

discover in a drive through the spacious corridors and unique villages that can provide answers for future attempts at utopian design. Perhaps a dual journey, both theoretical and physical, may be in order

My body, enlarged by the leaking prosthetic that is my arm, speeds along the freeways that slice the sterile city/suburb. The 91 to the 55 to the 405, et to-my-mind, ridiculous “the” that graces the freeway signifiers takes nothing away from the power of the telephone exhaust tubes that dump us in appropriate zones—zones that specify race, wallet girth, or square feet owned. But I, daring as I am, exit in an inappropriate zone. Irvine, California: heart of Orange County, home of the security mom, the overachieving son, and the high dad. A placeless place. The utopia of the white family I join my toporous, white, metallic body to a multitude of sleek, neatly sealed, silver and gold bodies of others and sweep by signs for Irvine’s famous “villages.” On a hunch, I turn onto West Yale Loop (I always wanted to go) and cruise through bird signs—Heron, Mallard, Whistling Swan—and land on Nighthawk. There, lurking by a curb, I find what I’m looking for. Not that I knew I was looking for it, but nevertheless there it sits. An empty Miller Genuine Draft beer can. Forlorn, abandoned, lost. Maybe waiting for another punctured leaking metal vessel chug, chortle, and groan to a stop by my find. My fleshly body unfolds from metal to sit by my newfound friend. I join my skin to the rough curb to ponder my companion’s out-of-placeness.

Irvine is a planned community. Planned as few communities have ever been

planned. The ultimate in the postmodernist, post-Fordist, post-history (Fukuyama style), new urbanist design. Born through the machinations of the Irvine Company, a huge corporate entity that owns over sixteen percent of all the land in Orange County, Irvine sprang up seemingly overnight in the 1960s when the University of California decided Irvine would be the perfect place for a new campus. William Pereira, hired by the Irvine Company to create a plan for the campus and a surrounding town of 10,000 acres, originally attempted a design for a 100,000-person population that avoided the spectre of large-scale sprawl. Martin Schliesl, a prominent historian of Southern California, claims that the Irvine Company looked with pleasure at Pereira's careful plans to secure the area from uncontrolled suburbanization. But suddenly in 1970 the plan for a small university town ballooned to incorporate space for 400,000 residents on 53,000 acres and concerns over sprawl quietly slipped into the background.

Would she come to make sure I was sufficiently safe (same) to be accepted? Would my
 body ease into the smart design (smart bomb) of my new abode with each efficient tool
 stored in an efficient place for efficient use? Would I cruise the rooms that hang
 Japanese style prints and tasteful photographs eventually alighting on a muted divan
 with my martini in hand? Yanked back from my fantasy by footsteps, I cringe behind my
 metal prosthetic awaiting the certain security check. Click, click, the heels come closer
 They slow. "Is that a comfortable place to sit?" she asks. Accused, I stammer and smile,
 "It's all right." She begrudgingly moves along wondering at her appropriate response to
 my intrusion. Surveilled, I guiltily slink back into my chrome extension. I have no doubt
 at my fate if I was a black man. Twenty questions and then a quick call to the local
 authorities. My unknown black body would have been too much of an inconsistency in a
 tightly controlled quarter

behaviour in the future. My skin crawls, my body retreats, I make a quick getaway.

While Soja might slide into a backhanded celebration of Irvine, not all postmodern analyses suffer such a fate. Hold up Irvine to a Foucauldian light and quite another picture emerges, one not so prone to confusion with utopia. In fact, Irvine's meticulous design and spacing, rigid homogeneity, and neighbourhood watch all conjure images directly from Foucault's unnerving view of the social order. A planned, overnight creation, Irvine figures as a premiere institution of spatial control. Each lot, each park, each tree, and each human exist on a master plan to guarantee Irvine's citizens a safe community and "peace of mind." A spatial grid locks each body into its appropriate place ensuring an accumulation of power and knowledge in an orderly system. Anybody out-of-place sounds the alarm of the surveilling security mom who is kept securely in the male created master plan.

Yet somehow, everyday more bodies vie to enter this confining system. In fact, residence in Irvine has become a highly sought-after goal; competing homeowners believe that this sublime spot will ensure their children's admittance to Stanford and their own inclusion in the global game of global wealth. But, to enter, you must prove your financial worth; after all, not just anyone can be accepted. It's a simple test really; only one question. Can you afford a house or apartment with a median price tag of \$245,000? Yes, the perfect entrance exam to create homogeneity. And although a large number of Asians have snuck in (29 percent by 2000), black admission has been kept to a reassuring 1.45 percent.¹⁰ Even Nicholas Bloom, a cheerleader of the New Town, admits that Irvine is "an equality among equals. a democratic city for upper income

bumperstickers scream Ahh, Irvine, John Ashcroft's ideal bedroom community. Keep the populous decentred, contained in their bubbles of domesticity or gathered under the surveilling eye. No central public space needed, thus none exists. I wind up at Target, pinned down by consumer culture. My metal body sweeps back onto the corridors of wide, Western boulevard. Corridors of discipline. Keep the citizens inside and the aliens outside the walls, both encased in a world of inescapable, gelatinous fluid. Slow, tame, easy to handle. To watch. Erect larger corridors to define the perimeter. The 5, the 405, the 55 prevent undesirable interaction. "The freeway in Los Angeles is analogous to the road which linked West Berlin to West Germany. It is an umbilical cord between related bodies.¹⁹ The freeway will take you where you (be)long. The perfect zone for you. But never exit in the wrong place or you may not come home again. I, in my dripping and rusting form, am an egregiously alien body; I try to slip through, but the pressures of space ("activity corridors"), time (the clockface), and conformity (where are my tennis whites?) refuse to provide myself. One lingers, while one escapes. One vaults to her appropriate zone in a state of abject terror, but one is emboldened to stay. Only in this split form can I survive. "We live, have lived, in fragmented cities fragmented by the wastelands between the heterotopias of compensation and illusion, fragmented by the immediate and fluid boundaries between affluence and poverty, and fragmented by the mandates of zoning. Because we are, as subjects and objects, fragmented beings.²⁰ As my one self escapes, I allow my other self, the transparent and fearless, to steal over the wall of Westpark and creep through an open window. A new world awaits.

lie safe under the wings of their corporate parents.

And, as if this did not provide enough cause for alarm, a further issue sneaks into view couched in the rhetoric of “power of place.” In the creation of Irvine, promotion relied heavily on a symbolic language that constructed Irvine as the new paradise. Many of the utopian claims of the new urbanism continue to depend on such rhetoric to paint postsuburban attempts as both divinely communitarian and rooted to place. If the “power of place” discourse is co-opted by capitalistic ventures, it only serves to augment damaging cultural and economic divides. Further, as this “sense of place and community” discourse meshes with the homogeneity caused by wealth exclusivity, political power frequently accumulates in hyperconservative hands. As Harvey explains, “[p]laces constructed in the imagery of homogeneity of beliefs, values, ideals, and persuasions coupled with a strong sense of collective memory and spatially exclusionary rights can be extraordinarily powerful players upon the world stage. The effect is to convert the dialectic of community solidarity and repression into a quagmire of violence and oppression.²⁷ In Irvine’s case, “power of place” stems from pure commodity fetishism and hastens the journey toward, as Harvey calls it, uneven geographical development. As the inhabitants of Irvine continue on their path, fetishising place as the site of safe, financially-plump, homogeneous family values, they trip down a path too often travelled in the past toward dangerous ends. Irvine’s unwavering efforts to ignore the social and ecological processes that support it while travelling in its mystical sense of community and place can only lead toward a dystopia of hatred, fear, and inequity.

to scare me away. Gliding soundlessly over AstroTurf search for a crack, a narrow ledge, a relenting passageway. My imperceptible self finally discovers a careless cavity and I slip inside. I freeze and listen. Assured of my solitude, I glance around. Soft carpet buoys me along in a sea of pale ivory. Has anyone walked here before? Search for evidence of living, for signs of use. No one exists. I worry at the silence of the walls, the roof. "[T]he building [is] an organism with its surface being the third skin of the occupants. For the organism to be healthy, the skin should be allowed to function naturally: breathing, absorbing, protecting, insulating, regulating, communicating...."²⁸ I'm used to the groaning, the creaking, the play of my own third skin. But here, the air, the surfaces do not converse. These beautifully manufactured, planned, perfect homes livi(e)]TJ >>BD

house is supposedly a stable vessel for the personal identity of its occupant(s), a home for, and mirror to, the self. But the concept of home is also a response to insecurity and the fear of change. The home must appear to be stable because social norms and personal identity are actually shifting and slippery.³⁰ Yes, stability may provide reassurance, but it only pushes the fear into deeper, more dangerous places. Those places must move and converse to render change acceptable, fear manageable, anger beneficial. Movement seems so difficult in a building of unenlivened materials. Somehow I drag myself down soft, still hallways to complete this mission of reconnaissance, this inquest. Microwaves, blenders, toaster ovens, salad spinners, Cuisinarts, utensils stand in reserve on kitchen counters awaiting their appropriate use. What would happen if I made glue in the blender, dug dirt with the grill fork, employed the spinner as a bug house?

America's exceedingly consumerist culture, Irvine, and Orange County in general, has

happiness offered there. As historians Rob Klig, Spencer Olin, and Mark Poster cryptically suggest, consumption, rather than family interaction, has become the County's "core cultural value."³⁵

But wait just a minute! Who's to say that consumerism is not a type of empowerment? Can't the financial decisions we make as well as our methods of product use entail a certain level of creativity and strength in the face of corporate greed and political disenfranchisement? That's the news from Michel de Certeau anyway. De Certeau, famed postmodern theorist and advocate of the consumer in the face of all powerful production, seems ripe for application to the consumer culture of Irvine. In his analysis, de Certeau creates an image of shopping and of product use as the activities of clandestine creativity employed by the masses. As he remarks, "[t]he tactics of consumption, the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong, thus lend a political dimension to everyday practices."³⁶ But who exactly are the weak and strong in this case? Is the shopper at Giorgio Armani truly making a statement by the weak when she purchases a blouse for three hundred dollars or more? Particularly when that same shopper may be using money earned through ownership of Prudential or Motorola or Wendy's? In other words, are the Irvine consumers part of the marginalised masses? No, on second thought, de Certeau would be absolutely inapplicable in such a case. In fact, when the Irvine consumers zero in on Fashion Island with their median income of \$72,057,³⁷ they figure as the epitome of the strong, not the weak. Their political vocalization rings loud as they cruise the aisles of Nordstrom's and Sak's only

politico to sit on the throne of America's empire. And it is from this position of power that the residents of a wealthy paradise continue to craft our space in the model of commodity fetishism. Kept in our boxes, surveilled by the powers that be, we can purchase to our heart's content, but we will never gain freedom of movement outside the consumer grid. We will never be allowed to traverse the wide, smooth spaces of a non-capitalistic utopia.

Back outside on the AstroTurf, no wait, this isn't AstroTurf. This is actual grass. Eastern, water-fat, kelly green grass. But so flawless and neat. No blade beats his brother in height or width. Each appears cloned. Surreal. Awful. I scamper to the next fully enclosed yard. The same. A grill, a deck, and grass. The next, a grill, a swing set, and grass. I saw none of this from streetside. For each yard is completely sealed like the garages and the metal boxes inside the garages. The Irvine resident can rest secure in their own backyard cubicle without interaction with such undesirables as neighbours or friends. But do they use these cubes of green? The unmarred and water-greedy lawns show no marks of spoiled children's feet or lazy dogs' spittle forms. I continue my transparent journey up and over fences until I reach the famous "greenbelts" of town. The semiarid ground across which live oak and sagebrush, wild tarragon and elderberry used to dance has vanished to be replaced by occasionally bike paths and lush green growth. These little gardens of play that improve the postsuburban utopia serve so many functions. They ensure the city's aesthetic appeal. They ring the town to keep degenerates away. They divide city and university for fear of those wild students and too-liberal faculty. They keep home prices high. And they add to yet another illusion, one that

lures me to lie on the luxuriant carpet of green. I feel stability in the human future, a loving partnership between humans and ~~the~~. Relishing this sense of security, I slip into a sleep of the satisfied

subvert the tightly managed space fragmented into easily maintained partitions, Irvine appears as the realisation of what the inventive French theorists, Deleuze and Guattari, call “striated” space. Within striated space, there is no experience of leaving the system, no ability to escape the eyes of state control, no true space to wander. Striated space is formalised, homogeneous, and universal, eating up all remaining free, or “smooth,” space. Smooth space, on the other hand, which Deleuze and Guattari depict as the opposite of absolute, quantifiable space, cannot be counted or easily delineated. Heterogeneous and polyvocal, smooth space can only be experienced through the tactile, i.e. the body. Smooth space returns us to a physical wandering where we relearn place by attending to the environment and its idiosyncrasies through bodily inhabitation. Thus, smooth space contains potential for our utopian quest beyond the borders of capitalistic state control.

But what does Irvine offer us in our search for smooth space or utopian form? Why even journey through such a severely striated pseudopia? After all, Irvine, in many ways, is diametrically opposed to our dream of equity and inclusion. But Irvine provides us with an excellent foil in our utopian pursuit. And it serves as a cruel reminder of the dangers of materialising utopia in general. Exhausting social, economic, and ecological resources, Irvine shows the damaging direction that newly crafted communities imbued with utopian lingo can take. Hidden behind walls, recreating the perfect neotraditional villages that harken back to some idealised communal past, Irvine residents have sealed themselves off from the realities of an extremely mixed, democratic society. And by living in this idealised past, one that proves so destructive to the present, Irvine ensures its own demise. As Edward Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder,

authors of *Fortress America* blatantly point out, homogeneous communities are inherently brittle, weak, and “too easily harmed by a single trauma.”⁴¹ In addition, such communities with their exclusionary homogeneity undermine attempts at environmental sustainability. Roger Talbot and Gian Carlo Magnoli, two among many environmental

Flexible, fluid, tactile, and enlivened, it is in such forms that our bodies will continue the quest for an endlessly improving society. For only with the integration of our physical and mental selves into the very interstices of architecture and community will these spaces breathe and thrive and grow in sustainable and enjoyable ways.

Robert Mugerauer, professor of architecture at the University of Texas at Austin, rubs his hands in pleasure at the possibilities for this new dance toward utopia. “This dance is a dance of disassembly,” he muses. “It also is a dance that may promise a freer and more careful mode in which people can belong to each other and to the sustaining earth.”⁴⁸ He so eloquently enunciates, we must begin this journey toward utopia with one question: “What kind of place should we make for the dance that we now welcome, or await, or resist?”⁴⁹

On my last spin through the space of pseudopia, I happen upon another lost companion, a final thread of hope. I streak by, my metal body looking for a resting place. But, of course, stopping here on the fast passageways would on, nq las7-14(r)-1(e at/P <)-2(o es)-1

more substantial (riotous buildings, solar panels, entire communities of mixed race and class), nevertheless, they send me back to my own zone grinning at the inevitable “choreography of collision”⁵⁰ that our future communities can only hope to be.

¹ Paraphrase from a California Office of Tourism brochure quoted in Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-Imagined Places* 11 (1996).

²⁶ Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*, 70.

²⁷ Harvey, *Justice, Nature...*, 323.

²⁸ Bob Fowles, "Transformative Architecture: A Synthesis of Ecological and Participatory Design," in Warwick Fox, ed., *Ethics and the Built Environment* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 108.

²⁹ Kent C. Bloomer and Charles W. Moore, *Body Memory and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 59.

³⁰ Hill, "An Other Architect,"