount of power (and violence) to eliminate waste populations.

The production of social waste appears natural. Pynchon’s work critiques this order and does so by imagining what remains possible within a social system that refuses to allow its negative to flourish. Since modern politics operates through a basic system of exclusions, Pynchon’s work illuminates the possibility of thinking other forms of the political. He imagines the ways in which these people recycle themselves is articulated through everyday practices. Placing Pynchon’s critique within the theoretical framework of Henri Lefebvre’s notion of everyday life opens paths from which alternative types of life and politics might flourish.

Lefebvre and The Everyday

Henri Lefebvre developed his ideas on the everyday in the 1940s. Lefebvre's work responds to the increasing commodification and modernization of France's post WWII culture. France's withdrawal from its colonies turned the practice of colonization inward. Kristin Ross argues that this meant "rational administrative techniques developed in the colonies were brought home and put to use with new technological innovations such as advertising in reordering metropolitan, domestic society, the 'everyday life' of its citizens" (Ross *Fast* 7). This rationale also developed side by side with the expansion of capital and the Americanization of French society. Through new products available on the market, the French quickly adjusted to higher standards of living. They could more readily purchase electric refrigerators and automobiles, and technology came to play a major role in people's experience of domestic life. Lefebvre cites access to and use of technology as characterizing the "new structural conflicts within the concrete of society" (9). With "breathtaking developments in the application of techniques of everyday life" there came also a "no-less-breathtaking degradation of everyday life for large masses of human being" (9). Lefebvre uses the example of peasants living in squalor yet owning electric ovens to show the contradictory nature of everyday life. Although the peasants overall living conditions were still terrible, owning a piece of technology that represents modernity symbolically moved them out of their past.

This commodification of daily life began to shift people's perception of time: "Capitalist modernization," Ross argues, "presents itself as timeless because it dissolves beginning and end, in the historical sense, into an ongoing, naturalizing process" (10). This naturalizing process ushers in repetitions of the same. Lefebvre's notion of "everyday life" develops this problem of sameness and its production of difference:

The days follow one after another and resemble one another, yet . . . everything changes. But the change is programmed: obsolescence is planned. Production anticipates reproduction; production produces change in such a way as to superimpose the impression of speed onto that of monotony. (Lefebvre “Everyday” 10)

The production of commodities, Lefebvre suggests, coordinates one’s sense of time since newly produced items make other ones obsolete. Together, Ross and Lefebvre describe a moment when economic and social developments shaped how people lived. The everyday then became a stage on which the commodity could reproduce itself and shape how people lived. The production of the everyday ensures a high level of sterility since the everyday reproduces the logic of the commodity.

The “everyday” signifies the banal and routine practices in which people engage. “Everyday life,” on the other hand, is a term used to recognize within boring routines the revolutionary sparks that could ignite forms of de-alienated living. Everyday life for Lefebvre is dialectical, containing tensions between alienated relations and spontaneity, between routine and desire. The term establishes grounds for resistance and renewal. Lefebvre argues that people can transform their consciousness by changing their routines. An example of this is the festival, a time and place in which social norms are suspended. During a festival people can momentarily escape their routine lives and act spontaneously, following their libidinal desires. The key to everyday life is to discover, among a range of people, those moment when people could collectively read and act according to a whole other set of norms. However, Lefebvre makes it clear that a festival is not enough: “[a] break with the everyday by means of festival—violent or peaceful—cannot endure. In order to change life, society, space, architecture, even the city must change” (11). The key is to sustain interruptions into the everyday in order to change it permanently.

Within the framework of Lefebvre's conception of everyday life, we can understand the schlemihl as one who can grasp the dialectics of events. This is because his subjectivity is the antithesis of the subject who reproduces the everyday. An example of the schlemihl in Lefebvre's work is Charlie Chaplin's Tramp. Lefebvre sees the Tramp as a social character type who confronts the bourgeois social order. The Tramp represents those individuals who cannot gain permanent employment and thus fall into the category of social waste. According to Lefebvre, the Tramp

contains certain characteristics of the image Marx presents of the proletariat in his philosophical writings: the pure alienation of man and the human which is revealed as being more deeply human than the thing it negates—negatively forced by its essence to destroy the society to which at the one and the same time it belongs and does not belong. (*Critique* 12)

The Tramp is produced as a body that is inferior to people who are employed. Yet, if one becomes a Tramp, he/she is mostly excluded from occupying social spaces. The Tramp disrupts the flow of a capitalist society since he/she embodies its negativity: he/she does not and cannot conform to the daily practices of those who live a life of mindless repetition.

Chaplin's film *Modern Times* provides a perfect example of the Tramp's unwillingness to continue repeating the alienating effects of the everyday. In one scene the Tramp works as a night watchman at a department store where his love-interest (who is also a vagabond) can sleep comfortably and safely in a bed. That night, thieves break in and are about to beat up the Tramp until he recognizes that he used to work next to them on the assembly line in the now closed factory. Learning that they broke into the department store to get food and drink, the Tramp offers them provisions. This gesture of helping people, which according to store policy would be theft, calls into question a society that prioritizes profit over human life. Instead of seeing his friends as thieves and

thus reproducing alienating social relations by arresting them, the Tramp sees them as hungry people. This scene also isolates moments when marginal figures can undermine authority through small acts of resistance. The struggle of Chaplin's Tramp takes place in the sphere of the everyday, yet it seizes its potential to construct change by politicizing eating as a way to highlight class struggle.

The everyday is the site that normalizes standards of hygiene through discourse and practice. Everyday banal rituals such as shopping for food, driving to work, or cooking dinner, create impressions of a static world, a life that could not be lived or experienced any other way. Just like waste, the everyday, Lefebvre argues,

is a *product*, the most general of product in an era where production engenders consumption, and where consumption is manipulated by producers: not by "workers," but by the managers and owners of the means of production (intellectual, instrumental, scientific). The everyday is therefore the most universal and the most unique condition, the most social and the most individuated, the most obvious and the best hidden. (my emphasis "Everyday" 9)

The everyday is actively produced through systems that engender consumption. Whether inhabiting the suburbs or the city, the subject can think of him/herself as living in a specific way for specific purposes, separated from others who do not share the same cultural interests or social habits.

We can use the concept of the "everyday" to explore the ways in which the spaces of sterility are constructed and policed. Here we get a sense of the power needed to maintain sterility. Sterility is not an act unto itself; it is part of a larger process of calculability. As Kristin Ross notes, the "everyday" represents a system of enclosure,

when the lived experience of those new urban dwellers became organized, channeled, and codified into a set of repetitive and hence visible patterns, when everything—money, work hours, miles, calories, minutes—became calculated, and when objects, people, the relations between them changed under the onslaught of such quantification. (*Fast* 21)

The quantification of life reduces one's actions to predictable patterns: eat, sleep, work, and vacation. With the occasional disruption of schedules by planned events such as football games or unplanned disasters such as floods or airline crashes, experiences of the everyday implicitly teach people that any attempt to change their lives is impossible. Change of any type—social or political—never appears in the horizon. Reducing life and lived experiences to numbers means that people reproduce themselves as figures of sterile rationality. Lefebvre addresses how this type of repetition induces thinking of time as ahistorical (another word might be “sterile”); while at the same moment, this ahistoricity gives the impression that change happens. But this notion of change happens only by the advancements made in the market. Technological advancements and changes in consumer goods such as the development of quicker, quieter household appliances or the yearly redesigned automobile legitimize narratives of progress. The castoffs, last year's model, are thrown away in a dump, or circulated as second hand items that filter down to consumers with less spending power. Either way, castoffs are waste. The new replaces the old, and in so doing advances the notion of a linear progress of time. In Chapter 5 I examine the value of castoffs, as they provide a critical disruption between the old and the new.

Changing how people live means that a disruption in everyday life anticipates a more systemic change of the organizational mechanisms that shape social life. It also means that within the everyday are the deviants and their practices who threaten to undermine it permanently with their figurative festival way of life. These deviants, schlemihls, or social wastes, suspend the norms of the everyday. Waste populations, therefore, become a privileged site to examine how the everyday is produced since the set

of conditions that produces them as obsolete flow from the same structures organizing the lives of seemingly disparate people who are not obsolete. Further, waste allows for critical analysis of exclusion practices since the violence of the everyday is the most discernable.

Situations towards a Production of Space

The texture of everyday life appears orderly. But as Lefebvre points out, practices can disrupt this stable order. The Situationist International developed such practices. Specifically, they employed wanderings to disrupt the reification of movement and awaken one's dulled sense of his/her environment, an environment becoming increasingly commodified. The Situationists insistently engaged in the critique of a society formed by the commodity, especially as it formed social and spatial realms. Wandering through the city became for the Situationists a method to experience unexpected events.

The Situationists' theory of the *derive* offers particular insight into the significance of wandering. Guy Debord defines the derive as "a technique of transient passage through varied ambiances. The derive entails playful-construction behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects; which completely distinguishes it from the classical notions of the journey and the stroll" ("Definitions" 50). A stroll or journey could be said to be done for purposes of health or leisure; however, ultimately both are planned activities, ones built into the structure of the "normal" world. Ivan Chtcheglov's "Formulary for a new Urbanism" suggests that through the derive one discovers not only new worlds, but also oneself:

The derive is certainly a technique, almost a therapeutic one. But just as the analysis without anything else is almost always contraindicated, so the continual derive is dangerous to the extent that the individual, having gone too far without

defenses, is threatened with explosion, dissolution, dissociation, disintegration. And thence the relapse into what is termed “ordinary life,” that is to say, in reality, into “petrified life.” (372)

Chhtchevlov suggests that the derive works as a type of psychoanalysis, meant to overcome alienation from one’s built environment. The derive helps build a better understanding of a practice of recycling: one must be able to re-conceive another relation to the built environment and the possibilities in rearranging spatial organizations, while at the same time resisting forces that bring one’s experience back into the fold of a “petrified life.” The derive is part of a strategy of recycling, as it finds by chance already present possibilities of remaking one’s world.

The act of reusing “useless” objects remains ambiguous as a political gesture. This act can be read as something playful, as an ironic use of debris, as an aesthetic practice, or it can be read as a lifestyle choice celebrating kitsch. From the perspective of the SI, recycling critiques the ideology of such constructions. Recycling critiques the politics of space by projecting potential spatial practices against the everyday. A critical approach to the act of reusing space—making it a practice—and the politics inherent in it is best understood through the SI’s critical strategy of detournement. Detournement is the practice of “reusing [of] preexisting elements and placing them in a new ensemble.” This serves two functions: first, “the loss of importance of each detourned object” and second, “the organization of another meaningful ensemble that confers on each element its new scope and effect” (“Definitions” 55). Detournement is a type of recycling that contributes to a rethinking of the symbolic and political order from which the object originated. Detournement is a type of recycling that disrupts the cycle of production and consumption, a cycle that when coupled with the everyday, appears natural and exists largely unnoticed. A society based on sterility isolates waste and restricts it from moving

freely within “proper” space, policed in part by people who remain loyal to an orderly way of life.

Pynchon’s Fiction

“Low-lands”

“Low-lands” focuses on Dennis Flange’s transformation from a respectable domestic life to one of squatting in squalor. Kicked out of his house by his wife for skipping work and drinking wine, Flange ends up at the city dump, where he continues drinking homemade wine with his friends. In the bowels of trash, Flange encounters a gypsy whom he follows into tunnels dug throughout the dump, where, we are lead to believe, he starts a new life. “Low-lands” stands as an important work in Pynchon’s oeuvre since it introduces key themes and images dealing with waste populations and practices of recycling, which will recur later. In “Low-lands” Pynchon charts the terrain in which alternative worlds may be located. His story offers a grammar and concept of waste from which to read a social order presented as clean and free of waste.

“Low-lands” presents waste people’s responses to the increasing sterilization of society and space. Specifically, this story introduces various layers of waste and the people who occupy them. It concerns the production, organization, and containment of material and social waste, and particular practices in which resistance is possible. We learn from “Low-lands” that spaces of waste can be reused and redefined by obsolete people. These spaces and people remind us about the possibility for change.

Pynchon explores the potential for disruption of the relationship between waste and those forces that produce it. The lines between clean and dirty spaces are continually contested through spatial practices, as evident when Flange moves from above ground to below, substituting the socially abject space of the dump for his earlier domesticated

bliss. As we will see, negotiating between these two worlds creates a possibility for change in the social and spatial order whereby space is produced and shaped by those who inhabit it.

Spaces in “Low-lands” are remade and used differently than originally intended. Pynchon acknowledges that recycling can function in two different ways. The first form of recycling moves in the direction of respectability and rationality. The house bought by Dennis and his wife, Cindy, was built by an Episcopal minister who ran bootleg whiskey into the US from Canada. The house consists of

priest-holes and concealed passage ways and oddly angled rooms; and in the cellar, leading from the rumpus room, innumerable tunnels, which writhed away radically like the tentacles of a spastic octopus into dead ends, storm drains, abandoned sewers and occasionally a secret wine cellar. (56)

The irrational design of the house meets the needs of someone who engages in illegal activity. The house reflects a practice that transgresses the law. However, as the house is used by Dennis and Cindy, it conforms to their domestic needs of stability and security. Although the reader is reminded of the house’s past, the Flanges efface its history. It turns a past associated with deviance and waste to something new, considered proper by the economy of domesticity.

This system of erasure, however, cannot fully eradicate the past; its residuum persists. Dennis’ fantasy about the houses being built on top of a dump reveals this relationship between sterility and waste:

one day, perhaps fifty years from now, perhaps more, there would no longer be any hole: the bottom would be level with the streets of the development, and houses would be built on it too. As if some maddening slow elevator were carrying you toward a known level to confer with some inevitable face on matters which had already been decided. (64)

This “inevitable face on matters” takes the form of covering waste with “progress.” Just as people’s consumption increases, so does the demand for “newness.” Dennis imagines how concealing waste erases people’s memory of it. This motif appears in different forms throughout Pynchon’s work. He shows the reader again and again that traces of waste leading to other worlds will always exist.

One particular space in “Low-lands” crystallizes two contradictory social forces found throughout Pynchon’s work. When kicked out of his house in the past, Dennis would retreat to another space recycled for his pleasure, a police booth now used as a spare room. Dennis’ preference for cozy interiors is met by this booth. However, on the wall hangs all that Dennis, and Pynchon, despises: a Mondrian painting. We are told that “[t]he booth was womb like as could be and Mondrian and Cindy, he suspected, were brother and sister under the skin, both austere and logical” (61). Mondrian’s geometric paintings represent the rationality and sterility of an ordered planned society, bereft of play, surprise, or grime. This logic sets the tone of the house run by Cindy, which disallows grown men to drink homemade wine all day long, as Dennis does with Rocco, the garbage man. The disdain felt for Mondrian’s rational, right-angled grid translates to a rejection of a Taylorized social order, where one’s activities are regulated, and useless activities eradicated. In this schema, people like Dennis, the schlemihl, are simultaneously produced as such and rejected.

Their rejection is measured by the vertical level they occupy in the physical and social strata. In this story, Cindy occupies the upper level of the hierarchy. When the door bell rings Cindy comes “suddenly roaring downstairs like a small blond terrier to answer it” (60). Of course, drawing similarities between Cindy and a dog makes it clear that

Pynchon has inverted the significance of the hierarchy. Occupying the top floor draws disdain. The higher one is, the more he/she sides with the order of sterility. High above the ground distances one from waste. The significance of this inverted hierarchy becomes clearer when Dennis travels out of town with Pig Bodine and Rocco to a dump, a place where objects thought to have died are recycled for different uses. Upon entering the dump, they descend “in a wide, long curve” eventually reaching the bottom at fifty feet below street level (64). The windy dump contrasts the neatly designed world structured on a logic similar to the straight lines and right angles of a Mondrian. Walking through the dump, they pass “half an acre of abandoned refrigerators, bicycles, baby carriages, washing machines, sinks, toilets, bedsprings, TV sets, pots and pans and air-conditioners” (66). At the bottom of the dump lies a clutter of useless objects. The dump’s caretaker, Bolingbroke, lives in a shack made from these objects. The gypsies, however, live even further down in an even more sophisticated construction.

Called out of Bolingbroke’s shack by Nerissa, a gypsy girl, Dennis follows her to a tunnel and learns that “the entire dump had been laced with a network of tunnels and rooms back in the ‘30s by a terrorist group called the Sons of the Red Apocalypse, by way of making ready for the revolution. Only the Feds had rounded them all up, and a year or so later, the gypsies had moved in” (75). The gypsies represent the ultimate recuperation of waste space. Taking over an abandoned space, the gypsies make it their home, and with the recuperation of a useless space they replace the world above. This recycling of the dump redefines both the dump and the objects in it. The world of the gypsies calls into question Dennis’ understanding of the world by remaking the rules and values of a clean spatial order and the social norms that emerge from it. At the bottom of

the dump salvation from a sterile world is found. The potential to remake his life grows as Dennis descends into each lower level in the story. As Cindy occupies the second floor of their house, we can gather that in it deviant activity of any kind is disallowed. On the first floor, Dennis can drink wine with the garbage man; and his home away from home, the police booth detached from the house, allows him more freedom. The dump, where Dennis meets Bolingbroke, the “uncontested ruler” of the “discrete kingdom” (67), promises a life unlike that lived with Cindy, as the men continue to drink homemade wine. Finally, as if descending into a bomb shelter, Dennis enters a different world under the dump, one which we can imagine protects him from forces of sterility.

The dump is remade much like Dennis and Cindy’s house. Both places are used for reasons different than that originally intended. The dump is not remade into the ideal domestic space; it retains its status of waste and therefore has no value beyond that of use. The dump escapes quantification and overrides sterility. Bolingbroke, the gypsies, and Dennis do not attempt to remake the space into something that it is not. Rather, they use what is available and reuse those material items to live. They show that it is possible to remake oneself in spaces of waste. In the same way, spaces of waste offer a different way to live outside of the rationally organized world. But these spaces do not announce themselves loudly. They are secretive underground places where people practice their way of life. Placing two worlds in contrast with one another, Pynchon shows that resistance is possible to a social order modeled after modernity’s dream of purity.

Dennis Flange’s wanderings into the dump acquire greater significance when considered as through the frame of the Situationist International. In his explorations, Dennis seems to respond to a Situationist logic that prioritizes spontaneous movements

over predetermined excursions. In his travel from the house to the dump and to the underground, Dennis experiences spaces that do not conform to a spatial logic of sterility. Dennis' derive exposes him to the gypsies, who reuse that which is obsolete. Hence, we learn that the possibility for social change—the making of a different version of everyday life—is intimately tied to remaking or reusing items or practices deemed useless by the dominant culture.

In the case of “Low-lands,” an alternative world is an isolated phenomenon that takes place in an isolated space. Even though the spatial relation between the dump and town is based on an inside/outside dichotomy, Pynchon suggests that conceptually we need to think in terms of layers, where directly underneath middle class communities are people living entirely different lives. We can gather from this story that Dennis escapes his old, petrified life, and begins to live a different one. Because he turns his life away from a rationally ordered world, waste is a site of redemption for rejects. Waste is the dialectical moment in everyday life, when others can explore potentialities for another type of life. What emerges from waste is a model fundamentally different from a social order that produces waste. The dump does not merely hold trash; it is created into an alternative world that Pynchon reproduces in many guises throughout his work.

The Crying of Lot 49

How many shared Tristero's secret, as well as its exile?

—*The Crying of Lot 49*

The Crying of Lot 49 (*Lot 49*) extends the split between the domestic realm of the everyday and throwaway populations evident in “Low-lands.” *Lot 49* shows that throwaways are much more ingrained into the structure of things. The novel follows the

adventures of Oedipa Maas, who has been asked to execute her lover's will. She discovers clues, a muted postal horn and the acronym W.A.S.T.E., which point to the existence of a secret society, the Tristero, a mail carrier service begun in sixteenth century Europe and migrated in the nineteenth century to the U.S. The Tristero hints at a waste population waiting for a revolution.

On the surface the world of *Lot 49* appears fixed, tranquil, and orderly; however, the presence of the secret society of the Tristero undermines this image. Because of its subculture status, the Tristero can be seen as an extension of the gypsy population in "Low-lands." This time Pynchon places subcultures on the same horizontal plane. Unlike the gypsies who live under mainstream society, people who belong to the Tristero—or identify with it—do so secretly, and they live above ground, in the mainstream world. In this way, Pynchon introduces in his fiction the concept of zones of waste. Who belongs to the Tristero and in what capacity eludes both Oedipa and the reader. The vast spread of people associated with this alternative and secretive mail delivery system confuses its function.

The Tristero remains the single reference point with which waste people and populations align themselves. Because different and disconnected groups associate with the Tristero, its meaning becomes multiple. While it functions as something different for many people, its position in society is singular: it remains "underground." It is thus a figure of dissent emerging from within the everyday. With various people aligning themselves with values associated with waste, waste becomes a primary site to recognize what people have in common. Oedipa becomes more aware of these different groups associated with waste, but she cannot enter their world:

Last night, she might have wondered what undergrounds apart from the couple she knew of communicated by WASTE system. By sunrise she could legitimately ask what undergrounds didn't...For here God knew how many citizens, deliberately choosing not to communicate by U.S. Mail. It was not an act of treason, nor possibly even of defiance. But it was a calculated withdrawal, from the life of the Republic, from its machinery. Whatever else was being denied them out of hate, indifference to the power of their vote, loopholes, simple ignorance, this withdrawal was their own, unpublicized, private. Since they could not have withdrawn into a vacuum (could they?), there had to exist the separate, silent, unsuspected world. (124-25)

This "calculated withdrawal" is similar to Dennis Flange's in "Low-lands." Pynchon here imagines another world separated from the mainstream. It seems that for certain people their alliance to the Tristero is voluntary, a conscientious decision to take an alternative path to that which is practiced in everyday life. The Tristero, while always poised against established power, remains secretive. So although they exist among the everyday, they are invisible like the gypsies under the dump. Similar to the gypsies, the Tristero appears coordinated. The threat of the Tristero comes from what they might do in the future. A permanent festival may erupt.

What the Tristero suggests is that waste populations exist everywhere, that they have infiltrated the everyday, and that they identify with the abject, based on their sites of contact. For example, Oedipa drops a letter into a dumpster that has "WASTE" written on it, and upon closer inspection she notices that periods have been placed after each letter. Thus "W.A.S.T.E." changes the function of the dumpster by designating it as a letter box. To the uninitiated "W.A.S.T.E." would not mean anything. But for Oedipa, this is another experience of a small rift in the seemingly smooth social order.

Because it is associated with waste, it should come as no surprise that Oedipa first encounters the sign of the Tristero, a muted postal horn, in a bathroom. This first encounter opens the way she sees her world. We are told that "there were revelations all

around her” (44). Oedipa learns about these people and their association with the Tristero through the derive. Her wanderings collect impressions and knowledge about the Tristero which in turn help break the hypnotic hold of the everyday world she had previously inhabited. Oedipa’s wanderings are meant to cement her relationship back to her previous world of the Elect. But this backfires on her. She wants to collect information to solve the mystery. Instead, Oedipa’s wanderings break her from her petrified life. Oedipa’s character at the beginning of the novel is similar to that of Cindy in “Low-lands” since her life has taken on a repetitive pattern: “[Oedipa] wondered, wondered, shuffling back through a fat deckful of days which seemed...more or less identical, or all pointing the same way subtly like a conjurers deck, any odd one readily clear to a trained eye” (11). From this encounter she loses a certain predictability in her world. She can no longer apply the laws of cause and effect that she has learned from her world. Whereas Lefebvre would see this as a critical break in the everyday and a moment when one could pursue a different construction of the everyday, Oedipa is overwhelmed and unable to act productively. She is unable to construct another subjectivity aligned with something like those associated with the Tristero.

A variety of people associate with the Tristero. The membership confusingly spreads across socio-economic boundaries. Members include: Mike Fallopian, a worker at the aerospace corporation, Yoyodyne; English Professor Emory Bortz; a sick, homeless sailor in San Francisco; and children playing in Golden Gate park. Oedipa meets professionals who associate with this underground society. When Oedipa wanders around Yoyodyne—a defense company that makes missiles for the government—and meets Stanley Koteks, who is doodling the muted postal horn on paper, she learns of his

particular stance against authority. Koteks is an engineer concerned about the loss of individuality. The patents process, he explains to Oedipa, “stifles your really creative engineer” (85). Stressing teamwork as a way to design products, Yoyodyne has all engineers sign a contract that holds all rights to anyone’s inventions. Of course, Koteks’ problem with companies owning patents is based on the notion of the lone individual who invents things in his/her laboratory. While this falls into the myth of the solitary genius, Koteks and his like struggle against being “grounded into anonymity” (88). We can read Koteks rejection of the teamwork ethos in several ways. On the one hand, this rejection celebrates the individual, posing him/her above the masses. It would seem that Yoyodyne, a large corporation subsumes the individual and appropriates his/her work while effacing the individual. On the other hand, belonging to W.A.S.T.E. places Koteks in a more collective relation to other creative people. His rejection of teamwork and the corporate values associated with this, in this sense, is a fight against a business that can immediately find him obsolete. Thus Koteks’ association with the Tristero is a form of recycling. He belongs to it before he turns to social waste. But because he does not literally occupy the marginal spaces of society, his association with the Tristero adds another dimension to waste: those who reject the current social order. He is within the system, but against it, and remains undetected. While working for Yoyodyne, his allegiance is really with others who reject its policies.

The Tristero survives by being stealthy. We learn that the Tristero traveled from Europe to the US in the early 1800s. By 1861 they were competing against the Pony Express. While the Pony Express identified themselves as postal carriers, thus matching their exterior appearance with their job, the Tristero took an alternative approach:

While the Pony Express is defying deserts, savages and sidewinders, Tristero's giving its employees crash courses in Siouan and Athapascan dialects. Disguised as Indians their messages mosey westward. Reach the coast every time, zero attrition rate, not a scratch on them. The entire emphasis now toward silence, impersonation, opposition masquerading as allegiance. (173–74)

Oppositional forces concealing themselves grows problematic in Pynchon's novel, *Vineland*; but for now, this impersonation can be read as the Tristero appropriating other appearances to travel a path of least resistance. Because of their success as carriers across the west, it is clear that other people could not distinguish the Tristero from the people they were imitating. The Tristero then introduces another facet to recycling: making themselves invisible through performance. The ability to fit in is crucial for recycling, something I elaborate further in Chapter 6.

Oedipa's trouble understanding the dynamics of the Tristero parallels the crisis France's authorities faced in May 1968 Paris. The Tristero recalls the radical forms of collectivity formed in Paris. As Kristin Ross says of the alliances formed during this time, "May 68 brought together socially heterogeneous groups and individuals whose convergence eroded particularities, including those of class and age" ("Establishing" 676). The disruptive potential of this, of not easily being aligned with any identifiable social group, threatens the stability that social divisions offer: "the subversive potential of the [May 68] movement lay in the way it created something like a 'chain reaction of refusal' across the entire social field, the way it was, finally, irreducible to any framework or organizational location" (676). People from different classes, cultures, and social spheres became a collective without a leader. They gathered together because they shared similar experiences, similar feelings. Jesus Arrabal, an exiled member of the *Conjuracion de los Insurgentes Anarquistas* in *Lot 49*, mentions the anarchist miracle, which is similar in design to what Ross describes:

you know what a miracle is. Not what Bukunin said. But another world's intrusion into this one. Most of the time we coexist peacefully, but when we do there's cataclysms. Like the church we hate, anarchists also believe in another world. Where revolutions break out spontaneously and leaderless, and the soul's talent for consensus allows the masses to work together without effort, automatic as the body itself. (120)

Leaderless groups, masses of people working together: the different groups coagulating against the legal and political order of 1968 France shook traditional ways of managing dissent. The spontaneous actions of heterogeneous groups seize moments in which to change their everyday life. With no central organization to delegate and discuss the issues, political leaders had to deal with the people in the street and their demands. The absence of a leader makes this especially frightening since people seemingly act on their own. To combat the structures that induce boredom, people in the street did not strive to amend or fix certain laws or policies they felt were wrong, they meant to destroy them, remaking the social and political order of France. Much like W.A.S.T.E. does to Oedipa, the "insurgents" threaten to destabilize social and political foundations.

Instead of functioning more overtly, waste populations and their association with the Tristero remain in a self-imposed form of containment. They resist formal representation and instead acquire a spectral aura; it is as if members of the Tristero—through traces of their existence—haunt the everyday world. The multiplicity, the sheer amount of possible reactions against the state, or corporate patents (to use Stanley Kotek's reason for belonging to the Tristero), actively produces resistance. Part of their success in surviving has depended on silence and impersonation. They recycle themselves to fit in. That they appropriate different cultural signifiers explains the many faces of the Tristero. The qualities that make the Tristero useful for recycling become

dangerous in *Vineland*. Here, secrecy and impersonation unravel stable political and social relations and turn the counterculture against itself.

Vineland also explores the problematic of sustaining a collectivity within the violent political forces that police a neo-liberal economy. Published in 1990, *Vineland* anticipates the full mapping of a neo-liberal space, wherein capitalism reigns free without opposition. Indeed, the double-crossings within the left makes any collective opposition seem impossible. Thus, the break between *Lot 49* and *Vineland* signals the difference between a culminating counterculture 1960 politics in *Lot 49*, and the dismal end of that experiment in *Vineland*. *Vineland*, however, offers hope by positing small groups who approach the political differently than their 1960 predecessors, and slowly rebuild this collective.

Vineland

What was a Thanatoid, at the end of the long dread day, but memory?

—*Vineland*

How is political resistance possible after the 1980s of *Vineland*, a novel partially about government policies of containment increasingly becoming more integrated into people's everyday lives? In this novel any type of political opposition appears impossible. The left has been appropriated, and leftist politics and communities of the 1960s appear hopelessly obsolete. *Vineland* shows the increasing power of the market and its ability to assimilate previously anti-market politics. The novel also marks the further colonization of people's lives by the market. Action, desire, and resistance are realized through consumption rather than production, and the "entertainment value" of such human endeavors serves as a guiding line.

In the most pessimistic sense, this is the final mapping of space, defined and controlled by conservative forces. Similar to *Lot 49*, *Vineland* is littered with waste populations. Unlike the previous novels, however, where spaces of waste encouraged the rethinking of the dominant organization of space, *Vineland* offers a cheap substitute of political engagement with the emerging commercialized culture of the 1980s. This novel more than previous works by Pynchon sees the production of such populations as a result of the political Right of the Reagan administration and federal agencies.

In *Vineland*, the present “alternative” political environment of the 1980s, unlike that of the 1960s, is effaced by ambitions to fulfill a market niche. This is best seen in Isaiah Two Four’s desire to create theme-park-like violence centers that would include “automatic-weapon firing ranges, paramilitary fantasy adventures, gift shops and food courts, and video game rooms for the kids” (19). Here, violence, which was an act meant to destabilize order in *The Great Gatsby* and *The Day of the Locust*, now helps keep order intact by embracing and reproducing the prevailing entrepreneurial logic of the 80s, when the very idea of remaking the world seems outdated and impossible to realize except as a form of entertainment. Even a seemingly “extreme” idea such as a violent theme park not only anticipates violent-laced family-fun activities like paintball parks, but also underscores the power of capital, where ideas materialize in the market and lose any connection to the social or political context from which they emerge. Violence is not, therefore, repressed—it is managed. This goes for waste as well.

Unlike in “Low-lands” where garbage and the gypsies remain isolated from town, waste in *Vineland* is produced through squashing the Left. Carefully managing them through surveillance signals an end to possible political interventions. In certain instances

waste is just another product to sell for entertainment purposes. The opening scene in *Vineland* shows the ossified remnants of the counterculture. They have been made waste through simple economics. Ex-hippie Zoyd Wheeler must perform his annual act of insanity in order to receive payment from the government. He must do this so the authorities know where he lives and that he has kept his promise not to try to find his ex-wife, Frenesi Gates. Zoyd's stunt is eagerly anticipated by the media, to the extent that his agency—deciding what, where, and when he will perform this act—is overruled by the news stations who have already set the stage and excitedly await him. Even Zoyd acknowledges that this is a “performance” and it must meet certain standards. He buys a “party dress in a number of colors that would look good on television” and then “with a small hairbrush he tried to rat what was once his head and face into a snarl he hoped would register as insane-looking enough for the mental-health folks” (4). His now classic act of running through a plate glass window is the ongoing stunt that defines him as crazy. So not only is his stunt recycled over and over again, it is a figure for what the left has become: a harmless performance.

The failures of the Left in *Vineland* have much to do with their relation to the power they fought. Engaging in oppositional politics, the radicals of the 1960s were practicing politics that were already obsolete. Eva C. Karpinski notes that in *Vineland*,

Pynchon's critique of the revolutionary stance seems to signal...the inadequacy of thinking in binary oppositional terms. Adversarial conflicts like revolution versus counterrevolution and individual versus state may ultimately only reinforce the dominant terms of the opposition. By exposing both, Pynchon seems to anticipate the need to go beyond binarism and to transcend the terms of the master's discourse. (40)

Any politics that attempts to transform the everyday would be at its core in opposition to the “master's discourse.” A politics based merely on rejection, a politics of opposition,

must rethink its position since they merely recycle the same structures of power they seek to undermine. Those on the Left who wanted to make change were unknowingly complicit with the reproduction of social, political, and spatial hierarchies of the right. Public and open resistance is not an option in *Vineland*, as any social and collective subjectivity is immediately co-opted by those in power. Avoiding “binary oppositional terms,” does not mean avoiding or creating oppositional stances in *Vineland*. Reinventing politics based on a repetition of past political strategies is a step in discovering the revolutionary potential in the everyday.

Pynchon’s critique of politics includes both the right and left. While clearly he does not side with Nixon or Reagan, he explores major problems with the oppositional student movement. At the People’s Republic of Rock and Roll (PR3), formerly College of the Surf, members of the radical film collective, the 24 fps, kill Weed Atman, a mathematics professor and leading figure of the PR3 at the height of their rebellion against Nixon’s America. They kill Weed because they believe he is an FBI informant. On the one hand, killing Weed seems like a small payback since the government is “locking us in those federal slams, regular and mental, packing us away, this is who he’s been working with this whole time” (235). On the other hand, some members hesitate to condemn Weed. Frenesi reminds them of the stakes involved in their political project: “every night they pick us up, and they beat us, and they fuck us, and sometimes we die. Don’t any of you kiddies understand, we either have 100% no-foolin’-around solidarity or it just doesn’t work” (235). According to Frenesi, radicals must totally adhere to their political project. Of course, what makes this a troublesome idea is that at this point in the novel Frenesi is also a radical turned FBI informant and lover of the federal agent Brock Vond. While

Frenesi is clearly a hypocrite (and a very dangerous one at that), she represents the inherent contradictions in any political project that purports to have “100% no-foolin’ around solidarity.” This stance does not allow for innovative thinking. Her accusing Weed of being a snitch is particularly troublesome because the PR3, by opening its doors to all rejects, sees itself as a refuge for social waste. They have accepted “the hypocrites and double agents and summertime outlaws and all that fringe residue that nobody else’ll touch” (235). Because the PR3 already consists of people who put the revolution at risk of failing—the hypocrites and double agents—the PR3 denies its power by including those who threaten its safety and success. They have created a double bind that dooms their project.

Frenesi’s discourse introduces two issues concerning recycling that require more attention. The first is the very real threat of violence and death against members of alternative political groups. She uses this fact to further an agenda that includes killing Weed Atman. Her stance is easily supported by her position of 100% solidarity to the cause. As Frenesi is an informant for the FBI, her relation to the 24fps shows that politics and power do not so much conceal spaces of waste as they have already appropriated them, controlling them through force, and slowly remaking them. The Political Re-Education Program (PREP) serves to “reeducate” members of radical political groups by redirecting the allegiance to power:

Brock Vond’s genius was to have seen in the activities of the sixties left not threats to order but unacknowledged desires for it. While the Tube was proclaiming youth revolution against parents of all kinds and most viewers were accepting this story . . . the hunch he was betting on was that these kid rebels, being halfway there already, would be easy to turn and cheap to develop. They’d only been listening to the wrong music, breathing the wrong smoke, admiring the wrong personalities. They needed some reconditioning. (269)

To enter PREP means one leaves sterilized: clean of revolutionary tendencies, bereft of outwardly disruptive counter-cultural signs. Brock understands that the 1960s hippie revolution consisted of a deep need to be controlled by an authority figure, be it a guru, charismatic leader, or rock star. Same power structure, different look. And while the manifestation of this desire appears radically different, the line dividing counter and mainstream culture was not as deep or wide as previously thought. Brock recognizes that while the politics of youth movement look different, they remain within the same class against that which they rebel. The hippie movement itself then did not necessarily constitute a threat to how power is structured since they organized themselves based on a similar power structure they sought to overturn. This elaborates Stuart Hall's notion of countercultures. As Hall maintains, "countercultures never break cleanly away from their class position..... Focusing on how one lived, countercultures did not address the systemic forces that necessitated their existence" (66). Brock's re-appropriation of the counterculture shows that rebellions can work against themselves and implode. Moreover, rebellions that do not produce different existing relations are easily brought back into the mainstream. Brock's realization of this enables him to redirect rebel-youth into serving the interests of the Reagan era political machine. His actions show that "Leftist cleansings" are done through no minor act of violence. In fact, as Brock has Weed Atman killed through Frenesi, the production of the everyday as boring and routine is a violent act.

With waste controlled in *Vineland* we learn a valuable lesson: that which is useless, the excess to social order, is not made superfluous to it and contained; it is now recuperated to work for that order and it is powerless to resist. This is another form of

recycling, one put in use for counter-revolutionary means. Waste is therefore not relegated to the margins of society, but brought back to become an invaluable source that recycles the dominant social and spatial order. Waste populations, or “the residue” as Frenesi calls them, can be easily managed. Instead of being waste and against the system, they are working for them, doing “shit work,” like being informants who have no authority over their lives. Like Zoyd, Frenesi remains attached to federal agencies. She must not only perform undercover to catch certain people, but her movement is managed by them. Because Frenesi must play a role to help the FBI arrest people, her job requires that she remain silent about her life. So too with Zoyd, who cannot publicly reveal the real reason for jumping through plate glass windows. Both Frenesi and Zoyd have been remade, and are continually recycled as waste. The tactics used by the Tristero in *Lot 49* have been appropriated by the FBI and used against counter-groups.

While 1960s politics are obsolete in *Vineland*, Pynchon focuses on the making of individuals obsolete as well. Counter-cultural politics became obsolete through their relation to power; people can become obsolete through their relation to impersonal bureaucracy. This process becomes more abstracted as the computer can add or erase names easily. Frenesi Gates and her current husband Flash experience this. Eliminated from computer files (88, 86), or through budget cuts (88), people’s lives are negatively affected “regardless of the names in power, office politics far away now determined the couple’s postings to new addresses and missions, each another step away from costly pleasures” (72). The computer, as it is explained to Frenesi after her check has been cancelled, “never has to sleep or even take a break. It’s like open 24 hours a day” (91). Thus, the hasty changes in people’s lives by the computer produces an unstable version

of the everyday. At the same time, violent changes happen to people under a neo-liberal economy.

If political alliances and the economy do not prove stable in the novel, what does? A strategy of recycling, accordingly, cannot develop as either oppositional politics or through economic sanctions since both have tenuous relations to power. During what appears to be an impossible moment for oppositional politics, a third option for a strategy of recycling emerges. This one focuses on interpersonal relationships, and is a strategy practiced by “karmic adjusters.” Two characters, DL Chastain and Takeshi Fumimota practice this form of recycling, which considers personal relations as a starting point for a different kind of politics, a politics for those who have been made obsolete: the Thanatoids.

DL and Takeshi develop this type of recycling after DL accidentally places the fatal Vibrating Palm on Takeshi. She must “balance [her] karmic account by working off the great wrong [she] has done [to Takeshi]” (163). As she goes about righting her wrong to Takeshi, they discover a community of Thanatoids, people who have died yet remain on earth. Thanatoids are similar to zombies in that they are the living dead, except they “were victims...of karmic imbalances—unanswered blows, unredeemed suffering, escapes by the guilty—anything that frustrated their daily expeditions on into the interior of Death” (173). It is the job of Takeshi and DL to act as karmic adjusters by helping them right the wrongs that have been done to the Thanatoids, which for the most part consists of listening to people’s individual histories. In terms of recycling, this suggest something larger than dead people sticking around until wrongs are righted. Thanatoids are the traces back to an event that must be corrected. It would seem that *Vineland* would

have particular reason to have the figure of the Thanatoid. The relation built between the Thanatoids and DL and Takeshi is one of de-alienation. It seems plausible that we could read the figure of the Thanatoid as the ultimate state of alienation; they are separated from their body and life. Their resolution begins to take form by having other people sympathize with them. This would suggest the beginning of understanding other people's lived experiences. The importance of telling stories for strategies of recycling becomes even more crucial in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*. The Thanatoids prefigure the women who practice recycling. Recycling stories of misery, pain, and humiliation in *Vineland* identifies in the social structure relations that reproduce these wrongs.

Thanatoids represent waste populations and their potential for recycling. In the real sense Thanatoids are dead, thus reminding us of Dennis Flange's symbolic death when he arrives at the dump. Both he and the material goods that surround him are considered obsolete. Thanatoids, although obsolete for production purposes, are made from past injuries. Although they spend "at least part of every waking hour with an eye on the Tube," Thanatoids think about advancing their death by focusing on emotions that accelerate their passage: "Among the most common by far was resentment, constrained as Thanatoids were by history and by rules of imbalance and restoration to feel little else beyond their needs for revenge" (171). This need for revenge is addressed by DL and Takeshi. Revenge shapes a vision of a better future in the present, and hence works toward that goal. Their job as karmic adjustors, James Berger argues, "provides a way to work back to those traumatic moments and retell them so as to make possible new histories and new futures" (35). The future can only reveal itself through reference to the past. Thus memory and sharing one's history are key in realizing a better future.

The Thanatoids represent those produced as waste, people or populations who are obsolete and marginal. They are a “trope for [...] victimized groups, among others, the disempowered, disabled, disenfranchised, people of contemporary America” (Tatar 249). Remaining undead and linked to the disenfranchised could certainly be read as a trope of political defeat were it not for DL and Takeshi helping them recycle their personal histories. The Thanatoids remind people of past injustices: they seek to recycle the past into the present, or to rewrite the past and how we remember it. They differ from a nostalgic remembering of the past since their history does not recall a fabled time. The Thanatoids will not rest until they have regained justice. The political ramifications of the Thanatoids, and DL and Takeshi’s Karmic Balance, is the type of relation built between the living and memory, the un-dead. This is a different relation between people than that found in the radical student movements or government agencies. Both politics demand that a person behave in a particular way, conform to the pressure of the politics. The relationship between the Thanatoids, on the other hand, builds from personal knowledge. Because each Thanatoid has his/her own story, however, does not mean that their problems are individual. Their body collectively records wrongs done to them. Similar to the people belonging to the Tristero, the Thanatoids are different, yet have in common the status of being waste.

Because Thantoids live in seclusion, their presence remains relatively unknown. They can therefore go about their daily activities as they wish without fear of retribution. Other people in *Vineland*, on the other hand, must conform. Space is continuously policed through the power of the state and order is maintained through the obsessive management of waste, either by violent force or economic sanctions. Zoyd, Frenesi and

her second husband Flash, and the People's Republic of Rock in Roll are all controlled through a continual reproduction of the everyday, where the world appears unchanged and unchanging. And even though people deemed waste, like Frenesi Gates, never move up beyond their lowly status, the role that waste plays is crucial to maintaining the structure of power.

The management of waste involves making dissent safe. The goal of taking the threat out of dissent is to produce the illusion of deviance through highly organized and planned spectacles, like Wheeler's annual jump. To make space sterile requires an infinite source of force and power. While waste provides the crucial foundation for repressive government policies, the form of waste represented by the Thanatoids slowly recycles a relation that may eventually spread and therefore begin to undermine the structural violence of the everyday. Because DL and Takeshi work to repair past wrongs, we can suggest that ultimately Pynchon reminds us in *Vineland* that our political project is with waste.

At the end of the novel, Pynchon suggests the demise of such repressive policies. The economic force necessary to produce this version of the everyday implodes on itself when Brock Vond is called back from his mission of kidnapping Frenesi's daughter, Prairie:

Suddenly, some white male far away must have wakened from a dream, and just like that, the clambake was over. The message had been relayed by radio from the field headquarters down at the Vineland airport. Reagan had officially ended the "exercise" known as REX 84, and what had lain silent, undocumented, forever deniable, embedded inside. (376)

Soon after this scene, Vond dies. Divine justice, as one character quotes from Emerson, always balances out over time. This sounds similar to the type of work DL and Takeshi perform balancing people's karma. Karmic adjustment produces alternative relations that

necessarily avoid an oppositional stance. Through the Thanatoids and karmic adjustment, Pynchon recycles a strategy of recycling. This time, instead of remaining secretive or oppositional, recycling personal narratives emerges as the beginning of a different set of social relations. This form of recycling attempts to remake the everyday by eradicating those who reproduce violence. The work of DL and Takeshi, listening and gathering stories, suggests that strategies of recycling will produce an everyday absent of alienating relations.

What makes DL and Takeshi's response particularly difficult are the deeper, complex devices that make people waste. Whereas *Vineland* examines this production through an overtly political lens, Pynchon's next novel, *Mason and Dixon*, foregrounds the making of space, both social and geographical territories, as forming relations and a consciousness that makes people waste. While Pynchon does not abandon the political, the discourse of science naturalizes the process of making people waste. Recycling in this context becomes a practice, not a strategy since people and populations are eradicated by the redrawing of boundaries based on right angles and parallel lines.

Mason and Dixon

“Nothing will produce Bad History more directly nor brutally, than drawing a Line, in particular a Right Line, the very Shape of Contempt, through the midst of a People,—to create thus a Distinction betwixt ‘em,—‘tis the first stroke.—All else will follow as if predestin’d, unto War and Devastation.”

—Captain Zhang, *Mason and Dixon*

“The Behavior of the Stars is the most perfect Motion there is, and we know how to read it all, just as you’d read a Clock-Face. We have Lenses that never lie, and Micrometers fine enough to subtend the Width of a hair upon a Martian’s Eye-ball.”

—Jeremiah Dixon, *Mason and Dixon*

The horizontal and the vertical constitute two right angles; among them the infinite possible angles, the right angle is the angle type; the right angle is one of the symbols of perfection.

—Amedee Ozenfant and Pierre Jeanneret, “The Right Angle”

Throughout his work Pynchon has shown concern for waste populations. In his novel, *Mason and Dixon*, he takes an event, the drawing of the Mason Dixon line between Pennsylvania and Maryland, to examine the systemic production of people as waste. In this novel Pynchon revisits the origins of the social and spatial problems that run throughout his earlier texts, and in so doing he gives the most articulate vision of recycling yet. The novel is set in a moment when the history of the New World is being created, and when space is captured and made static. The novel follows the work of Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, surveyor and astronomer, respectively, who measure, chart, and mark territorial boundaries in America.

The making of a boundary line becomes a trope for scientific reason, civilization, and European culture. The line is a device of power since it re-organizes the land. For this reason, a line, especially a right line, defines the everyday in *Mason and Dixon*. The right line is a product of Western enlightenment science, and as it marks territories, it also destroys certain cultures and ways of life. While mapping an uncharted territory organizes land to people who are unfamiliar with it, maps also efface pre-existing boundaries that delineate territories less strictly defined by rigid parallel and perpendicular lines. These boundaries can be said to flow with the land, to seamlessly fit within it. And within these territories are people who, once land is reorganized, are driven underground. The right line thus produces people, places, and populations as waste.

In America, Mason and Dixon encounter an “open” land which is a perfect slate for them to measure, chart, and map. It represents “pure space . . . no previous lines, no fences, no streets to contain polygony however extravagant” (586) on which they must perform their job of expressing space in rational terms. Mason and Dixon belong to the “cult of the right line” (219), which puts into practice the reification of space: thinking of space in terms of degrees of latitude and longitude, miles, or acres establish rules and practices on a specific site contained within borders. With the erection of psychical boundaries, space closes. The line creates order on previously uncharted land, and from these mapped territories spring private property and the division of people.

Mason and Dixon examines a moment when waste populations begin their underground existence. As the novel places itself in a moment when America was being mapped and taken over by Europeans, the main characters occupy a special place between the pre-modern and modern world; Similar to Oedipa in *The Crying of Lot 49*, Mason and Dixon also stand between two worlds. They become situated between two temporal orders through their direct interactions with people their work makes obsolete. By defining the land between Pennsylvania and Maryland they drive underground that which does not fit within Reason. But their act of elimination exposes a recuperation of a history that challenges the everyday. Thus, by making waste they also place these people as practicing strategies of recycling.

Recycling in *Mason and Dixon* embodies alternative versions of everyday life that do not fit within a rationally designed world organized by the right line. Throughout the novel the use of the subjunctive mood works to undermine the strict parameters set up by the right line. The subjunctive makes possible the existence of other worlds, or their

resurrection. The narrative's frequent use of the subjunctive to imagine exchanges between two people, or events that may or may not have happened, projects what is possible. The subjunctive—as I will discuss in more depth below—signals hope since it can be read in the novel as a process of recovering lost histories. In turn, the subjunctive is fundamental to a practice of recycling since it thinks beyond the limits imposed by the right line, with what empirically exists. This is important since Pynchon represents the production of waste in *Mason and Dixon* on a much larger scale than in previous novels, as entire populations are swept away under the rug. What produces waste and makes recycling an imperative is the Enlightenment and its desire to impose order on disorderly lands.

The line in *Mason and Dixon* functions similarly to the symbolic meaning of the Mondrian painting in “Low-lands.” The painting consists of parallel lines and is “austere and logical” (61). The painting is especially menacing since it violates the “womb like” space in which Dennis Flange finds solace. Here, womb like can be read as having qualities that speak to one's sense of safety and comfort. The line, like the Mondrian, introduces a harsh geometric order over space. Everything else revolves around it. The line announces the space not only as orderly, but also as sterile.

Captain Zhang , a Chinese astronomer who serves in the novel as a voice challenging the colonial project, understands that organizing space on principles not found in nature rewrites power relationships to the advantage of those who create the line. As another character notes, the implications of this are far reaching:

the model [of a right line] . . . is imprisonment. Walls are to be the future . . . these will follow right lines If we may not have love, we will accept consent—if we may not obtain consent, we will build walls. As a wall, projected upon the Earth's surface, becomes a right line, so shall we find that we may shape, with

arrangements of such lines, all we may need, be it in a Crofter's hut or a great Mother City—rules of Precedent, routes of approach, lines of sight, flows of power. (522)

If one cannot rule or organize people's lives through their willing consent, then walls, which represent power, become the answer. Walls contribute to building uneven space by socially and spatially dividing people, placing them in hierarchical zones of affluence or waste. Those who control the configuration of walls have the ability to create "all we may need." People who build walls have power since they decide who lives where, who may enter, and who remains outside. In this sense, walls and lines define the limits of Western civilization by determining who is included and who is excluded. The key to organizing people is to make walls—literal or figurative—appear natural, as part of one's everyday experience. In order to make the division of land and people appear natural, everyone must absorb such a logic and reproduce it in their daily lives.

The drawing of lines or making of walls is thus no innocent act: it is an act of intentional violence. This segmentation and division of space creates areas of specialization, where distinct activities take place. This effectively eliminates certain practices. The Mason-Dixon line is one such example since it divides the North from the South. This division manifests itself in two ways. On the one hand, as Brian McHale argues, *Mason and Dixon* is a novel concerning itself with horizontal space. Citing the many alternative spaces and histories in the novel, McHale compares the space of *Mason and Dixon* to that in *Gravity's Rainbow*. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, action takes place according to the axis of vertical space—the motif of the rising and falling rocket. Motion in *Mason and Dixon*, McHale argues, takes place on the horizontal plane, and this has thematic and ideological consequences (59–59). Orientation on the horizontal plane corresponds to democracy, set against a vertically ordered social hierarchy. This

horizontal plane ultimately yields to “a resolutely earthbound this-worldliness” (60). This then shifts the emphasis from an appeal to a transcendent power to solve problems and to find solutions in the here and now. Responsibility falls on people, not gods.

Of course, democratic practices have their limits in horizontal space since in order to practice democracy, one has to be included within its walls. The contradiction of democracy arises: Who is democracy for? Who is allowed to practice it? While citing differences between vertical and horizontal planes suggests thematic and ideological differences, I argue that *Mason and Dixon* combine both, which articulates the theme and ideology of recycling. In the marking of territories, cultures and populations are figuratively driven underground, which means they vertically move downward. They then exist horizontally, parallel, to the “above” world. In articulating a practice of recycling that does not conform to the power that produces people as waste, we need to question the use of such rigid distinctions of up and down, left and right. Movements across both the x and y axis adheres to scientific methods of marking land. A method of recycling would travel a less predictable, almost chaotic trajectory, which would make maps waste, turn them into useless pieces of paper with parallel and perpendicular lines. If horizontal space is democratic for a select group of people, chaotic space destroys it. This movement escapes the parameters of the right line. The movement of waste people may be more like a wave, ascending onto the plane of the Europeans before descending into their “other world.” In *Mason and Dixon*, this power creates a form of waste that escapes representation. The same logic that divides people into social and spatial categories reverberates with chaotic consequences.

Mason and Dixon encounter a particularly deadly form of chaotic consequences in Cape Town, South Africa. They travel there together to chart the transit of Venus. In Cape Town, the harm done to slaves generates negative energy among slaves and Europeans alike:

[T]he wrongs committed Daily against the Slaves, petty and grave ones alike, going unrecorded, charm'd invisible to history, invisible yet possessing Mass, and Velocity, able not only to rattle Chain but to break them as well. The precariousness to Life here, the need to keep the Ghosts propitiated, Day to Day, via the Company's merciless Priesthoods and many-Volum'd codes, brings all but the hardest souls sooner or later to consider the Primary Question more or less undiluted. Slaves here commit suicide at a frightening Rate,—but so do the Whites. (68–69)

History gone unnoticed, “invisible history,” does not fade away. Having mass and velocity, a history of wrongs committed against people persist and has material consequence. In this passage Pynchon suggests that this invisible history has more power than expected, and that once harnessed, the hegemony of the right line may finally be challenged.

Injustice done by the right line and its cult of followers is countered by several figures: bad energy, invisible history, and Captain Zhang. Zhang's presence recalls the role that DL and Takeshi played in *Vineland*. Their project of Karmic Adjustment, read as a strategy of recycling, built relations between people in ways that prioritized the personal. But the line in *Mason and Dixon*, as Zhang explains, produces more efficiently wrongs committed against people:

[The Visto] acts as a Conduit for what we call Sha, or, as they say in Spanish California, Bad Energy,—Imagine a Wind, a truly ill wind, bringing failure, poverty, disgrace, betrayal,—every kind of bad luck there is,—all blowing through, night and day, with many times the force of the worst storm you were ever in. (542)

This bad energy produces itself through social relations where one person is literally the slave to others. Once established in the social fabric, this relation reproduces itself through a systemic process that ensures people are waste. America is set to inherit the bad luck of Cape Town. Destruction is imminent, but for whom? Do natives and the fact that they are driven underground suffer from this bad energy? If so, how might this bad energy be recycled to work against those who mark the earth with right lines?

The wind Zhang speaks of can be taken as invisible history, or to put in terms of *Vineland*, bad karma. Whatever term one uses, the line serves the purpose of dividing people and driving waste people underground. The bad luck Zhang speaks of applies to both natives and Europeans since everyone experiences poverty or betrayal. But Zhang's warning rings particularly ominous for Europeans. Although natives are made waste, driven underground, and unable to practice their way of life, they threaten dissent. Dissent, as we have seen, has many faces throughout Pynchon's fiction—gypsies living under the dump in "Low-lands"; the Tristero in *Lot 49*; DL, Takeshi, and Thanatoids in *Vineland*. This destructive wind of bad energy ensures there will always remain traces to enact change produced by the closure of space. Or, as Dixon puts it, "mathematical necessity there do remain, beyond the reach of [power] routes of escape, pockets of safety—markets that never answer to the company, gatherings that remain forever unknown" (69).

Pynchon elaborates more fully in *Mason and Dixon* components that define "recycling." The subjunctive is one such component. Dixon's statement about things remaining forever unknown makes the subjunctive a crucial component to recycling since it allows us to think about what can exist. Alternative worlds can be theorized through the

subjunctive. Unlike the indicative—which states facts—the subjunctive functions in Pynchon’s fiction to keep possibilities for recycling open. Wood and McHale discuss the importance of the subjunctive in *Mason and Dixon*. Wood argues that the line creates the subjunctive, and that the farther one travels from the line, the more possible it is for the subjunctive to thrive. McHale stresses that the subjunctive is not what might have been, but what might be, “the interminable because hypothetical world—a world which need be none the less precise because you have to imagine it” (259). The line delineates the limit and beginning to the subjective. McHale continues by arguing that these subjunctive spaces function like Foucault’s heterotopias, where multiple realities exist, each zone a population living according to its own law and reason. Importantly, as the logic of the parallel and perpendicular line continues to shape America, it gives greater significance to heterotopias. The influence of the subjunctive reinserts this type of possibility. If one does not have access to one of these spaces, or knowledge of one actually existing, then imagination increasingly becomes more important in keeping the subjunctive as a critique of existing order.

The subjunctive makes the realization of other worlds and histories beyond the line possible. To illustrate the subjunctive, Zhang asks Mason and Dixon what happened after Western science took 5 degrees out of the Chinese circle to make it 360 degrees:

And what may that slender blade of planetary surface they took away, not be concealing? 21 minutes of clock-time, and eleven million square miles—anything may be hidden in there . . . The fountain of youth, the seven cities of gold, the other Eden, . . . Histories ever secret. (630)

Zhang offers Mason and Dixon a tantalizing vision of mythical places that already exist beyond their measurements. Of course, Zhang uses a device—the missing 5 degrees—to imagine what can or may exist. Zhang offers an option: between what is already mapped

and who is driven underground; what can be imagined becomes crucial for any strategy of recycling. It projects a better future.

Imagination, Christy Burns claims, is key to rethinking the dominant version of history. She understands *Mason and Dixon* as staging an encounter between the past and present. By seeing the past differently, one may begin to project an alternative future trajectory. History in this context ceases to be static; instead, it is a collection of bits made coherent by a master narrative. Trying to avoid this pattern of dominance and using historical fragments forgotten,

Pynchon's project offers a way of bringing lost fragments of history into a disruptive dialogue that could jolt his American audience out of an assertive forgetting and the repeated aggressions that are propelled by the social-psychological work done as a whole culture endeavors to lock out our memory of disturbing elements within its national narrative. (21)

This process of recovery recycles lost or thrown away histories as a means to disrupt the ostensible seamless narrative that is America. Recovering fragments of history in dialogue with preexisting narratives of history brings waste back to the surface and gives expression to their "invisible history." I find Burns' argument particularly useful to combine elements from *Lot 49* and *Vineland* to sharpen a strategy of recycling. The resurrection of lost stories—as seen with the Thanatoids, combined with their capability to jolt people out of their daily slumber, as Oedipa is jolted by seeing her world differently having once been exposed to stories of the Tristero—frames stories as having a particularly destructive force. Invisible histories, once recycled, have devastating effects on the structures that maintain a static everyday life.

The subjunctive makes these invisible histories visible. But the subjunctive does not only work for those who have been wronged by the line. Since the subjunctive can imagine possible worlds, it can also imagine the growth of capital. In *Mason and Dixon*

science does more than just rearrange space, it serves to expand the economy into previously uncharted markets. When marking the line, Pynchon employs the subjunctive and offers a vision of what the Line calls forth:

Were the Visto to've cross'd the Warrior Path and simply proceeded West, then upon that Cross cut and beaten into the Wolderness, would have sprung into being not only the metaphysikackal Encounter of Ancient Savergy with Modern Science, bit withal a civic Entity, four Corners, each with its own distinguishable Aims. Sure as Polaris, the first structure to go up would be a Tavern,—the second, another Tavern. (650)

He continues with the vision by noting that shops would spring up all along the Visto.

This projection of the future merely follows the mathematical-like equation set up by the line. It can multiply itself and graph unknown territories. Numbers and rational thinking take over. This recalls Kristin Ross' description of the everyday: the everyday is a system of enclosure wherein lives are codified into visible patterns, and all aspects of life are made calculable. The visto clears away waste; it eradicates the chaotic, unclean wilderness and introduces open, organized, clean space.

The clearing of the visto meets resistance when it threatens already established boundaries. As they travel west, Mason and Dixon approach the Warrior Path, “not merely an important road for [the Mohawks],—but indeed one of the major High-ways of all inland America” (646). The trail is thought of as a river, “they settle both sides of it, so as to have it secure,—they need the unimpeded Flow. Cutting it with your Visto would be like putting an earthen Dam across a river” (646–647). The Warrior Path has been established through more directly visible means. As one Mohawk Indian says, “As the Stars tell you where it is you must cut your Path, so do the Land and its Rivers tell us where our Tracks must go” (675). In one sense, using the stars to guide one's path is essentially the same as using the land and rivers; they each have their own point of

reference. But when the vial crosses the Warrior Path, it violates and overwrites a method of marking boundaries, making the Warrior Path obsolete for travel or as a territorial boundary. And from damming the path creates, as Zhang would say, bad energy. What then is the status of the Warrior Path after it is dammed? In his discussion of the Warrior Path, David J. Greiner reminds us that “The Mohawks . . . define the Path in abstract terms as a spiritual line of demarcation not to be violated by European intersections. . . . [T]he north-south Warrior Path is a fault line that when disturbed explodes into the cataclysm of extermination” (81).

To restore the flow of energy to the land at first seems to require a certain amount of destruction. Small ongoing battles would seem a necessary choice to eradicate the presence of the line. But a smaller, less violent way exists to question and perhaps even disassemble the power of the line. Just as in previous novels where characters wanderings brought them into contact with people or phenomena that challenged their conception of the world, Mason and Dixon discover alien ideas and people. Their wanderings were not done, as in Chtcheglov’s theory of the derive, to gain perspective beyond a “petrified life.” Their travels, however, were meant to do the opposite: to make life “ordinary” and predictable. But in making space ordinary, they first had to encounter it as strange. Their wanderings thus produce reactions similar to that of a derive. While they did not create new itineraries, Mason and Dixon did experience the unpredictable. They find themselves on the line between the subjunctive and indicative, between what could only exist in the imagination and what could exist based on facts. Dixon acknowledges this tension and defers to imagination: “I know something is out there, that may not happen till we arrive. . . . I am a Northern Brit, a semi-Scot, a Gnomes’ Intimate,—we never err in these

things” (645). Dixon momentarily abandons his scientific, objective outlook in favor of the subjunctive. Calling himself a “Gnomes’ Intimate” indicates that he will not try to explain away or eradicate that which does not fit within scientific reason. He instead remains receptive to experiences that happen to people who aimlessly wander. Of course, if Mason and Dixon were to give in to their impulses, they would not have created a straight line. For Mason and Dixon, their techniques of measuring were meant to focus one’s perception of an unknown land through rational space.

After having drawn the Mason Dixon line, Dixon goes back to Scotland where he meets Gnomes who live underground. He enters the inner earth by first traveling north: then reaching an opening, he descends into their interior world. Once there, the Gnomes explain their fate to Dixon: “Once the solar parallax is known...once the necessary Degrees are measur’d, and the size and weight and shape of the Earth are calculated inescapably at last, all this will vanish. We will have to seek another space” (741). Mapping the earth according to certain measurements captures and remakes other worlds into its own image. But while we learn of their imminent demise, the Gnomes explain a fundamental difference between them and people living on the earth’s outer surface. Their insights are highly suggestive for any practice of recycling:

How many of us, I wonder, could live the other way, the way you People do, so exposed to the Outer Darkness? . . . And wherever you may stand, given the Convexity, each of you is slightly pointed away from everyone else, all the time, out into that Void that most of you seldom notice. Here in the Earth Concave, everyone is pointed at everyone else,—ev’rybody’s axes converge,—forc’d at least thus to acknowledge one another,—an entirely different set of rules for how to behave. (741)

These entirely different set of rules are fundamentally social. People are connected to one another since their body axes cross one another. This also suggests that they will be incapable of adhering to social rules devised on axes that point away from one another.

The difference between the two axes give insight into everyday practices. Whereas people above the earth are divided from one another and thus reproduce the many different forms of social division (labor, property), people of inner earth share space; theirs is a collective existence where these divisions cannot happen. How does one divide something that is eternally connected? Gnomes and their inner-connectedness provide a compelling figure for recycling. This then appears as the task for recycling: how to recreate among divided people and divided lands practices that connect us?

The main aspect of the world of the Gnomes is that people always converge in space. Recovering obsolete people, ideas, and ways of life for the present performs what we may call an “ethos of convergence.” This would necessarily recognize the waste of the present and past. In *Mason and Dixon* ghost fish (660–61), and giant vegetables several building stories tall (654) are but a few example of the fantastic that challenge Western science’s version of reality. Incorporating those elements systemically rejected by the West has significant consequences for the future. Burns suggests that the magical aspects “of [Pynchon’s] narrative necessarily—and politically—interferes with the drive to fix and control knowledge and ‘truth’” (22). The magical has less to do with rejecting Western rationality, which cannot acknowledge the existence of ghost fish, and more with challenging what we know of the past and how it may be used to project other worlds onto the everyday. Practices of recycling an ethos of convergence means producing a social relation beyond that of lines and boundaries. Convergence collapses distinctions previously made by the division of a right line.

Projections of Waste

What would a convergence when projected onto social space look like and how could it inform strategies of recycling? We learn from Pynchon’s fiction that another life

is embedded in the everyday. It is only when this life is resurrected through practices of recycling that social and spatial change can be made.

The everyday initiates a reality and practice for people who either participate in advancing the practices of modern technology, or remain an anomaly to the dominant model of the social. Where does the anomaly, the one who does not represent or embrace the “newness” around him/her, fit in a society that organizes itself around narratives of progress? Excluded from participating in the social, the waste people supposedly exist on the edge of society.

For Pynchon, waste hovers underneath the sterile surfaces, always on the verge of destroying the appearance of the everyday. His fiction exposes the life of the underworld, the lived experiences at the subterranean level and by so doing complicates the fantasy of a sterile society. The social rejects, losers, and outcasts exist on the margins of society; yet somehow, Pynchon suggests, they engage with society more than people realize. These people in his fiction offer the most threat to order or stability in that they constitute a formless entity that exists between the vertical and horizontal lines forming the right angle. The waste people in his work momentarily appear, then disappear, forever avoiding formal representation.

As we learn, the surface creates norms by sterilizing deviant practices. The surface, as it functions in *Mason and Dixon*, has a particular amount of power to define what is normal in the everyday. If surfaces are this powerful, we can turn our attention to them and consider how to use surfaces against the power that defines them. To deploy a critical term from the Situationists, surfaces need *detourning* since they form social relations. The “projections” of contemporary artist Krzysztof Wodiczko offers highly suggestive

strategies to articulate processes that make people waste. His “projections” are part of a series of temporary installments of projected images on static objects, such as buildings, statues, and memorials. Wodiczko’s work addresses social issues such as homelessness and poverty and attempts to redirect the way people think about them by projecting images onto symbolic structures of power that in turn detourn the meaning of the original image. Included in his critique are the structures’ social meaning. In so doing, he calls into question our psycho-social relation to the built environment and the way it constructs and enforces ideas, behavior, and cultural practices against the powerless and dispossessed. In his “The Homeless Projection: A Proposal for the City of New York,” Wodiczko projects discordant images onto statues of famous Americans. Onto a statue of Abraham Lincoln, Wodiczko projects a crutch so that it looks like Lincoln is holding onto it. He projects onto George Washington, who sits on a horse, a wheelchair, towel, and a can of glass cleaner. The statues thereby temporarily resemble the homeless. For Wodiczko, this is part of a larger process of exposing the power of architecture:

What has been defined as architecture is really, then, a merciless real-estate system, embodied in a continuous and frightening mass-scale *event*, the most disturbing public and central operations of which are economic terror, physical eviction, and the exodus of the poorest groups of city inhabitants from the buildings interior to the outdoors. (55)

Architecture in this context of analysis divides people, as evident in *Mason and Dixon*.

The homeless, however, who permanently represent “the public,” are eclipsed by the symbolic power of architecture, as their personal histories and the structural conditionals that made them waste are effaced. Their relation to architecture is one of waste.

Wodiczko argues that architecture “must continuously repress the monumental conditions of the homeless deeper into its (political) unconscious” (56). The economic and social terror inflicted on the homeless is made normal by the repression of the event; in other

words, everyday beliefs naturalize poverty. The projections of images onto statues attempt to “impose this condition back upon the Architecture and to force its surfaces to reveal what they deny” (56). The projection magnifies “the scale of the homeless to the scale of the building” and it liberates “the problem of the homeless from the unconscious of the ‘architecture’” (56). Using the readily-available meaning of the building against itself, the projections redirect the role of the building’s social function and visually articulate a set of relations that create and legitimize sub-standard living conditions. The projection can disrupt the processes of the everyday by forcefully making aware the innocent bystander’s psychological relation to the built environment. The projections can enable people to begin to see their relation to social space in a different way, one that accepts a repressive system that produces social waste. Recognizing the conditions of the homeless, and the larger systems that produce them as such could converge the viewer’s world with those who have been made social waste.

The convergence of homeless people with symbolic structures suggests that Wodiczko’s projections bring the effects of the *derive* to the public through *detournement*. For these once austere statues are sullied by discordant images, images that possibly jolt the middle class out of their everyday slumber. Since people are confronted with images that subvert and reveal processes that produce obsolescence, Wodiczko’s projections also could possibly bring waste and non-waste populations together. Waste people and the conditions that produce them are recycled to the surface thereby seemingly contaminating the everyday. We could read Wodiczko’s projections thus as taking the plight of social waste in the subjunctive: what would everyday life be like if suddenly our lives converged? Pynchon would argue that we have more in

common than we think. The notion of convergences certainly supports this view. People of different classes would see, through these projections, how their practices intersect and effect the lives of other people. While people may be aware of this, the projections dramatize this relation. Convergences show that a collective already exists, it just needs to be articulated, a problem that persists into Chapter 5.

Wodiczko's projections produce possible forms of spatial relations. These relations would not exclude people based on their class. By *detourning* the formal relations produced by architecture, Wodiczko's projections temporarily suspend repressive spatial codes that disallow convergences to happen. Wodiczko's work introduces temporary changes into the built urban environment. To imagine a more permanent form of change, one that builds from Wodiczko, we can turn to the work of Lebbeus Woods. His architectural sketches of rebuilt buildings destroyed in war-torn Sarajevo produces situations of convergence in the built environment.

Instead of building monuments remembering the Yugoslavian civil war, or erecting buildings to erase its traces, Lebbeus Woods proposes that the torn, ripped, exposed spaces of buildings be attended to without altering the existing functional parts of the building. Wood's primary concern is to create what he calls "heterarchical" spaces out of destroyed ones. Unlike hierarchical space, which seeks to dominate people and impose a single meaning onto space, heterarchical space originates from within what has already been destroyed, creating and then maintaining complex and multilevel meanings. Heterarchical spaces do not impose a single, top-down power onto people to follow. Where buildings are destroyed, Woods argues, "In their damaged states they suggest new forms of thought and comprehension, and suggest new conceptions of space that confirm

the potential of the human” (14). From rebuilding debris emerges a different type of dwelling. The rebuilding of bombed out buildings has a direct correlation to reorganizing urban space.

Woods proposes three stages to remake buildings: injections, scabs, and scars. Injections are new structures applied to destroyed buildings. Woods’ sketches of these hypothetical injections look like stainless steel piping growing out of and twisting outside the building. The closest example of what an injection looks like is the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, designed by Frank Gehry. Covered in titanium sheathing, the museum’s surface moves like a ribbon unfolding; the building has no flat surface. Injections, however, do not fit snugly within gaping holes of a building, effectively sealing any opening to the outside. Injections are a second space of the building, leaving an uninhabitable open space, or “freespace,” that “require[s] inventiveness in everyday living in order to become inhabitable[Freespaces] offer a dense matrix of new conditions, as an armature for living as fully as possible in the present, for living experimentally” (21). There is no master planner, primary architect, or developer guiding the design of the injection. After the injection, comes the scab. The scab transforms or smoothes over the rough exterior of the injection, yet it maintains the original disjunctive aesthetic of the injection to remind people of the violence that destroyed the building. Finally, the scar represents the “deeper level of construction” that blends the old elements of the building with the new without prioritizing one over the other. The scar on the building for Woods is a sign of healing.

The scar represents a suturing between two forms of waste: of the useless building and the people who occupy them. Both represent the “stories of resourcefulness and

invention, more and more distant from conditions created by conformity to social norms” (31). These three stages of the process of rebuilding—*injection*, *scar*, *scab*—represent a form of recycling. The transformation of a building, and a city, by the collective work of the people gives insight into the future of waste. That is, hope for a better world always exists among the trash heap.

These shattered spaces, argues Woods, are “beginnings of new ways of thinking, living, and shaping space, arising from individuality and invention” (19). From invention emerges experiments in living; to invent within waste another social order arises that resembles Pynchon’s notion of convergence. Woods sees “freespaces” eventually emerging, spaces in which people are able to invent, create, and move. Reminiscent of Evan Watkins, Woods reminds us that “this should not be mistaken for an ethic of ‘survival of the fittest,’ but understood as a form of comradeship, or compassion” (32). The individual is healed from this process, but he/she cannot do it alone. Rebuilding is synonymous with renewing collective social relations. This architecture is shaped by people, and reflects a politics without social divisions. Prioritizing fluidity over fixity in his design, Woods maintains that the spatial relations within the city will always change and transform. The instability of spatial relations represents possibility, the possibility to recycle through invention and therefore to live differently.

Pynchon’s work begins to answer the question of how we would behave once we started to acknowledge one another. Acknowledging waste, as Pynchon has his characters do—Dennis Flange in “Low-lands,” Oedipa Maas in *The Crying of Lot 49*, DL Chastain and Takeshi Fumimota in *Vineland*, and Mason and Dixon in *Mason and Dixon*—is a step in breaking away from the hold of the everyday. For Dennis this meant a life beyond

the orderly world; for Oedipa the Tristero represented the possibility for radical change; for DL and Takeshi this meant remaking relations by listening to and learning from the past; and for Mason and Dixon the subjunctive posed the greatest struggle against the total mapping of rational or neo-liberal space.

In Pynchon's work, the colonization of everyday life threatens to eliminate people. Pynchon sees pockets of resistance as combating this force; thus, his work explores the dialectical aspect to space and everyday life. In Chapter 5 I explore another version of this theme in Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and *Underworld*. The spectacle threatens to override people's sense of control in these novels. It colonizes not only people and space, but also spaces of waste, the very thing that Pynchon believed safe from its forces.

CHAPTER 5
UNREPEATING THE COMMODITY FORM OF WASTE

Now let us consider the *residue* of each of these products [of labor] All that these things now tell us is, that human labor-power has been expended in their production, that human labor power is embodied in them. When looked at as crystals of this social substance, common to them all, they are—Values.

—Karl Marx, *Capital* (my emphasis)

What we excrete comes back to haunt us.

—Don DeLillo, *Underworld*

Waste returns in Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and *Underworld* as a commodity. The exchange value of waste signals capital's ability to expand itself into new territories and create value for objects previously deemed worthless. Waste in this context "haunts us" because it replicates the commodity form, a condition in which people, places, and objects are represented as exchangeable. Thus the form of the commodity organizes people's lives on a much larger scale than seen in previous chapters. Characters attempt to gain control over waste, yet this task proves difficult since people, for the most part, lack the creative skills to rethink their relation beyond the commodity form. In *White Noise* characters attempt to live alongside waste by adapting to its power, while in *Underworld* characters try to distill its power by managing it. The accumulative forces of the commodity and waste raise concerns about living beyond the power of the market. It

would appear that combined, the commodity and its byproduct waste make an unstoppable force, overriding any effort to enact change in the social or spatial order.

Recycling avoids these feeble attempts at control since it is always a collective formation that can potentially break the social forces of the commodity form. Much has been written on the individual in DeLillo's novels and critics have celebrated the idiosyncratic characters who inhabit his works. These unique characters, however, always remain within the oppressive systems that produce them as such.¹ Instead of reading the characters as impotently responding to a world shaped by the commodity, we can search for instances of collective practices of recycling. One gains agency and breaks relations with the commodity by recycling. In both novels, recycling one's relation to the process of production and consumption suggests alternative ways to live beyond the sign of exchange value.

Recycling occurs on many levels in *White Noise* and *Underworld*. Most instances in the novels refer to the traditional meaning of recycling, which supports the cycle of production/consumption and in so doing, makes the power of the commodity invisible. This is not the type of recycling I see as important. Recycling does not mean re-making an object into a commodity. Instead, within each novel are moments that articulate the contradictory power of the commodity, and it is at these moments that recycling promises to break the "natural" cycle of production and consumption. My analysis of *White Noise* looks for waste on two levels. First, I examine the ways in which characters have no

¹ The "unique" character dates back to Georg Simmel's "eccentric" in "The Metropolis and Mental Life." Simmel argues that the person in the metropolis fights against anonymity by developing an eccentric or bizarre personality. They are a product of their immediate environment. Simmel sees the money economy as animating this environment. Focusing on the characteristics of each character in DeLillo's novels underscores their eccentricities while forgetting what animates their world.

power in relation to waste, which has acquired the organizational force of the spectacle. Second, I read the novel against itself by locating within it moments that open temporarily to thinking beyond the spectacle. In spite of itself, the novel offers an alternative to its world.

My interpretation of the novel differs from previous criticism in that, by linking the work of Guy Debord with DeLillo, I read *White Noise* as thinking the contradictions of a society organized around the commodity. In this way, my use of Debord to read *White Noise* is a performance of a strategy of recycling. My strategy identifies spaces in the novel that can suspend the force of the spectacle. Jameson's discussion of the ideological and utopian drives in mass culture foregrounds how these spaces encourage collective relations. Collectivity and fragmentation individually take the psychic form of wish fulfillment and repression. Wish fulfillment in mass culture translates to the utopian impulses for collectivity. These impulses, however, are

incompatible features of aesthetic gratification—on the one hand, its wish fulfilling function, but on the other hand the necessity that its symbolic structure protect the psyche against the frightening and potentially damaging eruption of powerful archaic desires and wish-material—be somehow harmonized and assigned their place as twin drives of a single structure. (“Reification” 25)

Mass culture introduces these desires in its texts only to eliminate them. Repression and wish-fulfillment together “strategically arouse fantasy content within careful symbolic containment structures which defuse it, gratifying intolerable, unrealizable, properly imperishable desires only to the degree to which they can be momentarily stilled” (25). Thus, any radical project, such as a collectivity in *White Noise*, appears as an impossibility. Jameson, however, offers a way to sustain the utopian impulse before its closure. This allows the further elaboration of a possible collective, while simultaneously acknowledging the limit of the text to imagine a more developed critique of the spectacle.

Underworld has a more nuanced relation to waste. Waste is studied, managed, and recycled. An aesthetic of recycling waste emerges in the novel and elaborates themes of collectivity discussed in *White Noise*. The aesthetic of reclaiming waste sites takes two forms. One is the art project of Klara Sax, a well-known artist; the other is the homeless who live in a wall in the Bronx, headed by Ismael Munoz, a graffiti artist. Both recycle as a form of collective agency, not, as most critics argue, a celebration of individual freedom. Reclaiming useless objects and spaces restructures those objects and spaces against the forces that make them waste.

Gleaning Waste

My discussion of recycling and waste seeks practices in these novels that make use-value out of useless objects. The practice of reusing waste tells a story about one's relationship to society and the economic market. Agnes Varda's documentary, *The Gleaners and I*, explores this relationship. Her film situates gleaning as an activity close to recycling. Referring to [Jean François Millet](#)'s nineteenth century painting, *The Gleaners*, she comments that while in the paintings gleaning is a social activity, today, people do it alone. We can gauge from this that gleaning today represents the fragmentary forces of capital since her film captures different people gleaning in many different ways.

Varda documents people who use waste for their survival. The people in the film implicitly convey the message that what appears as waste to some can be used productively by others. Their primary activity is turning waste, the end result of the exchange-consumption circuitry, into a use-value. They do not do this for fun, recreation, profit, or as an individual celebration of the Do-It-Yourself ethic. Most of the people in the film use garbage in one form or the other since they have become useless to the

market. One man picks up vegetables after the farmer's market closes; another man collects furniture that people leave on their curbs. The film places waste in a grey zone, between the market and death, indicating that waste is the last refuge of survival. But the people in *The Gleaners and I* do more than just survive; they react against wretched living conditions that define them as waste. Gleaning is an activity that a class, not an individual, practices, ultimately as work against the commodity form—against a logic informed by the market that prioritizes the new—by recycling and reusing waste. They also reject this logic of the market, its ability to recuperate valuable waste and turn it back into a commodity. They do not sell what they find. Indeed, waste breaks the spell of the commodity; it has no aura or life when used to help people survive, nor does it possess any marketable quality when it is used precisely to cut against the notion of value.

The film implicitly asks what type of space do gleaners occupy in the social milieu? Do they exist intentionally on the margins? Since some of the gleaners nomadically roam from place to place to appropriate waste, can they be said to occupy a single, representable space, such as a shanty town on the edge of a city? While the gleaners provide a model of social and spatial relations not dictated by the commodity, they call into question the notion of representation. For if they exist either on the margins or are invisible to mainstream society, they are either another type of underground or they play the role of the unique characters endemic to any city. Both identities, however, miss the political, social, and spatial aspect of gleaning. Gleaning can counter the power of the image, the most refined stage of the commodity form.

In the following pages I perform as a gleaner; I re-use DeLillo differently than previous critics have. Most seem to agree that the world of *White Noise* is bleak and that

Underworld celebrates the individual. I agree with the critics only so far, and that is to acknowledge that DeLillo does not necessarily argue for a total change in how we live our life, or how it is organized. DeLillo describes the conditions under which we must endure under global capitalism. While he certainly provides terrifying episodes of human despair, it seems that from his writing capital is not the problem, it is the direction capital has taken in a global context. These novels need recycling; they need to be read against the tendency to close all possibilities for collective agency.

The Spectacle that is *White Noise*

Critics use Guy Debord's concept of the spectacle to *describe* the world of DeLillo's novels, and by doing so find in his fiction a negative critique of contemporary culture. Paula E. Geyh argues that

as an articulation of the crisis of the real, of the mediation of our experience by the media, of the primacy of the signifier over the signified, and the functioning of the simulacrum and of aura, this episode works remarkably well. One could, of course, revisit such recent icons as DeBord, Baudrillard or Paul Virilio. (19)

Jeremy Green argues: "Television creates its own world: the hyperbole is hard to avoid, and DeLillo's remarks recall theories of contemporary culture of the kind often encapsulated in Guy Debord's slogan, the 'society of the spectacle'" (584). Douglas Keesey refers to the Zapruder film in *Libra* as an instance of how the media undermines "our ability to understand [the Kennedy assassination] and other events, to see what it all means." He follows with Debord's comment that images have now superseded an individual's direct connection to the world (Keesey 4). In his discussion of *White Noise*, Keesey also refers to Debord, noting that tourism and TV offer no meaning: "Tourism, human circulation considered as consumption," and the "spectacular abundance" of goods offered on TV "presents a 'false choice'" to consumers (137, 139). Silvia Caporale

Bizzini argues that in *Mao II* images have surpassed reality, quoting Debord: “Spectacle has mixed with reality and has irradiated it” (Bizzini 250). Perhaps the most sustained discussion of Debord’s significance to the work of DeLillo can be found in Arthur Saltzman’s essay on *Underworld*. Saltzman refers to Debord’s spectacle as a means to connect its ambiguous, tautological, and technological religiosity to the world of DeLillo’s novels (Saltzman 303).

Although applied to several novels and different situations, critics’ use of the concept of the spectacle share similar aims: to highlight the power of the commodity and the lack of control people have over their lives. John Frow captures the essence of this problem by mentioning the structural reasons for the proliferation of images.

Commenting on Murray Jay Siskind’s musing about people and their “place” as a consumer in the market, Frow writes:

The assumptions are astounding: we know that human worth can’t be measured in terms of our relationship to consumption—to money and commodities—and that the order of things transcends “the marketing schemes.” But all that Murray is doing is stating the central, the deadly serious principles of a capitalist society. This is really how it is, the marketing scheme really does work, for most purposes, in a capitalist society, as the scheme of things; *the whole social organization is geared to this equation*. The propositions are monstrous, but only because we find it so hard to believe in the true and central awfulness of capitalism. (my emphasis 185)

Consumption does not measure human worth, but capitalism can only survive from constant consumptive practices and the increasing colonization of everyday life. Since the spectacle is so rampant in *White Noise*, examining how the spectacle organizes social relations in the novel is the first step on the path to get beyond its grasp. Murray Jay Siskind maintains that by learning how to read images, one can establish a more meaningful relationship to them. Murray’s theory of the market reminds the reader of John Fiske, who argues that one can build agency through the consumption of images.

Similar to Fiske, Murray's critical reading of images does not acknowledge the "awfulness of capitalism" within the spectacle's "social organization." In spite of Murray's efforts to help people embrace the market, however, they continue to lose control over their world. Murray is the perfect anti-Debord. Murray recognizes the centrality that images have in organizing our world, yet he has no political understanding of them.

Recovering the neglected political and theoretical aspect of Debord's concept of the spectacle frames *White Noise* differently than do previous critics. Debord's formulation of the spectacle should be understood as furthering the political aims of the Situationist International (SI). Reading *White Noise* this way uncovers moments that suggest the spectacle's weakness. Placing DeLillo's work in the context of Debord's captures the political urgency that constitutes the work of Debord and the SI and, I argue, the work of Don DeLillo.

The SI, as Douglas Kellner and Steven Best remind us, "combined a theoretical critique of consumer society with a radical artistic and social politics" (79). Indeed, the aim of the group was to "reconstruct society and everyday life to overcome the apathy, deception, passivity, and fragmentation induced by the spectacle" (92) and to "promote critical consciousness, and to produce new forms of culture and everyday life" (93).

In his earlier writings, Debord makes clear the intentions of the SI: "The situationist movement manifests itself simultaneously as an artistic avant-garde, as an experimental investigation of the free construction of daily life, and finally as a contribution to the theoretical and practical articulation of a new revolutionary contestation" (Debord "Situationists" 159). He continues: "One cannot understand the

coherence of the society without an all-encompassing critique informed by the opposing project of a liberated creativity, this is, the project of the dominion of all men over their own history at all levels” (159). Creating a life apart from the influence of capital proves difficult without a critique of its power that organizes and subordinates life. It remains for Debord the project of experimental artists who remake—if only temporarily—social and spatial practices. Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle* elaborates how to think through a systematic critique of capital’s relation to people, time, and space.

Critics miss Debord’s revolutionary project and therefore fail to use the theory of the spectacle as a critique of capital. Implicitly missed in this political blind spot is the relationship between Debord’s “spectacle” and Marx’s “commodity fetishism.” Commodity fetishism is foundational to the concept of the spectacle. For Marx the fetishism of the commodity was the projection of human characteristics onto commodities, and a corresponding treatment of human beings as things. The fetishism of the commodity transforms people and the product of their labor so that “the relations connecting the labor of individuals with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things” (Marx 78). Thus, production takes mastery over the worker, determining his/her social and material worth, and ultimately severing the relation between worker and product, worker and worker, and worker and world. The commodity circulating in the market appears to have a life of its own, taking on human properties. Over time, capitalism remains structurally the same; however, it intensifies in scope and depth—advancements in technology, communication, and

information services broadens the commodity's horizon. Thus, we enter the stage of the spectacle.

In *Society of the Spectacle*, the spectacle replaces the commodity theorized by Marx as the primary device that organizes relations: "the spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images" (#12). Debord indicates that the spectacle is not merely about televised images, or mediated experiences. It envelops and encompasses peoples' lives constituting society; it is the "highest developed form of a society based on commodity production" (Jappe 3). The logic itself rests on the notion of image to the extent that "from city planning to political parties of every tendency, from art to science, from everyday life to human passions and desires, everywhere we find reality replaced by images" (12). The means of reproducing life, and life itself, become a commodity, as exchange value determines the worth of each part of the commodified world. A commodity's usefulness is less important than its relation to other images. The extension of this logic to all areas of life sets the stage for the departure of the spectacle into the everyday. For Debord, the spectacle "corresponds to the historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life" (#41), and reduces the individual to a passive observer whose sole function is to consume images. Just as the commodity form separates the worker from his/her product of labor, the spectacle intensifies this separatedness: "[The spectacle] captures the contemplative and passive nature of modern life and accounts for the boredom and apathetic dissatisfaction which characterized social experience" (Plant 9).

The quotes from Debord can easily be used to describe *White Noise* since the novel explores various phenomena that separate the individual from his/her world. Debord's

theory of the “spectacle,” however, should be read as a productive term used not only to describe but to challenge the influence of the spectacle. In other words, “In a given society, what is termed culture is the reflection, but also the foreshadowing, of possibilities for life’s planning” (Debord “Report” 29). People gathering in public spaces for routine matters, such as grocery shopping, is an example of this “foreshadowing” for collective action. This collective action acknowledges the shared living conditions people endure. This recalls the actions of “the Cheated” in *Day of the Locust*, who acknowledged their suffering by rioting. *White Noise* is a more extensive elaboration of the spectacle than seen in *Day of the Locust*, and therefore the possibility for a similar type of violent response is contained. Yet, there are more subtle expressions of a shared sense of community.

The Spectacle of Waste and The Airborne Toxic Event

The spectacle finds its strongest articulation in *White Noise* as waste. Waste is not the negative or ugly side to consumer culture, but another form of the spectacle that has taken power over people. Waste in *White Noise* is a relation, not a byproduct, and is best illustrated by disasters.

Whether on large or small scale, waste overrides people’s ability to act productively against its destructive powers. One such event, the Airborne Toxic Event, shatters any pretense of stability or safety. The toxic cloud—growing from “black billowing cloud,” to “feathery plume,” to the frightening “Airborne Toxic Event”—violates divisions between inside and outside, and momentarily opens a way to think about the spectacle. The binary between inside and outside in *White Noise* is strong, as the concept of the private inside is thought safe. The inside designates the ideology of “clean” space against the polluted outside world. The primary defense against the

growing toxic cloud, according to the novel's central protagonist, Jack Gladney, is to enact the inside/outside binary. It is telling that when the toxic cloud begins to form Jack offers a typical excuse to why his family should not be concerned:

these things happen to poor people who live in exposed areas. Society is set up in such a way that it's the poor and the uneducated who suffer the main impact of natural and man-made disasters. People in low lying areas get the floods, people in shanties get the hurricanes and tornadoes. I'm a college professor. Did you ever see a college professor rowing a boat down his own street in one of those TV floods? We live in a neat and pleasant town near a college with a quaint name. These things don't happen in places like Blacksmith. (114)

At first appearing cynical in his dismissal of the cloud, Jack images there are structures to obsolescence. A spatial and social organization that absorbs disaster in the poor section of town allows others to define the event and its destruction as "natural"; or, worse, the event remains invisible to those living outside the zone of destruction. He understands the division of the town in strict terms of boundaries and territories, and that they mark the uneven development of the town. He also shows that space makes order; it stabilizes one's sense of the world. According to Jack, the division of the town is a timeless entity, a place where rules of destruction apply. Waste, however, destroys older notions of space and reiterates the power of the spectacle. But unlike other instances of waste in the novel, the Airborne Toxic Event is a rare moment when the spectacle disrupts the flow of everyday life by disrupting the "naturalized" class borders established in cities.

Critical discussion of the Airborne Toxic Event implicitly link it to the spectacle. In general, critics have argued that the Airborne Toxic Event illustrates the disconnect between language and the world. Critics view the term "event" as concealing meaning rather than describing the severity of a situation. Showing how the Airborne Toxic Event functions discursively, Mark Osteen states that "this phrase doesn't describe the cloud, but only the 'event,' as if the poison has already been obscured by the media cloud

surrounding it” (177). Douglas Keesey aligns the name with official obfuscation: “by agreeing to use the official term for the poisonous gas . . . the Gladney’s expose themselves to the ‘threat in state-created terminology,’ for such euphemisms present the illusion that authorities can control the situation using representation (words, suits, microorganisms) when in fact the real danger still exists” (144–45). And Frank Lentricchia notes that the event is “the evasive name not of a natural but of a human effect” (Lentricchia). In these examples, the name of the event recursively marks the power of the spectacle: the cloud tell us what we already know from previous events in the novel.

But the cloud does more than this. The cloud ultimately functions much like the killer white shark in *Jaws* as described by Fredric Jameson:

it is precisely this polysemousness which is profoundly ideological, insofar as it allows essentially social and historical anxieties to be folded back into apparently “natural” ones, both to express and to be recontained in what looks like a conflict with other forms of biological existence. (26–7)

How can we read the cloud/event so as to avoid folding it back into characterizing our inability to control or understand the world? The cloud analyzed as something else naturalizes the event—i.e., making it a synecdoche of consumer culture—and dismisses the larger spatial significance of this, much as Jack dismisses the spill at the beginning. The cloud tells us what we already know. It represents relations shaped and controlled by images. But as mentioned above, the toxic cloud disrupts formerly concrete social categories. In other words, everyone must flee the cloud or turn into waste. Everyone—the powerful and weak, the young and the old, the rich and the poor—is produced as having *the same* relation to the cloud. The Event is one form of the spectacle that collapses class difference.

Characters in *White Noise* fail to grasp the meaning of the Airborne Toxic Event. After the event, no narrative comes forth to explain or legitimize their experience. Feeling neglected, a man walks through a room carrying a TV, complaining about the absence of news coverage: “Don’t those people know what we’ve been through? . . . Are they telling us it was insignificant, it was piddling? . . . don’t they know it’s real?” (162). Fact or fiction, the “realness” of an event does not automatically qualify it for TV coverage. In the “society of the spectacle” truth and nontruth are merely images that have been subsumed and legitimized by the power of the spectacle. But a disaster without TV coverage loses meaning, both in an historical sense and for the people involved. Noticeably, in another part of the novel, we learn that during an airliner’s nose-dive descent, a crew member narrates the event from the third person, as if he/she were giving an objective report: “airliner going down. Simulators did not prepare crew for this terror feeling of death” (90). And when Jack’s daughter disembarks from the plane, she asks why they went through the terror of falling from the sky if the news did not cover it (92). As Osteen points out, “they can’t understand their own experience without electronic mediation, without the knowledge that they are being observed. Stripped of the universal third person, they are trapped in the first person they no longer recognize” (171). In other words, they lack any way to think of their relation to their world.

A disaster prior to being framed by the media allows for collective social relations to form since all involved must begin constructing a story to understand what they experienced. Disasters are moments when we acutely detect what is otherwise undetected: the loss of authorship over our lives. They are rare moments of clarity from which we can learn and begin to recycle our relation to waste through *action*, by first

attempting to explain the event and second creating new forms of relations beyond the power of the spectacle. While this opportunity is lost during the Airborne Toxic Event, the Event signals that problems that appear as individual should be thought of as a manifestation of something systemic.

Large-scale disasters pose little threat when compared to the everydayness of waste that threatens to make people obsolete. Small “disasters” happen in discrete doses. The Airborne Toxic Event makes the outside world appear as dangerous and threatening, and the inside world as the only safe alternative. Characters such as Jack may think a safe place exists, but in *White Noise* the everyday world is just as dangerous as any singular event. In the everyday, one does not necessarily die in a horrific encounter, but in an absurd situation. This is evident in chapter one in the school’s evacuation of its students. It seems that anything may have made people sick:

They had to evacuate grade school on Tuesday. Kids were getting headaches and eye irritations, tasting metal in their mouths. A teacher rolled onto the floor and spoke foreign languages. No one knew what was wrong. Investigators said it could be the ventilating system, the paint or varnish, the foam insulation, the electrical insulation, the cafeteria food, the rays emitted by microcomputers, the asbestos fireproofing, the adhesive on shipping containers, the fumes from the chlorinated pool, or perhaps something deeper, finer-grained, more closely woven into the finer state of things. (35)

The lack of any clear evidence of what exactly poisoned the students and teachers places waste beyond human control. This makes any attempt at stopping or eradicating the problem impossible and turns human activity into responses to disasters, not preventions of them. This is another example of how waste organizes people’s lives. Waste calls into question the stability of spatial division, since waste “leaks” in from the outside. While some forms of the spectacle accentuate class differences, the school evacuation registers, like the Airborne Toxic Event, the obliteration of class distinction.

The organization SIMUVAC (simulated evacuation) best captures the utter sense of helplessness felt by the characters. The SIMUVAC team prepares itself and the people of Blacksmith for disasters, and thus places everyone in the role of victim. In one scene, people lay in the street acting as victims of a toxic gas for a SIMUVAC drill. SIMUVAC, by managing the afterlife of events, legitimizes the dangerous world and disconnectedness of the people. Keeping the *appearance* of safety, SIMUVAC justifies, even encourages, people's passive relation to the world in which they live.

While SIMUVAC prepares people to react to a disaster, other characters attempt to control their world through more personal means. Control in this context translates to knowledge, seemingly placing a person in a more active relation to his/her immediate reality. In different ways, Murray and Jack rely on semiotics to organize the complexity of their world. As a way to counter feelings of anxiety, Murray studies signs and argues that people need to relearn to see and think of their world. The problem, according to Murray, is our inability to read cultural signs emanating from the supermarket shelf or television. Importantly for Murray, the TV offers "a myth being born right here in our living room, like something we know in a dream-like and preconscious way" (51). He insists that

you have to learn how to look. You have to open yourself to the data. TV offers us an incredible amount of psychic data. It opens ancient memories of world birth, it welcomes us into the grid, the network of little buzzing dots that make up the picture pattern. (51)

Reading TV or other phenomena only articulates a relationship to the spectacle, providing the illusion that one has control over his/her immediate world. Murray's work would ultimately enable one to understand the ecology of media; however, it offers no alternative to it. Murray enthusiastically embraces the spectacle, reminding us of

Debord's point: "[The spectacle] captures the contemplative and passive nature of modern life and accounts for the boredom and apathetic dissatisfaction which characterized social experience." Murray offers an escape from the media through the media, erasing the difference between viewing and knowing. He approaches his subject to describe it, failing to critically assess how it influences or shapes viewers' understanding of their world. His scholarship does not offer the conceptual tools to enact change or to recognize the devastating effect of waste.

Another attempt at recycling lies in creating a "personal narrative," a story made to empower one's own relation to the social without acknowledging or incorporating others. Jack attempts to create his own narrative on the urging of Murray: "Slaughter is never random. The more people you kill, the more power you gain over your own death" (291). Killing someone, taking another's life, adds "life credits" to one's existence, something Jack is eager to acquire in his pursuit to rid himself of his fear of dying. Although it does not matter whom Jack kills, it seems appropriate that he chooses Mr. Grey as his victim, the man with whom his wife had an affair. It also seems appropriate since Babette had an affair with this man so she could receive the pills. Whether predicated on life credits or revenge, Jack sets out, as Osteen remarks, to "[invent] a story, 'a reality [he can] control, secretly dominate' one that will allow him to repackage death in a plot." Of course, Murray's advice to Jack would have been better for the people who experienced the Airborne Toxic Event. Jack's imagined control rests on the notion that he must take it away from someone else. His attempt to de-alienate himself only serves to further alienate him from others. This narrative strategy is only made for one person to survive among the helpless many.

The Collective in the Supermarket

To turn against the spectacle would require finding spaces where people form collectively within the organizing forces of the spectacle, yet do not reproduce its logic. Poised against the spectacle is the supermarket, a space that counters the destabilizing effects of the toxic event and outside world, and in so doing, announces itself as a space in which people glimpse a different life. The section to follow the Airborne Toxic Event, “Dylarama,” begins with the supermarket. For Jack, the supermarket stands as his house once did, as a stable space that offers safety in the hostile world. We learn that although the town has neglected and dirty parts, “the supermarket did not change, except for the better. It was well-stocked, musical, and bright. This was the key, it seemed to us. Everything was fine, would continue to be fine, would eventually get even better as long as the supermarket did not slip” (170). Unlike one’s house, the supermarket is a public space where people gather, move about, and encounter others. And while people go to the supermarket to consume products, they also intuit in it alternative social relationships.

Shopping does not solve any problems. Experiences in the Mid-Village Mall illustrate that consumerism is the last place to seek solace. Unlike the supermarket, the mall is a hostile place where one must look out for oneself self. We learn that the elderly couple, the Treadwells, get lost in the mall, spending two days wandering around and two more days living in a kiosk, with

the weak and faltering sister venturing out to scavenge food scraps from the cartoon-character disposal baskets and swinging doors . . . No one knew at this point why they didn’t ask for help. It was probably just the vastness of the place and their own advanced age that made them feel helpless and adrift in a landscape of remote and menacing figures. (59)

The mall also strips one of his/her defenses against the influence of the commodity. This is best seen in Jack’s identity crisis at the mall. His image of himself is demolished after

having met Eric Massingale, a colleague, who notices that Jack does not look as important as he does when he is on campus, wearing his academic robe and sunglasses.

Jack turns to shopping to cure his ache:

I shopped for immediate needs and distant contingencies. I shopped for its own sake, looking and touching, inspecting merchandise I had no intention of buying, then buying it I began to grow in value and self-regard. I filled myself out, found new aspects of myself, located a person I'd forgotten existed. (84)

Rather than recycle one's subjectivity into something as-yet unseen, the mall contributes to one's obsolescence. As seen with the Treadwells and Jack, the mall alienates people as they consume images. Moreover, shopping—like killing someone or reading the buzzing dots of the TV—is an individual attempt at recycling one's relation to the spectacle. In this way, the characters reinforce the fragmentary and failed human relations already present within a society organized by the spectacle.

Recalling Giorgio Agamben's comments on the spectacle underscores the potential of the supermarket: "the spectacle's violence is so destructive; but for some reason, the spectacle still contains something like a positive possibility—and it is our task to use this possibility against it" (83). We can glean from Agamben the supermarket's use-value, how people use it not only to shop for food items, but to bring themselves together in a space that is very different than from the rest of the town. This "positive possibility" expresses itself in *White Noise* as a swarm in the making. The swarm is, according to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, a social network composed of different creative agents. These agents within this network produce a collective intelligence (*Multitude* 91–3). While I will elaborate further the centrality of the swarm in collective relations in my discussion on Leslie Marmon Silko and Toni Morrison, Jack anticipates the swarm relation in the supermarket by becoming aware of something else:

I realized the place was awash in noise. The toneless systems, the jangle and skid of carts, the loudspeaker and coffee-making machines, the cries of children. And over it all, or under it all, a dull and unlocateable roar, as of some form of swarming life just outside the range of human apprehension. (36)

While this roar could be the sound of commodities talking to each other, the unlocateable roar of a swarming life brings to mind the seemingly chaotic yet harmoniously synchronized patterns found in nature.² It also suggests that outside one's perception are forms of community waiting to be practiced. This means that for the individual in the street or in the supermarket, he/she has the potential of becoming part of the formless swarm.

This possibility for a collective intelligence in the supermarket represents what Jameson says of the utopian thread in contemporary works of art, which “have as their underlying impulse . . . our deepest fantasies about the nature of social life, both as we live now, and as we feel in our bones it ought rather be lived. To reawaken . . . some sense of the ineradicable drive towards collectivity that can be detected” (34). The swarm calls forth the virtual, a possible future awaiting to be realized. Kristin Ross sees the swarm as anticipating another future, when a “swarm of people, stripped of any individual subjectivity, faceless, is always on the point of becoming ‘political man,’ always just at the limit of action” (*Social* 108). The politicized swarm corresponds to a production of space, and recalls what the SI calls a “situation,” a moment consisting of “a unitary ensemble of behavior in time [E]ach of the participants in this adventure would have to discover precise desires of ambiances *in order to realize them.*” (emphasis

² “We see, then, all that our analysis of the value of commodities has already told us, is told by the linen itself, so soon as it comes into communication with another commodity, the coat. Only it betrays its thoughts in that language with which alone it is familiar, the language of commodities” (58). Karl Marx *Capital*, v 1, Ed. by Frederick Engels. New York: International Publishers, 1967. Thanks to Ivan Ascher and his work on Marx and Derrida for drawing my attention to this quote.

in original Situationist 43) The supermarket makes possible the realization of an individual desire as a collective one. It suggests that just beyond consciousness are narratives and structures of a collective.

Perhaps more than any other place, the supermarket prompts the possibility of another world since it embodies the contradictions of capital. While surrounding consumers with commodities whose price is dictated by a larger, more complex market, people may identify the “unlocatable roar” of another life.

Critics’ remarks on the supermarket illustrate the contradictions found in it. Christian Moraru sees the supermarket as the “‘digital’ temple of contemporary society . . . [bringing] to the fore in *White Noise* a new ‘postcultural’ docta ignorantia, which the author tackles with devastating irony”(95). The supermarket interpolates people into the economic market: “Here [in the supermarket] the consumer faces his or her own consumption, a paradoxical disappearance not beneath surfaces but on them, which eliminates the difference between the consumer and the consumed” (96). Eugene Goodheart offers a similar sentiment when he claims that the market contains “not real food but its representation The supermarket (a trope for all consumption) is filled with an abundance of items, but the main staple of that world is not the tangible item, the real thing, but what stimulates and sustains it in an endless deferment” (123–24).

Thomas J. Ferraro considers more positive aspects of the supermarket: “If one is searching for signs of potential renewal, the strange market-rituals of American families compel closer inspection” (130). Turning to the novel he claims that the supermarket functions differently for the Gladneys because “unlike other family activities, the Gladneys know full well what they are doing when they go to the supermarket” (31). He

then goes on to argue that the Gladneys communicate in the supermarket, as when Jack and Steffie walk hand in hand and talk about Babette's possible drug problem. Dana Phillips comes to a similar conclusion about the supermarket:

The supermarket is the place that the characters in the novel depend on the most for a sense of order, pattern, and meaning, and thus it fulfills something of the cultural function that used to be assigned to the pastoral. The difference is that the supermarket has an obscure relationship to the rest of the world, particularly to the natural world whose products it presumable displays. (125)

I find these observation on the supermarket highly suggestive of a latent/nascent social order not already present, but ready to be discovered. The sweeping view of the market, from a place of self-consumption to a place of order, further shows its contradictions. But all of these aspects of the supermarket are momentarily suspended when the shelves are rearranged.

Placing hope in the supermarket as the solution to people's problems proves futile. At the end of the novel the shelves are re-arranged. Jack, along with other shoppers, walks around in a stupor. Whereas before people leisurely strolled contently down the aisles, they now experience the trauma of having the commodities rearranged. The supermarket, the last vestige of stability, has let them down. Jack notes that

It happened one day *without warning*. There is agitation in the aisles, dismay in the faces of older shoppers. They walk in a fragmented trance, stop and go, clusters of well-dressed figures frozen in the aisles, trying to figure out the pattern, discern the underling logic, trying to remember where they'd seen the Cream of Wheat. They see *no reason* for it, find *no sense* in it. (my emphasis DeLillo *White* 325)

This rearrangement hits suddenly, as if a natural disaster. The reader is told it occurred "without warning." But this is a human-made economic and social disaster whose effect ripples throughout society. The supermarket reflects the economic market. People repeat in exaggerated form the confused movements they may make in the world outside the

supermarket, as when they fled the Airborne Toxic Event.³ If before the arrangement of the supermarket made it easy for them to shop, then why re-organize this space unless it was demanded by the spectacle? To confuse people defies the spectacle's constructed logic as these people know it: there is no "reason" to rearrange the shelves in the supermarket. The rearranged aisles may serve to "shock" the consumers out of their shopping routine and force them to recognize—and perhaps buy—products they have never seen before. At this confusing moment, however, people are left without the spectacle's influence. They cannot rely on habit to navigate this new space. They need to adopt to this space by relearning their relation to the commodity. People are suspended between two the worlds of the supermarket: the one they used to know and the one they will soon know. For now, they are in-between. If capitalism demands people to behave and think naturally like consumers, the rearrangement of the shelves destroys this. Jack notes: "There is a sense of wandering now, an aimless and haunted mood, sweet-tempered people taken to the edge In the altered shelves the ambient roar, in the plain and heartless fact of their decline, they try to work their way through confusion" (326). This feeling in the supermarket will not last long since this confusion will be eventually closed by the narrative of consumption. Jack, so far as he believes in the spectacle, knows this future as he approaches the check out line. He assures himself:

The terminals are equipped with holographic scanners, which decode the binary secret of every item, infallibly. . . . And this is where we wait together, regardless of age, our carts stocked with brightly colored goodsEverything we need that is not food or love is here in the tabloid racks. The tales of the supernatural and the extraterrestrial. The miracle vitamins, the cures for cancer, the remedies for obesity. The cults of the famous and dead. (326)

³ Interesting enough, the supermarket emerges in modernity, as Ross notes, to confuse and muddle shoppers, leading them to "consume more and more in a frenzy of greed and disorientation" (Ross *Social* 102).

In other words, people need and seek the comfort that the spectacle offers. Any hope for people to realize an alternative space on their own is shutdown and in its place with the wonders of technology, superstition, and magic. With the meltdown of any stable order in the supermarket, we are left wondering if indeed John Fiske was right and that consumerism is the only viable solution to easing the pain of human existence.

The conclusion of *White Noise* leaves Osteen with many questions:

is Jack resigned to the reduction of religion to tabloid tales, to late capitalism's distortion of familial and community bonds? Is he dourly exposing the pathetic delusions of contemporary Americans? Or is he probing the recesses of the religious impulse, accepting the viability and authenticity of postmodern faiths, despite (or because of) the "Pop Art" aspects of their expression. (190)

The rearrangement of shelves implies something much simpler than what Osteen suggests. This aimless, shell-shocked state recalls the aftermath of the Airborne Toxic Event, when people sat wondering what had happened to them. It is only through the familiar exchange of value, money for commodities, that Jack and others will re-stabilize themselves. But for now, the shopper's freedom from the spectacle is terrifyingly palatable. Indeed, the open ending underscores the helplessness felt in the absence of the spectacle. But keeping in the spirit of Debord, we can ask what the rearranged aisles tell us about the space of the supermarket.

The supermarket remains an unrealized community poised against forces that seek to fragment social bonds. In spite of the spectacle governing people's lives, the supermarket suggests that people can nevertheless forge from within its walls a community that has no name. The unintentional coming together is like the "dull and unlocatable roar," that Jack perceives yet cannot figure. To become conscious, as Debord states, is one step toward radically altering one's relation to the world:

Conscious of desire and desire for consciousness together and indissolubly constitute that project which in its negative form has as its goal the abolition of classes and the direct possession by the workers of every aspect of their activity. The opposite of this project is the society of the spectacle, where the commodity contemplates itself in a world of its own making. (Debord *Society* #53)

Although speaking of workers, Debord's critique applies beyond the confines of the work space, since not only work, but all areas of everyday life contain the patterns that reproduce the spectacle's grasp over people. Of course, in *White Noise* the spectacle contemplates and regenerates itself making it more difficult for people to achieve control. Yet, the supermarket brings forth a model completely antithetical to the order of the world in *White Noise*: "the state of the spectacle, after all, is still a state that bases itself not on social bonds, of which it purportedly is the expression, but rather on their dissolution, which it forbids" (#51). Between this complex relation that of social bonds, Agamben looks to the student uprising at Tiananmen in 1989 for thinking about the spectacle differently:

the state found itself facing something that could not and did not want to be represented, but presented itself nonetheless as a community and as a common life. . . . The threat the state is not willing to come to terms with is precisely the fact that the unrepresentable should exist and form a community without either presuppositions of conditions of belonging. (89)

The uprising in this context is not proof of the inevitable victory of liberal democracy over communism. It instead reveals that within seemingly total systems, such as communism or capitalism, resides alternative social forms that if fully realized would destroy the state apparatus. For DeLillo—linking his work to Debord's—the supermarket, a space of consumption, momentarily represents a possible "situation" from which they learn that History is not predetermined. The shoppers at the end of the novel are on the verge of discovering another frequency on which they can produce "a liberated creativity, this is, the project of the dominion of all men over their own history at all

levels” (Debord 159). Debord and the SI certainly experimented in producing these transformations though a collective social life lived against the spectacle.

The supermarket reveals the strengths and weaknesses of the spectacle. It is a space in which the realization of an individual experience produces a collective desire. The supermarket suggests that just beyond consciousness are narratives about and structures of a collective swarming against the spectacle. But at this moment, the characters are not ready for it. Jack intuits this life, but cannot formally represent it. They have not created this situation, yet it resembles the closest example of freedom from the spectacle. They must learn to live in or create these in-between spaces.

A strategy of recycling must possess this hope of collectivity at its foundation. My performance of recycling DeLillo through Debord’s politics and theory of the spectacle and Jameson’s theory of utopian impulses in mass culture hints at the larger task of remaking meaning for objects already deemed useless. *White Noise* seems to exude hopelessness. Waste in *White Noise* brings forth what normally lies dormant in the social imaginary: that of lives lived passively through consumption. The problem in the novel is how to become active agents working collectively on projects that attempt to dismantle the power and influence of the spectacle.

White Noise lays the foundations for recycling; *Underworld* resolves it. *Underworld* gives serious attention to waste as characters actively use it. The novel also provides examples of social relations not governed by the spectacle. Creating an alternative space is crucial to the production of these relations that take place within a global system.

Underworld

Architects against Waste

These activities, however, have a meaning more sinister than just keeping the Party going, a meaning that we overlook at our peril. It is this: the Party is a vast workshop where the member is polished and shined, his impurities melted out, his loyalty to communism strengthened. He is made into *communist man*.

—J. Edgar Hoover, *Masters of Deceit*

Underworld concerns itself with the status of waste in two radically different worlds, that of the cold war and the post cold war. Waste during the cold war is something to be eliminated, while post cold war waste helps develop a logic of recycling that crosses national borders. Thus, waste recycling in *Underworld* is an activity of global unity.

During the cold war waste is an ideological category used to characterize the people and ideas of communist countries. J. Edgar Hoover, obsessed with his own hygiene in *Underworld*, attempts to contain the spread of the contagious virus of communism from entering the U.S. Making containment, and by extension, “purity,” a necessary strategy to stop communism, Hoover sounds the alarm in *Masters of Deceit*, warning Americans that “within four decades communism, as a state power, has spread through roughly 40 per cent of the world’s population and 25 per cent of the earth’s surface” (4). Hoover then uses tropes of nature to place the rise of communism across the world, as if communism followed an evolutionary law.⁴ He mentions that capitalist countries have become islands in a communist sea. The spread according to Hoover is

⁴ We can assume from Hoover’s use of natural evolution to show in frightening detail the political evolution, that he viewed communism, as many Marxists do, as the finality to the capitalism-socialism-communism path.

imminent. To eliminate that which threatens to contaminate the purity of the US., ideological borders must be erected.

Hoover's depiction of a communist revolution in the United States relies heavily upon architectural metaphors: "The revolution would affect every man, woman, and child in America. Communist do not propose to remodel our government or retain any part of it. They would tear it to the ground, destroy all opposition, and then create a new government" (6-7). The communists turn into a demolition crew in their threat to make waste of the economic structure of capitalism. Against this economic aesthetic, Hoover poses as the builder who integrates clean and simple elements into his design. Building a clean American reflects the modernist architect's drive toward eliminating material traces of an old and dirty pre-modern world. In this respect his goal of "saving" American from corruption places him in a relationship with LeCorbusier, whose architecture, as Jameson reminds us, teaches the city how to live differently, while at the same time containing the spread of an irrational design of the city. LeCorbusier's agenda was also hygienic; in addition to designing ornament-free buildings, he sought to change the way people thought about dwelling. He informs people that "we must clear our minds of romantic cobwebs" (*Architecture* 238). Was this not the goal of Hoover, to purify American's minds so that the US could stand as a beacon of democracy for other countries to follow? Just as LeCorbusier's work loudly announced differences between the modern and premodern, so too did Hoover in his attempt to mark the boundary between one way of life and another.

That J. Edgar Hoover in *Underworld* and LeCorbusier dreamed of a rationally designed space free of "dirt" and traces of a past is no surprise. LeCorbusier's

architecture announces not only a departure from past architectural forms, but also an antiquated form of daily living. The clean lines, open spaces, and minimal design inside his houses were meant to teach people how to live in new, modern ways. Looking to his earlier writing, we can locate LeCorbusier's interest in a clean architecture in his manifesto on art. In "Purism," written with Amedee Ozenfant, LeCorbusier argues that "one of the highest delights of the human mind is to perceive the order of nature and to measure its own participation in the scheme of things; the work of art seems to us to be a labor of putting into order, a master piece of human order" (437). They continue to argue that Purism "is like a plastic word duly formed, complete, with precise and universal reactions" (442). Thus the natural and human combine harmoniously, making what is constructed appear natural. The hegemony of this built environment relies on notion of purity grounded in rationality, expressed in the right angle. As they argue in their essay of the same title, LeCorbusier and Ozenfant claim that the right angle makes humans conscious of the ideal, mainly, that the right angle expresses order and security. The aesthetic purity of the right angle is universally recognized.

The concept of purity is reinforced by the building material of Le Corbusier's architecture: concrete. Concrete buildings such as the *Unite de Marseilles* is a self-contained unit that includes a restaurant, shops, and a gymnasium. Concrete, though, also brings to mind sterile surfaces and impersonal, cold spaces. For a building meant to stand in relation to others, concrete can be read as a fortress against contaminants. Concrete reveals dirt and decay, whereas wooden or brick structures absorb it, and through their susceptibility to decay, mark the passage of time. In addition to the *Unite de Marseilles* differing from older buildings, the *Unite* literally stands above the ground. Its verticality,

suggesting a “free standing structure,” further purifies the building by distancing it from the filth of the earth. LeCorbusier’s concrete and vertical structures are reproduced by Hoover’s obsession with sterility, both his own and America’s. Indeed, Hoover’s fear of germs in *Underworld* makes him a primary candidate for living in one of LeCorbusier’s houses:

at home, Edgar sat on a toilet that was raised on a platform, to isolate him from floorboard forms of life. And he’d ordered his lab people to build a clean room at the Bureau with unprecedented standards of hygiene. A white room manned by white-clad technicians, preferably white themselves, who would work in an environment completely free of contaminants, dust, bacteria and so on, with big white lights shinning down, where Edgar himself might like to spend time when he was feeling vulnerable to the forces around him. (560)

Hoover erects a clean inside against the germ-ridden outside. Purification begins in the place where one is most at risk: the bathroom. Eliminating waste from one’s body within an environment that is always maintained as sterile means one can remain pure. Hoover does not want to contain waste, he wants to eliminate it wholly. The bathroom for Hoover becomes a mechanism to replicate in the United States: pure spaces for a pure mind means ideological purity of the Nation. Of course, the fact that the communists, according to him, were “polished” and “shined” suggests that they could perform as an other to fit within the clean social and political environment of post WWII America.

A politics that eliminates dirt, however, induces the paranoia that someone is invisibly infected. What neither politics can acknowledge, especially Hoover’s, is that a pure ideology of communism or capitalism necessarily creates waste. Hoover, in this respect, fails not because of the strength of the Soviet Union, but because of the byproducts that emerge from the cycle of production and consumption under a growing global economy. Waste contradicts progress. It is production that measures progress. Industries that make products through chemical processes yield toxic byproducts, while

consumers use and throw away consumable goods. Both processes produce a large amount of waste.

DeLillo makes the connection clear between consumption and waste in the chapter, “Better Things For Better Living Through Chemistry.” Writing about a typical suburban setting, DeLillo lists the various ways waste enters our life through the goods we consume. He does this through textual interruptions, as if they were announcements from the Emergency Broadcasting Service. As DeLillo writes about a day in the life of a family in 1957—the wife is making Jell-O chicken mousse for dinner, while her husband polishes the chrome on his car and her son masturbates into a condom to a picture of Jane Mansfield—he shows that behind consuming everyday products lurks a danger. People’s consumptive practices are making the world a more hostile place to live. Between paragraphs DeLillo places such warnings one would find on a typical product label found in one’s house: “Do not reuse this bottle for storing liquids” (513), “Danger. Contents under pressure” (516), “May cause discoloration of urine or feces” (517), “To avoid suffocation keep out of the reach of children,” and “Flush eyes with water and call physician at once” (519). With the dream of better living through chemistry comes the nightmare of its consequences—the Airborne Toxic Event of *White Noise*. Not surprisingly, the task after producing so much waste is to manage it through recycling.

In Hoover’s drive to contain ideological waste, the accumulation of material waste is a necessary reality since continual production and consumption of goods is mandatory under capitalism. Once the cold war and the threat of communism end, and the borders between the East and West open, waste is something that must be managed through recycling since no proper outside exists under global capital. Without an outside, waste

cannot be properly contained by being shipped to a third world country or a poverty stricken area in the U.S. Instead, waste enters a new relation to the market by being recycled, thereby turning into a commodity.

Recycling, A New Way of Life

The task of recycling becomes central to a post Cold War world. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the empty space left by communism is easily be filled by capital, while the strategy of containment necessarily becomes obsolete. The management of the spread of waste implies control over the ever-growing useless artifacts people and industries create on a daily basis. The management of waste prioritizes recycling as a means to revive the useless-commodity. And besides, recycling waste can be lucrative. With the rush of a capital into previous communist spaces, people must adjust to the demands of the global market. The global market—based on relations of the commodity—remakes the world in its image. Global capital must always remake itself and evolve into other forms. Therefore, a commodity, once used can evolve into something else.

This is most effectively seen in the former Soviet Union. On becoming a useless space for communism, a country must recycle its relation to the global economy. The global market finds a residue of exchange value left in spaces previously thought useless. This re-valuation of waste as a commodity in turn remakes the space of the former Soviet Union. This in turn ushers in a new history for Russia. That the Russian waste dealer in *Underworld* used to teach Soviet History before the fall of the Soviet Union indicates the centrality of waste and the obsolescence of the history of communist thought. In this sense, waste effectively overrides histories of the Soviet Union while writing a lucrative economic future. The Soviet Union goes from being antagonist towards the West, to becoming an integral and necessary part to the global dumping ground.

The toxic waste disposal site in Russia epitomizes the global organization of the market. Previously a testing ground for nuclear weapons, the toxic waste disposal site illustrates the flexibility a business must adopt. Technologies developed and built during the cold war are obsolete, and must now function in new ways to meet the demands placed by consumption. Russia recycles itself to accept and dispose other people's toxic trash. In her essay covering the business of spent nuclear fuel, Kate O'Neill mentions that

Russia . . . offered to take in civilian nuclear wastes from around the world and store or possibly reprocess them over the long term, at a price The fact that this scheme is being welcomed and given serious consideration by several possible exporters highlights the desperation felt by many nuclear power-generating countries in the absence of any long-term scheme for dealing with their wastes. The Russian proposal also highlights how the civilian nuclear fuel cycle has become more global in its scope, and more commercialized, as a result of private sector and multilateral efforts to address problems of nuclear waste management. (157)

The business of waste management ensures that the current level of nuclear consumption need not be curbed. In turn, this reinstates the public's conception of an inside/outside duality between waste and everyday life. This is accomplished not by politics, but by standards of hygiene. The fact that toxic waste is shipped to Russia for storage indicates their "crappy" geopolitical status. As we all know, radioactive waste threatens to always escape its containment; thus, thinking in terms of an inside/outside is dangerously naive. Certain spots have become dead zones; these contaminated sites literally embody the germs of the cold war's ideology of fear, and literalize the infections of which Hoover was so terrified. A few "dirty zones" in the East, perhaps because of the spectacular disaster of Chernobyl, remains relatively unknown. O'Neill notes,

the Chelyabinsk region, one of the regions that might receive waste shipments, and home to Mayak, Russia's only functioning reprocessing plant, is already known as "the blackest spot on earth." Fifty years of producing plutonium for Russia's nuclear weapons program, the dumping of wastes directly into the Techa River, and a serious explosion in 1957 led to decades of cover-ups, unexplained evacuations, and slaughtering of livestock. Levels of radioactive contamination in the

Chelyabinsk region are at least eight times greater than in the area around Chernobyl and the populations suffer from correspondingly high rates of cancer and leukemia. (166)

Chelyabinsk becomes the toilet bowl of the world so other places can appear clean.

Making waste invisible absorbs the productive and consumptive habits of a global market all the while masking the unevenly developed spaces produced by this market. People's social status in an global economy parallel the fate of waste. Social waste must be recycled as well, or it must remain invisible.

Everyday Recycling

As *Underworld* documents, recycling waste is also important to practice in the realm of the everyday. Thus at various spatial levels waste is a central concern. People reproduce the logic of waste management in their house, placing garbage into specific receptacles for recycling. No longer do people throw glass bottles away knowing that it will end up in a land fill. Compared to Jack Gladney in *White Noise* who simply lists items found in the garbage compactor such as q-tips and paper napkins, Nick Shay recognizes the value of garbage. Jack's garbage can reflects a high level of consumption, while Nick's recycling underscores garbage's second life. Recycling has reached such a level of specialization in *Underworld* that Nick and his wife place it in specific receptacles. Nick states,

we had a recycling closet with separate bins for newspapers, cans and jars. We rinsed out the used cans and empty bottles and put them in their proper bins. We did tin versus aluminum. On pickup days we placed each form of trash in its separate receptacle and put the receptacles, from the Latin verb that means receive again, out on the sidewalk in front of the house. (102)

The practice of recycling is much like the toxic waste site in Russia. Environmental concerns aside, recycling garbage is done because it can now circulate in the market.

Prior to technologies that could make garbage into new products, garbage was still a

commodity, but for only the few who stored it, such as waste management companies. But under the sign of recycling, waste turns into a commodity and in turn is fetishized. No longer indiscriminately thrown away, waste is now stored in specialized places. Marx's commodities have their own language; DeLillo's garbage has a designated space of its own. Recycling stresses the economic aspect of waste, yet it does not offer possible ways to think differently about one's relation to it because waste, like objects to be consumed, is still a commodity.

Waste acquires special powers and transcends its name by acquiring properties that belong to the spiritual world. People learn to see garbage in a new way that parallels religion. Nick Shay mentions that,

the Jesuits taught me to examine things for a second meaning and deeper connections. Were they thinking about waste? We were waste managers, waste giants, we processed universal waste. Waste has a solemn aura now, an aspect of untouchability. White containers of plutonium waste with yellow cautions bags. Handle carefully. Even the lowest household trash is closely observed. People look at their garbage differently now, seeing every bottle and crushed carton in a planetary context. (88)

This quote remains one of the most disturbing concerning waste in DeLillo's work. The last refuge of a product's zero value, garbage now is part of a constellation of signs, giving waste various meanings and afterlives. The aura of garbage can only be sustained by placing it beyond human reach or control. The fetishization of waste—achieved through the practice of recycling—pushes it even further away from human intervention.⁵ Under this relation, people remain unable to intervene with the production-consumption circuitry.

⁵ Connecting Nick's religious lessons to his current job of a waste manager would appear to support those critics who see garbage as redemptive. However, this only redoubles one's distance from the commodity.

Wasted People

In *Underworld*, however, there are several incidents that suggest not all waste can be neatly recycled. The residue of waste persists enough so that its “solemn aura” is disrupted. Waste is recycled in many productive and lucrative ways. Obsolete people, however, have a more difficult time re-entering the market. While in Russia, Nick and Brian visit the town of “downwinders”—people living downwind from the nuclear test site and who suffer from terrible disfigurements. The downwinders are linked to the past, literally embodying the history of the cold war in their horrific disfigurations. The downwinders represent an obsolete history, and remain useless to the global market. Nick comments that “these faces and bodies have enormous power. I begin to feel something drain out of me. Some old opposition, a capacity to resist. I look around for Brian. But Brian does not want to see toothless people eating lunch. He is outside somewhere” (799). How can one allow people who evoke such negative reactions into a global community? The outcast nature of the downwinders necessarily places them in a time not like our own. The market echoes this sentiment since the downwinders have no value. They do not evolve into a commodity; they cannot sell themselves as “The Village of Downwind Freaks.”

Underworld articulates the dual movements of globalization and waste: On the one hand, people and places are noticeably connected globally through business or culture, as seen in recycling; on the other hand, people and places are separated in a global imaginary through the management/containment of waste, as seen in the village of the downwinders. The downwinders only evoke the past since the market has made them invisible.

The Art of Waste

Ecology is the guilty side of economics.

—Robert Smithson, *Unearthed*

Reusing waste counters the logic of making people waste. Implicit in *Underworld* are two counterpoints to the Cold War ideology that produced people like the downwinders. The artist recycles waste as a response against large, impersonal political systems. Its significance falls into two radically different categories. One type of recycling resubmits something back into the cycle of production and consumption. The other type seeks to destroy this cycle.

For the most part, literary critics of *Underworld* favor the role of the artist as one able to recover the power of the individual. Osteen comments that “*Underworld* moves from criticism to celebration, championing those who forge economies of grace from the dead matter of weapons and waste” (254), and,

what is irrefutable is DeLillo’s continued fascination, even celebration, of the ways that hope emerges out of large scale ruin . . . how in *Underworld* you find transcendence in unlikely places, as the very emblems of capital are transmuted into an economy of grace. (258)

This sentiment echoes Nick’s musing about the aura of garbage. In this case, the individual transcends capital’s power by remaking what it has destroyed. Paul Gleason argues that “DeLillo proposes art and language as means by which the individual can reinvent and redeem the waste that defines America in the second half of the twentieth century” (130). Citing both nuclear waste and the waste produced by the mass media, Gleason suggests that language and art “bond individual lives and distinct phenomena in the universality of their individualities” (141). For him, DeLillo “considers the ways in

which the artist responds to an America whose waste culture undermines human freedom. [*Underworld*] is a realism of redemption and hope” (142). Writing about *Underworld*, David Coward would agree, asserting that “art, like religion, promises the redemption of human waste. It recycles” (60).

For these critics, redemption of oneself or society appears to be redemption from cultural and material forms of waste by reusing it. In other words, one gains freedom by turning shit into an aesthetically pleasing object. While these typical notions of recycling waste offer a path to an individual’s temporary redemption over a cultural or economic wasteland, recycling in this context does nothing to interrogate the production and consumption of commodities.

The manner critics discuss the artist in *Underworld* alerts us to an underlying attitude that focuses on the individual, not the collective. Thus any hope at transforming social relations dies. Mark Osteen comes close to articulating the collective when he places the artist as the one who critiques the political economy. Calling this a strategy of “survival,” Osteen sees the artist performing a similar role with the one I am outlining.

Osteen says about the artist:

Each of the artists employs bricolage—a spontaneous method, a patchwork style—with whatever materials come to hand. The methods are therefore political, in that these artists use waste to contest “massive systems,” to express and celebrate the “idiosyncratic self” that DeLillo describes as the source of art and of political resistance. (245)

He continues with: “Each one springs from the Underworld to lay bare the secrets of Cold War culture and criticize the excesses of capitalist society, but, more importantly, to redeem its artifacts and transmute them into lasting testaments to eccentricity and community” (245). Survival is a critical first step in identifying and criticizing the “dirty” side to an economy that must always regenerate newness, and the mirage of purity, at the

expense of people's livelihood. One can sense the urgency of this task. Rather than work with difficult and time consuming materials like marble, the artists' method of bricolage communicates the democratizing effect of such an activity. The classically trained and amateur artist can employ it in their critique of dehumanizing systems. The strategy of survival can be applied quickly by the artist who has the option of responding without hesitation to negative forces.

The strategy of survival, however, is similar to the one employed by Jack Gladney in *White Noise* when he decides to kill Mr. Grey. It is a testament to the "idiosyncratic self" that legitimizes Jack's actions; he acts alone and for himself. Recalling John Fiske's notion of resistance from Chapter 2, we can see how "survival" isolates one from others who equally struggle. Neither one offers a critique of the production of waste. The artist in *Underworld* combines discarded elements to critique the system within which they live, artworks that serve as pedagogical tools to teach people how to think about their world and especially the role of waste. However, for a strategy of recycling that I have been trying to articulate and expand from Watkins' work—building a collective response against repressive forces—celebrating individuality or eccentricity through art would devastate any collective project aimed at renewing social relations. The artist who uses waste functions more than just an eccentric counterpart to the mindless masses. Being an artist is not a lifestyle—it is a political subjectivity. He/she transforms waste into a new relation to other commodities, reminding us that art is always a social act and that its political purpose works to delink forms of social and spatial alienation. It is at this point that we reach the limits of a strategy of survival, and of viewing art as empowering the individual. The idea that political resistance comes from the isolated artist—from a self-

interested politics—reproduces the social fragmentation of globalization. Indeed, this approach sees garbage as something to recycle, as an object that enters a “planetary context” of meaning, that ultimately turns into a fetishized object of garbage. The artist may seem liberated, but his/her work acquires the same “solemn aura, an aspect of untouchability” that garbage held for Nick. This is the work of the Garbage Project mentioned in Chapter 2. People collect, quantify, and reassign meaning to garbage. They place garbage in relation to itself.

Recycling is not only a strategy aimed at delinking relations defined by the commodity form, but also a practice of remaking collective relations. To foreground the radical potential in recycling waste, we can turn to Fredric Jameson’s discussion in *Geopolitical Aesthetics* of the role that jeepneys play in the Philippine film *The Perfumed Nightmare*. The film marks the distinctions between the industrialized modern world, and the colonized subjects who embody the contradictions of capital. They are provided with images and promises of the first world while having to live the reality of the third. One particular “business” venture stands as a compelling case for resisting the co-optive forces of global capital. The production of jeepneys, brightly colored army jeeps used to transport people from village to burgeoning metropolis, illustrates recycling and reusing “useless” objects in an innovative way. The jeepney (like Frank Ghery’s house Jameson discusses in an earlier essay) serves as the device that connects First and Third world realities without, Jameson says, deciding which is more dominant or fundamental. In addition, the manufacture of jeepneys also signals a new relation to production, and in so doing, critiques both modes of production found within the city and country:

[The film] also in and of itself immediately blasts apart the sterile opposition between the old and the new, the traditional and the Western, and allows its former

components themselves cannibalized and conceptually resoldered . . . [T]he jeepney factory is a space of human labor which does not know the structural oppression of assembly line or Taylorization, which is permanently provisional, thereby liberating its subjects from the tyrannies of form and of the pre-programmed. (210)

The labor involved in rebuilding the jeeps avoids demands set by traditional markers of progress and offers an enticing way to think about collective forms and production practices not having to rely on models of efficiency. The cannibalization and resoldering of automobiles are a type of production that reminds us of Watkins' notion of "innovation," a practice that "will never count as 'innovative' in the dominant coding of obsolescence/innovation" (214). Each jeepney presents a unique mechanical or structural problem in making it ready for use. One cannot churn out jeepney after jeepney since the demands of production preclude the repetitiveness of mechanized motions. This emerging mode of production, unlike that found in those of a traditional agricultural society or of late capitalism, responds to a particular set of problems and operates according to a different logic altogether, one that

mark[s] the place of a properly Third-World way with production which is neither the ceaseless destruction and replacement of new and larger industrial units (together with their waste by-products and garbage), nor a doomed and nostalgic retrenchment in traditional agriculture, but a kind of Brechtian delight with the bad new things that anybody can hammer together for their pleasure and utility if they have the mind to. (211)

The delight of recycling, of hammering the bad new thing, avoids any slippage into a false sense of repair. Recycling does not have faith in new forms of technology to solve the problem of efficiency, nor does it delve into creating a nostalgic, pre-capital mode of production. A different relation to production based on reusing available materials in innovative ways expands the notion of repair to apply to not individual, but collective

concerns. Production, one's labor, becomes useful in building alliances between people and enacting forms of behavior not reducible to the logic of the market.

The jeepney's production provides a space for strategies of recycling, re-using in innovative ways that which is considered useless. No longer alienated from or exploited by their labor, the workers who produce the jeepneys create a collectivity devoid of "any bourgeois sense humanist or a golden mean, since spiritual or material propriety is excluded and inventiveness has taken the place of genius, collective co-operation the place of managerial or demiurgic dictatorship" (210). The impetus to invent rests in this case on the absence of divided labor. Instead, the characteristics of the space in which the jeepneys are built remind us of a space devoid of social hierarchies. Like the jeepney workers, the artists' use of waste in *Underworld* exposes the notion of collective possibility in abject places.

The Aesthetic of Recycling

Reproducing a logic similar to the production of jeepnies, Klara Sax's art project in *Underworld* is another response to the vast systems that produces the deformed people in Russia. I argue that Klara offers an alternative to the fetishization of the artist/individual. Using waste differently, her project unrepresents the social and personal practices that sustain relations of the commodity form. Klara articulates the political and economic aspects of waste by implicating her work into the social forces that produce waste.

Confronting the problems of (in)visibility and the forces of the spectacle, Klara's project suggests that we rethink our relation to systems that threaten to override our ability to act and devastate us. She does this by going to the Arizona desert where 230 B-52 bombers have been retired. Given the enormity of this project, Klara has many volunteers painting the planes. The project of repainting B-52 bombers teaches us how to

look at and think about waste in a new way, all the while calling our attention to the process of production. Sax's activity of recycling would seem to carry out what Watkins' suggests about repair, that reusing old things in innovative ways can help us rethink our current social and political reality.

Her attempt to recycle our spatial and social relation to reifying institutions relies on her ability to glean useless objects. Similar to the people in the *Gleaners and I* who reuse objects, and like the Situationist International's critical strategy of detournement, she radically critiques the original B-52 by positioning its usefulness between past and future so that we can view our present situation differently. More importantly, the repainting of planes reproduces similar relations that were almost realized in the supermarket in *White Noise*. We can see this in the way Klara discusses the work done on the art project, using the first person pronoun "we." She underscores the collective labor necessary for this project: "We scrape and sandblast We have many blasting machines with guns and nine gallon hoppers We're not looking for precision. We spray it on, grit and all" (69). This approach to painting avoids the mechanized motions and Taylorized process of the original labor. As the volunteers re-paint the planes they re-make a type of labor that originally went in to making the planes. They work according to their own speed and design, not according to the clock.

Using everyday objects and remaking their meaning situates Sax within the work of the avant-garde. Reminding us of Duchamp's readymades, Sax's work nonetheless differs from Duchamp's anti-art gesture. Sax use of waste is not a rejection of either art or life, nor does it rely on the specialized space of the art gallery to contextualize its meaning. Rather, it is a critical project aimed at remaking our perception about waste,

and certain ideas that materialize in the art object. Sax's project of repainting the planes is just another stop in a long series of her work of collecting bits and pieces of ephemera, what she calls "castoffs," such as "aerosol cans and sardine tins and shampoo caps and mattresses" (70) and painting them. This reminds us of Walter Benjamin's discussion of the ragpicker. In Chapter 3 the figure of the ragpicker referred to the cheated in *Day of the Locust*. *Underworld* elaborates another aspect of this figure. The ragpicker's primary activity of collecting debris from the city streets made this figure the embodiment of abject poverty. The activity and social standing of the ragpicker speaks for all who dare act against the structures that determine most people's lives. The spirit of the ragpicker lives in Klara Sax whose own subjectivity responds to the over production of waste within globalization.

Sax's project produces waste as something else. Pointing out the differences between WWII and the moment of her art project, Sax states, "[W]e haven't actually fought a war this time. We have a number of postwar conditions without a war having been fought. And second, we are not going to let these great machines expire in a field or get sold as scrap" (69–70). Rather than have the planes disappear or have them cannibalized and recycled into other planes, Sax calls attention to the 230 planes that would have remained invisible to the public. In addition, unlike the downwinders who have been forgotten by history, Sax converts the space of the desert:

Unconducive to industry and progress and so forth. So we use this place [the desert] to test our weapons. It's only logical of course. And it enables us to show our mastery. The desert bears the visible signs of all the detonations we set off. All the craters and warning signs and no-go areas and burial markers, the site where debris is buried. (71)

Sax also recuperates a place, the desert, as "central to this piece" (70). The desert transforms from a space restricted to non-military use to a central location for earth art.

The bombers and the desert symbolize the work and research of the military industrial complex; both dwarf the individual, figuratively emphasizing the gap of power between ordinary people and systems of war.

While there are other examples of artists producing cultural artifacts out of waste in *Underworld*—such as Sabato Rodia, the man who made Watts Tower in Los Angeles, a 100-foot tall tower made entirely out of garbage such as bottles and cans—we can understand the relationship between the artist and waste by situating the landscape work of Klara Sax within the tradition of Robert Smithson’s land reclamations. Smithson’s land reclamations make visible the politics of industry and environmentalism. In the early 1970s, Smithson was particularly interested in reclaiming used-up industrial sites, specifically mines. He saw the artist, by reclaiming useless land, as making people aware of the destructive processes of production. Blake Simpson notes that Smithson envisioned a new role for the artist: he/she would recycle industrial waste and make it into art (135). This was no celebration of waste or the artist. For Smithson,

by making monuments to waste, artists could challenge the reigning “ideological consciousness of time” or the lie of progress The artists’ new role . . . would be to serve as something like a Geist advisor guided by the principle of what he called ‘a purely negative idealism’ and develop monuments that would function effectively as symbolic correctives to existing impoverished common-sense philosophies of history. (Simpson 135–36)

Rewriting the object corrects how one thinks of the production and function of that object. Smithson’s work proposes to make the viewer aware of the process of decay in history, rather than celebrate as ingenuity typically associated with notions of scientific or industrial progress. Yet the artists’ role is to expose the site, to make people aware of it. At the same time, by making people aware of the decay of progress, the artist closes the gap between impersonal, industrial systems and people.

To begin reclaiming a space, Smithson would use a site already exhausted of exchange value. In an untitled proposal written to several coal companies, Smithson makes the relationship between the artist and waste clear. Confronting the many polluted and disused areas of mining, Smithson proposes:

One practical solution for the utilization of such devastated places would be land and water re-cycling in terms of “earth art.” . . . A dialectic between land reclamation and mining usage must be established. The artist and the miner must become conscious of themselves as natural agents. In effect, this extends to all kinds of mining and building. When the miner or builder loses sight of what he is doing through the abstraction of technology he cannot practically cope with necessity. The world needs coal and highways, but we do not need the results of strip-mining and highway trusts. Economics, when abstracted from the world, is blind to natural processes. Art can become a resource, that mediates between the ecologist and the industrialist. Ecology and industry are not one-way streets, rather they should be crossroads. Art can help to provide the needed dialectic between them. A lesson can be learned from the Indian cliff dwellings and earthworks mounds. Here we see nature and necessity in consort. (“Untitled” 220)

The artist serves as a critic of the relationship between industry and nature. Smithson proposes to remake the residue of production into a reminder of consumption. The artists’ production of earth art is not a celebration of individual freedom over waste, or a monument to the idiosyncratic self; rather, earth art reclaims useless land. Smithson proposes an art that disrupts any notion of “purity,” by crossing ecology and industry, contaminating each side with the other. To do this, the artist must leave the sanctity of the gallery and move into the dirty world of dirt, mud, and rocks.

The fact that Sax does not move the planes to another location ties the two strands of space and history together. By remaking the planes she remakes the space, she produces it differently and hence rewrites a present history, showing how collective relations can form within a space perceived as useless. John Duvall sees Sax’s work as yet another example of high-art escaping the minds of the masses: “Klara’s art finally points to the implication of avant-garde art in the structures of high culture. This is not a

people's art, since only a very few people have the economic means to view this massive installation" (273). He argues that Sax's role reminds us of the dangers of aestheticizing the political. Indeed, aesthetic resistance in an era when the "image is the final form of commodity reification" (Debord qtd. in Jameson *Post* 18) seems naive. However, what Duvall misses is that by remaking the planes and the space that contains them, Sax calls our attention not only to the process of making the object, but also time itself. How does one think of the past and the future with such massive structures that seem to guide and limit our future? The effect of knowing what Sax and her helpers have done in the desert is more important than actually seeing the planes. The idea that we must personally view the planes instead of being aware of how they challenge the way we think about specific relations already reifies the planes into dead art. The planes would merely turn into another art piece that celebrates the individual. Paradoxically, Sax's collective project brings new life to the planes.

Sax's project comes after a long, silent period of not knowing how to think about nuclear war and the apparatus that supports it:

We all tried to think about the war but I'm not sure we knew how to do this. The poets wrote long poems with dirty words and that's about as close as we came, actually, to a thoughtful response. Because they had brought something into the world that out-imagined the mind. They didn't even know what to call the early bomb. The thing of gadgets or something. And Oppenheimer said, It is merde. I will use the French. J. Robert Oppenheimer. It is merde. He meant something that eludes naming is automatically relegated, he saying, to the status of shit. You can't name it. It's too big or evil or outside your experience. It's also shit because it's garbage, it's waste material. But at the ordinary thing, the ordinary life behind the thing. Because that's the heart and soul of what were doing here. (77)

The shit of the atomic bomb continues to contaminate how people consider their relation to it. Sax indicates that rather than pursue a line of thought that eliminates the shit of the bomb, art must interrogate the unnamable toxic garbage. Any project that sought purity,

that is, an erasure of the plane's past, or the pure celebration of them as freedom bombers, denies the dynamic processes that make waste. As Sax indicates, waste laying outside our experience threatens to demolish us, as the Airborne Toxic Event threatened to contaminate all of Blacksmith in *White Noise*. Sax's approach to the planes, her way of bringing the Cold War realities to our conscience, brings them to a level of understanding. She does this primarily through collective action. The painted bombers are a product of labor actively engaged in a process of de-specialization. Repainting the useless bombers is not a celebration of Cold War kitsch, nor does it parody them. To get beyond the trappings of the commodity, one must engage in the critical activity of engaging in a different type of labor. Recycling the planes, Sax is acutely aware of the intersection between labor and agency, suggesting an epistemology of recycling:

See, we're painting, hand-painting in some cases, putting our puny hands to great weapons systems, to systems that came out of the factories and assembly halls and near alike as possible . . . we're trying to *unrepeat*, to find an element of felt life, and maybe there's a sort of survival instinct here, a graffiti instinct—trying to trespass and declare ourselves, show who we are. (my emphasis 77)

Sax interacts with and even challenge vast and violent systems. To unrepeat means to derail a type of recycling that places the waste object back into the circulation of production and consumption. Unrepeating assembly line labor that produced these great machines of war, Sax also figuratively unrepeats a cultural logic that legitimized the use of such weapons. By undoing the plane's original relation to their production and labor, by effacing this connection between an object and its use, she encourages new connections. Repainting them brings two ideas at a crossroad, challenging the viewer to see them together: impersonal flying machines that drop bombs and machines made harmless by human intervention. Embodied in the colorful planes, Sax rewrites a history

between ordinary humans and systems of power and in so doing she suggests that we can think the future through present interventions of the past, breaking reified relations.

The Haunting of Recycling

Another strategy of confronting powerful systems comes from Ismael Munoz. Ismael is a synthesis of the Russian downwinders and Klara Sax. He is poor and an artist. We first encounter Ismael as a prominent graffiti artist whose pieces are seen all around New York. He spray paints *Moonman 157* onto subway trains. Ismael knew his fame was growing in the graffiti world “because he had imitators, first, and because other writers did not disrespect him by spraying over his work, except some of them did, and because two women came looking for him in the Bronx” (436). One of these women is Klara Sax. She wants to learn Ismael’s identity so she can commission him to paint a large wall. But for Ismael, “the whole point of [his] tag was how the letters and numbers told a story of a backstreet life” (434), of “tenement life, good and bad, but mostly good. The verticals in the letter N could be drug dealers guarding a long diagonal stash of glassine product or they could be schoolgirls on a playground slide or a couple of sandlot ballplayers with a bat angle between them” (440). He sprays graffiti so his tag is well known, not his identity. So long as Ismael is not linked to *Moonman 167*, his production is a story of the people around him; it does not repeat the logic of the commodity.

Later in the novel we see Ismael as the guardian of homeless children. They squat in an abandoned apartment complex called “the Wall.” Ismael’s earlier resistance fighting the colonizing forces of the commodity is overrun by capital. Ismael and his like are remade from waste to “waste.” A tourism company offers The Surreal Bronx Tour, which casts the miserable lot in the image of the poor street urchins of the city, thereby effectively depoliticized their living conditions. Representing the abject homeless in New

York, they have become exchangeable in relation to other images of waste. They are another causality of the spectacle. The zone they occupy transforms from the Bronx, a rough and undesirable place to live or even visit, to a “gritty” tourist zone through which a bus drives. Indeed, the tour is a twist on Jon Jerde’s “City Walk” discussed in Chapter 2. “City Walk” is a private “idealized reality” of Hollywood. The Walk and the Tour distance the viewer from lived reality. The tourist on the Surreal Bronx Tour can experience the Bronx much like they would do at home with the TV, by staring through the bus windows, perversely admiring the spectacle of poverty. Thus, the structural conditions that produce Munoz and the homeless children as waste are erased by the invisible (gloved) hand of capital.

Against this force, a powerful expression of a collectivity happens near the end of *Underworld*. A homeless girl, Esmeralda Lopez, has been killed. Yet she returns as an image on a billboard that advertises orange juice. When an elevated subway train comes by, its lights sweep the billboard and “a face appears above the misty lake and it belongs to the murdered girl” (821). Esmeralda, the waste that “haunts” the billboard, overrides the meaning of the orange juice ad. Significantly, the novel mentions earlier that an orange juice mixture was used to erase graffiti on subway cars. The elimination of graffiti silences the stories told by Ismael and others. Yet Esmeralda’s face creates a story: it unites the poor into a collectivity. Similar to Jack’s sensing a “dull and unlocatable roar, as of some form of swarming life just outside the range of human apprehension” (36) in the supermarket in *White Noise*, the billboard elicits an unspoken bond between the viewers: “She feels the words before she sees the object. She feels the words although no one has spoken them. This is how a crowd brings things to a single consciousness” (821).

People are brought together through what most people consider a miracle. Yet the socio-political aspect of the gathering is a reawakening of the drive for a collectivity. Despite their waste status like the downwinders in Russia, these people recycle their relation to each other. When Esmeralda's face appears on the billboard, it both unites people and effaces the commodity. The people, at that moment, unrepeat relations of the commodity form.

Recycling waste into a different social relation critically disrupts how people think about production, consumption, collectivity, and agency. *Underworld* pushes forms of collective production that innovatively thinks about the global processes that make people useless. We learn that collective action is the motor that recycles waste. Despite Klara Sax, Ismael Munoz, and Esmeralda Lopez's face, a collective is never sustained for long. Klara and Ismael explore innovate ways to produce a collective, yet no larger political structure exists to sustain these people together. Here is where we meet the limits of recycling in DeLillo's fiction. We now need to turn to the work of Leslie Marmon Silko and Toni Morrison to complete the strategy of recycling.

CHAPTER 6
LUMPENPROLETARIAT OF THE WORLD . . . SWARM!

This Chapter explores strategies of recycling waste in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*, and Toni Morrison's *Paradise*. Silko and Morrison focus on different aspects of the production of social waste than did Pynchon and DeLillo. Instead of entering a relation with waste as in previous novels, the characters in each novel are already defined as waste after having inherited histories not of their own making. The waste populations in these novels confront history as the primary force that produces their obsolescence. Each specific group faces the challenge to change their situation by remaking their relation to their past. They remember their history so that they can selectively use stories from it to position themselves differently in relation to repressive structures. Personal and collective versions of history confront dominant narratives and their overarching power to organize social space. Within this space are practices and identities that define both proper subjects and social activities. In these novels, this ultimately represent a supposedly "proper" politics. The act of remembering counters any possibility for proper politics to continue and leads to different organizations of space and alternative concepts of time. This Chapter examines the crucial links between space, time, and recycling. In addition, since these novels explore the political aspects of making social change through a rearticulation of space, this Chapter ends by considering a type of architecture and social space based on strategies of recycling.

Change concerns those who most benefit from what it promises. The history of Native Americans and African Americans in *Almanac* and *Paradise* place them on the margins of society. In both novels, these populations live in the desert, a place typically associated with barrenness. And yet, far from being outside political or social forces, the desert, as both authors acknowledge, is within a global web of forces. Thus, from these marginal spaces grow creative responses through not just local politics, but global practices that manifest themselves in the local. The creative responses born within waste populations aim at remaking living conditions through active transformations of one's subjectivity. From this emerges a life that intentionally disrupts other lives around it and places itself at risk of violence and death. Alternative subjectivities challenge the logic and subjective formation that the dominant narratives pose. Recycling narratives, retelling and refashioning stories from the past, people in *Almanac* and *Paradise* create an innovative political position.

Recycling serves to build a different sort of subjectivity that collects and combines various narratives, sometimes even ostensibly narratives that contradict one another. Recycling builds a hybrid-like subject, where other approaches try to embalm the past by preserving themselves as "authentic" people. The people who want to remain authentic do so through similar methods of recycling, but recycling in this mode strives to continually police the present. The desire for authenticity leads to notions of a proper political subject and mode of politics. Silko and Morrison's novels challenge and finally overturn "properness" through several characters who engage with strategies of recycling. These characters are considered waste and share similar traits with Marx's lumpenproletariat. Using a class that Marx found undesirable and unsuitable for the

working class struggle, I argue that Marx, in his critique of this class, frames subjectivity and class consciousness within a notion of a "proper" political subject. If Marx's definition of the lumpenproletariat were applied to these characters, they would either be marginalized from the process of social change, or be forced to adapt a political stance not of their making. To use the lumpenproletariat as a productive term, and in a manner beyond Marx's conception, I position this subclass within Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's notion of the "multitude." Seen as agents of change, the multitude elaborate alternative versions of political subjectivity. Applied to Silko and Morrison's characters, the multitude produces itself primarily through narratives of a different political aesthetic. This aesthetic, one that is a result of recycling, relates to Frederic Jameson's theory of "cognitive mapping." Cognitive mapping is an attempt at building a different political aesthetic that coordinates one's position to global capital. Characters in *Almanac* and *Paradise* tell stories of one's relation to history, versions that disrupt the dominant one within global relations. Retelling an official version of history in turn remakes power relations.

My analysis of *Almanac of the Dead* focuses mainly on two characters, Lecha and Angelita. They share a different yet highly suggestive relation to history, which then offers a more clear picture of critical strategies of recycling. It is this section that I discuss the similarities of Jameson's cognitive mapping and these characters mixture of narratives. My discussion of *Paradise* delineates two forms of recycling. The first is conservative and intent on preserving the past to perpetuate a "proper" and "authentic" subject. The other type is radical since people remake themselves and in turn remake their relation to one another. Finally, I end this Chapter considering how a waste

population may create a space based on strategies of recycling. I turn to the work of Acconci Studio, and argue that their design of a city on top of a dump captures in material form a strategy of recycling. I find their design highly suggestive for thinking about the relationship between history and space, and how the two shape and are shaped by political subjects. Because the houses are built on waste, waste cannot be excluded from public space; and, because the landscape continually shifts, a reified notion of space and a linear conception of time are replaced by an epistemology of recycling.

Toward a Waste Collective

Strategies of recycling in *Almanac* and *Paradise* disrupt the temporal order that structures society. In *Almanac*, establishing a different notion of time is a crucial step in articulating change. Caren Irr argues that, “multiple temporalities settle into an active, circulating, spatialized figure of a possible near future” (225). The native populations in *Almanac* seek to restore a spatialized version of time, and to do this they must collectively revolt against Europeans in the Americas. The same can be said about time and space in *Paradise*. Traces of history repress both the isolationist community of Ruby and the disparate group of runaway women who live at the Convent, once a mansion for bootleggers and a Catholic school for Native American orphans. The space of Ruby, a town built exclusively to remember the past, shapes their social practices. The women in the Convent confront and eventually overcome a past that haunts them.

Both authors explore the processes by which waste populations transcend the economic and social tensions between wealth/poverty, usefulness/waste. While Silko examines how disparate waste groups interact and communicate their different experiences and conditions, Morrison takes the opposite approach and examines how people survive by excluding themselves from the influences and forces of the outside

world. The novels, however, both explore strategies of recycling devised through collective thought and action. People recombine ideas and practices from the past to create an alternative form of collective struggle in the present. They do not, however, fit within a recognizable identity, as they cross categories of gender, race, and class. Instead, the characters' identity takes a hybrid form. They collect various, sometimes contradictory, identities. Reinventing one's self is necessary for the people in these novels since they fail to fit properly into the identity that has been assigned to them by others. Because they do not appear as proper subjects, these characters acquire social distinction of "embezzlers, . . . criminals, as well as addicts and pushers" (15) in *Almanac*, and "throwaways" in *Paradise*. They have in common a subordinate relation to power, and thus are considered waste.

Silko and Morrison imagine possible strategies obsolete populations can engage to ameliorate their status as waste. In *Almanac*, the Native American Lecha and Mexican revolutionary leader Angelita work in different ways to prepare to take back their land from Europeans. In *Paradise*, five women gather in a mansion in the desert of Oklahoma. Simmering in the waste heap made by decent society, the rejected people and populations find a commonality of being waste that brings them together. Because they experience similar humiliations, and because they eventually overcome the social role they have been assigned, the characters in the novels illustrate the politicizing of a subclass who were traditionally seen as a threat to the class struggle. On the contrary, organized waste populations struggle collectively, and so doing they threaten order. Their organization turns into a monstrous entity once they establish what they share in common with one another. They appear monstrous since they cannot be represented as a proper, or

even a unitary, political force. The waste populations in *Almanac* and *Paradise* inherit the figure of the lumpenproletariat as their predecessor, and the figure of multitude as their emerging subjectivity.

The Lumpenproletariat and Multitude

Waste populations, a loosely-knit group of disenfranchised people who are not anchored in any stable occupation or place, in *Almanac* and *Paradise* structurally resemble Marx's despised lumpenproletariat. A subclass of people deemed useless for the revolutionary project by Marx, the lumpenproletariat represent the rejection of class discipline needed for a victorious class struggle. For Marx, the lumpenproletariat are a debased class living in equally debased spaces. These are people who frequent or live in places of ill repute: brothels, workhouses, and madhouses. The danger of the lumpenproletariat, as Marx notes, is that they are easily manipulated by tyrants. Because the lumpen are prone to be persuaded to act against the best interest of the class struggle and the dialectic, Marx shows no sympathy, describing them as,

decayed *roues* of dubious means of subsistence and of dubious origin, alongside ruined and adventurous offshoots of the bourgeoisie, were vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, swindlers, mountebanks, *lazzaroni*, pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers, *maquereaus*, brothel keepers, porters, literati, organ-grinders, ragpickers, knife grinders, tinkers, beggars—in short, the whole indefinite, disintegrated mass, thrown hither and thither, which the French term *la bohème*. (75)

Instead of offering precise descriptions of their social characteristics, Marx places the lumpenproletariat in the general category of chaos: “the whole indefinite, disintegrated mass, thrown hither and thither,” which suggests that this class oozes disorder in whatever space it occupies. The imprecise language suggests that the forces that produce the lumpenproletariat are just as unpredictable, and as a result these people escape formal social categories. There appears to be no limit to how the lumpenproletariat takes form.

The lumpen can appear anywhere at anytime, forming an infinite set of complex social relations that resemble a model of a web or swarm. Marx understands this lack of a proper, orderly structure as being susceptible to serving in authoritarian regimes, such as that by Louis Bonaparte, who “recognizes in this scum, offal, refuse all of the classes upon which he can base himself unconditionally” (75). Under Bonaparte, this highly malleable group of people are given shape. The hybrid forms of community to emerge from waste populations in the novels occupy the social class of the lumpenproletariat. The jobless and sometimes homeless waste populations in these novels also live in abject spaces. One can also guess that another danger lurks within this class. Their lack of permanent employment represents an absence of any allegiance to a political party or cause. Drifting among and apart from the class struggle, the lumpenproletariat lack the social bonds to formally organize themselves against capital. The term “lumpenproletariat”

is not so much its reference to any clearly defined social group which has a major socio-political role, as in drawing attention to the fact that in extreme conditions of crisis and social disintegration in a capitalist society large numbers of people may become separated from their class and come to form a “free floating” mass which is particularly vulnerable to reactionary ideologies and movements. (*Dictionary of Marxist Thought* 292–93)

This suggests that large groups of people are detached from their class by sudden and violent shifts of the market. From this we can infer from this that anyone who, for example, makes a bad investment, losses employment, or acquires a debilitating mental disease can descend into the class of the lumpenproletariat. The process that makes the lumpen is fundamentally economic, and their articulation as a disorganized body is a political threat. This definition of the lumpenproletariat also implies that revolutionary politics is the task of those who are rooted by relations of production. The ruling, middle,

and working class are grounded in their struggle because capitalistic relations of production define their social relations and identity. Each plays a specific role and has a certain position to occupy. Thus, proper politics for Marx requires proper class identity: A proper social class lacks the heterogeneity that Marx's gives to the lumpenproletariat.

Marx maligns the lumpenproletariat because they are unproductive members of society—this class fails to procure housing and permanent employment—and are therefore obsolete, both for society and for the class struggle. The lumpenproletariat are also made obsolete by the shifting conditions of labor, and from this we can infer their social position represents abject relations produced by capital. Today, the production of unemployed, homeless, and landless people continues at the rate of capital developing unevenly across the globe. Similar to the lumpenproletariat, waste subjectivities are produced by social, political, and spatial forces not of their control. The waste body is produced, but it can maneuver itself and emerge within the social order as a different body through the critical strategy of recycling. Waste populations build agency through the critical act of recycling. They emerge from their marginal space as people who pose an imminent threat to hierarchical and stable social order.

The “free floating mass” under global capital, a class of people harboring no alliance to any one political party or social order can be productively framed within the emergent class of the multitude. Rather than malign these people for their improper political subjectivity, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri grasp on to this characteristic in their notion of the “multitude,” recycling the figure of the lumpenproletariat for its potential to radically disrupt political and social order. Hardt and Negri's theory of the multitude places the strategies and struggles of these populations within the larger

strategies against global capital. The multitude is already a political concept meant to recycle our notion of class, class struggle, and the methods to change social and political order. Part of this recycling of political practices is based on the innovative combinations of political subjects. As a collective, they emerge as a monstrous class: their resistance to rot in the dustbin of history disrupts and eventually rewrites conceptions of order. Working against these forces, utilizing their energy, and reorganizing their power happens through a transformation of the (social) body in *Almanac* and *Paradise*. This process of subjective transformation is captured in the theory of the multitude. The multitude is borne from events or situations originating from within the complex forces of global capital. Like waste populations, the multitude acts against the internal machinations of capital. This active subjectivity emerges as a positive force that has the ability to create alliances across time and space. These alliances have the potential to destroy the bonds that manage the production of waste populations.

The multitude is a concept meant to resurrect the Left today. According to Hardt and Negri, the multitude is a category of class that grasps certain political tendencies existing in struggles against global capital, and is meant to re-propose Marx's concept of class. The multitude cannot be formally represented, and a description meant to capture it would resemble Marx's extended list of the characters who comprise the lumpenproletariat. But Hardt and Negri note that, because it is a class, the multitude is defined by its labor. Extending the definition of labor beyond wage labor or the production of surplus value, Hardt and Negri argue that "living labor" performed by the multitude produces cooperation, forms of life, and human creative capacities. This labor is performed by singularities who, in number, are the multitude. Singularities cannot be

collapsed into sameness, or under a homogeneous political idea. Instead, they maintain their specific political, cultural, racial difference while producing what is common between them. This type of production is a performative act that communicates through networks. They can communicate in a complex web or swarm of relations across boundaries and territories. No hierarchical or central agent controls the flow or dissemination of information or ideas. Floating across geographical sites, the multitude is a global subjectivity. And herein lies an opportunity for recycling—through labor—to disengage itself from reproducing exploitative relations, often in violent and unpredictable ways. Part of this violence consists of creating a different mode of time. As Hardt and Negri state in *Empire*, “the multitude takes hold of time and constructs new temporalities, which we can recognize by focusing on the transformations of labor” (401). Breaking from the temporality of capital requires from strategies of recycling a concept of an alternative temporal order.

The multitude remains an important concept when reading *Almanac* and *Paradise* since it offers a theoretical model of the emerging political subjectivity explored in the novels. The multitude is a figure of agency that works internally, within capital, to locate its contradictions and undermine its power. Thus, the multitude haunts structures of power. Although Hardt and Negri refer to current groups such as the Zapatistas in Mexico, and the worker’s who recuperated factories in Argentina, the multitude is a figure meant to capture current political practices that anticipate a changed social order in the future. The multitude represents both a present reality and one to emerge in the future. The present political tendency of the multitude seems to reside in already disaffected subjectivities, ones ready to explode.

Throughout their writings and interviews, Hardt and Negri use specific images for the multitude. The multitude is not composed of a singular political figure, such as the industrial laborer. Like waste populations that can take many forms, the multitude has a fluid and amorphous identity. The vast list of what the multitude resembles for Hardt and Negri echoes Marx's description of the lumpenproletariat. They align it with such figures as the poor, those who refuse, and the militant. Although different, each figure shares being despised by authority. And yet, each one offers particular characteristics of the productive nature of the multitude. The poor signifies a "common denominator of life" (156). Everyone can become poor. With its status as being the lowest possible class to occupy, the poor, argue Hardt and Negri, represent the potential to produce relationships. The poor "live radically the actual and present being, in destitution and suffering, and this only the poor has the ability to renew being" (157). The poor have nowhere to go; they can only evolve as a force against the agents of their condition. Another figure of the multitude, those who refuse, occupy places of work. Referring to Herman Melville's *Bartleby* as the classic figure who refuses work, Hardt and Negri argue that the "refusal of work and authority, or really the refusal of voluntary servitude, is the beginning of liberatory politics" (204). The person who refuses to work begins the process of refusing other forms of domination. Hardt and Negri understand this figure as breaking from subordinating relationships and building alternative social bodies. The militant for Hardt and Negri is defined best by the "agitator of the Industrial Workers of the World" (412). The militant, such as the Wobblies, organizes people from below, and produces forms of community. The militant as organizer shares with those who refuse the vision of another set of social relations. These figures of the multitude, while resisting in different ways,

share a common practice. They produce a politics of the reproduction of life by practicing alternative social relations. Finally, the multitude evokes the putrid. Referring to New Yorkers after September 11, Negri states that “I do think that we are all New Yorkers [I]t’s not because we embrace American culture but because we embrace the culture of New York . . . the mongrel culture, the Big Apple full of worms” (“Ruptures”). Negri’s response on the mongrel culture of New York reveals the commonality between different figures of the multitude. The poor, one who refuses, and the militant can co-exist among each other; the multitude is the abject in New York.

Those who potentially constitute the multitude evolve collectively as a dangerous class who have nothing to lose in their quest to make change. A more poetic figure to capture this potential for disruption—and as something that has nothing to lose—is the monster. This image refers to the multitude’s tendency to exceed and destabilize social order. Hardt and Negri use this figure as a positive force that creates communicative and political networks for the production of alternative societies. The recuperation by Hardt and Negri of the unproductive or disorganized class suggests that the multitude is a recycled form of political agency. Taking the dreaded class out of the gutter and into the streets—indeed taking what has been declared the residue of pre-industrial forms of life or a class refuse (*Multitude* 130)—Hardt and Negri salvage the figure of the lumpenproletariat by redirecting its disruptive power against traditional forms of political organization. If “we” become the lumpenproletariat, then we somehow have evolved into a political monster incapable of compromising political goals under the banner of reform. The political monster disrupts secure feelings because it flees any stationary spatial or

political terrain. The temporary joining of singularities through political practices and the formation of hybrid political relations suggest the malleability of strategies of recycling.

Public gatherings of singularities give insight to what alternative relations look like. These events, however, have been ephemeral and site-specific. The WTO protest in Seattle is a hallmark example. The clash between people in the streets and representatives of globalization articulates a struggle in which one can “discern a common thread” among those in the street (Negri “Ruptures”). In each event unfolds a premonition of a different social body, and we can infer from these instances brief subjective transformations. The concept of the multitude frames the social actions and political practices within the larger project of recycling. If the multitude gathers for significant events against global capital, then what would it look like on a smaller scale? How would singularities locate a common thread among disparate social and political positions in everyday life? And once they do gather, how does it disrupt the structures that produce people as waste?

Almanac of the Dead and *Paradise* explicitly address these questions, asking if social change can come from below. The dregs of society exploit their waste status and thus appear forefront in the struggle for change. In turn, *Almanac* and *Paradise* contribute to how we think of a particular agency evolving from the multitude through waste populations struggling against the organizational forces of global capital in specific sites

Almanac of the Dead

Focusing on a diversity of people—Native American populations, European Americans, Mexicans—and places—Arizona, Mexico, Peru—*Almanac* develops on the general theme of gaining back land that has been taken from Native peoples by

conquerors from Europe. The reader quickly learns the futility of pursuing justice through proper legal means since the law excludes native people.

An insight into the power relations that make the task of recycling necessary, and reform impossible, can be seen in the native people's attempt to retrieve their stone idols from a museum. The Stone Idols—"dark gray basalt the size and shape of an ear of corn" (31)—were gifts from the spirits to accompany the people's journey into the Americas. While in the tribe for generations, the stone idols were stolen by anthropologists, placed behind glass, and put on display. Taking what was useful for the tribe and placing it behind glass reduces the object to cultural commodities exchangeable on the market: they are alienated from their own culture. Because the stone idols were donated by a "distinguished patron whose reputation was beyond reapproach" (33), the natives cannot take what is rightfully theirs. Indeed, their only choice is to hire a lawyer. Trapped in a legal system that already places them at a disadvantage, the Natives always lose. They are powerless against legal and cultural forces that legitimize the practice of violence and theft against them.

The case of the stolen stone idols illustrates the systemic process and legalization of cultural appropriation. The theft of the stone idols represents in miniature the issues faced by Natives. Any strategy to take back land would have to exclude pursuing legal channels and instead explore the necessary radical alignments to transform the "people" into the multitude. Silko's examination of the process of change, of its planning, organization, and eventual practice does not propose that a new order appears that favors the Native populations of the Americas. What we do see is the emergence of spatial practices

beyond the rule of law. Further, how one talks about struggle is key to forging positions against the complex forces of global power, and aligning disparate groups.

Revolution becomes the only answer to taking back land since legal means prove worthless. Key to inserting oneself back into an impersonal reality is the demolition of reifying (master) narratives. Just as the museum is able to hide its function as theft behind the veil of culture, so too do the narratives of Europe legitimize its power. As the case of the Stone Idols illustrate, Native's do not own their past; indeed, they can only remember it. The idols are now part of their past, and they remain meaningful only through stories.

In *Almanac* history plays an ambiguous role. It is both a powerful force which people must respect, and a fragile entity, something that can only survive if people remember it. If un-remembered, history risks becoming extinct and detaching people from their culture. Since history is important, it should be no surprise that Silko places it as the catalyst to change. But history alone does not make change. Placed between historical forces and the potential for change are people who dedicate their lives to the re-appropriation of land. The waste populations gather stories, stories made into waste by hegemonic narratives, in preparation for the revolution against the European invaders. As the black militant Clinton states, "ignorance of the people's history has been the white man's best weapon" (742). To challenge this, he fills his notebook with forgotten history of Africans and black Indians in America. If concealing history from the people can be a weapon, then the opposite, remembering history, can be considered dangerous. Rediscovering or remembering history is a sharp tool to cut-up hegemonic discourses.

And like a weapon, knowing one's history can be used to intimidate or harm one's enemy.

Memory of the past positions native populations in the present, binding people together in a common cause, whether they are from Arizona or Mexico. This common cause places them in an antagonistic relation to US politics. For Natives, the past is linked to painful memories of exclusion, expulsion, and containment. Memory for Natives is the persistence of pain since they "had not believed in the passage of time at all" (19). This constant present of the past lived by the different communities in *Almanac* helps them resist giving in to hegemonic spatial practices. Recycling in *Almanac* is both a constant remembering and a type of return. However, this "return" has more to do with what already belongs to people: not a specific time, but time *itself*, the control over every aspect of their lives. Recycling is not a method to repeat or preserve the past. Recycling is the active process of remembering the past through one's actions.

Several characters representing different races and tribes plan and strategize separately in different regions. In Arizona, Lecha translates ancient almanacs that foretell the demise of Western influence in the Americans; the Vietnam veteran Roy assembles his Army of the Homeless to begin a war against the rich; Clinton, also a veteran of the Vietnam war, broadcasts over the radio the repressed history of black people and the violence done against them; and the Eco Terrorists blow up Glen Canyon Dam, thus freeing the Colorado River. In Mexico, Angelita readies an indigenous group for the takeover of the Americas, and the brothers El Feo and Tahco prepare to cross the border to take back their land.

With all this activity, various cultures continue to re-acquaint themselves with their history, and towards the end of the novel revolution appears imminent. One way this revolution could begin is through riots in prisons, argues the Barefoot Hopi, who “had dedicated his life to one day of mutual cooperation among all incarcerated persons in North America and Mexico” (625). He planned to “organize a national uprising of prison riots and jailbreaks all over the United States.” Yet he conceded that “it wasn’t likely all the prisons and jails would participate, and everything in the Hopi’s plan depended upon simultaneous riots so that police and other law enforcement would be overwhelmed” (626). The Hopi Indian’s militant organization recalls the multitude. Organizing prisoners, a figure of repression, means recognizing a commonality they share with Native Americans. More importantly, however, their riots would signal to other people the conditions to take back their land.

Time in the novel is ripe for revolution. Angelita, a member of an indigenous tribe in the mountains of Mexico who takes her cue from Marx, believes that “history would catch up with the white man whether the Indian did anything or not. History was the sacred text. The most complete history was the most powerful force” (315). This force of history is unstoppable. Tacho, an Indian from Mexico, recalls

the arguments people in villages had had over the eventual disappearance of the white man. Old profits were adamant; the disappearance would not be caused by military action, necessarily, or by military action alone. The white man would someday disappear all by himself. The disappearance had already begun at the spiritual level. . . . The disappearance would take place over hundreds of years and would include massive human migrations from continent to continent. (511)

Thus the dominate culture, according to this view, may implode from the weight of its own spiritual decay. But Silko hints that for this change to happen, one must know history. History can only “happen” through people.

While each character similarly understand history, how they view history as working is another issue. The non-European characters believe that people must know their history in order to know themselves. To know history means to develop an awareness of one's route to an alternative subjectivity. By knowing themselves, people can begin to hear voices from their past. Thus, a specific history of a specific people guides their actions in the present. The almanac Lecha decodes also tells "[people] who they were and where they had come from in the stories" (246). The notebooks making the almanac told of all the days of the people, and that, "these days and years were alive, and all these days would return again" (247). History was

not lost. The days, months, and years were living beings who roamed the starry universe until they came around again. In the Americas the white man never referred to the past but only the future. The white man didn't seem to understand he had no future here because he had no past, no spirits of ancestors here. (313)

Because history is alive only through the memory of its people, Silko suggests that the forces of history bring change only if people harness the past. Reminding people of their past, Clinton broadcasts over the radio the history of black people in the Americas: "he wanted black Americans to know how deeply African blood had watered the soil of the Americas for five hundred years. But there had been an older and deeper connection between Africa and the Americas, in the realm of the spirits" (416). Knowledge of history then gives one agency; it allows one to act purposefully against power structures built against waste people. History also brings diverse people together, giving them what Hardt and Negri call "commonality." Commonality is the "activity that combines the intelligence and the action of the multitude, making them work together" (*Empire* 302). What is common among people is a production. Maintaining their separate identities, or singularities, people from different tribes and cultures merge in opposition to the

European occupiers of the Americas. Thus, history, and one's knowledge of its force, remains the single most powerful device through which one builds a strategy of recycling.

Remembering history collectively recycles stories into the present. Indigenous history in *Almanac* is not linked to nostalgia, a sentiment that motivates the Eco-warriors, a group of environmentalists who see their respect of the Earth as equivalent to the struggles of Native Americans. Practicing deep ecology, they want to return "back to the Pleistocene" and live as "their forefathers had once lived." This desire, however, "for the distant past was a symptom of what had become of the Europeans who had left their home continent to settle in strange lands" (689). Three crucial things separate the Eco-warriors from the Native Americans: first, the Eco warriors have no history in the Americas, and hence they have no real past with which to connect. Second, they achieve their goal through pure destruction, not by building an alternative social order based on the labor of current struggles. And third, living like cave people does not eradicate alienated social relations.

The Native Americans on the other hand want to return to their land; history for them is associated with living in a particular space, not time. We are told that "the old ones did not believe the passage of years caused old age. They had not believed the passage of time at all" (19). Time is not chronological; it does not progress through a series of events. Living on land that was once theirs is marked in the past, and hence part of their history. Yet this return to it has less to do with behaving anachronistically and more to do with traveling to a specific territory.

In their quest to reappropriate their land, each person or group in *Almanac* contributes to a theory of recycling. The two who pursue a distinctly different project are Lecha and Angelita. Both push a radical agenda: the reinstatement of one's use value while subverting the current law of value, and of the inevitability of change. The subjectivity that emerges from Lecha's translation of the almanac requires an active engagement with time and history, as does Angelita's project. One gains agency through recycling the past. Both women recognize the importance of history while also looking forward to imminent change.

Lecha

Remembering the past for her people rests with the Native American Lecha. We are told that "the future is encoded in arcane symbols and old narratives," and that Lecha must translate ancient notebooks, passed down from generation to generation so that the Native people can learn how to identify the end of Western rule in the Americas. Consisting of notebooks written by various authors over hundreds of years, the almanac remains the single record of their culture. The almanac is a key to unlocking and opening the past in the present. Lecha learns from her grandmother Yeome that the ideas in the text must be preserved, and that "nothing must be added that was not already there. Only repairs are allowed, and one might live as long as I have and not find a suitable code" (129). Her translation is not an exact one of what was said in the past, but an interpretation, influenced by her experiences, that rewrites the coded language in the notebooks. Lecha must place the work into a new language that can communicate to others its powerful message:

Yoeme and others believed the almanac had living power within it, a power that would bring all the tribal people of the Americas together to retake the land. . . .

Europeans called it coincidence, but the almanacs had prophesied the appearance of Cortes to the day. All Native American tribes had similar prophecies about the appearance, conflict with, and eventual disappearance of things European Without the almanacs, the people would not be able to recognize the days and months yet to come, days and months that would see the people retake the land. (569–70)

The almanac helps interpret the significance of events in the Americas. It is a textual form of the past speaking about the present, steering people to think and act. This, according to Silko, is not a nostalgic yearning for uncorrupted times, but a re-alignment of political and social collective actions.

Lechas's translations of ancient languages into a grammar of the present is a specific practice of recycling. Deciphering signs and patterns of events from the past, she must provide a narrative that leads back to the land the ancestors. This will then introduce them to the larger collective discourse of struggle. The almanac functions like Hardt and Negri's multitude; it mediates between present living conditions to possible futures to come. Integrating the past into one's thinking about the present effectively creates a political subjectivity that changes the future. The almanac "was what told them who they were and where they had come from in the stories" (246).

Stories gain significant force to produce social, political, and spatial relations that do not aim to reform, or work within the confines of the logic of the system they oppose. The stories real threat to established order is better understood when framed by the project of Jameson's cognitive mapping. Waste populations in *Almanac* who struggle to represent the global forces that shape their immediate lived reality encounter the larger

problem faced by the subject confronting the cultural logic of postmodernism. Jameson's account in *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* articulates several key aspects of postmodernism, such as simulacrum, pastiche, and nostalgia to mark the present depthless ahistoricism. The past is effectively obscured in postmodern cultural texts. The past turns into a "referent" [and] finds itself bracketed, and then effaced, leaving us with nothing but texts" (18). Instead, daily life and psychic experience, Jameson explains, "are dominated by categories of space rather than categories of time" (16). Drawing from Ernst Mandel, Jameson notes the three stages of capitalism and its corresponding type of space. Market capital is associated with the grid system. This is a space that people can easily navigate, as they can stand in one spot and know where they are in relation to the whole town. Monopoly capital complicates one's lived experience with the economic forces that shape his/her immediate reality. One's experience of space does not coincide with it, but rather, one's experience of "London lies . . . [in] India or Jamaica or Hong Kong; it is bound with the whole colonial system of the British Empire that determines the very quality of the individual's subjective life" (411). Late capitalism is the current stage in which commodification has settled into new areas. Late capitalism is based in the multinational networks, where the "individual subjects into a multidimensional set of radically discontinuous realities" (413). These different sets of reality are experienced through various types of space.

The problems of late capitalism can be posed in spatial terms, specifically through architecture: "architecture space is also a way of thinking and philosophizing, of trying to solve philosophical or cognitive problems" (125). Architecture poses a similar problem to that of late capital. Jameson uses the Bonaventure Hotel as an allegory of the space

formed by late capitalism. Unlike the disruptions that buildings of the International Style created, such as LeCorbusier's *Unite d'Habitation*, as I mentioned in Chapter 4, the Bonaventure Hotel does not introduce a Utopian alternative into the commercialized and commodified city. The rest of the city cannot learn from it since the Bonaventure is a city unto itself. Jameson contends that the Hotel stands as a total space in which a new collective practice evolves. In the hotel, one is confronted with having to navigate an overwhelming foreign space. The confusion of moving efficiently and directly through this space makes one more aware of his/her movements. Jameson sees the difficulty of the hotel's layout as instructive about a new type of space that develops quicker than our ability to adopt to its design. The confusion of the space makes it difficult for the "human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world" (44). The space surpasses our habits of using and being in space. The person who wanders through the space of the Bonaventure resembles those without history in *Almanac*. Without any narrative to serve as a map, one wanders aimlessly among a political landscape which he/she cannot understand.

To counter this situation, Jameson offers the strategy of cognitive mapping as a way to successfully locate oneself in relation to the unrepresentable network of late capitalism. Cognitive mapping is not a mimetic representation of the totality, but an aesthetic practice that "allows us to renew the analysis of representation on a higher and much more complex level" (51). Jameson's cognitive mapping borrows from Kevin Lynch's notion of cognitive mapping and Athussier's formulation of ideology, "the representation of the subject's *Imaginary* relationship to his or her *Real* conditions of existence"(51). Cognitive mapping acts as a mediator between the imaginary and the real.

Jameson sees social space as expressing this formulation. An aesthetic of cognitive mapping enable us to “grasp our position as individual and collective subjects and regain a capacity to act and struggle” (54). This, however, is not exclusively an individual practice. Jameson argues that cognitive mapping is an attempt to make a mental map of the global totality of late capitalism in an effort to map the totality of class relation on a global scale (415, 416). Jameson notes that an aesthetic of “‘cognitive mapping’ was in reality nothing but a code word for ‘class consciousness’” (418). Cognitive mapping is an attempt to connect disparate struggles and to have, for my project, specific waste populations articulate their struggles from which others will learn.

The waste population in *Almanac* work toward such a mapping, and their relation to time is an essential component to their mapping. Occupying a space is a recuperation of lost time, of a lost experience of a different sense of lived time. For waste populations, stories from the past are cognitive map. Lecha’s decoding promises to introduce change in the future in the form of narrative, and in turn these narratives coordinate their actions to take back their land. Lecha’s task, therefore, parallels that of a mapmaker, and the notebooks a mapping. She is someone who must read in the present to understand her past. Making people aware of their own history enables change.

Angelita

Similar to Lecha, the Mexican revolutionary Angelita mixes Western politics and Native beliefs in her quest to take back land from the Europeans. Much like the multitude composed of different political positions, Angelita’s recycling of different political positions escapes traditional identity traps which insist on “authentic” approaches to struggle, and instead looks forward to a relation based on singularities and multitudes. She takes narratives from seemingly vastly different sources and combines them to give

the revolutionary project in the mountains of Mexico a clear direction. Angelita, a.k.a. Comrade La Escapia, and the “Army of Justice and Redistribution,” fuses Marx’s dialectical materialism with Native stories as a means to think clearly about the process of taking back their land. Angelita’s task is to form a collection of singularities to combine narratives and remake its identity into something unknown to the power it resists. Before people gather together, however, they must know their history. Thus, stories from the past are vigorously guarded, and those who deny people their history are considered traitors to the indigenous peoples’ struggle.

One important incident, which reveals the complexity of one’s relation to history, occurs when the Cuban Marxist Bartolomeo and Angelita meet. Bartolomeo teaches the natives about Marx, and supplies their struggle with weapons and money. In return for his help, Bartolomeo insists that natives do not stray from his teachings. As a teacher of the communist party, Bartolomeo rejects the importance of Mexico’s history and of Cuba’s history before Castro’s revolution. Unfortunately, Bartolomeo teaches them what has already happened. His instructions for armed insurgency could be anticipated since what he proposes for Mexico has already happened in Cuba and Russia. Instead of advocating repeating past insurgencies, Angelita understands the importance of her people’s history and its force through not only her ancestors, but also through Marx’s study of labor and capital. This places Angelita in the precarious position between the “elder sisters” of her people and the revolutionary party funding the secret army to which she belongs. Angelita refuses to wholly side with either the sisters or Bartolomeo, and because she does not align herself with either orthodoxy, she falls outside the limits of “proper” politics. Neither side can recognize her politics. Both the elder sisters and Bartolomeo,

although representing wholly different ideas, are part of the same structure of power. They require that people stay within the proper boundaries of identity and politics. By mixing native stories with Marx's, Angelita's character forms a type of narrative that represent the political aesthetic of Jameson's cognitive mapping. She suggests an alternative political subjectivity that assimilates disparate and conflicting ideas. Her position is one of recycling. Following Hardt and Negri's discussion of the monstrous forms of the political, I mention that recycling means recreating oneself in the image of the monster.

Rather than a politics of purity, Angelita seeks one based on commonality.

Between the working classes in Industrial Britain discussed by Marx and the history of indigenous struggles, she recognizes a common thread:

Tribal people had had all the experience they would ever need to judge whether Marx's stories told the truth. The Indians had seen generations of themselves ground into bloody pulp under steel wheels of ore cars in crumbling tunnels of gold mines. That was how La Escapia had satisfied herself Marx was reliable; his accounts had been consistent with what the people already knew. (312)

Both indigenous people and British working class endure the violence of labor, and share a mutual sense of alienation from themselves and their work. What remains clear is that both were cheap labor and therefore experienced the same humiliating and violent social relations. To deny these similarities would mean to not know a history larger than that of one's culture; it would mean not knowing a world history that has the potential to link disparate people. If native stories of struggle have force, then stories of working class struggles in Industrial Britain, as Angelita recognizes, only add to that force.

Angelita's strategy of recycling, of using two modes of thought that historically have fought to maintain their purity, leads some critics to cry foul. The extent that Angelita violates the notion of a proper Native political subject is clear in Tamara M.

Teale's claim that: "if Silko is weaving a connection between land and justice, the Marxists generally, in their practice, in their refusal to return tribal land, are refusing justice to indigenous peoples," and, "what *Almanac* doesn't tell us, or perhaps can't show us, is that Marxist and industrial capitalists are both destroyers of the earth. Marxism requires industrial development for its existence" (160, 161). Teale protects the sanctity of her territory. She makes it clear that a Marxist politics "infects" the political body of Native Americans. Teale distrusts Marxists because according to her they need industry to exist, favor production, and are therefore the natural enemies of Native people and the Earth. Teale does not differentiate between Marxist theory and the state policies of the USSR. In general, this type of thinking sterilizes innovative approaches to persistent problems. Her analysis of Marxists reveals her thinking about identity. Whereas Marxists want to overturn social relations produced by capitalism, therefore rendering class and political categories irreverent, Teale's conservative agenda reverses this goal and wants to preserve the social status of native Americans. The political agenda Teale favors fails to think itself in relation to global forces. Instead, the struggle remains between the United States and Native Americans, a simple battle about property, without even considering how the theft of land could be read as an allegory of the destructive forces of global capital.

Arguing that the failure to return tribal land is a refusal of "justice to indigenous peoples," Teale separates the specific struggle of Native Americans from other, similar struggles that take place throughout the world, both past and present. Silko, on the other hand, refuses to separate Native and Western ideas. She disrupts the dream of a pure struggle by acknowledging the similarities between a Marxists and Native project.

Bringing Native struggles into class struggle, Silko's joins narratives. And while Marxism provides a discursive analysis of history and subjectivity, orthodox Marxism is not the answer for her. Indeed, even though Angelita uses Marx, she rejects particular types of Marxism—"we say to hell with all Marxist who oppose the return of tribal land" (519). She eschews any tendency to adhere to an orthodox position that would deny strategies based on personal experience. To fully embrace State Marxism would mean she would deny a lived reality fundamentally incongruent with the orthodox project of Bartolomeo. His reading of Marx disallows other to influence or to organize a revolution. History is so important to Angelita that she finally kills Bartolomeo because "he had neglected to mention the great Cuban Indian rebel leader Hateuy" (315), "why hadn't the stupid Cubans running the communist school in Mexico City talked about this part of Cuban history? . . . La Escapia called it further proof Cubans didn't want indigenous people to know their history. When they betrayed the true meaning of Marx" (314). Angelita's use of Marx shows a flexibility and ingenuity toward incorporation, and this becomes crucial for Natives to make changes. It also shows that the singular task of taking back their land involves thinking in terms that encompass the forces that organize global relations. Angelita's political strategy of recycling combines Marx's ideas on history and working class struggle into Native American stories. Combining two histories, Angelita harnesses their force.

Marx is an important figure for Angelita since he emphasizes the historical process as important to the revolution; for her understanding history is a type of politicization.

She who understands history also understand how to change the present:

Marx had gathered official government reports of the suffering of English factory workers the way a tribal shaman might have, feverishly working to bring together a

powerful, even magical, assembly of stories. In the repetition of the workers' stories lay great power; workers must never forget the stories of the workers. The people did not struggle alone. Marx, more tribal Jew than European, instinctively knew the stories, or "history," accumulated momentum and power. No factory inspector's "official report" could whitewash the tears, blood, and sweat that glistened from the simple words of the narratives. (520)

The power of the factory inspector's official report is similar to the art patron who acquired and then loaned the Native's stone idols to a museum. The law is on the side of the inspector and art patron, and recourse through legal channels fails solve the problem. Recovering workers' human element—tears, blood, and sweat—Marx suggest we look at Industrial progress through a different perspective. For Angelita, this perspective originates in stories. To forget their stories would mean isolating the struggle of the underclass as a present one without history. Memory of the past pushes one into action. Like the natives losing their land, workers in the factors embody the social and economic relations under capitalism that inflict misery. Both the regime of the workday and the suffering of those who have lost their culture are lived on a daily basis. Having combined both narratives in her pursuit for justice, Angelita offers a synthesis of two positions that transcends the formality imposed by both. The emergent subjectivity so crucial to recycling does not detach one from the past. As Angelita acknowledges:

the stories of the people of their "history" has always been sacred, the source of their entire existence. If the people had not retold the stories, or if the stories had somehow been lost, then the people were lost; the ancestors' spirits were summoned by the stories. This man Marx had understood that the stories or "histories" are sacred; that within "history" reside relentless forces, powerful spirits, vengeful, relentlessly seeking justice.

No matter what you or anyone else did, Marx said, history would catch up with you; it was inevitable, it was relentless. The turning, the changing, were inevitable. (315–16)

Silko makes it clear, however, that this narrative force exists through its repetition, a repetition that eventually sets the time for revolution. Retelling stories shapes a

subjectivity based on a cultural tradition, not the linear progress of time. In this sense, the stories offer an aesthetic of one's relationship to power. Angelita invents a spiritual materialism.

Remembering history and acting in accordance to its lessons, the whole indefinite mass of waste populations could build strategies of recycling that, when disseminated, politicize subjects in ways unanticipated by the forms of power they seek to destroy. The people in *Almanac* produce a subjectivity that does not reproduce a body shaped by capital. Central to their form is the non-form; organizing themselves much like the multitude:

[T]he government thought the saboteurs, rioters, and looters were part of a single group or organization. The government wanted groups because they hoped for leaders to crush or to buy off. But this time the story was going to be different because the people no longer believed in leaders. People had begun to gather spontaneously and move as a mob or swarm follows instinct, then suddenly disappears. The masses of people in Asia and in Africa, and the Americas too . . . were listening to strange voices inside themselves. Although few would admit this, the voices they heard were voices out of the past, voices of their earliest memories, voices of nightmares and voices of sweet dreams, voices of the ancestors. (513)

The figure of the swarm, of people organizing and then dispersing, suggests that various tribes and cultures find a commonality. The organizing principles follow a logic that already understands the idea of "leaders" as obsolete. Instead, from waste emerges singularities that transgress official doctrines of citizenship or identity.

The power of history and the accumulative stories of despair and loss in *Almanac* merits a further analysis of the difference between spontaneous gatherings and the figure of the swarm. While spontaneous events suggest coincidence, the swarm suggests something more dangerous. Hardt and Negri describe the swarm as having no center or leader who dictates order. It forms, however, through communication networks that resemble dynamic and untraceable patterns. Hardt and Negri call this "swarm intelligence" (91).

Referring to research done on artificial intelligence, Hardt and Negri assert that the swarm intelligence is fundamentally social, and that there are “multi-agent-distribution systems of intelligence” that “forms an intelligence system with no control” (91). Lacking central control, the waste populations in *Almanac* form the multitude by remembering and retelling their history. When Dara Donnelly mentions the central role of story telling in *Almanac*— “justice is most realized in the act of storytelling” (253)—she reminds us that the fragments of stories collected in the novel are from “marginal people” and that change will come from “the improvisations of the weak and powerless” (249). Storytelling does not promote spontaneous uprisings. It establishes the ground work for action. The various stories serve as a “multi-agent-distribution” of various cultures that anticipate the demise of European rule in the Americas. At the bottom of society, the waste populations share common stories about European power withering away. Indigenous histories form collectively and bring people together through a strategies of recycling.

From an Almanac to Paradise

On the one hand, history is an independent force in *Almanac* that will determine people’s fate. On the other hand, history is kept alive only through the conscious efforts of individuals who persist in taking back their land. The history of a tribe is a vitally important part in the task of reacquiring their land. The waste populations in *Almanac* engage in a type of labor that coordinates and communicates each other’s struggles. This labor of remembering history is the living labor of the multitude.

The waste populations in *Paradise* similarly recycle themselves. The people in the small town of Ruby recycle the past only to preserve it. Their form of recycling is spatial and based on a strategy of isolation. Isolation keeps Ruby in a proper place, and

essentially seals off their small community, preventing it from evolving. This type of strategy builds a subjectivity that cannot identify with similar struggles or recognize alliances with other waste populations. Even though waste plays a significant role in their history, it is eradicated from the memory of Ruby.

The other waste population to recycle themselves are a group of women who find refuge at a empty convent near Ruby. There, the women confront their past in order to move beyond the limitations it imposes on them. They recycle their relation to their past, and in turn emerge from the convent as singularities, subjectivities that cannot be captured and contained by their past. In this respect, both the people in Ruby and the women in the convent create a different relations to the past and a new conception of time. Whereas people in Ruby mean to stop time by repeating the past in the present, the women in the convent destroy time.

Space remains for the people in *Paradise* a central component to their history and subjectivity. Unlike those in *Almanac*, the people of Ruby and the Convent use space to continue their way of life undisputed and away from outsiders. The space of Ruby, however, turns repressive as the elder men impose over the other inhabitants their vision of how the town should function. The Convent, at first, repeats the same pattern as Ruby. However, through a series of events the women actively seek to transform their relation to a past that haunts them. The Convent then becomes a space where people build strategies of recycling. It functions for the emotionally fragile and physically weak as a space to emerge from, and thereby enter into the social as transformed individuals. Since each woman in the Convent suffers differently, their strategies of recycling addresses an

individual problem. The women do not seek one solution for all their problems. Instead, the women who live in the Convent creates themselves as singular identities.

Paradise

Preserving the Past

In the town of Ruby families keep the memory of their ancestors alive by repeating history. Ruby recycles the idea of Haven, an all-black town established in the mid nineteenth century by people who were not allowed to move into other towns. Before establishing Haven, the people traveled from Mississippi to Oklahoma looking for a place to call home. However, although they were “turned away by rich Choctaw and poor white, chased by yard dogs, jeered at by camp prostitutes and their children, they were nevertheless unprepared for the aggressive discouragement they received from Negro towns already being built” (13). Even to people who occupied the lower rungs of society, the founders of Haven were waste. They were “too poor, too bedraggled-looking to enter, let alone reside in, the communities that were soliciting Negro homesteaders” (14). As they traveled, the founders of Haven stopped “only to relieve themselves, sleep and eat trash. Trash and boiled meal, trash and meal cake, trash and game, trash and dandelion greens. Dreaming of a roof, fish, rice, syrup. Raggedy as sauerkraut, they dreamed of clean clothes with button, shirts with both sleeves” (96). Jobless, homeless, and dirty, the people were lumpenproletariats who were systematically shunned by others. The people who founded Haven carried waste on their body and in their soul. Haven was built because no one else would allow them to enter their towns. Haven, therefore, functions to recycle waste population into citizens who live within socially acceptable categories. However, the town itself begins to turn to waste when families move out and its economy starts to weaken.

Wanting to preserve the good that Haven once stood for, twelve families decide to leave the wasted town of Haven and start again. For one of the men, “loving what Haven had been—the *idea* of it and its reach—they carried that devotion . . . and they made up their minds to do it again” (my emphasis 6). The town of Ruby is a reincarnation of Haven’s idea, its spirit. Ruby constantly reminds people of not only the successes of an all black town, but also the dangers that threaten to break apart their community. To preserve unity and avoid ideas and people who may pollute the purity of their mission, the Ruby families settle in the Oklahoma desert, 90 miles from the nearest town. To preserve the town, the people deny certain forms of entertainment. The town people have given up television, disco, policemen, “picture shows, filthy music . . . wickedness in the streets, theft in the night, murder in the morning. Liquor for lunch and dope for dinner” (274). In their conscious attempt to avoid social problems such as crime, the men of Ruby collapse social issues into cultural concerns. Music, television, and film threaten their re-incarnated culture of Haven precisely because these forms of entertainment bring ideas from the outside. Ruby protects itself from wasting by denying the presence of social waste in their town in what ever form it takes: slothfulness, crime, disorder, or violence. Music, film, and television are constant reminders of the passage of time.

Without entertainment or information coming from outside Ruby, time appears nonexistent. Their willingness to be nonsynchronic, or to produce a nonsynchronicity, to take their selves out of the processes of the world, the people of Ruby attempt to remove relations that may make them obsolete. Hence, the people rely on the absence of time to determine their value. To keep time from unfolding people repeat stories from the past to hold the shape of their present. Just as they have recycled themselves in the same image

of their ancestors, the elders expect the younger generation to recycle the past as well, and this is where conflict arises. The elders refuse to recognize any concept of time that moves them away from their rigidly constructed social norms. If Ruby does not change, then they remain a “clean” community, and keep the idea of Haven untouched by not only time, but also waste, which is a part of their past they avoid to repeat. The major site of contestation between the older and younger generations is the Oven.

The Oven is a hollow remainder and reminder of the past. Once a communal meeting spot for the people of Haven, the Oven sits in Ruby as a testament to a past no longer representative of the town’s current values. At one time the Oven had a socially relevant function. The Oven symbolized Haven’s collective struggle and it was also the spot where the people cooked and socialized. The Oven was sacred, yet usable. But after the oven was moved from Haven to Ruby, rather than being useful to the everyday routine of the town’s people, it sits detached from the people of Ruby. While the older people in town think it best to honor the Oven, the second generation think otherwise. The “timeless” meaning of the Oven is up for interpretation and the younger generation’s desire to rename it quickly becomes an issue of power. Katrine Dalsgard’s observation that “the Oven is endlessly productive of new meanings, hence the ardent political battle between Ruby’s leading elders and the community’s young lion” (240) connects the task of subjective recycling to the producing of meaning. Of course, producing a different meaning that reflects the youth in town would suggest the passage of time.

What the Oven means for the town largely depends on how an obscured word will be interpreted. While the words “the furrow of his brow” are legible across the Oven’s door, the first word remains smudged, revealing only two letters: “B-E.” Two versions

emerge: “Beware” and “Be.” The older members of town argue for “Beware,” since their God is vengeful and should be obeyed. The younger people argue for “Be,” thus suggesting that they embody the power of their God. The motto over the oven is more than an idea about how one should live; the words represent the inherent power of the people who define it, and hence the future of Ruby. The younger generation in Ruby have no interest in preserving the cultural traditions or rigid values of the town. They do not want to “be” living in the past. In a heated debate over the word on the Oven it becomes clear that the younger generation contest the insignificant ideals currently expressed in the Oven. In contrast with Deek who is from the older generation and thinks the Oven needs respect, the young and newly arrived minister, Richard Misner, supports the younger generation, not because they are right, but because it reinvigorates the meaning of the Oven:

“Seems to me, Deek, they are respecting it. It’s because they do know the Oven’s value that they want to give it new life.” . . .

“The oven already has a history. It doesn’t need you to fix it. . . . If you, or any one of you, ignore, change, take away, or add to the words in the mouth of the oven, I will blow your head off just like you was a hood-eye snake.” (86–7)

Reinterpreting the social and symbolic role of the Oven means, for some, killing the memory of Haven. But when the Oven’s current meaning fails to function, it loses use-value and becomes a monument to the dead past. The tendency in Ruby to suppress transgressive thinking suggests a repressive community, properly symbolized by the Oven. The desire (and management) of a singular meaning is symptomatic of a community that denies change happening in their community. The Oven is a highly contested site over one’s relation to the past, present, and future. The tension created around the oven promises to either repress or liberate the town people. The potential to

organize people under such radically different conditions recalls Henri Lefebvre's discussion of "monumentality":

Against the monument: the monument is essentially repressive . . . any space that is organized around the monument is colonized and oppressed. . . . and although the monument is always laden with symbols, it presents them to social awareness and contemplation (passive) just when those symbols, already outdated, are beginning to lose their meaning, such as symbols of the revolution on the Napoleonic Arc or de Triomphe.

For the Monument: it is the only conceivable or imaginative site of collective (social) life. It controls people, yes, but does so to bring them together. . . . In their very essence, and sometimes at the very heart of a space in which the characteristics of a society are most recognizable and commonplace, monuments embody a sense of transcendence, a sense of being *elsewhere*. They have always been u-topic. Throughout their height and depth, along dimension that was alien to urban trajectories, they proclaimed duty, power, knowledge, joy, hope. (*Urban* 21–22)

The Oven, according to Lefebvre's formulation, is both an ode to the past and a symbol of future change. It is both backward and forward looking. What controls a dominant meaning of the Oven are stories that retell the past. These stories lead Ruby to function less like a town, and more like a living monument to the past. Stories told by the elders reify the past and ossify the present:

Over and over with the past provocation, they pulled their stock of stories tales about the old folks, their grands and great-grands; their fathers and mothers. Dangerous confrontations, clever maneuvers. Testimonies to endurance, wit, skill and strength. Tales of luck and outrage. But why were there no stories to tell of themselves? About their own lives they shut up. Had nothing to say, pass on. As though past heroism was enough of a future to live by. As though, rather than children, they wanted duplicates. (Morrison 161)

Stories are meant to instill a sense of tradition and identity in the youth of Ruby. They are told to memorize and understand the past yet not encouraged to think of themselves as continuing their past. Instead, to keep the past alive, the present and future are killed. The stories told by the older people in Ruby are meant to conjure spirits from the past to animate the present. If the youth accept the word "Beware" over the Oven, and if they

repeat the values of Haven in Ruby, they are like any baked food product made by the Oven. They become the product of historical ingredients.

The fight to have the motto “Beware” on the Oven extends to areas outside of Ruby. Keeping the town uncontaminated means repeating the violence the founders of Haven had to endure. When the men gather with guns, rope, and handcuffs in their predawn attack on the women in the Convent, we are told that “the target, after all, is detritus: throwaway people that some times blow back into the room after being swept out the door” (4). Waste, objects or people represents the passage of time, must be eliminated from Ruby. Called at one time or other “sluts,” “bitches,” “whores,” “nasty women,” or “not natural,” the women’s abject subjectivity threatens more than Ruby’s non-synchronic space. The men use this trope of waste to legitimize the cleansing of their social space from dirt, which threatens the order they have established. Ruby’s primary role is never to be waste again, and in this, they become a sterile community, one that isolates itself from the contaminants from the outside. Their strategy to recycle Haven, to live as their ancestors, reminds us of the Eco-warriors in *Almanac* who want to live like their stone age ancestors. Recycling in this case is a return to the past.

The term “throwaways” also suggests the inability to properly name the women. Their subjectivities cannot be apprehended by the social imaginary; as seen from people in Ruby, the women are monstrous. Herein lies their real threat, and reason for the men’s attack. The women’s status as “throwaways” opens the discussion to people who are made socially obsolete under global capital. Although the reasons why these women come to the Convent are not necessarily economic, their position of exclusion structurally resembles the one of marginalized populations. The violence and exclusion the women

experience in their own lives can be read in the larger context of populations that are excluded from the global market.

The Convent

The problems created by people in Ruby—such as the row over the Oven—are blamed on the women living in a Convent 17 miles from their town. While people in Ruby live according to laws that ensure that they repeat history, the women in the Convent feel as if they belong nowhere. The women are of various age, race, and temperament; they are a multiplicity of people who do not agree or submit to one common rule. The Convent evolves through the people living there; it is remade by the labor of recycling.

The women who arrive at the Convent share traits with the people of Ruby in that they too have been rejected. Rejected by their families or lovers, and alienated from their own lives, they seek temporary shelter in the Convent. Like the families of Ruby, the women escape violent or repressive situations. And, like the families, the women start over again and rebuild their lives.

The similarities stop here. Unlike Ruby, the women share no explicit bond between each other, nor do they hold any superior ideas about themselves. Even their arrival at the Convent happens by chance. Mavis, the first to enter, leaves her abusive husband and violent child. Her escape from domestic hell is hastened by the fact that she accidentally kills her infant twins by leaving them in the car while she shops at the grocery store. Gigi, a young woman, is dumped by her lover and has no family with whom to live. Pallas, a rich, young, and naive teenager, arrives scarred after being first rejected by her older lover, who decides to court Pallas' mother, and then perhaps raped by men who forced her car off the road. Seneca, another young girl, cuts lines into her skin with razors to

draw blood. Finally, Connie, a woman in her 40s, has lived at the Convent since she was adopted by nuns as a child.

For the women, the Convent serves to protect them from which they are running, and as they live there, they continue their individual destruction. They embrace their marginal status and do nothing to “improve” themselves. This becomes most noticeable when they visit the town of Ruby. The women represent all that the town people have worked so hard to eliminate. The mere presence of the women represent an interruption of time. When the Convent women attend a wedding in Ruby wearing revealing or tattered clothes and asking for alcohol, the people see this as scandalous, noting that “fun-obsessed adults were clear signs of already advanced decay” (157). What is scandalous in this context is not that the women were having fun, but that they fail to submit to the rules of behavior of the town. In the time the women have been living in the Convent, they have fully indulged their personal neurosis. In their marginality, they actively pursue their destructive habits, which then serve to disrupt social relations and threaten established order. In the absence of a public eye, the women at the Convent embraced their idiosyncrasies; no one and nothing controls them.

If the women were to continue to suffer, then the Convent would be exactly like Ruby. They would recycle a past that inhibits their relation to present social and political situations. But they do change. After Connie’s bed-ridden mother dies, Connie redirects her energy towards herself and the women in the Convent and begins the process from which each woman will confront the forces that have negatively shaped her. The women begin to recycle themselves. This transforms the women from individuals with their own pathologies to a collective that resembles the multitude. They begin by building their

double. In the cellar the women lay down and paint a white line around themselves. This is their individual “template,” a “place” to express their pain, hope, and fear. The templates, like the Oven, functions as a depository for the past. Writing their individual issues onto their templates, the women visually express their tragic past. They also socialize their past in a practice called “loud dreaming.” These are stories that the women tell about themselves. We are told “it was never important to know who said the dream or whether it had meaning. In spite of or because their bodies ache, they step easily into the dreamer’s tale” (264). This loud dreaming temporarily displaces the individual and posits each of the women’s experience in a collective. Patricia McKee argues that this alternative practice of communication allows the “women [to] identify themselves in ways that neither clearly distinguish them from others nor connect them to others along established lines Their imaginary occupations move them in and out of positions, so that each self is occupied with others, and each other person can take the place of the self” (8). Another way to think about “imaginary occupations” is Hardt and Negri’s “finding what is common” among them. In this context, loud dreaming is a form of communication necessary to form the multitude. The socialization of these stories displaces the heavy burden of one’s personal history, and distributes it evenly among the many. They tell stories to purge and purify themselves, while infecting others with their stories. The simultaneous act of purifying and infecting disseminates their pain, so that once all stories are told, the women share a commonality, the story of their lives.

Losing their past, the women enter a different relation to each other; they form another kind of familial relation: Connie is their mother; she rears the women, who are now her children. Recalling my discussion of Judith Butler in Chapter 2 elaborates the

significance of this rearticulation of familial bonds. Analyzing drag balls in the film *Paris is Burning*, Butler argues that the houses to which the men live and belong form another type of kinship relations. She understands these relations as an “appropriation that seeks to make over the terms of domination, a making over which is itself a kind of agency” (137). Indeed, the women of the Convent remake their societal roles; they no longer have a “proper” family. In so doing, the women gain mastery over their own lives. Butler sees another aspect of agency to these kinships that illuminates the project developed within the Convent as a form of recycling. Butler states that the resignification of kinship “creates the discursive and social space for community, that we see an appropriation of the terms of domination that turns them toward a more enabling future” (137). The appropriation of terms takes an enormous amount of labor.

To have the chance for an “enabling future” means one will always face the labor of recycling. The women’s transformation results from their labor. This labor is directed toward remaking one’s relation to the social through the production of a different subjectivity. As Hardt and Negri argue, living labor produces alternative lines of communication and forms of life. That the women share stories while maintaining their individual position suggests that it is their singularity that allows them to find what is common. Their performance also illuminates a strategy for recycling. The women disengage themselves from exploitative relations. Their bodies do not submit to authority, nor are they made sanitized, safe bodies. The women are thus a direct threat to not only Ruby’s social values, but capital’s value as well.

The women free themselves from their past, and this in turn alters their present. The narrator mentions that “gradually they lost the days” in their process of

transformation (262). Subtle changes take place in the women and we are told that “if a friend came by, her initial alarm at the sight of the young women might be muted by their adult manner, how calm they seemed Then she might realize what was missing: unlike some people in Ruby, the Convent women were no longer haunted” (265–66). The Convent serves as an ideal site for change. Multiplicity flourishes. And within this dynamic exchange of stories a strategy of recycling fully emerges. That the women recycle themselves and are still seen as waste in Ruby indicates the threat of their the counter-power they have produced.

If the multitude has the potential to explode on scene, as in the 1999 Seattle protest, then could it have the same potential to disrupt on a smaller scale? And if so, what does this disruption look like? Looking toward the violent elimination of the women from the Convent suggests that they posed more than just an ideological threat to Ruby’s social stability. Indeed, Ruby itself could only maintain order through mimicking the very worst that they strove to exclude. Instead, reading the women as “throwaways” in the context of the multitude threatens the entire social body of not only Ruby, but also people who organize their lives around exclusionary practices. At first, their exclusion from traditional social structures is a tragedy. But their production of another type of kinship system binds them together so that they no longer require traditional structures to survive. After the attack on the Convent, they appear antagonistic to these traditional familial structures.

After the attack the women return in spectral form to the people who had previously rejected them. Earlier, Mavis Albright was deeply embedded in a submissive relation to her husband and children. Having accidentally suffocated her twins, her still-

living children terrorize her, and her husband, before sex, throws her nightgown over her face. Many years later, when Mavis's daughter sees her in a cafe, the daughter desperately talks to make up time, while Mavis appears more interested in her meal:

Mavis lined up the place mat and flatwear. "That's what I like about this place. They let you choose. Gravy poured or on the side, see?"

"Mom! I don't want to talk about food." Sally felt as though her mother was sliding away, acting like their seeing each other wasn't important." . . .

It came out in a rush because she felt she had to hurry. If she was going to say anything, she had to hurry. "I was scared all the time, Ma. All the time. Even before the twins. But when you left, it got worse. You don't know. I mean I was scared to fall asleep."

"Taste this, honey." Mavis offered her the glass of [orange] juice. (313–14)

In her refusal to enter into a coherent conversation with her daughter, Mavis rejects the past relations that made her useless and helpless. Mavis resists her role as a "mother" and does not enter into nostalgic musing for her family. However, Mavis does not define herself against the social roles of mother or wife, nor does she explicitly reject her daughter. If Mavis is not a mother or wife, then who is she? What is her proper social identity?

Mavis appears strange partly because she has become someone else. How does she relate to another person who embraces traditional family kinships? Mavis' daughter confines her. This act appears natural, yet Sally's conversation with Mavis is equivalent to the hail of interpellation. It produces Mavis as "mother." With this social classification, Mavis' subjectivity is narrowly defined. However, Sally's hail cannot anticipate the excess it produces. We can read Mavis' concern with her orange juice as deliberately misunderstanding her daughter's hail. This does not mean Mavis rejects Sally; it means Mavis can no longer perform as a mother, she cannot fit in a role others

have defined for her. The power of Mavis' subjectivity brings Sally to a panic: "It came out in a rush because she *felt* she had to hurry. If she was going to say anything, she had to hurry." Sally's sense of time slipping away has more to do with her being unable to clearly define her mother. Rather than exchange conversation freely, Sally figuratively bombards Mavis as an attempt to force her to play the role of the mother. This strategy is not much different from the men who attacked the Convent. Both continue to impose their understanding of the world onto the women once their hail goes unheeded.

A practice of misunderstanding the hail means one must continually produce alternative relations. A fixed alternative will eventually be appropriated. For this reason, Morrison leaves us with changed women, yet she refuses to project a vision of a better future. Instead of showing the reader an ending in which the women show their complete transformation, Morrison suggests that the act of individual change as a collective is more important. The women avoid arriving fully at any determined subjectivity, and instead actively pursue recycling. Their narrative of change happens over time. It recycles itself to adapt to the ever-changing processes that produce waste.

Spatial Recycling: *City on a Dump*

The aesthetic of recycling follows the project of Jameson's cognitive mapping. In *Almanac* and *Paradise*, although spatial practices articulate strategies of recycling, neither novel proposes an actual space that materializes the idea of recycling. This space would have to be dynamic and flow according to the shifting narratives of one's relation to the unpredictable processes that produce waste.

Acconci Studio offers a space that responds to the ideas of recycling. In 1999, Acconci Studio proposed that two dumps, one in the Netherlands the other in Israel, be converted to cities. To re-use the dump, mats would be placed on top of steel mesh which

are then draped over the garbage. On top of the mats are rugs, and on top of “each rug is *a web of bowls that ride the tide of the dump*. When a bowl tilts on the slope, the cup inside—the ball inside—swivels to stay horizontal” (emphasis in original Acconci Studio). The city moves not to the time of capital, but to that of waste: “Time passes, and the flying carpet falls. As gas is released and the mound settles, the outer sleeve of the column slides down: stairway and elevator sink in garbage—the bowl descends like a space-ship.” A city constantly shifting means those who use it are made aware of the passage of time through spatial transformations. Unlike a mountain or river bed which may erode over thousands of years, a city on a dump moves and adjusts according to the breakdown of solid waste into methane gas used to power the city. The city forces one to be actively aware of his/her relation to space and time.

Acconci Studio’s proposal collapses the distance between proper and improper spaces for living. Placing a “proper” distance between waste and architecture in question, *City on a Dump* recycles a space of waste so that people may experience an alternative relation to space and time. Acconci Studio’s work builds upon Vito Acconci’s political concerns. For example, in *Bad Dream House* (1983), Acconci uses the interior of a home, a place of seemingly neutral meaning, and makes this a site of contesting meanings. His aim, Kate Linker notes, “involves a strategy of reconnoitering the terrain of meaning, now defined as the site of convention, and derailing the viewer’s established narrative progression through space” (140). The house defamiliarizes our relation to a typical interior. The “floors become ceilings (and vice-versa) and stairways lead nowhere, and the use of such simple furnishings as built-in tables and chairs contorts the body into odd, unnatural positions” (140). Acconci makes the user of this space aware of how it shapes

and influences his/her relationship to built space in general. The problem with comfortable space is that it lulls one into complacency, and according to Acconci, “you are lost in the past and stabilization; but, if the house makes you itch, if you do a double-take, the you snap out of the present, you can have time to think of the future and change” (“Home-Bodies” 378). Becoming familiar in one’s house strengthens presuppositions about properly ordered space. These presuppositions extend from the domestic into the public realm and create expectations about space and people’s use of it. These expectations are shaped by “conventions, that are the building blocks of a culture: these conventions are power signs, that confirm and maintain dominant class/race/gender” (378). Making one aware of these building blocks enables an active relationship to space and time. Pushing this critique of social behavior and dwelling even further, Acconci Studio’s *City on a Dump* figures alternative social relations.

The relationship between time and subjectivity in *City on a Dump* articulates a space of the multitude. The city is built according to what the multitude has only temporarily built in places as such Seattle, Genoa, and Montreal during protests against businesses and governments solidifying their power under global capital. The people who live and use a city on a dump reclaim a site of waste and recycle it. A city powered by the release of methane gas gives waste use value. The dump produces a living space for people who have to continually adjust to the changing shape of their city. The shifting terrain undermines over time any single spatial formation, and thus forces people to think of their relationship to space in dynamic terms. People’s description of the city must remain active—a narrative of this city would always have to be recycled. The city also challenges the notion of a singular history predicated on a positivistic understanding of

time, since the city will not majestically rise above the horizon, but eventually sink into the ground, leaving an oily residue of its existence.

The people who would live in A City on a Dump could identify with the narratives of time, space, and subjectivity articulated by Angelita, Lecha, and the Convent women. Far from being enlightened from a clean space, the residence of City on a Dump would find themselves having to continue revising narratives of the space they inhabit. The continual shifting of land, and living on waste, would eventually prevent the people from describing their paradise, and instead transform themselves into bodies that are recycled and perform recycling. Like the Convent women who produce alternative kinship relations, the citizens of the City Dump would have to rearticulate their relation to one another as a swarm.

From the Washroom to the Dump

At the beginning of this dissertation I referred to an advertisement from the 1930s that warns bosses their workers may rebel if not provided with decent paper towels. The ad points out that it is not the shop floor, local pub, or employee basement where the transformation into a Bolshevik will take place; it is the washroom. Keeping workers clean, the ad suggests, would prevent them from collectively organizing against their working conditions. The example of a washroom as a site of purification reveals anxieties other than just labor relations; it reveals the tension between the commodity and waste. A clean washroom appears as a commodity—new, sterile, and safe. To maintain these qualities, a washroom must eliminate not only waste, but also traces of it. The commodity must always reassert itself. If unsuccessful, relations organized by the commodity would break.

Throughout the last five chapters I have explored different accounts of the process of elimination, and the strategies that attempt to break from it. Chapter 2 examined subcultures and artists who develop forms of resistance that anticipate practices of recycling. In Chapter 3 the poor use violence to challenge their status. In Chapter 4, Pynchon's waste characters reside in spaces of waste to develop their strategies of recycling. In DeLillo's work, an aesthetic of recycling prefigures social relations of recycling. These themes of recycling and collectivity fully develop in this last chapter. *Almanac* and *Paradise* unite the lumpenproletariat of the late twentieth century in a space and time of their own making.

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Acconci, Vito, "Home-Bodies: An Introduction to My Work 1984-1985." *Vito Acconci*. Ed. Gloria Moure. Barcelona: Ediciones Poligrafa, 2001. 378-381.
- Acconci Studio. "Garbage-Waste." 15 June 2003. <www.acconci.com>.
- Agamben, Giorgio. "Marginal Notes on *Commentaries on the Society of the Spectacle*." *Ends without Means: Notes on Politics*. Trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino. Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 2000.
- Auster, Paul. "City of Glass." *New York Trilogy*. New York: Penguin, 1985.
- Barnard, Rita. "'When You Wish Upon A Star': Fantasy, Experience, and Mass Culture in Nathanael West." *American Literature*. 66.2 (1994): 325-351.
- Berger, James. "Cultural Trauma and the 'Timeless Burst': Pynchon's Revision of Nostalgia in *Vineland*." *Postmodern Culture: An Electronic Journal of Interdisciplinary Criticism* 5:3 (1995): 46 paragraphs. 20 June 2005, Project Muse <<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/pmc/>>.
- Bizzini, Silvia Caporale. "Can the Intellectual Still Speak? The Example of Don DeLillo's *Mao II*." *Critical Essays on Don DeLillo*. Ed. Hugh Ruppersburg and Tim Engles. New York: GK Hall and Co., 2000.
- Burns, Christy. "Postmodern Historiography: Politics and Parallaxic Method in Thomas Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon*." *Postmodern Culture: An Electronic Journal of Interdisciplinary Criticism*, 14:1 (2003): 20 paragraphs. 20 June 2005, Project Muse <<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/pmc/>>.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On The Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Chtcheglov, Ivan. "Formulary for a New Urbanism." *Situationist International Anthology*. Ed and trans Ken Knabb. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1989.
- Clark, John, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson, and Brian Roberts. "Subcultures, Cultures, and Class: A Theoretical Overview." *Resistance Through Ritual: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*. Ed. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1975. 9-74.

- Dalsgrad, Katrine. "The One All-Black Town Worth the Pain: (African) American Exceptionalism, Historical Narration, and the Critique of Nationhood in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*." *African American Review*. 35.2 (2001): 233-248.
- Davenport, Nancy. *October*. 100 (2002): 64-68.
- Davis, Mike. *City of Quarts: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. New York: Vintage, 1990.
- . *Ecology of Fear*. New York: Vintage, 1999.
- Debord, Guy. "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the Terms of Organization and Action of the International Situationist Tendency." *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*. Ed. Tom McDonough. Trans. Tom McDonough. Massachusetts: MIT, 2002.
- . "The Situationists and the New Forms of Action in Politics or Art." *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*. Ed. Tom McDonough. Trans. Thomas Y. Levin. Massachusetts: MIT, 2002.
- . *The Society of the Spectacle*. Trans. Donald Nicholson Smith. New York: Zone Books, 1995.
- DeLillo, Don. *Underworld*. New York: Scribner, 1997.
- . *White Noise*. New York: Penguin, 1985.
- Dictionary of Marxist Thought*. Ed. Tom Bottomore. Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1983.
- Donnelly, Daria. "Old and New Notebooks: *Almanac of the Dead* as Revolutionary Entertainment." *Leslie Marmon Silko: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Louise K. Barnett and James L. Thorson. Albuquerque: U New Mexico P, 1999. 223-244.
- Duvall, John N. "Excavating the Underworld of Race and Waste in Cold War History: Baseball, Aesthetics, and Ideology." *Critical Essays on Don DeLillo*. Ed. Hugh Ruppersburg and Tim Engles. New York: G.K Hall, 2000. 258-281.
- Edmonds, Susan. "Modern Taste and the Body Beautiful in Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust*." *Modern Fiction Studies* 44.2 (1998): 306-330.
- Ferraro, Thomas J. "Whole Families Shopping at Night!" *New Essays on White Noise*. Ed. Frank Lentricchia. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991.
- Fiske, John. *Reading the Popular*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989.
- Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995.

- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1979.
- Frow, John. "Notes on *White Noise*." *Introducing Don DeLillo*. Ed. Frank Lentricchia, Durham: Duke UP, 1991.
- Geyh, Paula E. "Assembling Postmodernism: Experience, Meaning, And The Space In-Between." *College Literature* 30.2 (2003): 1-29.
- Gleason, Paul. "Don DeLillo, T.S. Eliot, and the Redemption of America's Atomic Waste Land." *Underwords: Perspective on Don DeLillo's Underworld*. Ed. John Dewey, Steven G. Kellman, Irving Malin. Newark: U Delaware P, 2002. 130-143.
- Goodheart, Eugene. "Don DeLillo and the Cinematic Real." *Introducing Don DeLillo*. Ed. Frank Lentricchia. Durham: Duke UP, 1991.
- Green, Jeremy. "Disaster Footage: Spectacles of Violence in DeLillo's Fiction." *Modern Fiction Studies* 45.3 (1999):
- Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000.
- . *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: Penguin, 2004.
- Harvey, David. *Spaces of Hope*. Berkeley: U California P, 2000.
- Hawkins, Gay. "Down the Drain: Shit and the Politics of Disturbance." *Culture and Waste: The Creation and Destruction of Value*. Ed. Gay Hawkins and Stephen Muecke. New York: Rowan and Littlefield, 2003. 39-52.
- and Stephen Meuke. "Introduction." *Culture and Waste: The Creation and Destruction of Value*. Ed. Gay Hawkins and Stephen Muecke. New York: Rowan and Littlefield, 2003.
- Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. New York: Routledge, 1987.
- Hegeman, Susan. "Taking Blondes Seriously." *American Literary History*. 7.3 (1997): 535-554.
- Hoover, J. Edgar. *Masters of Deceit: The Story of Communism in America and How to Fight It*. New York: Henry Holt, 1958.
- Irr, Caren. "The Timeliness of *Almanac of the Dead*, Or A Postmodern Rewriting of Radical Fiction." *Leslie Marmon Silko: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Louise K. Barnett and James L. Thorson. Albuquerque: U New Mexico P, 1999. 223-244.
- Jameson, Frederic. *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995.

- . *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke UP, 1991.
- . "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture." *Signatures of the Visible*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Jappe, Anselm. *Guy Debord*. Trans. Donald Nicholson Smith. Berkeley: U California P, 1999.
- Kallipoliti, Lydia. "Dross: Re-Genesis of Diverse Matter." *Grey Room*. 30-37.
- Karpinski, Eva C. "[From *V.* to *Vineland*: Pynchon's Utopian Moments.](#)" *Pynchon Notes* 32-33 (1993): 33-43.
- Keeseey, Douglas. *Don DeLillo*. New York: Twayne, 1993.
- Kellner, Douglas, Steven Best. *The Postmodern Turn*. New York: Guilford P, 1997.
- Laporte, Dominique. *History of Shit*. Trans. Nadia Benabid and Rodolphe el-Khoury. Massachusetts: MIT P, 1993.
- LeCorbuier. *Towards A New Architecture*. Trans. Frederick Etchells. New York: Dover, 1986.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *The Critique of Everyday Life, Volume 1*. Trans. John Moore. New York: Verso, 1991.
- . "The Everyday and Everydayness." *Yale French Studies*. Trans. Christine Levich. 73 (1987): 7-11.
- . *The Urban Revolution*. Trans. Robert Bononno. Minneapolis: U Minn. P, 2003.
- Lentricchia, Frank. "Tales of the Electronic Tribe." *New Essays on White Noise*. Ed. Frank Lentricchia. New York: Cambridge UP, 1991.
- Lewin, Ralph A. *Merde: Excursions into Scientific, Cultural and Socio-Historical Coprology*. London: Aurum P., 2000.
- Linker, Kate. *Vito Acconci*. New York: Rizzoli, 1994.
- Martin, Jay. *Nathanael West: The Art of His Life*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*. Vol. 1. Ed. Frederick Engels. Trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling. New York: International P, 1987.
- . *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Ed. C.P. Dutt. New York: International P, 1963

- McHale, Brian. "Mason and Dixon in the ZAone, or, A Brief Poetics of Pynchon-Space." *Pynchon and Mason and Dixon*. Ed. Brooke Horvath and Irving Malin. New Jersey: Associated UP, 2000. 43-62
- McKee, Patricia. Geographies of *Paradise*. *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3.1 (2003): 197-223.
- Moraru, Christian. "Consuming Narratives: Don DeLillo and the 'Lethal' Reading." *Don DeLillo*. Ed. Harold Bloom. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2003.
- Morrison, Toni. *Paradise*. New York: Plume, 1997.
- Mueller, Lavonne. "Malamud and West: Tyranny of the *Dream Dump*." *The Cheaters and the Cheated*. Ed. David Madden. Florida: Everet Edwards, 1973. 221-234.
- Negri, Antonio. *Marx beyond Marx : Lessons on the Grundrisse*. Trans. Harry Cleaver, Michael Ryan, and Maurizio Viano ; Ed Jim Fleming. Autonomedia, 1989.
- . "Approximations: Towards an Ontological Definition of the Multitude." Trans. Arianna Bove.
- . "Ruptures within Empire, The Power of Exodus: An Interview with Toni Negri." Guiseppe Cocco and Maurizio Lazzarato. Trans. Thomas Seay and Hydrarchrist. Originally published in *Multitudes* no 7. 10 Oct. 2003 <<http://www.generation-online.org/t/empireruptures.htm>>
- and Paolo Virno. "Public Sphere, labour, multitude. Strategies of resistance in Empire." Transcription and trans. Arianna Bove. Seminar organised by Officine Precarie in Pisa. Coordinator: Marco Bascetta: 5 February 2003.
- O'Neill, Kate. "Radioactive 'Trade': Globalizing the Nuclear Fuel Cycle." *SAIS Review* 22.1 (2002): 157-168.
- Osteen, Mark. *American Magic and Dread: Don DeLillo's Dialog with Culture*. Philadelphia: U Penn P, 2000.
- Ozenfant, Ameddee, Pierre Jeanneret. "The Right Angle." *Plumbing*. Trans. Nadir Lahiji. Ed. Nadir Lahiji and D.S. Friedman. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997. 20-34.
- Phillips, Dana. "Don DeLillo's Postmodern Pastoral." *Don DeLillo*. Ed. Harold Bloom. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2003.
- Plant, Sadie. *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Pynchon, Thomas. *The Crying of Lot 49*. New York: Harper and Row, 1990.

- . "Low-lands." *Slow Learner*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1984.
- . *Gravity's Rainbow*. New York, Viking, 1973.
- . *Mason and Dixon*. New York: Henry Holt, 1997.
- . *Vineland*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1990.
- Rathje, William, Cullen Murphy. *Rubbish! The Archaeology of Garbage*. Tuscon: U Arizona P, 2001.
- Roberts, Matthew. "Bonfire of the Avant-Garde: Culture Rage and Readerly Complicity in *The Day of the Locust*." *Modern Fiction Studies* 42.1 (1996): 61-90.
- Ross, Kristin. "Establishing Consensus: May 68 in France as Seen from the 1980s." *Critical Inquiry*. Spring 2000 V 28 Number 3. 650-676.
- . *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture*. Massachusetts: MIT, 1995.
- . "French Quotidian: The Art of the Everyday" *The Quotidian in Postwar French Culture*. Ed. Lynn Gumpert. New York: New York UP, 1997. 19-29.
- . *May 68 and its Afterlives*. Chicago: U Chicago P, 2002.
- Saltzman, Arthur. "Awful Symmetries in *Underworld*." *Critical Essay on Don DeLillo*, Ed. Hugh Ruppersburg and Tim Engles. New York: GK Hall and Co., 2000.
- Scanlan, John. *On Garbage*. London: Reakiton, 2005.
- Seguin, Robert. "Ressentment and the Social Poetics of *The Great Gatsby*: Fitzgerald Reads Cather." *Modern Fiction Studies*.
- Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Almanac of the Dead*. New York: Penguin, 1992.
- Situationist International. "Definitions." *Situationist International Anthology*. Ed and trans Ken Knabb. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1989. 55.
- Slade, Joseph W. *Thomas Pynchon*. Writers for the Seventies. New York: Waner Paperback, 1974.
- Smithson, Robert. *Unearthed*. Ed. Eugenie Tsai. New York: Columbia UP, 1991.
- . "Untitled, 1972." *The Writings of Robert Smithson*. Ed. Nancy Holt. New York: New York UP, 1979.
- Stallybrass, Peter. "Marx and Heterogeneity: Thinking the Lumpenproletariat." *Representations* 31 (Summer 1990) 69-95.

- Stimson, Blake. "Conceptual Work and Conceptual Waste." *Discourse*. 2.4 (2002): 121-151.
- Taylor, Frederick *Taylor. The Principles of Scientific Management: and Shop Management*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Teale, Tamara. "The Silko Road from Chiapas, Or Why Native Americans Cannot be Marxists." *MELUS* 23.4 (1998): 157-166.
- The Gleaners and I [Les glaneurs et la glaneuse]*. Dir. Agnes Varda. Canal Plus, 2000.
- Vicas, Astrid. "Reusing Culture: The Import of Detournement." *The Yale Journal of Criticism*. 11.2 (1998): 381-406.
- Watkins, Evan. *Throwaways: Work Culture and Consumer Education*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993.
- West, Nathanael. *A Cool Million and The Dream Life of Balso Snell*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1961.
- . *The Day of the Locust*. New York: Signet, 1983.
- . "Some Notes on Violence." *Nathanael West: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Jay Martin. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971. 50-51.
- Woods, Lebbeus. *War and Architecture*. Pamphlet Architecture 15. Trans. Aleksandra Wagner. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993,
- Yaeger, Patricia. "Trash as Archive, Trash and Enlightenment." *Culture and Waste: The Creation and Destruction of Value*. Ed. Gay Hawkins and Stephen Muecke. New York: Rowan and Littlefield, 2003.103-116.
- Willis, Susan. *A Primer for Dailey Life*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Wodickzko, Krysztof. "The Homeless Projection: A Proposal for the City of New York." *Critical Vehicles: Writings, Projects, Interviews*. Massachusetts: MIT, 1999. 55-56.
- Zizek, Slavoj. "Afterword: Lenin's Choice." *Revolution at the Gates: A Selection of Writings from February to October 1917*. Ed. Slavoj Zizek. New York: Verso. 167-336.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Derek Merrill received his B.A. in English at the University of California at Davis, his M.A. in English at San Francisco State University, and his Ph.D. in English from the University of Florida. He is currently a Marion Brittain Fellow in the School of Literature, Communication, and Culture at Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta. He is a founding member of the (now international) *Informe* Horst Langer Football Club, an art collective dedicated to investigating the situation. He dreams of camping on the slopes of the Pyrenees with fans of Euskaltel-Euskadi and running alongside cyclists in the Tour de France the next day.