From the Other Side of the Tracks: Dual Cities, Third Spaces, and the Urban Uncanny in Contemporary Discourses of ''Race'' and Class

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A sibyl, questioned about Marozia's fate said, ''I see two cities, one of the rat and one of the swallow.''

This was the interpretation of the oracle: today Marozia is a city where all run through leaden passages like packs of rats who tear from one another's teeth the leftovers which fall from the teeth of the most voracious one; but a new century is about to begin in which all the inhabitants of Marozia will fly like swallows, calling one another as in a game, showing off, their wings still, as they swoop, clearing the air of mosquitoes and gnats.

Was the oracle mistaken? Not necessarily. I interpret it in this way. Marozia consists of two cities, the rats and the swallows, both change over time, but their relationship does not change, the second is the one always about to free itself from the first.

<div align="right">Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities</div>

The theme of the dual city, first popularized by the Victorian urban explorers, has not ceased to multiply its terms of reference in the twentieth century. To the cities of rich and poor, bourgeois and proletarian, indigenous and immigrant have been added cities of night and day, youth and age, established and outsiders; there are pink cities and black cities, global cities and mobile cities and cities where everyone with get-up-and-go has long since left town. Digital cities composed of virtual streets and neighborhoods where no one rules, OK, come up against analog cities where hopes and memories continue to stake out territorial claims over rival plots.

The spatializing of social difference of every kind proceeds apace, and the city as metaphor and matrix of this process has never been more to the forefront of the public imagination. And yet we are living at a time when hard and fast social

divisions have supposedly weakened, cultural boundaries have become blurred, and third spaces proliferate on every side. Is this a new kind of contradiction, or an old one updated? Is there a subtle connection between these terms of polarization and their transcendence, a complicity between those who live on the other side of the class/race/sexuality line and those who take that line for a walk on the wild side in pursuit of less pedestrian forms of urban pleasure? In this chapter I am going to explore this conundrum with special reference to contemporary discourses of "race" and class.

Let us start with Calvino. He invites us to consider the question from the angle of modernity. He argues for the dual city as a constant if emergent property integral to modernity's powers of self-transformation. If we are still struggling to come to terms with the fact that the heroic attempt of modernist planners and architects to design a city of light and air fit for swallows resulted in the creation of so many urban rat runs, Calvino's little parable suggests that this is the beginning not the end of the story.

Some would argue that this is a somewhat overoptimistic view! The two cities of Morazia seem to approximate ever more closely to the split between the ideals of urban industrial living which inspired Corbusier et al. and the real cities we actually live in. The streamlined egalitarian city of the senses, where it retains its rhetorical power, is today largely confined to privatized utopias of urban flight encoded in domestic interiors, back gardens, or the home pages of the Internet. Otherwise the metropolitan sublime of the early urban romantics has given way to the public profanities of pollution, traffic gridlock, crime, poverty, and violence as distinguishing features of "the urban real."

In juxtaposing these two visions Calvino draws on a familiar distinction between an overview composed from a bird's (or a helicopter's) eye view of the city and an underview from those who are trapped in the urban rat race. This in turn rests on an equally familiar binarism: the invisible and visible city.

How the city has been visualized is inextricably bound up with strategies of civil governance. The Victorian explorers who pioneered the art of moral panic made that connection palpable through graphic descriptions – and photographs – of habits, habitats, and inhabitants whose appearance contradicted the official story of urban progress superintended by a philanthropic state. But since then the power of making a spectacle out of those who are visibly different has increasingly been complemented and even supplanted by the power to render invisible those whose faces do not fit the positive image being created for the promotion of the greater civic good (Smyth 1994).

Under the egis of high modernism it could be argued that these were two sides to the same story: the visibly deviant, and the invisibly disadvantaged were seen as a joint challenge – a test of modernity's transformative power. Today strategies for rendering visible and invisible are increasingly working at cross-purposes. The most obvious example is that we have moral panics about the emergence of an unemployed youth "underclass" with Blair, following Clinton, introducing zero tolerance policing and youth curfews in many frontline areas of metropolitan Britain. At the same time, these local "youth at risk" are entirely marginal to the global city view, taken with the proverbial wide-angled telephoto lens for glossy municipal brochures designed to promote inward investment. At best they are allowed to provide an

ornamental backdrop to the happy-clappy service economy threading its way through the marinas and neoclassical piazza parlours; at worst they are simply airbrushed out of the picture because their presence – and in-your-face attitude – point up an embarrassing discrepancy between lived territory and official map.

Elsewhere, though, the marginalized and the outcast are recuperated as a site of exotic liminality through the intervention of a postmodernist style of urban imagineering; sensational scenarios of urban low life – hitherto carefully distanced through the screening devices of a historical or ethnographic discourse – are now rendered "transparent" and peopled with fresh young faces recruited to encourage the lifestyle tourist to sample the delights of a subterranean city that even the local inhabitants are not supposed to know. For this purpose youth subcultures are promoted as sexy signs of urban vitality and cosmopolitanism associated with the cultural industries that have increasingly come to dominate strategies of urban regeneration in these areas. In this way, the concentration of potentially dangerous difference, surrounded with the aura of something impenetrably Other, is used to generate a new kind of urban ethnoscape where poverty and powerlessness are dressed up in multicultural drag, and made to dance for their dinner to the latest megacity sounds.

Is it possible to understand this contemporary mise-en-scène as just the latest version of Calvino's two cities? Or do we need an altogether different kind of map? Perhaps by looking in a bit more detail at the provenance of the dualisms that have so profoundly shaped our view of the European city we may be able to get a better handle on the terms of a properly conjunctural analysis.

The Dual City as Body and Text

Richard Sennett has argued persuasively that as both motif and model, the dual city is an ancient device, as old as the Western idea of the city itself (Sennett 1990). According to Sennett, the greek *polis* was constructed primarily as a public realm of communicative possibility; in particular its boundaries were defined by the distance the sound of a human voice could carry from the central square or *agora*, so that if any citizen was in distress, their cry for help would not go unheeded. The spatial limits and conditions of direct vocal copresence thus defined a haptic sense of political community. The body thus articulated – the *demos* – was the collective voice of the citizenry in action. However not everyone who walked the streets of Athens, Thebes, or Sparta were citizens, or had a say in its affairs. Women, children, and slaves were not strictly speaking subjects at all, because their role was confined to the private or at least publicly invisible sphere of household – the *oike* and its governance. The household was here regarded as constituting the realm of necessity, of biological and social reproduction, of labor and what stayed the same, outside history. Those whose activities were confined to this sphere were by definition regarded as apolitical beings, denied access to the *agora*, without powers of articulation.

This split between a realm of material necessity – the realm of the *oekonomia* – and a realm of freedom and historical action – the realm of politics – was central to the Hellenic model of the *polis*. Sennett argues that it was reworked in terms of the Judaeo-Christian split between secular and spiritual to set in motion a long-standing

quarrel between those who see the city as primarily a material infrastructure for accommodating a diversity of socially necessary functions, and those for whom it is essentially a space of representation for imagining and regulating the body politic and its cultural life. He cites Isodore of Seville as the first to explicitly make the distinction between *urbs/urban*, the stones laid for the practical purposes of shelter, commerce, and warfare, and *civitas*, the structures of feeling, ritual, custom, and belief that take form within it; this rests on a division between profane and sacred space which finds its contemporary academic resonance in what we might call the prosaics and poetics of sociospatial analysis: the first concentrating on the logistics of urban policy, planning, and administration, the second on the lived cultures and narratives through which the daily business of living, loving, working, traveling, and playing around in the city are conducted by different groups of citizens. Sennet argues that this conflict resumed but did not resolve the terms of the earlier distinction between the material and spiritual city. As such it can be traced right through to the modernist dialectic between the global heights of profane power commanded by state and capital, and local spaces of private or public retreat organized around purified identities and communities constructed "from below."

If such a line can be described, it would have to be a very broken and irregular one; the danger is that in drawing it, the historic shift from "haptic" cities, administered through bodily and vocal copresence to "cartographic" cities ruled by strategies of visual mapping and surveillance, is downplayed. Yet it is precisely through this shift that the project of modernity draws an invisible sightline under the feet of those who are included and excluded from its special dispensation (de Certeau 1995).

From the standpoint of governance, from which maps of every kind are drawn, the modern city has indeed come to be represented as a rational, ordered, visible whole (Harvey 1989). Especially when its superficial appearance is one of chaos and fragmentation the aim is to disclose the hidden organizing principles in order to subject them to conscious planning and control. The social sciences have played a key role in disseminating this model of urbanism throughout the West. Nevertheless there remain important national differences in the way large cities have been imagined, observed, written about, and governed. Metropolises in the USA and Germany have frequently been compared to gigantic engines of production and complex servo-mechanisms, melting pots and waste disposal systems, prisons and asylums (Sennett 1994). In all these cases the city is imagined to be a crucible or microcosm of the whole society, to contain all its disparate elements and hold them together in some kind of dynamic equilibrium.

Since at least the eighteenth century the Western metropolis has thus been assigned its own special chemistry, a more or less magical alchemy, in which different social elements (classes and ethnic groups) are transmuted into a new kind of urban fabric, where the streets, if not paved with gold, at least support the making of a common cosmopolitan culture. This imagination is, of course, haunted by the fear that the elements will prove too combustible to be contained in this way, that the melting pot will become a boiling cauldron. To stop it boiling over, however, requires the pouring of oil on troubled waters, and taking the matches away from anyone who might be tempted to fan the flames of resentment. This makes for a compelling urban soap opera which keeps us on the edge of suspense, for it is always a case of the fire next time.

This dramatic trope of a multicultural city has never been popular among the urban squirearchy in Britain. In the nineteenth century their anti-industrial temper drew them to other, safer analogies (Dyos 1985; Feldman and Stedman Jones 1991). The workings of cities were compared to those of bodies and texts, not primarily on account of any affinities of natural symbolism, but because the available disciplines which studied bodies and texts furnished strategies of urban and civic comprehension with which the elite felt more at home. Comparative anatomy, parasitology, epidemiology, on one side; classical philology, biblical exegesis and literary esthetics on the other provided the models and metaphors with which this stratum thought, felt, dreamt, and often disavowed, its relation to the city.

The first set of discourses made it possible to represent the city as Other, and then to isolate the Other in the city, to distinguish and classify the diseased habits, habitats, and happenings associated with the *race apart*; the second set of analogies made it possible to identify and celebrate those elements which might be assimilated into the body politic and strengthen the *backbone of the nation*. Here uniquely, and only for a time, the two cultures of Victorian science and humanities collaborated to common purpose and effect. We will look at each in turn.

Many commentators have been struck by the more obvious medical analogies: cities that are equipped with lungs, arteries, bloodstreams, bowels, hearts, and faces (Sennett 1994). Galen's theory of humors connects with Harvey's model of circulation to put flesh on the bare bones of bourgeois fears of social contagion and racial degeneration in the body politic. In keeping with the English propensity for advancing into the future looking over their shoulder towards the past, this backward-looking analogy was pressed into the service of modernity. The first rule of the capitalist city is, after all, the free circulation of commodities, both of labor and of goods. The role of the police in the Victorian city was to keep the wheels of industry turning as well as to keep the human traffic moving on the streets. Policing strategy was designed to prevent any blockage or disturbance to this circulation process; it thus applied not only to manifest forms of public disorder – riots, strikes, occupations, civil commotions of every kind – but also to the most elementary strategies through which groups of citizens colonized urban space, asserted their own proprietary rights over local amenity and resource and put a stop, however temporarily, to the remorseless logic of capital accumulation (Cohen 1998).

It is easy then to see the power of the body analogy; it furnished a naturalistic principle of circulation which in turn yielded an image of urban growth as a process of endless self-regeneration. It was more often used to represent its antithesis – processes of blight, and decay caused by parts that become dysfunctional, or parasitic, and disrupt the harmony of the whole.

However, to many Victorian observers there were numerous processes of urban growth which remained unrepresentable by these means. In particular the urban demographic seemed to have rendered the city into a foreign language or an illegible text (Walkovitz 1992). One of the main aims of the early urban explorers was to decipher its vernacular codes, parse its sentence structures, translate its idioms into a more familiar language and, if they were professional *flâneurs*, read the exotic signs between the lines of even the most pedestrian desires. This was an active methodology which permitted the working class and immigrant city to be read and written about in a way that rendered it both fascinating and a safe topic for conversation

and concern in the middle-class drawing room. In this way organic images of urban health or disease were rendered into an intelligible and narratable text, with a story line which unfolded more or less teleologically, and featured heroes and villains, bearers of good news and bad.

The envisagement of the metropolis as a visual spectacle played an important part in this elaboration. As the metropolis grew in size and complexity, so totalizing perspectives of the urban panorama or diorama increasingly gave way to the synecdochal view – the choice of particular locations or perspectives as standing metonymically or metaphorically for the essence of the city. Inevitably these tended to be places associated with the exercise of various kinds of power – highly visible parts that exercised control over the now incomprehensible, invisible whole.

These two image repertoires could be – and were – combined to great effect. Bodies have invisible insides and visible outsides, texts legible surfaces and depths of meanings hidden "between the lines." Through their conjugation we arrive at the notions of a hidden urban underworld as an ultimate repository of inside stories and a socially transparent overworld where everything is on the surface, legible and light. It was through this moral economy that fluid hierarchies of wealth, status, skill, labor, and lifestyle were hardened into bitter binaries of rich and poor, native and immigrant, established and outsider (Stallybrass and White 1986).

The body/text code specialized in generating images of Otherness: certain visibly deviant features could now stand for a more general disreputability and a clear line could be drawn between those elements which were redeemable and those which were not (King 1995). The code held special implications for the way immigrants and ethnic minorities were treated – in particular for the dividing lines drawn between model minorities (i.e. those whose cultures were regarded as translatable and hence a suitable case for inclusion in programs of urban renewal) and those pariah minorities whose faces did not fit, whose cultures were regarded as too inscrutable to be read and whose presence was regarded as a threat to urban health and harmony. It is the latter, of course, who were made to represent the chaotic flux and flow of urban life, the anarchic vitality which is both subverting its rational organization, and yet from another standpoint is required by it. For after all they provide the local color that is otherwise lacking but which is so attractive to sociologists, filmmakers, bohemians, sex and lifestyle tourists and all those who want to experience how life is lived on the other side of the tracks (Jacobs 1996).

Today however the principles of urban circulation and inscription have moved on. The global city is constituted by the invisible circuitry of transnational capital and its space of information flows (Sassen 1991; Castells 1991, 1998). The powers of surveillance deployed by the nation-state have so far proved no match for the deregulation of markets and the Internet. International migrations of labor have generated diasporic information networks on a worldwide scale; at the same time the local social visibility of these communities has increased concomitantly to the point that they become the focus of concerted attack on the part of those who feel excluded from the global information flow. As one Bagladeshi leader in East London put it to me: "I can surf the internet, I can ring my family around the world, but I am afraid to go out of my own front door and across the street to the corner shop for a newspaper and loaf of bread in case I get attacked by some of the racist thugs who live down the end of the road" (quoted in Cohen 1996).

This dual city can no longer be visualized or understood by analogy to the body or the text. It no longer has an inside and an outside, there are no hidden messages waiting to be decoded (Soja 1989; Westwood and Williams 1996). Instead everything happens on the surface, with an impacted immediacy that is both bewildering and apparently beyond political redress. None of the customary graphologies – bio/ ethno/historio/carto/topo – singly or in combination seem to provide a satisfactory "take" on what is happening.

It has been suggested that the postmodern frame merely glosses, where it does not actively celebrate, the systematic dislocation and randomized violence that prevails on many of our urban front lines (Harvey op cit). Certainly much of what passes for postmodernism can be seen as a search for new urban life-forms that reembody or recontextualize the lost dialectics of the visible and invisible city. But what if this dialectic is being worked through a more material and profane process of urban development?

Multicultural Capitalism, Third Spaces and the Invention of the ''Postcolonial City''

Many recent commentators have pointed to the emergence of a new, multicultural, form of capitalism, in which the accumulation process requires not only an internationalized flow of information and ideas from a diversity of sources around the world but the presence of diasporic networks of labor drawn from non-European cultures. Let's briefly look at each side of this story in turn.

Multicultural capitalism – capitalism based on the re/production of cultural diversity and the marketing of exotic commodities – is at the cutting edge of globalization. It works by manufacturing local cultural goods and services and packaging them for global consumption as material signs of an authentic (sic) ethnicity (Appadurai 1997).

In contrast to the old "national" middle class still largely closeted in their local xenophobias, this operation works through a new cosmopolitan elite that both produces and consumes cultural diversity on a global scale, from world music to the latest in cross-over fashions in food and clothing. And unlike the homogenized business culture promoted by multinational companies with their rigid dress codes and concern for "corporate image," the lifestyles of this stratum advertise individuality, flair, difference – the same values they promote via their products.

The transnational middle class is no longer dominated, either demographically or ideologically, by more or less dead white men. Women, and members of ethnic and sexual minorities have been in the vanguard. And like any emergent social force they have constructed a view of the world in their own image, a world in which there is no reality outside its representation, where hybridity is celebrated and the pleasures of consumption are put at the cutting edge of change. En route, gender and race (but not class) have been transformed from topics of personal identity work into resources for consciously directed cultural production. Through the intervention of new rhetorics of entitlement, lifestyle innovation ceases to be merely a site of cultural labor, but a privileged means of accumulating cultural capital. And this in turn earns a return on personal investment that can be measured in strictly material terms.

This new fraction is a hybrid in another sense. It can be considered as a new aristocracy of labor insofar as it exercises a high degree of creative control over the technologies it operates. At the same time, it often merges the values of the pre-modern artisan with those of the postmodern entrepreneur. Unlike the old "self-made men" these do-it-yourself capitalists actively trade off their ethnicities or sexualities to give an added competitive edge to what is produced for the local/global market in "travelling ideas" (Wynne 1993).

But this is only one half of the story. The structures that produce this new multi-cultural middle class also throw up, as its necessary counterpart, a new kind of working class. Cultural industries require and actively promote a dual labor market, where a highly paid professional service class coexists with and sometimes directly employs a low-wage/low-skill servant class made up of women, young people, recent immigrants and refugees, and ethnic minorities. It is the preindustrial labor of these "hidden hands" that oils the postindustrial machineries of the cultural mass – from the bike couriers who deliver manuscripts or films to the seamstresses who sow the labels on designer jeans by hand, from the kitchen porters who staff the canteens of TV studios to the night cleaners who tidy the offices; as for the more visible economy it is students and unemployed cultural workers (actors, artists, writers) who are employed as front-of-house attractions in cafes, wine bars, and restaurants where their faces, and their arts of impression management, blend more acceptably into the middle-class mise-en-scène (Bianchini 1988; Zukin 1991).

This cultural labor force is more "flexible" than the historically sedimented sections of the old manual working class, less entrenched in a fixed habitus of customary work practice, and hence easier to hire and fire. Outside the workplace they are also major cultural innovators in their own right, continually introducing new topics of identity work, new hybridized styles of consumption which in turn provides the "raw material" for multicultural capitalism.

It is not the case that one "class" lives literally at the expense of the other. The exploitative nature of the classical capital/labor relation is not directly reproduced but takes on a more mediated form. Cultural labor – the work of inscribing collective meaning and personal identity on whatever materials are selected for this purpose (music, clothes, bodies, motorbikes, walls, etc.) – does not in itself create material value. It creates signs of authenticity and/or signatures of authorship. For these to function as marketable commodities they have first to be processed through a machinery of re-presentation. This is what cultural capital is and does: *it is the accumulated knowledge/power that intervenes to organize the commodification of cultural labor through its means of representation.* At the same time it transforms the topics of identity work into resources that can be traded off or bargained over.

It is possible in principle for the same individual or group to be on the side of cultural labor (for example as a local subject) and capital (as a global subject) at the same time, or to move continually between them. The imagined community of multicultural capitalism is, indeed, constituted by this constant to-ing and fro-ing, in which a kaleidoscope of signifying practices blurs the distinction between positions. Youth styles that trade off subcultural diversity provide a key currency of "free and equal exchange," or, if you prefer, mutual exploitation between the two "sides" in a way that turns structures of inequality into a kind of secret pact (Bourdieu 1995).

At another level the expanded role of design and communications technologies in every sphere of social production and consumption (Sassen 1991) and the growth of what Regis Debray has called, somewhat disparagingly, a mediocracy (Debray 1981), has thrown up an intelligentsia that straddles – and hence disrupts – established divisions between highbrow and lowbrow culture. A new kind of hybridized intellectual culture has emerged in which the invention of tradition, the profession of modernity, the cultivation of roots, and the embrace of liminality are no longer specialized strategies but can be combined in various permutations to compose a vibrant "postcolonial" intellectual mix.

Not surprisingly Black and Asian intellectuals and artists were in the vanguard of this movement. Many of them had graduated from the polyversities to join this new "cultural mass" and found themselves living and working through the digital revolution in information media and mass communications (Sharma, S. and A. 1997). It was not surprising (though not inevitable) that many of them saw issues of race and racism primarily through a cultural lens. Cultural racism was an apt enough description of the obstacles they faced in their struggle to assert autonomous spaces of creative activity in the artworld, the academy, and the mass media in a way that secured an adequate space of representation for the issues they wanted to address (Gupta 1993; Hall 1996).

Although its esthetic expression took many forms, the cultural fluidity associated with the "new ethnicities" movement also served to map out a cosmopolitan space, both real and imagined, of social mobility. Those who were on the move and "going places" now had a lexicon to describe their trajectory in other terms than those of the old class geographies which were in any case shifting their ground (Cannadine 1997). From this vantage point it was also possible to launch a swingeing attack on "middle brow" culture as a repository of a residual, but still imperial English parochialism, and to reclaim popular culture as the site of a dynamic and youthful urban multiculture (Back 1997).

All this helped to break thinking about race, nation, and ethnicity free from the essentializing discourses of Roots Radicalism and made the terms freshly exciting to work and play with. This take-up was facilitated by the promotion of another term which gave the notion of "new ethnicities" a spatial rather than a temporal dimension: diaspora.

Diaspora became "good to think with," as James Clifford put it, because it could be used to describe the global trajectory of traveling theory, a meeting place of postcolonial minds that was fully compatible with the digital age (Clifford 1994). En route, and through a process of projective identification that had little to do with their position in the real world, the refugee and the asylum seeker were "reinvented" as nomadic "postmodern" subjects (Cohen 1994).

The notion of cultural hybridity, wrested away from its racial problematic of miscegenation, served as a further resource for positively representing the processes of internal differentiation that were going on in second and third generation Black and Asian communities. In place of the pathologizing notion of young people caught "between cultures" there was the altogether more constructive vision of an inmixture of influence, where East met West on its own terms, and forged a dynamic "semiosphere" that put in question the cultural politics of both separatism and assimilationism (Werbner and Modood 1997).

Taken together these three terms (new ethnicities, hybridity, diaspora) thus worked to articulate the experience of those who were climbing out of the ethnic ghetto of "traditionalism" or communalism into the new multicultural middle class. They could now feel that their local climb up the social ladder of progress was part of a larger onwards march of ideas and populations across heterogeneous cultural space. The invention of the "postcolonial city" not only anchored these terms but gave Black and Asian cultural politics its own distinctive local/global habitation and a name, its own invented traditions, its own imagined history and geography, its own permeable – but still internally regulated – boundaries of belonging.

Once fluidity and floating signifiers became the esthetic trademark of a new multicultural intelligentsia, then by contrast, fixity and the failure to tolerate ambiguous or multiple identities were all too easily associated with an older generation stuck in their ways, or with a White and Black "underclass" immobilized at the bottom of the social ladder. A new moral binarism was established: between a progressive ethnoscape associated with the postcolonial city, celebrating a healthy, happy hybridity, and a reactionary landscape of "old ethnicities" mired in pathological purities or religious fundamentalisms belonging to the bad old colonial days. Underpinning the rhetoric of "third spaces" the familiar dualisms began to reemerge.

It could be argued that in this case the intervention of so-called "poststructuralist" modes of analysis, far from having broken with structuralism's obsessive concern with binary codes of race and class, simply reconfigured them in a rather more subtle form. But is there another way of understanding the relation between dual cities and third spaces which is less dependent on the art of deconstruction, while still putting the material phenomenology of the city back in touch with its cultural imagination?

The Urban Uncanny and Racism's Other Scene

In our traffic with everyday objects we move constantly between pure physics and pure landscape (Straus 1964). When we take the dog for a walk or go down the road to get the morning paper we unwittingly steer a course between the nonintuitive space of modern physics, the immediate sensory spaces which our bodies navigate, the private mental spaces of our dreams, memories, and fantasies, and the public geographical space that locates our journey within certain shared coordinates of social and cultural meaning.

Most people, including until recently most geographers, are not aware of how these different kinds of spatial orientation mesh in, how the stories we tell ourselves about where we have come from, where we are at, where we are going to in our lives, work to create a fictive concord between our positions in physical, psychological, cultural, and political space. Most people know nothing and care even less about the physical laws that govern the material environment, including the built environment; many have learnt to block out or defend themselves against the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touch of the city, because these sense impressions are felt intuitively to be ugly, or intrusive, or in some way bad and damaging to health; new technologies such as mobile phones, Walkmans, and pocket computers help create a second line of psychic defense by cocooning their users in a virtual space of communication that renders them impervious to their material and social surroundings; finally most uses of public space are part of taken-for-granted routines of shopping,

traveling, gossiping, and hanging about, routines that are largely indifferent to the variously sedimented histories of architecture, urban economy, social regulation, and civic governance that make them more or less possible.

For all these reasons most of us for most of the time are on automatic pilot, dreaming in broad daylight with our eyes open as we move about the city. Whether we are stuck in traffic jams, or queuing for buses that never come, or milling about in crowds of shoppers, we learn to deal with the logistics of urban encounter by retreating into first person singular landscapes where these impedimenta function as symptomatic backdrops to the stories of progress (or lack of it) that we tell about our lives. But what are these urban daydreams about beyond this immediate and material self-reference? What ghosts from the past do they conjure up, what figures from the other scenes of city life emerge to remind us that in the midst of what is most familiar, we remain in some sense strangers to ourselves?

Freud was the first to provide us with a map of the urban *unheimlich*. In his famous paper on "The Uncanny" he writes:

Once, as I was walking through the deserted streets of a provincial town which was strange to me, on a hot summer afternoon I found myself in a quarter whose character could not long remain in doubt. Nothing but painted women were to be seen at the windows of the small houses and I hastened to leave the narrow street at the next turning. But after having wandered about for a while without being directed, I suddenly found myself back in the same street, where my presence was now beginning to excite attention. I hurried away once more but only to arrive yet a third time by devious paths in the same place. Now however a feeling overcame me which I can only describe as uncanny and I was glad enough to abandon my exploratory walk and get straight back to the piazza I had left a short while before (Freud 1914).

How does the urban *unheimlich*, with its characteristic pattern of repeated inter-ruption of social routine, described so clearly by Freud, emerge in the interstices of everyday encounters in the park, the subway, the shopping mall, the journey from home to school or work? We are dealing here with that special transferential relation to place though which an unfamiliar setting evokes the absence/presence of signific-ant others, or invests the strange with a sense of déjà vu, and it directs our attention to a form of the dual city that is not much recognized or talked about.

As we have seen, the invisible city tends to have been defined purely negatively as everything that is excluded from the picture drawn by dominant strategies of graphic representation and surveillance. Yet the visible, ordered, rational city has as its necessary counterpoint a dreamcity where familiar landmarks are so transformed by fantasy and primary-process thinking that they can only be negotiated with the aid of a special map whose keys are only to be found in the subject's Unconscious (Cohen 1998; Vidler 1996). These two cities meet in sites of urban dereliction, tunnels that vanish into fog, labyrinthine streets that come to a dead end, industrial wastelands, shuttered houses, abandoned stations, deserted underpasses, cemeteries where ghost horses canter past the graves. In these holes in the urban fabric we come across the characteristic figures of the urban uncanny (Vidler op cit). Here dreaming with our eyes open we may run into our other more malevolent selves, have strange encounters with aliens posing as natives, meet robots, zombies, and other kinds of double trouble disguised in the form of our own flesh and blood. These "third

spaces" in the urban fabric may be made by bulldozers or bazookas, zoning regula-
tions or patterns of social segregation, but they are filled in by myths, legends, and
popular fictions that are in no way reducible to their material effect.

The cultural landscaping of sites of urban/industrial dereliction over the last
decades has insinuated a layer of symbolic distancing (and sometimes arch senti-
mentality) between these two cities so that they no longer engage in even the most
coded kinds of conversation. Where kitsch or irony rules, OK, the raw material of
the urban uncanny melts into the thin air of postmodernity (Soja 1989).

At the same time the demise of the crowded thoroughfare and street corner as a
routine feature of working-class life and its replacement by more transient or
simulated forms of social congregation has opened up many new sites for the figures
of the urban uncanny to take hold. When the throng of familiar faces fades, along
with the hubbub of gossip, when the routes that used to carry workers to and from
the factories, mines, and docks become part of the postindustrial "scenery," then the
"other scene" emerges into broad daylight, casting the shadow of "that which should
have remained hidden" on to screen memories of place.

Finding the Way Home

Only those most at home in the local/global city are able to seize this opportunity to
colonize the depopulated streets with figments of their sociological imagination; I've
already suggested this is where the postcolonial intelligentsia likes to come out to
play with difference. The theme of the alien and the stranger, the bogeyman, and
even the thief, can here be safely appropriated and used to deconstruct the racist
stereotypes in which they have historically been clothed.

Well-established Black cultures and communities that have to deal routinely with
the daily residues of dangerous or difficult intercourse with the city have developed
their own ways of immunizing themselves against the more traumatic effects of
racism. Through a repertoire of precautionary tales, stories that forearm as well as
forewarn about specific and hence actionable sites of threat, and through the con-
struction of defensible spaces, they succeed in devising narrative landscapes in a way
that reduces anxiety to predictable and tolerable levels. Urban fears can here be
visualized, symbolized, narrated, worked through, and finally mastered. Thus dis-
tanced they could even, in some cases, lend a halo of enchantment to the experience
of risk, yielding pleasurable adventure stories of dangers successfully negotiated,
obstacles overcome, traps avoided, safe returns.

But what happens when this kind of normalization is no longer possible? For
many people, living on the edge, on the permanent *qui vive* against unwelcome
incursions by the powers that be into domains ruled by their own highly local prides
of place, the themes of stranger danger tell a very different story. Here an untoward
look, an unknown face, a remark made out of turn, a passing brush with the law,
may be enough to break the fragile bond between what is loved and what is hated,
what fascinates and what repels in the everyday attachment to place.

In collaboration with colleagues in Germany, I recently carried out a comparative
ethnonarratological study into young people's landscapes of safety and danger in
"urban frontline" areas of Hamburg and London's Docklands. We were interested in
comparing the stories and mental maps constructed by young people living in areas

of high racial polarization and violence, with those from areas where urban multi-cultures existed and hence "third spaces" might be easier to sustain.

One young man, Alan, who lived in a highly racialized part of the Isle of Dogs, told us that he thought the whole place might one day soon sink into the Thames under the weight of Canary Wharf and all the new building going on. He was worried that there might be a flood and he would be drowned in his sleep. In a subsequent discussion with his friends he told the following story:

The other day we went across the water. It was "niggers galore," walking around, flash cars, flash clothes it's a Black's paradise over there. We went down the market and we saw this White geezer come up out of a manhole and he was speaking some foreign language. I dunno what it was – Russian I think. He didn't know where he was then just stumbled around like a zombie, bumping into people. Then he started talking to these Black muggers and they showed him where to go and they all went off together.

His friend backed up his story:

Yeah, probably was Russian cos they had one of their warships out there in the river. They're probably working together with the Blacks in the sewers, you know. My dad says if Labour win the Russians are gonna take over Docklands and maybe the whole of London.

This conversation raises a number of important questions. Where do these zombies come from if not Russia? What connections do they make possible between Alan's anxiety, represented by the fear of being drowned in dreams, the sense that this community is being engulfed by a tide of structural change, and the racial panic about Black muggers?

The characterization of the zombie as someone who speaks in a foreign tongue understandable only by Blacks intimates that the Unconscious, as discourse of the Other, has here become directly racialized. At the same time the device furnishes a powerful trope of this boy's own sense of social alienation – stumbling around, bumping into people not knowing where he is, "a stranger in his own country." Of course he has ventured "over the water" (i.e. across the River Thames), and what he discovers on the other side, in the wake of earlier maritime adventurers, makes him feel even more at sea – a Black El Dorado, a land of Cockayne peopled by "niggers galore" who are clearly having a good time that by implication is denied to Whites. These pleasure principles, precisely because they have been appropriated by "the other" are only allowed to surface and make history by its "bad side" (Roediger 1991; Cohen 1996). The sewers, apart from the obvious associations with excreta and the disposal of human waste furnish a principle of "negative circulation" that connects all kinds of matter out of place: alien ideas, foreign bodies, unnatural alliances of every kind.

The Urban Uncanny provides a strategy of symbolic displacement and disavowal by means of which the racist discourse can plunder the sociological imagination for whatever material it needs to establish its "common sense." But not everyone has access to the *unheimlich*. People caught in the crossfire of racial and ethnic confrontation, in divided cities and nations, in Belfast and Sarajevo, Pristina, Jerusalem, or Beirut – where even the simplest act of crossing the street to buy a newspaper, or taking the dog for a walk can be a precipitator of disaster – do not have the luxury of

such strategies of indirection. Instead they have to devise more immediate ways of staying on automatic pilot. Some become exhibitionists, hiding in the light of public attention, using techniques of mimicry or masquerade to flaunt their difference and turn the voyeur's gaze back upon itself; others turn inward, creating invisible, symbolic spaces of self-containment to protect memories, histories, hopes from further inspection and exploitation at the hands of outsiders whose concerns they do not trust; some mobilize to reclaim streets and communities from the grip of drug pushers or urban militia while others dream of returns or escapes to promised lands; perhaps the majority just get on with their everyday lives as best they can, concerned above all to secure their own immediate futures, indifferent to all the noise generated by politicians and cultural commentators.

Which brings us back to Italo Calvino, who, as it happens, has also given us a rather precise map of this process of negotiation, in a short story entitled "The Garden of Stubborn Cats":

The city of cats and the city of men exist one inside the other, but they are not the same city. Few cats recall the time when there was no distinction: when the streets and squares of men were also the streets and squares of cats, and you lived in a broad and various space. But for several generations now domestic felines have been the prisoners of an uninhabitable city: the streets are uninterruptedly overrun by the mortal traffic of cat crushing automobiles, in every square foot of terrain where once a garden extended or a vacant lot, or the ruins of an old demolition now condominiums loom up, welfare housing, brand new skyscrapers. . . . But in this vertical city, in this compressed city where all voids tend to fill up and every block of cement tends to mingle with other blocks of cement, a kind of counter city opens, a negative city that consists of empty slices between wall and wall, a city of cavities, wells conduits, driveways, inner yards, like a network of dry canals on a planet of stucco and tar, and it is through this network, grazing the walls that the ancient cat population still scurries (Calvino 1976).

In these new catwalks, suspended between the virtual space of information flows, and the pedestrianism of contemporary politics Calvino suggests that we will find, if we know how and where and with whom to look, the elements of egalitarian community, at once residual and emergent, that the project of modernism invokes in principle, but in practice has overlooked.

It is here, if anywhere at all, that legendary cities might yet be built where Catholic and Protestant, Muslim and Serb, Jew, Christian, and Arab, Rat and Swallow might grow up learning the benefits of sharing the same approximate geography of risk. And here, instead of the fixed lines drawn by racism, between those who are human and those who are not, between those whose imagination takes flight only to rule the city, and those who are mired in the mundane, we may yet discover strategies of narration and navigation which lead us into a practical, sensuous engagement with what is truly "from the other side of the tracks."

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