The Language of Postmodern Space

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My starting point for this inquiry is the image of Fredric Jameson, Edward Soja, and Henri Lefebvre walking together through the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles. Soja refers to this meeting in his essay "Heterotopologies," which quotes liberally from Jameson's *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*:

> In the bunkered forms of the Bonaventure, entrance and exit ways are curiously unmarked and appear at many different levels, as if "some new category of enclosure [was] governing the inner space of the hotel itself" (Jameson 1984). Inside and out, one is lost in a "placeless dissociation," an "alarming disjunction between the body and the built environment" that Jameson compares (and links) to the experience of Los Angeles itself and, even more pointedly, to the increasing incapacity of our minds to cognitively map another hyperspace, "the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects." I have covered similar tracks in my own depiction of the Bonaventure, written some time after strolling through the microcosmopolis with Jameson and Henri Lefebvre.[1]

The enduring thesis of Jameson's *Postmodernism* is that any experience of urban or architectural disorientation is profoundly related to the inability to map oneself within the world space of transnational capitalism. Jameson walks through (or in fact, is moved through) a physical structure, and becomes disoriented among its people-moving devices, reduced scale landscape and semantic depthlessness. In this moment, Jameson claims, is contained the definitive postmodern crisis: the bewildering irresistibility of late capitalism.

And yet there is something impatient about the analysis. In terms of discourses or categories of thought, the built environment is not identical

with the world political system. The question of exactly *how* physical disorientation is conjoined to political, or even moral disorientation, is not fully developed by Jameson. Do physical structures follow political structures, or is it the other way around? Are both produced simultaneously by a third force? Or is the relation merely metaphorical? Jameson's thesis has been explicitly criticised before, notably Woodward et al's attempt to disprove the "disorientation paradigm." [2] Such efforts, however, are grounded solely in physical spaces and in physical disorientation, and overlook the attention to language that pervades the work of Jameson, Soja, and Lefebvre. All three are reaching towards new forms of representation – linguistic, cartographic, or otherwise – to apprehend the relationship between geography and power in the postmodern urban environment.

My ambition here is the same as that of the Bonaventure-strolling theorists: to find the connection between the experiential space of walking through a building or an open square, or of living in a city, and the abstract or relational space of living within transnational capitalism. However, the discursive divide that the spatial metaphor effortlessly crosses invites a critical reading of the language that they employ to do this. To that end, my own journey through the postmodern space of a large Sydney shopping centre helps to reveal the political conditions that the spatial metaphor obscures. The social goal to which this inquiry contributes is, like Jameson's, the search for an aesthetic of resistance against a currently irresistible force.

Physical and Political Spaces

Jameson builds his theory of postmodern spatiality from his experience of walking around and within the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, and so it is worth quoting in full those passages in which he makes the theoretical movement from the architectural space of the hotel to the political space of late capitalism. Jameson begins his exploration of the Bonaventure Hotel with a description of first circumnavigating and then entering the building.

He notes the absence of anything like a traditional hotel marquee, replaced by several nondescript entry points – "rather backdoor affairs"[3] – which leave one half-floors and whole-floors away from the hotel foyer and reception. Movement within the hotel is then achieved by elevators and moving walkways, which supersede the active orientation of walking, and leave one with the passive pleasure of an interior designed for spectatorship. Jameson describes this feeling of trying to find his way within the hotel:

> I am … at a loss when it comes to conveying the thing itself, the experience of space you undergo when you step off such allegorical devices into the lobby or atrium, with its great central column surrounded by a miniature lake, the whole positioned between the four symmetrical residential towers with their elevators, and surrounded by rising balconies capped by a kind of greenhouse roof at the sixth level. I am tempted to say that such space makes it impossible for us to use the language of volume or volumes any longer, since these are impossible to seize.[4]

Jameson is unable to anchor a sense of place in the hotel and likens it to being immersed "up to your eyes and your body,"[5] or "an imperative to grow new organs, to expand our sensorium and our body to some new, yet unimaginable, perhaps ultimately impossible, dimensions."[6] His argument, generalised, is that within the total worlds of postmodern architecture, one becomes engulfed and disoriented; one's senses of distance, of perspective, and of Archimedean or Euclidean positioning,[7] are lost in a hyper-sensory space that not only confounds but subdues.

Jameson also signals here that the argument he is developing is not restricted to a few buildings in the postmodern style, but rather applies equally to painting, music and war. His thesis is that something of the order of 'space' itself has changed, that this new space – postmodern hyperspace – is the way in which we are able (or unable) to experience not only the built form, but also the urban sociological order and even the global structures of power and economy. In conclusion to this line of thought, and to his chapter

on the Bonaventure Hotel, Jameson makes what seems to be an intuitive leap from physical-architectural space to abstract-political space:

> So I come finally to my principal point here, that this latest mutation in space--postmodern hyperspace--has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world. It may now be suggested that this alarming disjunction point between the body and its built environment--which is to the initial bewilderment of the older modernism as the velocities of spacecraft to those of the automobile--can itself stand as the symbol and analogon of that even sharper dilemma which is the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects.[8]

Jameson writes evocatively that any experience of disorientation within the postmodern built environment is "symbol" and "analogon" of a disorientation within the postmodern political economy. In these passages he characterises, perhaps better than anywhere else, the feeling of living in postmodernity, and in particular, the problems of positioning within and resistance to the world space of transnational capital. It is not possible to view the global economic system with critical distance if one is immersed "up to your eyes and your body" in the "hyperspace" of this abstract world order.

However, in moving from the interior of the hotel to "the great global multinational and decentered communicational network" in the interval of only a few sentences, the terms Jameson uses to identify this progression from buildings to politics are somewhat elastically defined. A 'symbol' suggests a directional flow of representation from the material object of the hotel to the abstract space of postmodern politics, while an 'analogon' would suggest that each object is equally capable of standing for the other. As a theory of representation, what is distinctly unclear in Jameson's analysis is whether the experience of the interior of the hotel is *produced by*

transnational space, *resembles* transnational space, or is simply an *example* of transnational space.

Edward Soja becomes important in this task because much of his body of work is an elaboration of Jameson's moment of truth, and of the project to 'spatialise' our conceptions of history, knowledge and power. However, the ambiguity that I feel is written into Jameson's thesis – into the relationship between the physical space of the Bonaventure Hotel and the political space of transnational capitalism – is even more conspicuous in Soja's analysis. The last few pages of *Postmodern Geographies* contain a discussion of the Bonaventure Hotel in which I have emphasised (italicised) the point at which Soja is writing of a relationship between spaces:

> shining from its circular turrets of bronzed glass, stands the Bonaventure Hotel, an amazingly storied *symbol* of the splintered labyrinth that stretches sixty miles around it.[9]

> the Bonaventure has become a concentrated *representation* of the restructured spatiality of the late capitalist city.[10]

> in so many ways, its architecture *recapitulates* and *reflects* the sprawling manufactured spaces of Los Angeles.[11]

And in the introduction to the same book, Soja suggests the more general relationships between types of space:

> Postmodern and postfordist geographies are defined as the most recent *products* of a sequence of spatialities that can be completely *correlated* to successive eras of capitalist development.[12]

> relations of power and discipline are *inscribed* into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life.[13]

and most extraordinarily of all:

a more concrete regional geography is presented to *exemplify* the rise of a new regime of 'flexible' capitalist accumulation tautly *built upon* a restorative spatial 'fix' and edgily *connected* to the postmodern cultural fabric.[14]

It might be possible to identify what Soja is attempting in each iteration of this formula: to establish the value of "exemplify" relative to "built upon" or "connected." For the moment, though, it is enough to note that in each case he is writing of a relationship between physical space (concrete geography, innocent spatiality) and political space (capitalist regimes, relations of power). It is precisely this relationship which, for Jameson, characterises the disorientation in and capitulation to, the global political order; and which, for Soja, identifies the need for a 'spatialisation' of history and politics.

But in order to understand the nature of Soja's ambition, it is important to remember that the investigation of this relationship is the bedrock of urban theory. Louis Wirth, among others, established the Chicago School of urbanism[15] as the discipline which manages (and moves between) different kinds of socio-spatial problems. To this end, Wirth wrote that the proper basis of urbanism is the analysis of the interaction between (what might be called) physical, social and mental space: "Urbanism as a characteristic mode of life may be approached empirically from these interrelated perspectives: (1) as a physical structure …; (2) as a system of social organisation …; and (3) as a set of attitudes and ideas."[16] Furthermore, the specific consequences of 'capitalism' and 'disorientation,' as they relate to urban space, have for most of the twentieth century been the *raison d'être* of urbanism, as is evident in these quotes from the same essay:

> The competition for space is great, so that each area generally tends to be put to the use which yields the greatest economic return.[17]

> The pecuniary nexus which implies the purchasability of services and things has displaced personal relations as the basis of association.[18]

There is little opportunity for the individual to obtain a conception of the city as a whole or to survey his place in the total scheme.[19]

To summarise these few statements of just one classical urbanist: it is through the pressures of capitalism that physical spaces and social groups evolve towards specialisation and spatialisation; furthermore, that urban forms have evolved beyond the ability of any individual to map their position within them. The conclusion that can be drawn here is that if Jameson and Soja are familiar with the findings of Wirth, Simmel, Mumford and others, then their spatial hypotheses must be claiming new ground: that mutations in built form have a *more than* interdependent relationship with social forms and meanings. In the shift from modernity to postmodernity, the *interdependence* model of physical and political space has resolved into a *convergence* model, in which Wirth's perspectives of the social, mental and physical are no longer easily distinguishable.

Henri Lefebvre, who would have been in his eighties when he strolled through the Bonaventure with Jameson and Soja, did not write about the hotel specifically and was not a theorist of postmodernity. Yet the central ambition of *The Production of Space* (1974) is to understand the relationships between physical, mental and social spaces, which are crucial to evaluating Jameson's postmodern moment. Where Soja's work elaborates upon Jameson's proposal, Lefebvre's work prefigures the theoretical ground of Jameson's claims. Lefebvre's project is to unify different kinds of space under a general spatial theory, but perhaps, unlike either Jameson or Soja, he is theoretically cautious about what can be said about the word 'space.' He begins his work with the complaint that "not so many years ago, the word 'space' had a strictly geometrical meaning," [20] but now, "we are forever hearing about the space of this and/or the space of that: about literary space, ideological spaces, the space of the dream, psychoanalytic topologies, and so on and so forth."[21] This problem, and the subject of this

paper, is probably best defined here by Lefebvre, from *The Production of Space*:

> Few people today would reject the idea that capital and capitalism 'influence' practical matters relating to space, from the construction of buildings to the distribution of investments and the worldwide division of labour. But it is not so clear what is meant by 'capitalism' and 'influence.'[22]

What is at stake here is a key moment of contemporary theory: the linking of postmodernity to the logic of transnational capitalism through the rubric of 'space.' And those who support Jameson's position in declaring "the paramountcy of space" would regard it as the supreme postmodern moment: "His first extended analysis of a postmodern work was the great set-piece on Portman's *Bonaventure* Hotel in Los Angeles [which is] on the evidence of citation, the most memorable single exercise in all the literature on postmodernism."[23]

Postmodern Sydney

Like Jameson, my concern is to understand the relationship between the physical and political experiences of transnational capitalism, and to find strategies for resistance. Where Jameson began his analysis in Los Angeles, I will begin in Sydney. So, it was in order to test Jameson's account of the Bonaventure that I walked though Penrith Plaza shopping centre on Sydney's suburban periphery. Jameson's only explanation for his choice of the Bonaventure is that it is "a full-blown postmodern building," and one that "aspires to being a total space, a complete world, a kind of miniature city"[24] I believed that Penrith Plaza would satisfy similar criteria, and would serve a similar function to that of Jameson's Bonaventure: to animate a theory of postmodern space from particular material experiences.

There are twelve entrances to Penrith Plaza, six from parking stations and another six, very little used, from the street. Despite its being situated

on High Street – the historical core of Penrith retail – there is almost no interaction between the two commercial zones. It is clearly not anticipated, or perhaps, not intended, that many shoppers will approach Penrith Plaza from street level. I first of all circumnavigated the complex, and as with Jameson's experience of the Bonaventure, felt as if its back was presented to me at all times, with towering windowless walls of indeterminate height, punctuated by small doorways without signage. As Jameson says of the Bonaventure Hotel, the pedestrian entrances are "rather backdoor affairs."[25] To walk around the outside of Penrith Plaza is to have any human-scale perspective defeated: at ground level, it is just not possible to grasp its entire shape, particularly when it seamlessly houses retail shops, a cinema complex and three separate parking stations, as well as the Penrith Council Chambers and Library. But if you park your car at Penrith Plaza, and come through the connecting glass doors, you are rewarded with being immediately in the middle of things: at or near the geographic centre of the shopping mall.

Having made the circumnavigation of Penrith Plaza first, and finding a correspondence with Jameson's experience of the Bonaventure, I anticipated finding something sprawling and un-navigable on the inside: people-moving devices to annihilate distance; a maze of disorienting twists and turns. This incorrect expectation meant that I actually *was* lost for the first five minutes or so, until the weight of sensory data proved it to be a straightforward Victorian mall, with two levels of straight walkways, cut-away floors, and an arched glass roof.[26]

Some aspects of Jameson's theory are immediately recognisable upon entering Penrith Plaza, particularly the idea of the sign-language of consumerism being "learned from Las Vegas."[27] The plastic pagoda covering the (indoor) entrance to the Chinese restaurant would be iconically marginalising if it were not for the corrugated iron kangaroos, the water tank, the 1950s petrol pump, the fountain, and various other pastiches of Australian town and country life. In the 'space' of Penrith Plaza, notions of

centre and periphery are obliterated in a literally 'all-consuming' semiology. And while a Modern walk-through mall like the Queen Victoria Building in downtown Sydney is an enclosed street market, Penrith Plaza is hyper-real in its efforts to recreate the human-scale scenes of a street market that never was. For example, the fresh food retailers have Federation-style awnings, even though they are obviously indoors. Strangely indoors also are numerous trees, a sandstone fountain, and an obelisk. This last item seems to be a recreation of one at Sydney's Museum railway station, but without an inscription of any kind on its four blank faces. Rather than being an obelisk to remind us of a particular historical event, it is an obelisk to remind us of obelisks.

As Jameson suggests of the Bonaventure Hotel, of Los Angeles, and of the world space of late capitalism, Penrith Plaza is characterised by visual and semantic depthlessness. Just as the skin of the building fails to indicate the demarcation of space inside, the visual surfaces within Penrith Plaza refuse to convey any meaning with a historical dimension, other than the timeless command to *buy*. Penrith Plaza's town fountain might one day be replaced by a fashion catwalk, but the shallowness of the historical semiosis means that its removal is unlikely to sever any emotional bonds. As Meaghan Morris found in her own journeys to Australian shopping centres, the constant renovation and renewal signifies "the consecration of shopping centres … to timelessness and stasis (no clocks, perfect weather)," or what Morris calls "the perpetual present of consumption." [28] Indeed, the distinctly depressing feeling I experienced at Penrith Plaza might not have been the loss of spatial but of historical orientation.

Standing once again at the threshold, but this time looking out, one is struck by the compelling evidence of Penrith Plaza's insertion into the town fabric. It is not a great exaggeration to say that Penrith Plaza has for the most part replaced the function of the town itself. It has all the major stores and services, the post office and the banks, the council, child care and library

services; it is the marketplace and the social space. For the architecturally-minded Jameson, most significant about this would be the enclosure, air-conditioning, and passive spectatorship of a public space. But for me, the most significant issue that Penrith Plaza raises is better analysed with ordinary sociology, which is the massive transfer of commerce from High Street small businesses to transnational corporations. It is not so much that corporations like Kmart, Target, HMV Music, The Body Shop or McDonalds do not exist *outside* of the privately owned space of shopping malls, but that locally owned small businesses do not exist *inside*.

Malcolm Voyce's study of the Westfield shopping mall at Hornsby in Sydney's north discovered a similar lack of integration with the older shopping strip.[29] Like Penrith Plaza, the Hornsby centre retains customers within the centre via internal parking, overhead links, underground tunnels, and physical integration with office space. Such a strategy allows Westfield to occupy 75% of retail space in the area and take 95% of retail spending.[30] When one also considers the outright interdiction of political activities or busking in such centres, it is clear that the 'malling of Australia' enacts a shift from more public forms of citizenship towards a consumerist culture of safety, conformity, and exclusion.

Even a brief tour of Penrith Plaza clearly provides material that would place it within the periodising style of postmodernism, in being "playful, eclectic and alive with metaphor, ambiguity and asymmetry."[31] It is, as far as this goes, a postmodern building. But Jameson's principal argument is that the Bonaventure Hotel "offers the lesson" that a "mutation in space – postmodern hyperspace – has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the human body to locate itself."[32] This is what I wanted to test at Penrith Plaza, and having made the discovery of the Plaza's linear and modern spatiality, it becomes difficult to fully accept Jameson's hypothesis that such a place should mimic the fabric of the fallen city, and in turn represent the bewildering world space of late capitalism. The fact that this

space is actually easily navigable raises the question of whether physical disorientation is necessary for political, social, or moral disorientation, and specifically, whether the sometimes disorienting nature of postmodern architecture is extraneous or incidental to the postmodern political order.

Jameson characterises postmodern spatiality by a new kind of disorientation, "which is to the initial bewilderment of the older modernism as the velocities of spacecraft to those of the automobile."[33] As I have said, I did not find Penrith Plaza disorienting, but I question if even the largest, most complex shopping malls and hotels could be any more disorienting than the streets of London in the nineteenth century. The Australian urbanist Kim Humphery visited the then-recently completed Melbourne Central (Daimaru) shopping centre in 1993, with a similar feeling of disappointment. He writes that: "On my first foray the computerized information system was down, which I assumed would heighten the feeling of postmodern disorientation. But I didn't get lost. I didn't even get all that disoriented."[34] Penrith Plaza *can* be read as postmodern architecture, and *does* allow speculation as to the relationship of geography to power. But what is more alarming than the loss of human scale in the architecture is the very effectively retained perception of human scale within the impossible-to-grasp mechanisms of global capitalism that are at work in the centre. The threat of Penrith Plaza is not that it expands one's sensorium, but that it reassures it.

However, as I suggested in the introduction, overturning the disorientation hypothesis is only part of the job at hand. It may be true that the physical disorientation that Jameson experienced at the Bonaventure Hotel is not in any essential way a product of, or productive of, the political order of transnational capitalism. But it remains, as Lefebvre suggests, to explain exactly how capitalism 'influences' practical matters relating to space. The model proposed by Jameson and Soja suggests that if physical spaces are where relations of power are made real, then the physical and

political are no longer easily separated. The next section explores Jameson's and Soja's attempts to develop novel forms of representing this spatio-political whole.

The Language of Spatiality

In *Postmodernism*, Jameson studies human perception, and the orientation and mapping of oneself in the world. To this end, his writing attempts to evoke the subjective experience of living in postmodernity:

> The postmodernist viewer … is called upon to do the impossible, namely, to see all the screens at once, in their radical and random difference; such a viewer is asked to follow the evolutionary mutation of David Bowie in *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (who watches fifty-seven television screens simultaneously) and to rise somehow to a level at which the vivid perception of radical difference is in and of itself a new mode of grasping what used to be called relationship: something for which the word *collage* is still only a very feeble name.[35]

Through his analyses of cinema, architecture, painting, music, and war, Jameson characterises postmodernity by its radical difference and simultaneity. These notions are also central to Soja's theorisation of spatial experience, so much so that *Postmodern Geographies* begins and ends with Jorge Luis Borges's fiction of the Aleph: "The only place on earth where all places are seen – seen from every angle, each one standing clear, without any confusion or blending."[36] Soja overtly compares Los Angeles to the Aleph – calling it the "LA-leph" – and characterises the postmodern urban fabric as "a limitless space of simultaneity and paradox."[37] Like Borges trying to describe the indescribable Aleph, Soja finds that language itself is unable to capture the feeling of living in postmodernity: "What one sees when one looks at geographies is stubbornly simultaneous, but language dictates a sequential succession."[38]

But Soja's use of the Aleph should alert him to the fact that simultaneity in perception is *not* the normal way of things. The Aleph is the *only* place on

earth where this fantastical vision occurs. Space is not usually experienced as simultaneous because experience itself is successive. It is experienced, as Meaghan Morris has said of her own pedestrian excursion, as the "spatial play in time."[39] Soja's theory of simultaneity, and indeed, his desire to see things "standing clear, without any confusion or blending," reveals something of his ambitions. If spatial experience is decidedly temporal and successive, then Soja is aiming for something like a structuralism of space. He outlines this position by quoting Foucault from "Of Other Spaces:"

> Structuralism … is the effort to establish, between elements that could have been connected on a temporal axis, an ensemble of relations that makes them appear as juxtaposed, set off against one another, in short, as a sort of configuration.[40]

Soja's response to this quote is simply that "This synchronic 'configuration' is the spatialisation of history";[41] in other words, it is Soja's project *avant la lettre*. Soja speaks of the simultaneous and structural whole of space, but regrets that a representation of this whole may not be possible, at least not in language, which is temporal and successive. In the introduction to *Postmodern Geographies*, Soja notes his "linguistic despair"[42] at the challenge of mapping postmodern space, and signals his intention "to break out from the temporal prisonhouse of language."[43] Throughout the book, Soja restates his position that language, even his own, is an inadequate instrument for expressing the spatially and synchronically structured political relations of postmodernity. Soja's despair is ironic, however, given that language is the original domain of structuralism. It is the work of Ferdinand de Saussure which first demonstrated that every linguistic meaning is relative to all other meanings at a certain point in time. In this sense, meaning is distributed across what Saussure calls "the axis of simultaneity,"[44] or, if you prefer, as a *configuration*. And it is Saussure's linguistic insight that Soja is applying here, in adapting the 'spatial' distribution of meaning to postmodern geography.

To take an example: the notions of 'centre' and 'periphery' are often used to describe a physical and a political situation simultaneously. Indeed, much of my inquiry could be directed through the question: what is the relationship between the 'periphery' of politics and the 'periphery' of geography, and can the same meaning be attached to the word 'periphery' in each case? Bentham's Panopticon is an example in which political relations take the same structure as their physical relations, and this model has been captured by Foucault and Soja (among others) to show that 'space' is where discursive relations of power are transformed into actual relations of power. Soja utilises a quote (from Wright and Rabinow's "Spatialization of Power") that describes the materialisation of power in a similar way to that which we have seen before from him: the Panopticon is "a *diagram* of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form" and "a *combination* of abstract schematization and very concrete applications." [45] Similarly, in relation to Wallerstein's dichotomy of class and spatial hierarchies, Soja argues that: "[his] push is weakened somewhat by Wallerstein's failure to theorize the spatial structure 'at the same level' as the social, a lost opportunity to make the core-periphery relation more than an evocative metaphor." [46] But if the 'centre' of political power lay at the edge of a physical space, would this imply the kind of paradox with which Soja characterises Los Angeles, or is the Panopticon simply an unusual example, chosen by Foucault, and in turn by Soja, to support the spatialisation of history? We can draw an analogy here with the psychological language of *inner* self and *sub*-conscious, in being very successful spatial images. But are they not metaphors (and nothing more) that are not matched in a material physicality; are the concentric circles of id-ego-superego not wholly schematic rather than anatomical? We might say that the 'space of the superego' contains the 'space of the ego,' but at no point should the spatial metaphor be confused with, nor converge with, physical space.

To summarise these issues of centre and periphery: a structure is not a space; power relations are not distances and angles; and intertextuality is not reflective glass. Just because an idea of the world can be represented as a *structure* – and this includes the methods of semiotics, cartography, taxonomy, statistical and graphical representations – it does not automatically confer the materiality of physical space. I believe that this understanding is important for at least three reasons: firstly, because it frees up thinking about power structures, releasing us from the tendency to imagine them tied to their geography and architecture; secondly, the reverse; and thirdly, because it opens up an analysis of why or why not the two realms might coincide. In other words, what is interesting is analysing the sociology and psychology behind urban planning decisions such as centralisation, decentralisation, grid pattern, garden pattern, and so on. The harmonisation of power and architecture in the Panopticon is not a complete coincidence, because the metaphoric ideology (like the Freudian metaphors) of centralising power and marginalising the oppressed was probably in Bentham's mind when he designed it. The mental, social and physical effects of the Panopticon are therefore *inseparable* but need not be *indistinguishable.*

Conclusion

My critique here is of the spatial metaphor which has become so prevalent in socio-geographical studies of the city. It is a critique of what Soja has named 'the spatial turn' in the humanities and social sciences,[47] and of what Balshaw and Kennedy recently identified as the "increasingly irrepressible metaphor in contemporary cultural and critical theorising."[48] When David Harvey, for example, claims that: "space becomes whatever we make of it during the process of analysis rather than prior to it … space is neither absolute, relative or relational in itself, but it can become one or all simultaneously depending on the circumstances,"[49] one could ask: what of this situation, this context? What does space become when we discuss the

Bonaventure Hotel in relation to transnational capitalism? Harvey answers this question in another essay, quoted by Soja, in which he replicates the familiar formula of the physical / political conflation:

> Capital *represents* itself in the form of a physical landscape *created* in its own image.[50]

My reading of these texts is that the relationships between types of 'space' have been written too easily. It is not enough to say that physical space simultaneously produces, symbolises, recapitulates, reflects, or exemplifies political space. Like Jameson and Soja, I feel that to live within the postmodern urban fabric is to somehow experience the physical manifestation of transnational capitalism: incomprehensible, disorienting, subduing, in a way that might go beyond the Chicago School model. But the fact that neither author is able to describe that relationship consistently, from one paragraph to the next, draws attention to a theoretical instability in the spatial account of politics.

Of course, as Foucault states, we must not treat space as "the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile."[51] We must pay attention to the production of space, for its meaning, its functions, and its operations, are socially and politically dependent. However, it is not necessary, nor even helpful, to expand the meaning of 'space' so broadly that we can no longer distinguish between brick walls and disciplinary boundaries. Whether or not one agrees with Jameson's periodising definition, postmodernism should not serve as a release valve for any and every kind of spatial hypothesis, without empirical or rhetorical justification. The social problem associated with this theoretical slackness is the failure to provide either a technique of mapping postmodern hyperspace, or any hope of resistance.

In understanding Jameson's project in this context – as the absorption of incompatible phenomena under the structural and totalising rubric of "space" – I feel that we are now in a position to determine its failure as an

aesthetic of resistance against the world space of late capitalism. Somewhat surprisingly, Jameson would seem to agree. Jameson's original essay "Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" first appeared in the *New Left Review* in 1984. By the time this essay was published in the book of the same name in 1991, Jameson had added a concluding chapter, in which the defeat of what he calls "cognitive mapping" is accounted for:

> … cognitive mapping, which was meant to have a kind of oxymoronic value and to transcend the limits of mapping altogether, is, as a concept, drawn back by the force of gravity of the black hole of the map itself … and therein cancels out its own impossible originality. A secondary premise must, however, also be argued – namely, that the incapacity to map spatially is as crippling to political experience as the analogous incapacity to map spatially is for urban experience. It follows that an aesthetic of cognitive mapping in this sense is an integral part of any socialist political project.[52]

The irony of cognitive mapping's failure is that since the publication of *Postmodernism*, a new international resistance movement *has* emerged, in the anti-globalisation and World Trade Organisation protests. But it is a resistance movement which is anti-capitalist rather than socialist; plural, rather than totalising and pedagogical; and trans-geographic, organised around the internet, rather than inherently spatial. What might be required in orienting towards and resisting the phenomenon Jameson calls "late capitalism," is a theoretical way of explaining this complementary development as the visible shadow of a spectral object. To do so, it will be necessary to turn away from much of Jameson's spatial hypothesis, whilst retaining his urgency of writing about the radically original phenomena that are apparently coming into being. Perhaps it is to retain *as metaphor and nothing more* Jameson's experience of the Bonaventure Hotel, in which individual subjects find themselves unable to grasp or resist the economic, political and social logic of the epoch of postmodernity.

Russell Daylight has just completed a Ph.D. thesis at Macquarie University on the philosophy of language and the shift from structuralism to post-structuralism. The common concern between his doctorate, other recent work on the language of democracy, and "The Language of Postmodern Space," is with the linguistic aspects of philosophical manoeuvres.

[1] Edward Soja, "Heterotopologies: A Remembrance of Other Spaces in the Citadel-LA," in *Postmodern Cities & Spaces*, Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson, eds. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 21.

[2] Ian Woodward, Michael Emmison and Philip Smith, "Consumerism, Disorientation and Postmodern Space: a Modest Test of an Immodest Theory," *British Journal of Sociology* 51.2 (2000): 339-54.

[3] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 1991), 39.

[4] Jameson, 42-43.

[5] Jameson, 43.

[6] Jameson, 38-39.

[7] Euclidean positioning refers to one's position in three-dimensional space, while Archimedean positioning refers to an abstract and objective view, the "view from nowhere."

[8] Jameson, 44.

[9] Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), 243.

[10] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 243.

[11] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 244.

[12] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 3.

[13] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 6.

[14] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 3.

[15] Along with Robert E. Park, Ernest Burgess and others in the 1920s and 1930s.

[16] Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," *American Journal of Sociology* 44.1 (1938): 18-19.

[17] Wirth, 15.

[18] Wirth, 17.

[19] Wirth, 17.

[20] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Donald Nicholson-Smith trans (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 1.

[21] Lefebvre, 3.

[22] Lefebvre, 9-10.

[23] Perry Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernity* (London: Verso, 1998), 58.

[24] Jameson, 38-39.

[25] Jameson, 39.

[26] Penrith Plaza has been renovated and extended since my first excursion in 2002. It is now j-shaped.

[27] Jameson, 39.

[28] Meaghan Morris, "Things to do with Shopping Centres," *Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism.* S. Sheridan ed. (London: Verso, 1988), 206.

[29] Malcolm Voyce, "Shopping Malls in Australia: The End of Public Space and the Rise of 'Consumerist Citizenship,'" *Journal of Sociology* 42.3 (2006): 269-86.

[30] Voyce, 271.

[31] Louise Johnson, "The Postmodern Australian City," *Suburban Dreaming.* L. Johnson ed. (Geelong: Deakin UP, 1994), 52.

[32] Jameson, 38.

[33] Jameson, 44.

[34] Kim Humphery, "A Stranger in Daimaru," *Meanjin* 53.1 (1994): 85.

[35] Jameson, 31.

[36] Jorge Luis Borges, "The Aleph," quoted in Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 222.

[37] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 2.

[38] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 2.

[39] Morris, 195.

[40] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," quoted in Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 18.

[41] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 18.

[42] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 2.

[43] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 1.

[44] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* Roy Harris, trans. (London: Duckworth, 1983), 80.

[45] Gwendolen Wright and Paul Rabinow, "Spatialization of Power: A Discussion of the Work of Michel Foucault," quoted in Soja, "Heterotopologies," 29, my emphasis.

[46] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 110-11.

[47] Edward Soja, "Foreword: Cityscapes and Cityspaces," *Urban Space and Cityscapes: Perspectives from Modern and Contemporary Culture*, Christoph Lindner, ed. (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), xvi.

[48] Maria Balshaw and Liam Kennedy, "Introduction: Urban Space and Representation," *Urban Space and Representation*, Maria Balshaw and Liam Kennedy eds. (London and Sterling, VA: Pluto, 2000), 1-2.

[49] David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins UP, 1973), 13.

[50] David Harvey, "The Urban Process under Capitalism," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 2 (1978): 124.

[51] Michel Foucault, "Questions on Geography," *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, Colin Gordon ed. (Brighton, Sussex Harvester Press: 1980), 70.

[52] Jameson, 416.