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GENTRIFICATION AND THE YOUTH MOVEMENTS OF THE 1960S

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The 1960s student movement reached its symbolic climax in spring 1968 in Paris. Although the beginnings of gentrification as a discernible urban process in the late 1960s coincided with these events, the adversarial youth culture has been given surprisingly little attention in the historical contextualisation of the process.

This paper summarises a longer argument that locates the beginnings of gentrification in the critique of everyday life that was implicit in the late 1960s 'youth ghettoes' of major cities. Two aspects of that critique are particularly relevant for gentrification. First the spatialisation of the critique contrasted the one-dimensional conformity of the suburbs with the adversarial spontaneity of old inner city areas, valued precisely because they were devalued by mainstream society. Second, the aestheticism of the critique as a cultural politics, with a lifestyle exalting the prophetic status of the artist, aided the widespread aestheticisation that has accompanied later stages of gentrification.

The paper reconsiders Stuart HALL's neglected claim in 1969 that the hippies, the most conspicuous element of youth culture, were "some of the first enlisted troops in a new kind of politics of post-modern post-industrial society: the politics of cultural rebellion". Or in the later words of a Vancouver realtor, gentrification is a matter of "following the hippies". While not neglecting alternative explanations, the posing of a cultural politics, and indeed a cultural geography, that follows the youth movement is an insight worth pressing further.

Key Words: Cultural Politics, Gentrification, Student Movement

For some years I have been examining the restructuring of labour markets and housing markets in the downtowns and inner cities of six large metropolitan areas in Canada: Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa, and Edmonton, the five largest metropolitan areas, and Halifax, the major city in Atlantic Canada (LEY 1988, 1992, 1995). A principal feature of this restructuring has been the growth of managerial and professional workers, the so-called quaternary sector of the work force. Since 1971 more than half of net employment growth in these metropolitan areas has comprised quaternary level positions, a remarkable figure when it is recalled that these are jobs at the top of the employment hierarchy, enjoying the highest salary levels.

A minority of these workers have sought out a residence in the inner city, contributing to the phenomenon of gentrification. However, because of the simultaneous loss of non-quaternary employees from these same neighbourhoods, since 1981 quaternary workers have become *over*represented as inner city residents relative to metropolitan totals. In the six cities together they have increased from 18 percent of labour force members resident in the inner city in 1971 to 38 percent in 1991, for a net gain of 160,000 residents with professional and managerial jobs. The extent of this migration has contributed to a significant restructuring of many inner city neighbourhoods.

This paper considers only one aspect of this *embourgeoisement* of the inner city. What, if any, is the relationship between the gentrification of the inner city in the past

two decades and the youth movements that preceded it in the 1960s? For these youth subcultures were also significantly concentrated in the inner city. In the City of Toronto, for example, there was a net gain of 40,000 young adults aged 15-24 during the 1960s, while the inner districts subsequently gained 60,000 quaternary workers between 1971 and 1991. If most pronounced in the primate city, these trends were not limited to Toronto. In Vancouver, 60 percent of net migrants to the City between 1966 and 1971 were in the 20-24 age cohort, and here the research question may be asked more pointedly. The Kitsilano neighbourhood gained several thousand young adults in the 1960s and became the city's principal concentration of the counterculture. But within a few years significant change was underway, and between 1971 and 1976 some 40 three storey condominium buildings had been constructed in the district, and it had achieved the reputation of the city's most celebrated gentrified district.

What is the relationship between the presence of youth subcultures in the 1960s and subsequent gentrification of inner city districts? Three possibilities present themselves. The first is that any association is coincidental, a random conjunction warranting no further attention. A second possibility is a functional one, that the youth were the last group of poor residents to generate an economic return for owners from deteriorating housing near the end of its history of down filtering, housing that was occupied primarily because of its low cost. The third possibility is the most interesting theoretically. Besides its functional value, these old inner city neighbourhoods held a symbolic value for their residents. For the youth subcultures inner city living meant not only affordability, but was also in significant ways a statement of a cultural and political identity oppositional to mainstream culture. Place, or geography, became an important component in the constitution of an alternative identity politics. In this third interpretation, which will now be explored in more detail, the youth cultures transformed the meaning of space, and as this new topography of meaning was passed on to receptive fragments of the middle class, so gentrification emerged as a strategy to enlarge a particular expression of cultural and political identity.

The Aestheticisation of the Contemporary City

Gentrification is part of a larger constellation of phenomena, what some authors refer to as the aestheticisation of the contemporary city. This term invokes the rise of the 'soft city', with a new found importance for the arts, heritage preservation, leisure and tourism, a premium upon fashion and design, lively public places, boutiquing, and greater prominence for major sporting events and the spectacle. In some versions these are the essential conditions of the postmodern city (HARVEY 1989).

Aestheticisation is not a new phenomenon of course. The aesthetic personality was a central element of nineteenth century Romanticism, and at mid-century KIERKEGAARD wrote with some passion on the relations between the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious personality. More recently, the authors of the Frankfurt

School described the rise of the culture industry that they claimed sought to remove ethical judgements from a population of consumers, and trained them to respond sensuously to commercial and state propaganda, abandoning the responsibilities of citizenship for the pleasures of consumption. The French activist Guy DEBORD (1973) referred to such a condition as the society of the spectacle, raising the spectre of a brain-dead population, passive before the seductive delights of consumption.

It does seem as if there has been a quickening in the pace of aestheticiation in major city centres in recent decades. Cities like Toronto and Vancouver have made large investments in the arts, leisure, sports and tourism, while Montreal completed 14 substantial leisure projects in 1992 at a cost of $310 million. Three-quarters of attractions listed in the *Montreal Tourist Guide* are located in or near the downtown area (BROADWAY 1993). In this paper I will suggest in a preliminary manner that it may well be worth looking more closely at the youth movements of the 1960s for one source of the aesthetic disposition. This is by no means the only origin, and one should not for a moment overlook the role of the market and the state in promoting landscapes of consumption. But as we shall see, the youth movements were a large enough social cohort that they were able to impact the city in important ways concerning the *meanings* of urban life as well as the *forms* of urban development.

The Counter*culture*

First, consider the youth movements as a counter*culture*, concerned with the recovery of authentic meaning in everyday life in a society dominated by systems and structures that were perceived to be oppressive: sclerotic and authoritarian educational structures, self-seeking private corporations, an impersonal and repressive state apparatus, and an aggressive military-industrial complex. Here were the alienations that Herbert MARCUSE, one of the prophetic voices of the 1960s, castigated for their role in shrinking civil society to a one-dimensional society (MARCUSE 1964).

Because these alienations moved beyond the workplace to invade the whole of everyday life, the old Marxist focus upon the relations of production was inadequate. Authors like MARCUSE, LEFEBVRE (1991), and DEBORD (1973) identified the insidious control of a corporate society in the relations of *re*production. Particularly in French social theory, an antidote to the passivity of consumption was identified in the spontaneity and reversals of festival, a place and time for establishing community and creative self-expression. Continuing in the avant-garde tradition of defamiliarisation, throwing into doubt the taken-for-granted, LEFEBVRE saw in the freedom of festival a liminal condition where the routines of everyday life could be suspended in an "explosion of forces" (LEFEBVRE 1991, p. 202), where "tout est permit" (POSTER 1975, p. 244). So it was that the French student movement in particular had a distinctively cultural and festive edge. A *cri de coeur* from the Sorbonne in June 1968 declared "the bourgeois revolution was judicial, the

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proletarian revolution was economic. Ours will be social and cultural so that man can be himself" (YINGER 1982, p. 202). Or, in perhaps the best remembered Paris graffito of spring 1968, "Beneath the paving stones, the beach".

The pursuit of anti-structure, and the elevation of spontaneity and self-expression, had a strong Romantic character (TURKLE 1975; MARTIN 1981). Lord BYRON, the nineteenth century Romantic poet and warrior, had claimed that 'the great object of life is sensation', and critics of the student movement both on the right (BELL 1976), and the left (HABERMAS 1970), challenged what they saw as the sensuality of liberated youth. Moreover, personality assessments showed that sympathisers of the student movement scored highly on such personality dimensions as aestheticism, emotion and sensitivity (QUARTER 1972). The sensuality of 1960s youth had a further expression of the greatest importance that has not attracted the attention it deserves. The Romantic turn led to the ascension of art and artistic imagination, and the selective mobilisation of students in the arts and social sciences. A review of American and Canadian findings, reinforced with an empirical study at the University of Toronto, concluded that the most radical political sympathies were located in the arts, humanities and social sciences, and such related fields as social work and liberal theology, while conservative sentiments were held in engineering, law and business programs, with the natural sciences and other professional schools falling between (QUARTER 1972). Remarkably, we shall see later this disciplinary sequence reappearing in residential patterns in Canadian cities in the 1980s.

There is one further point to make as we consider the distinctively cultural complexion of the youth movement. The Romanticism of the movement and the aestheticism of its adherents, led naturally to the privileged status of the artist as a prophetic voice of social criticism in a secular society, usurping the traditional authority of religious leaders. The artist, moreover, besides a social role, served an exemplar of a liberated lifestyle. Freed from bourgeois disciplines, the artist was released to pursue the creation of new meanings and self-determination. The artistic way of life was totemic of an alternative society of anti-structure. In this light it is surely no accident that artists as an occupational group have experienced remarkable growth over the past 25 years. Their rate of increase exceeded overall job growth by 300 percent in Canada and the United States in the 1970s. Their avocation is symbolic and expressive, not functional and instrumental; a Toronto survey revealed that half the artists that were interviewed made a net *loss* in arts related activity (Social Data Research 1990). Clearly they were marching to a different drummer than that of the corporate organisation man.

The *Counter*culture

The youth movement was a culture of reversals, countering the presuppositions of bourgeois society. In its repertoire of anti-structure, the single theme that will be examined here is its reinterpretation of the meaning of urban space (see also

LEFEBVRE 1969). The artists are key players in this argument. HABERMAS has observed how "the avant garde must find a direction in a landscape into which no one yet seems to have ventured" (HABERMAS 1983). He was thinking, metaphorically, of pure aesthetics, but his insight has a greater range, extending to the literal astheticisation of space.

So what kinds of places are artists drawn to? First, and overwhelmingly, they are drawn to large cities. In 1971, fifty percent of Canadian artists lived in the Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver metropolitan areas. Moreover, they were further concentrated in the largest central cities, with high location quotients ranging between 2 and 3 for the different arts disciplines. There is a third level of spatial concentration, for within the central city, artists show a high level of centralisation, living in old neighbourhoods near the downtown and in the inner city. Around Toronto's CBD is a ring of census tracts with location quotients of 2.5 or more relative to the metropolitan distribution of artists.

There are functional reasons for this distribution -- available studio space and linkages with suppliers and markets -- but there is more to it than that. Downtown offers an intensity of stimulation, and also old neighbourhoods marginal to middle-class society, and valued because they allow a critical distance (in both senses) from middle-class life. As one Vancouver sculptor explained it: "Artists need authentic locations. You know artists hate the suburbs. They're too confining. Every artist is an anthropologist, unveiling culture. It helps to get some distance on that culture in an environment which does not share all of its presuppositions, an old area, socially diverse, including poverty groups" (Interview, summer 1992). Artists place a premium on sites that are devalued culturally as well as economically.

Note also the critical remarks concerning the suburbs. Here is a geographical reversal, a new topography of meaning raised over city space. The privileged centre is now the old inner city, while the suburbs are seen as containing the alienations of a conformist and commodified mass culture, the locus of what DEBORD identified as a society fallen asleep. Reviewing the spaces of the youth movement in Paris, LEFEBVRE (1969, pp. 117,119), too, contrasted the "social void" of the suburbs with the "utopian locality" of the centre.

The 1970s: Into the Job Market

Through the 1970s, the young adults of the 1960s entered the job market. Many turned to the burgeoning welfare state for employment, where they might retain some of their youthful idealism. During the 1970s, the glory years of the Canadian welfare state, more than half of college graduates gained employment in the public sector, either in government departments or health and education. Jobs in health, education and welfare expanded by more than half a million in the 1960s, and by a similar amount in the following decade. The largest share of public employees were graduates of arts and social science departments, who typically followed professional

and managerial career paths. A number retained their inner city locations from student days. So the City of Vancouver, for example, gained 10,000 residents aged 25-34 between 1971 and 1976. During this period, also, there was a marked upturn of income levels in the central city; 12,000 new households entered the top income bracket from 1972 to 1976 (City of Vancouver, 1977). Embourgeoisement was redefining the inner city.

In their residential choices, the professionals tended to follow the precedent of the artists. Indeed a quite remarkable residential progression is revealed which repeats the ranking of support by academic discipline for the student movement. Using data supplied by DANSEREAU and BEAUDRY (1985) I have identified 11 neighbourhoods in Montreal, five of which gentrified in the 1970s, while the remaining six gentrified in the 1980s. The authors supply figures on the degree of over- or underrepresentation of different occupational groups in these neighbourhoods relative to the mean for the Montreal metropolitan area. I have added these figures together for the two sets of five and six neighbourhoods (Table 1).

Table 1 Over- and Underrepresentation of Professional Subgroups in Montreal Neighbourhoods, 1981

	(a) Neighbourhoods that gentrified in 1980s	(b) Neighbourhoods that gentrified in 1970s
Artists	33	53
Social sciences	12	29
Education	3	48
Medicine	10	39
Natural sciences	-15	16
Managers/ administrators	-35	14

Source: Computed from data in DANSEREAU and BEAUDRY (1985)

Neighbourhoods gentrifying in the 1980s were, in 1981, near the beginning of the gentrification cycle (Table 1, column (a)). Note the high overrepresentation of artists, followed by occupations in the social sciences, education, and with underrepresentation for medicine, the natural sciences and, last of all, management, repeating with startling consistency the pattern of disciplinary support for the student movement. In contrast neighbourhoods that gentrified in the 1970s were, in 1981, much later in the cycle, and in these districts (Table 1, column (b)), all quaternary groups were overrepresented as interest in these districts had diffused from the artists, the location leaders, to other receptive professionals.

We see then the role of the artists as locational innovators, preparing a path that other professionals will follow, but in a distinctive sequence according to their ideological affiliation with *countercultural* values. Not surprisingly, correlation analysis

shows robust associations in Montreal (and also in Toronto, Vancouver and Ottawa) between the presence of artists in a census tract in 1971, and the tract's gentrification over the following decade.

These spatial relationships are sustained at even more aggregate geographical scales. In the six central cities as a whole, the most centralised of the major occupational groups in 1986 were artists, followed by occupations related to the social sciences, and then occupations related to religion, health care, teaching and the natural sciences (Table 2).

Table 2 Location Quotient of Residents, by Occupational Groups, in Central Cities Relative to Metropolitan Areas, 1986

	Six cities	Toronto	Montreal	Vancouver
Arts and related	149	225	137	149
Social sciences	144	201	128	144
Religion	137	121	159	99
Personal services	121	128	118	126
Medicine/ health	116	118	110	112
Teaching	107	119	100	103
Natural sciences	101	99	97	108
Other crafts/ equipment	96	95	104	102
Processing	95	84	110	98
Clerical	94	81	97	95
Sales	93	93	87	89
Product fabrication	91	82	113	96
Managerial/ admin	91	104	80	92
Construction	91	93	87	89
Transportation	88	71	89	77
Materials handling	83	75	103	87
Machining	79	61	93	72
Ag/ fish/ forest/ mines	76	77	67	75

All of these groups tended to be disproportionately concentrated in the central city. Replicating the position of antipathy toward the student movement in the 1960s, the least centralised of the quaternary work force were managers, who, unlike the professionals, tended to be underrepresented in the central city. The more adversarial the disciplinary field in the 1960s, and the higher the disposition toward the aesthetic, the more likely that the holders of jobs related to these fields twenty years later would be living in central city neighbourhoods. This is not simply a functional movement related to cost and distance: it is also a symbolic movement to a site that is perceived to support certain adversarial cultural identities.

So one finds that in old inner city neighbourhoods now occupied by the middle class, a critical cultural politics survives, a politics engaging the environmental and

women's movement, gay rights, social justice, and neighbourhood and heritage protection (CAULFIELD 1994; LEY 1994). Here the ideals of the 1960s are sustained.

Subversion: From Resistance to Collusion

One important step in my argument remains, for the adversarial culture in the central city is neither stable nor secure. As an interest in inner city living diffuses through the middle class to groups consecutively further from the countercultural core represented by the artist, so more conservative dispositions enter the gentrified inner city. Moreover, even critics may be insidiously co-opted, as the aesthetic ideology is domesticated into the art of living, the festival into a festival of consumption. The liberation of the sensuous, of individual self-determination may slide into self-contemplation, narcissism. Social as well as psychological arguments lead in the same direction. Like the counterculture, artists and their followers are primarily children of the middle class, and carry unexamined class interests. So apparently progressive struggles for heritage preservation, environmental improvement, or neighbourhood protection may have perverse consequences. By making neighbourhoods more desirable, they are creating a scarce good, and in the market place scarcity drives up prices. So it is that adversarial politics over the built environment may result in the housing displacement of the poor from gentrifying neighbourhoods, and their replacement by middle class groups later in the gentrification cycle, able to pay inflated prices for valuable inner city property, and much less concerned with issues of social justice. An ungenerous assessment would see the innovative ideas of the counterculture as the research and development that permitted the successful commodification of the aesthetic by entrepreneurs over the years to follow. As the art of living replaces a critical aesthetics, so the soft city of festival, community and spontaneity becomes incorporated within the calculus of the state and the market.

If this seems an excessive conclusion, consider the evolution of Yorkville, the core of Toronto's counterculture in the 1960s, a place then of street artists, American draft dodgers, and hippy coffee shops. Today it is a cornucopia of upscale consumption, and its principal mall is a suq-like bazaar called Hazelton Lanes. This aestheticised landscape has a history worth tracing, for its developer, Richard WOOKEY, perceptively anticipated the trajectory from the youth movement to gentrification. "In 1966 I saw all those 16 year old kids in Yorkville" he recalled at the opening of the Lanes in 1976. "I thought: 10 years from now they will be 26. They will want Yorkville, but a different kind. They will be consumers. And they will be more sophisticated" (FERRANTE and WARD 1976). WOOKEY frequently visited the beaches in the south of France, his father's home, and understood intuitively their sensuous desires. In true postmodern irony, Yorkville consummates the epigram of 1968: beneath the paving stones the beach!

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