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**HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE:
THE SHOPPING CENTRE IN THE REAL WORLD
AND THE IMAGINATION**

by

C. Amanda Craig

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Mass Communication

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Ottawa, Ont.
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**"Here, There and Everywhere":
The Shopping Centre in the Real World and the Imagination**

submitted by C. Amanda Craig
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

Thesis Supervisor

Chair, Department of Mass Communication

Carleton University

ABSTRACT

Shopping centres are a major contemporary phenomenon. Their very existence attests to the fact that the ideals of production, and perhaps to a greater extent, consumption, are fundamental components of a consumer society. For contemporary culture, the shopping centre has become the definitive site for the integration of a place of commerce with a place of pleasure. It is the amalgamation of the economic (production and consumption) and the cultural (the construction of meaning and identity) spheres that is at the heart of the postmodern shopping centre, and relatedly, postmodern theory. Postmodern theory allows for the examination of the status of social relations within society while at the same time offering some interpretation of the shifting perspective of production and consumption. The study of the contemporary shopping centre is indeed a complex one and postmodernity directly refers to this high degree of complexity and the various degrees of change which occur in a postmodern consumer culture.

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INTRODUCTION:

If the ancient Greeks are remembered for their amphitheatres and the Renaissance Italians for their magnificent churches, then certainly twentieth century North Americans will be remembered for their shopping malls. They are the signature structure of our age. Rising from the urban landscape of city after city across Canada and the United States these easily recognizable, sprawling mega-structures attest to the dominance of today's consumer culture; a culture in which they are a fundamental, if not essential, ingredient.

As a key element of consumer culture, shopping centres necessarily have a powerful impact on the people (the consumers) who frequent them. They have come to serve as an important site in the development of subjectivity for today's individuals and consumers. This is evidenced by the fact that everyone, regardless of social or economic status, ethnic background or gender has undoubtedly visited the shopping mall a vast number of times. This society has been raised on trips to the mall both with families and friends, as well as on an individual basis. Malls are family destinations. They are one of the few places where parents will allow teenagers to go unsupervised. And as adults, it is somewhere to conveniently make purchases, socialize with friends or conversely, and perhaps surprisingly, one of only a smattering of places where someone feels he or she can be seen alone without fear of being stigmatized.

The shopping centre has become almost as familiar as the family home even though the home is considered private and the shopping mall, public. Instinctively there

is a knowledge of what the place will look like and generally what to expect. As a result, equal comfort and satisfaction can be garnered when visiting a mall in Vancouver or in Halifax. There is a sameness and recognizability about malls whether they be in Boston or Orlando, Toronto or Ottawa. There appears to be little difference between the malls people frequent regardless of whether they cross provincial, international or even cultural boundaries. Vacations away from home are only complete when a requisite number of hours has been allotted for shopping at that particular destination's regional malls.

As central as shopping centres appear to be in contemporary culture, some experts have begun to predict the fitful demise of the shopping mall. They state that the heyday of shopping centre development occurred during the late 1970s and early 1980s. At that time, an average of six to eight regional centres¹ were built every year in Canada - mainly in Ontario and the Western provinces. By 1990 the pace had slowed to as few as one or two a year for the entire country.

Accompanying the slowdown in new mall development has been the loss of retail business within existing malls. Management Horizons, a consulting firm based in Ohio, completed a study in 1990 which estimated that more than half of the nation's retailers would be out of business by the end of the decade. This would include the closing and razing of many of the nation's marginal shopping centres.² Understandably, Canada

¹A regional shopping centre is generally defined as having a minimum of about 400 000 square feet of space, two major retail tenants and a minimum 'catchment' population of 60 000 to 100 000.

²"Malls facing fitful demise, study claims", *Vancouver Sun*, (June 18, 1990), p1:5.

faces similar failings in its retail sector. This situation is largely being blamed on a debilitated economy. This, coupled with a declining population growth rate, has resulted in a consequent decline in the number of possible consumers who, at any rate, have reduced amounts of disposable income.

All predictions on the future of the shopping centre are not gloomy however. Developers, mall administrators and marketing experts predict that there may be at least one way to ward off impending retail doom - to rethink the very ways in which shopping centres are developed and used. Generally, they believe that *innovation* is the key to maintaining consumer loyalty. This potential restructuring of the mall environment includes such things as the introduction of recreation and entertainment areas, libraries, medical clinics, children's play areas, amusement parks, and even schools. The goal is to make the mall a community. In place of fast food outlets in drab food courts, malls are now contemplating cafés, bistros and night clubs. Accompanying these items will be hotels, apartments and condominiums. On their exterior, architects are beginning to toy with the usual shape and look of the mall. Parking lot jungles are disappearing in favour of roofed lots covered over by arcades, patios and courtyards. The monolithic grey-brown walls of the centres themselves are being replaced with windows and restaurants that open onto the street outside.

In certain circumstances, this redesigning of the mall environment has already occurred. Canada's West Edmonton Mall, which opened in 1986 in Edmonton, Alberta, was the first 'mega-mall' of its kind. Boasting some 600 stores and services and covering approximately 480 000 square metres, this mall is a novel mixture of retail, commercial,

recreational and entertainment facilities. In addition to the stores, West Edmonton Mall has attractions which include a 2.83 hectare water park, a National Hockey League size skating rink, an 18-hole miniature golf course, an amusement area with a triple loop roller coaster, a 1.62 hectare sea aquarium complete with dolphins and submarines, and a scaled-down replica of Christopher Columbus's *Santa Maria*. Completing the complex combination of this mega-mall is a 360 room hotel of which 120 rooms are decorated according to one of six themes, including Arabian, Polynesian and Roman.¹

On August 12, 1992 a new mall opened its doors in Bloomington, Minnesota. Known as the "Mall of America", its owners flaunt the fact that it surpasses West Edmonton Mall in both size and scope. Fortunately, this is of little concern to West Edmonton Mall owners, the Ghermazian brothers. They also happen to be the developers of the Mall of America; the world's newest *and* biggest mega mall. Comprised of four distinct sections "East Broadway, West Market, North Garden and South Avenue", the Mall of America also contains an amusement park, known as 'Knotts Camp Snoopy', the LEGO Imagination Centre, Golf Mountain (a 2-level miniature golf course) and, Underwater World (a 4.8 million litre walk-through aquarium).

It is the hope of the Ghermazian brothers and their company, Triple Five Corporation, to prove everyone who has predicted the downfall of the shopping centre incorrect. While West Edmonton Mall and Mall of America are still the exceptions rather than the rule in mall development, they are certainly indicative of a possible future

¹"West Edmonton Mall: Landscape of Myths and Elsewhereness", *The Canadian Geographer*, (Vol 34 No 1, 1990), p2-17.

for North American shopping centres. Shopping centres are more likely to resemble carefully contrived theme parks than they are to reflect our traditional notions of a downtown streetscape. Complete with amusements, entertainment sections, food concessions and distinct areas which resemble Walt Disney World's FantasyLand or Adventureland, these malls combine the activity of consumption with other leisure endeavours.

Shopping centres are the theme parks of today's consumers. They have been carefully cultivated in order to enhance the buying experience of the consuming public. Like theme parks, they have been consciously designed and developed in order to purposely direct people through the shopping environment. Criteria such as the placement of food concessions and washrooms, the mixing of upscale boutiques with lower-end department stores, and the inclusion of some sort of centralized area serve to mimic the design of theme parks wherein all park attractions consciously revolve around one integral location.

Equally important in the similarities between shopping centres and theme parks is the manner in which both of these privately owned places of business actively work to fabricate themselves as being 'public'. Unlike a truly 'public place' where any and everyone is free to engage in whatever activities they wish, shopping centres and theme parks painstakingly work to present themselves as places that are available to everyone while at the same time deliberately striving to keep out the 'undesirable' elements of society. This may not be quite as serious a problem for theme parks because they charge an admission fee, thus eliminating those who cannot afford to buy the entertainment

experience before they ever enter the park. Shopping centres, however, have no such fee. Any person is free to enter the building. There are no main gates or security checks. All that is required is that everyone who enters goes about the business of consuming. On the surface, the shopping centre appears to be quite public in nature, one of very few places that has no predetermined entrance requirements. Below the surface, however, there is a concerted effort being made by mall owners and administrators to initially control those who can enter the mall and then, once people have gained access to the mall, to control what they can and cannot do while inside. What appears to be a fairly straightforward, public shopping environment, is, in reality, a carefully developed private enterprise where only certain people and certain activities are wanted and/or tolerated.

In order to meet their demand for the 'perfect' consumer, shopping centres employ promotion departments whose primary objective is to target and persuade specific groups of people to shop at their mall. With the assistance of marketing firms and advertising agencies, these promotion departments seek to attract what they consider to be the 'perfect consumer'. After discovering exactly who that person is, the department can then go about the task of developing advertising and promotional campaigns that will pique the interest of all people who fit into that defined category. Mass advertising campaigns on television and radio, and in the pages of the local newspapers provide information on the mall in general, and individual stores in particular. Promotional campaigns within the mall are devised to bring the target audience into the mall where it is assumed that they will make some sort of purchase before leaving.

Shopping centres, in addition to promoting themselves as a market environment, also promote themselves as being part of the community, if not the actual 'community centre'. By acting as a concerned member of the community, shopping centres work to dispel the myth that they are nothing more than huge buildings of consumption constructed amid the housing developments. Instead, they liaise with community leaders and charities to provide both a location and a helping hand for community-based activities. By appearing to be a corporation with a conscience, mall administrators attempt to change the popular opinion that the shopping centre is nothing more than a convenient site to do any required shopping. They want to be seen as much more.

And it is this need to alter the prevalent conception of exactly what a shopping centre is, and exactly what a shopping centre does that is at the heart of the debate surrounding contemporary shopping centres. Shopping centres are much more than sites of consumption, they are an intrinsic component of both contemporary culture and contemporary subjectivity. By looking simultaneously at the shopping centre as an institution, and the subsequent formation and evolution of human agency as reflected by that institution, it is possible to garner greater insight into exactly how and why shopping centres are altering both their appearance and their marketing strategies to maintain the interest of a public that has grown up frequenting the mall.

As downtown stores continue to close their doors because of a lack of business and consumer interest, shopping centres, for the most part, have continued to prosper. It may be true that profits are down as compared to several years ago, but in relation to the rest of the retail sector shopping centres are maintaining the interest of both retailers

and consumers. Understanding the reasons behind the persisting loyalty of contemporary shoppers is of paramount importance to an understanding of the mall philosophy itself. For just as mall administrators change their perception of what the shopping centre should be, so too have contemporary consumers altered the manner in which they experience the mall. It is no longer just a place of consumption, but instead, a multi-dimensional 'theme park' that can be used and experienced in a myriad number of ways by many different people and groups of people.

This comprehension of both changing strategies and changing subjectivities in the mall environment is intrinsically linked with the ongoing theoretical exchange surrounding modernism and postmodernism, and as such, will be the subject of Chapter One.

The emergence of shopping centres during the period of modernity and their subsequent rise in significance for both the retail trade and the consuming public made perfect sense for the time. Equated with such things as urbanization, industrialization and the mass production of consumer goods, the shopping centre came to represent the 'perfect world' of the Enlightenment thinkers. It served as the ideal outlet for the mass commodification and commercialization of the marketplace. By placing all necessary stores in one place under one roof, consumers could easily find and purchase whatever they wished. The centre was nothing more than a place to consume; it had few if any other functions. It did not need any. The shopping centre was the consummate exemplar of modernity's ability to control and rationally order the consumption process.

The world of modernity is not a perfect world however, and as time has passed many of the suppositions assumed by modernists to be correct and infallible have come

into question. The greatest criticisms and reactions have been rendered by theorists of postmodernism who have based their criticisms on an overall disillusionment with the modernist system. Rather than attempt to locate meaning within a perfectly ordered and rational system, postmodern thinkers began to question the world around them. Instead of trying to make everything fit into predetermined categories of sameness, they considered difference and 'otherness' as inherently important elements in a new social structure. Rather than succumbing to the economic rationality and discipline of the modern movement, postmodernism allows for the possibility that it is both the producers and the consumers who participate in the production and significance of meaning within a postmodern consumer culture.

Having established the parameters of this debate through the introduction of postmodern theory, Chapters Two and Three will then begin to enhance the argument by placing the shopping centre within its historical context.

This will begin in Chapter Two with an examination of the birth and development of Consumer Culture in Western society. This change in purchasing habits was brought about by such things as large scale manufacturing, the rise of advertising, an increase in leisure time, and the development of a mass market through improved transportation and communication networks. Equally as important as these distinct societal changes, however, was the transformation that occurred in the individual lives and identities of the people living through this period of reformation. Even during a time of unprecedented mass production, consumers sought to create their own meaning out of the commodities presented to them.

Chapter Three will build on the ideas of rapid expansion and changing consumption habits (or the way in which people shopped) as discussed in Chapter Two, to examine more specifically the *places* in which people shopped. Just as the demand and desire for commodities increased and transformed through consumer culture, so too did the setting for the display and purchase of these countless commodities also change. Beginning in the early 1800s, the traditional notion of the intimate local shop with a recognized shop-keeper began to give way to a more formal shopping environment, culminating in the *shopping centre* of the 1950s. But like the metamorphosis in store development, shopping centres themselves also underwent a great many modifications leading up to the extraordinary mega-malls of the 1980s and 1990s wherein leisure pursuits, in the form of vast entertainment spaces, merged with a more traditional retail sales environment in a previously unheralded way.

Beginning in Chapter Four, then, it is possible to explore the synthesis that has emerged between the shopping centre itself, and, the consumers who *use* it. No longer simply a retailing institution, the shopping centre can now be pondered as more of a *social* centre; a place that possesses both the means for consumption and the opportunity to engage in leisure pursuits. Similarly, the shopping centre attempts to suspend everyday reality and the mundane conception of shopping by re-making the mall into its own 'hyperreal' environment utterly removed from the urban landscape of which it is a part.

It is not just the mall environment that has altered the traditional codes of the shopping centre, however. Consumers also have begun to play with the conception of exactly what a shopping centre *means* to them. This introduces a key dilemma into the role of the

shopping centre in contemporary culture. For just as the public has begun to generate ever more complex ways to use the mall for personal (often non-economic reasons), mall management are working ever more diligently to sustain the control and financial viability of the centres. The dilemma then becomes one of individual power and subjectivity versus corporate control, a key concept which this chapter will seek to address.

Building on the notion of the shopping centre as an entertainment site, Chapter Five will make the connection between the shopping centre and the theme park as fundamentally similar locations wherein consumption and leisure are intrinsically linked in the consummate simulated environment. By briefly outlining the history of Walt Disney World and/or Disneyland, the definitive examples of the theme park phenomenon, it is possible to show how alike these two seemingly separate entities (shopping centres and theme parks) truly are. And further, it allows for the prediction that all of contemporary society is becoming more and more like a theme park - a place where history is an unknown, meaning and identity is found in consumption and reality is built on a simulation.

"THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW":
MODERNISM AND POSTMODERNISM

They have been called contemporary society's 'cathedrals of consumption' and 'temples of consumerism', but unlike the churches of organized religion these shrines of shopping have not been constructed for the purpose of worshipping a Divine God. Instead, they have been meticulously crafted in order to pay homage to the power of money and authority in contemporary culture.

That shopping malls are an integral component of today's society is hardly a new concept. The enclosed shopping centre has been in existence since 1956 when Southdale opened in Edina, Minnesota, a suburb of Minneapolis. But while the actual idea of a self-contained shopping area is no longer considered novel, the myriad ways in which the shopping centre is now being used by mall administrators and consumers is new. Shopping centres are a major contemporary phenomenon. Indeed, they may well have replaced for most people other types of shopping. And because shopping traditionally has been a moment of sociability in most societies they certainly warrant some attention.

There are some people who would argue, and understandably so, that if one is examining the shopping centre in contemporary society it is necessary to do so from an economic standpoint; that it is economic forces which are of the greatest significance to such an argument. They might claim that the study of shopping centres is redundant if exchange relations are not placed at the forefront of the debate. And this is because they hold to the idea that it is economic relations which shape and determine both the structure of contemporary society and by implication the people operating within that domain.

This study certainly does not exclude economic factors from the current debate for they are an indisputable component of any investigation into shopping centres. Certainly no inquiry into the role of shopping malls would even be necessary if they did not wield a certain amount of economic power. However, as the role of the shopping centre continues to evolve in keeping with the ever-changing role of the consumer it is the goal of this thesis to look beyond the economic to examine where shopping centres fit in with the overall transformation of contemporary culture. What is at stake here is not only the way in which economic relations are structured (or restructured), but also the way which *social relations* are correspondingly restructured. Social relations is used to refer to not only the relations of individuals and others, but also the way in which individuals view themselves, the expectations they have of others and of themselves, their notions of appropriate behaviour, and so on.

The study of economic forces is understandably significant but as the study of subcultures has shown, economics does not exhaust the meanings people attach to practices and commodities. For instance, if one were to look at Dick Hebdige's work on subcultures it would emphatically show that even within the confines of a certain socio-economic class position, members of subcultures create various new and even oppositional meanings.¹ The problem with a purely economic reading is that it assumes (in the classical phrase) that "production maps consumption", that is to say that the commodity produced contains within it the range of its use and meaning. Nothing, of

¹See Dick Hebdige, *Subculture - The Meaning of Style*, (New York: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1979).

course, could be further from the truth. So, subcultural study has indicated that it is also fruitful to look at phenomena from the point of view of their consumption

If some people feel that economic relations should take precedence as a way of understanding the shopping centre question, still others might deem it necessary to privilege the symbolic realm. Utilising a semiotic point of view, they might contend that the shopping centre is merely one more text that can be unpacked in such a way as to uncover the deeper levels of meaning contained therein. The problem, however, with purely textual analysis is that it is generally ahistorical. Simply stating that signifier x means signified z is not enough. Instead, it is necessary to ask such questions as, for whom, and under what conditions, does it mean these things? Semiotic analysis *does*, nevertheless, force one to look at the phenomenon in question as a coherent and organized set of meanings which is clearly a salutary step.

Just as with an economic point of view, this study does not eliminate the need for textual analysis. Instead, it incorporates the desire to uncover both the manifest and latent meanings contained within the subject of the shopping centre into a larger and more detailed analysis. In order to understand the transformation and function of the shopping centre, it is necessary to examine the emergence of the shopping centre within a particular moment of mass society. In fact, it can even be hypothesized that this transformation and function of the shopping centre can be best understood as the passage from modernity to postmodernity, the passage from rational to simulable subjectivity, from production to consumption, from order to seduction.

The dialectic of modernity/postmodernity, rather than being confined to one

dominant area of study, offers many different avenues for exploration. Through an understanding of the shift from a modern to a postmodern culture and some of what that entails, it is then possible to transcribe that change onto the shopping centre and the people who use it. Modernity/postmodernity allows for the consideration of the status of social relations within society. It can include such things as changing views of architecture, the emergence of new subjectivities, and a shifting perspective on the importance of contemporary consumption habits. Whereas the production process has historically been deemed the site of the greatest power within society, postmodernity questions that distribution of power. Instead of giving prominence to the producers, it allows for the possibility that power can also rest with consumers. It is imperative to understand that as consumption has become an increasingly important behaviour pattern, strategies for organizing it, which are no longer purely economic, but are also psychological and social, have become ever more complex. Postmodernity directly refers to this high degree of complexity and the various degrees of change which are occurring in a postmodern consumer culture.

MODERNITY

If change is indeed resulting because of a shift in the manner in which society is viewed, it is first necessary to understand what transpired prior to this shift. This entails garnering a greater understanding of the key tenets of modernity as they directly relate to the development of a consumer culture and the subsequent definition of the role of the

shopping centre within that culture.

Arising out of revolutions in countries like France and the United States in the eighteenth century, modernity emerged as an attack on traditional society. This traditional society was one in which there was massive social immobility and an endless reproduction of the past. Within this highly religious and ritualistic world people held to the belief that they could neither plan nor change their status in society; everything that happened occurred not because of anyone's individual will but because it was the will of God. It naturally followed that because people had no individual selfhood, they could not (and did not) question either their place in the social order or the traditional views of knowledge (religion) imparted to them through authority figures.

As exemplified by revolutions throughout the world, however, people began to call into question the role of authority within their lives. As they became disillusioned with the idea of Divine Transcendence and their lack of autonomy from religious ideals, people began to develop the notion that instead of relying blindly on the words and teachings of others, it was imperative to develop a conception of the world that was their own. This quest for more rational ways of looking at things, known as the Enlightenment, brought about a belief in the power of Reason.

Undertaking a ruthless break with everything that preceded it and with no respect for its past, modernity does away with notions of religion and faith in favour of complete objectivity. A totally secular movement which seeks to demystify knowledge, modernity (or the Enlightenment project) seeks to privilege scientific discovery and the development

of rational forms of social organization.² By attacking the traditional world view as nothing more than one highly particularistic 'image of the world', modernists displaced tradition as being both too contingent and too arbitrary. At the same time, modernity places at its centre the individual who will be the bearer of reason and the measure of all things. These two events then - the displacement of reason and the individual as the bearer of reason - necessarily imply one another. It is only when the individual can be emancipated from tradition, now understood as purely conditional, that he or she is able to imagine an absolutely objective world subject only to its own immanent rules.

By making tradition seen unreasonable, particularistic and arbitrary - in a word, purely contingent - reason was actually implying that the world was quite different from what tradition had claimed. Rather than being the repository of God's will, the world (both social and natural) was in fact objective, knowable and manipulable. If this is actually true, that it is not God who guarantees coherence in the world, then there must be something else to which individuals, as free and rational beings, will rationally submit. The answer can be found in reason's discovery of a new transcendence: Necessity.

If God has been rejected, then people require a new way to legitimate their actions, otherwise everything would fall into a state of despair and meaninglessness. By turning to Necessity as a way to both provide coherence in the natural world as well as legitimation to the social world, Necessity allows for the rational ordering of things. It is the only rational limit to individual freedom. Indeed, in the famous words of Karl

²David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, Inc., 1989), p13.

Marx, "Freedom is the recognition of necessity." Individual freedom, then, also has to exist in relationship to the limits imposed by the necessity (or interests) of others. One person's freedom must *necessarily* end where the next person's begins. Understandably, the ultimate limit to an individual's freedom is his or her own finitude: death.

Reason, therefore, is linked to both freedom and necessity. In fact, it conceives of the one only in terms of the other. They are respectively Practical Reason (freedom) and Theoretical Reason (necessity). Practical reason is that which criticizes tradition in the name of self-interest. Therefore, it affirms freedom. However, lest that affirmation of freedom become purely solipsistic - an affirmation devoid of content - and its content be reduced to nothing but the war of all against all, it requires its own transcendence. Practical reason requires theoretical reason, and theoretical reason discovered Necessity, the only rule to which practical reason could legitimately submit.

Practical reason had brought theoretical reason into existence, but is now totally dependent upon it. Practical reason can affirm freedom only in a paradoxical way. The end-point of total individual freedom is the detachment of the individual from all norms and social systems, the emancipation of the individual through any form of legitimation. That end-point, however, effectively empties freedom of all positive content and renders it useless, without either intention or finality. If freedom remains attached to a social system - the only desirable outcome - it must find a legitimation which is both abstract and universal (it must have the characteristic of an autonomous rule), and neither

particularistic nor contingent (it can in no way resemble tradition).³

This reorganizing of social relations is directly related to the modernist conception of progress as being a manifestation of rational thought. This idea of progress is based in the belief that society has an endpoint and that endpoint is a positive one. In keeping with certain Marxist ideologies, modernist thinkers feel that through the use of Reason society can evolve from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom, thus allowing for greater leisure time and activities. Paradoxically, this abundant leisure time would be achieved through the totalizing process of industrialization. The Industrial Revolution and the subsequent mass production of products and globalization of economies can probably be considered the fundamental exemplar of the modernist way of thinking. Freedom from authority would ultimately be reached through mechanization and industrialization. As Horkheimer and Adorno have stated, the modernist project has the potential to turn against itself and instead of bringing about human emancipation, it may in fact contribute to universal oppression in the name of human liberation.⁴

The irony of modernity is best exemplified, according to David Harvey, in the mythical figure of Dionysus who was "at one and the same time 'destructively creative' and 'creatively destructive'."⁵ For modernity, the drive to continuously create and produce more and more commodities means the continued destruction of everything that

³In a social context, this is an extremely difficult, if not impossible task. An entirely non-contingent social system is a social system without people. Nonetheless, despite its antagonistic relationship to tradition, modernity still required a new discourse of legitimation. It found this legitimation in democracy and science.

⁴Harvey, p13.

⁵Harvey, p16.

has gone before:

The entrepreneur...was the creative destroyer *par excellence* because the entrepreneur was prepared to push the consequences of technical and social innovation to vital extremes. And it was only through such creative heroism that human progress could be assured.⁶

Modernist notions of progress and linear development obtained through rational thought rested on the modernist notion of metanarratives. These metanarratives contributed to the destruction of the traditional conceptions of Church and State and instead, promoted a clear notion of causality in which cause and effect could be both predicted and achieved through careful planning.

Nowhere can this careful planning be better understood than in the birth and expansion of the shopping centre. By doing away with the established configuration of the downtown streetscape, city planners sought to develop a new area for consumption that was both streamlined and profitable. By enclosing the shopping experience, they found a way to include shoppers in the consumption process regardless of time constraints or weather conditions. This perfectly rational answer to the shopping process removes any necessity for the shopper to think. Instead, he or she simply has to enter through the mall doors and be carried away by the sights and sounds of the mall environment. In an entirely predetermined manner, mall developers construct the centres in such a way as to make the need for individual thought obsolete. Everything has already been taken care of - from a lack of seating to the placement of washrooms. Similarly, the positioning of the stores themselves is meticulously orchestrated to provide the best retail store mix, and

⁶Harvey, p.17.

subsequently, the greatest possible revenue:

All the best shops are clustered near centre court. This is where the retailer unleashes his retail thunder, the 'prime mix'...The most exclusive stores are on the second level near centre court, allowing their patrons to gaze down on the plebeians below.⁷

It is this strange dichotomy between the power of a few and the control of the many that is at the heart of modernist thinking. As Adorno and Horkheimer, as well as other members of the Frankfurt School have pointed out, Reason, when it is given preeminence in any society, begins to dilute any power that an individual might have. Instead, the individual is caught up in a system of power relations that consistently return power to a few key players. Human subjectivity, if it exists at all, is relegated to a subservient level where the individual is forced to live according to a preordained, rational pattern. Opportunities to resist the dominant order are either limited or non-existent.

This has certainly been the case within the confines of the shopping centre where a few principal players, namely mall developers and administrators, have had dominion over the vast population of consumers. Through a tightly assembled array of controls, mall owners are able to virtually guarantee that when people come to the shopping centre they are there to make purchases and nothing more. Understandably, there is little else to do. Through the power of rational thinking and the subsequent control of the individual, modernity, as exemplified by the shopping centre, removes any ability to construct ancillary meanings other than that which was previously intended.

⁷"Shoppers' Heaven", *Report on Business Magazine*, (June 1989), p64.

POSTMODERNITY

Postmodernity, however, has provided an outlet for the creative production of new meanings. Instead of a world comprised of rational distinctions, hierarchies and structures, the postmodern world is one in which a multiplicity of interests and intentions are not only accepted, but celebrated for their diversity. In stark contrast to the collectivising moment of modernity, postmodernity reasserts the power of the individual to formulate his or her own meanings out of whatever is presented, and thus, define his or her own unique identity. In the specific case of consumer culture, individuals, as consumers, are seen to have both power and potential within the social system. Instead of being limited by the rules and regulations as imposed by modernity, postmodern consumers are able to move about uninhibitedly within the consumptive realm freely choosing to act in whatever manner they wish. What this has meant for shopping centre management in particular, is that they can no longer be assured that just because someone has entered through the doors of the shopping centre, that he or she is necessarily there to purchase merchandise. While it is certainly possible, and also highly probable, that individuals continue to frequent the mall to engage in the activity of shopping, it is no longer the inevitable outcome of the journey. Rather than merely a functional location for consumption, shopping centres have become the site of play for the postmodern consumer.

This proficiency in playing with meaning is directly linked to the way in which

postmodernity views reality and the particular status of the individual. Whereas modernity enshrined the purely rational subject, postmodernity has ceased, for a number of reasons, to believe in that subject. Some of these reasons may be economic in nature, others are purely philosophical. Adorno, for example, ceased to believe in the purely rational subject because of Auschwitz. He refused to believe in a system (reason) which could deliberately manufacture its opposite (unreason). As he said, "What can one say after Auschwitz?" Whereas some people reject modernity by turning back to a modified form of tradition in the form of religious belief, others reject not modernity itself, but those aspects which they think led to Adorno's despair. This is the path of postmodernity. The postmodern subject is not a dithering idiot subject to the vagaries of whatever stimulation comes along. The postmodern subject is just not entirely rational. Instead, he or she is called upon as someone who can be seduced.

Instead of holding to the notion of a world in which there is but one supreme definition of reality, postmodernity signals the death of the meta-narrative and any belief in the possibility that signs are based in the real. For postmodernity, there is a simultaneous existence of realities. One person's attempt at locating meaning is considered neither better nor worse than the next. And because metanarratives no longer govern meaning systems, people can actively question everything that is going on around them. For postmodern consumers this allows for the continuous reconceptualization of the shopping centre and its role in their individual lives.

Fredric Jameson has termed this reconceptualization of reality 'postmodern schizophrenia' because any and all references to a defined 'real' have been eliminated.

No longer is there any conception of events occurring in the past or the present. Notions of temporal continuity are gone only to be replaced by an intense relationship with the present. Jameson states that the postmodern consumer is

condemned to live a perpetual present with which the various moments of his or her past have little connection and for which there is no conceivable future on the horizon...schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up any coherent sequence.⁸

Because any relationship with the past has been removed, it naturally follows that there is no longer any coherent understanding of history, and similarly no notion of finality.

The postmodern world removes all likelihood of coherence or consistency with regard to the choices that people make. Because all individuals are freely granted the opportunity to move about within the social structure picking and choosing from the myriad possibilities that suit their individual needs and tastes, the original conception of the shopping centre necessarily begins to decay. Any guarantee that people will shop and nothing else is removed and replaced by men and women who are proficient in the construction of individual meaning out of what the shopping centre has to offer.

Because postmodern consumers are not necessarily using the shopping centre for shopping alone, it has become critical for shopping centre developers to create an increasingly diversified structure. While the shopping centre continues to provide a space for consumption, it has also undergone a metamorphosis which includes the development of an entire leisure industry. And it is this combination of the economic with the cultural

⁸Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society", in Hal Foster, (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, (Washington: Bay Press, 1983), p.119.

realm that is at the heart of postmodern society, and subsequently, the postmodern shopping centre. If modernity focused on the realm of production, then certainly, postmodernity has called the power of the production process into question, choosing rather to highlight the manifest and latent power of both the consumption process and the consumer. Shopping no longer embraces only the process of making purchases and economic exchange. It has been elaborated by "practices of browsing, looking, [and] consuming the environment of various purpose-built 'consumption spaces'".⁹

Lauren Langman describes this new, commercially produced world of commodified goods, images and leisure activities as the *amusement society*.¹⁰ The amusement society is one in which carnivals and spectacles of consumption are paramount and where the consumption process is fundamental to the gratification of desires and the formation of images of the Self. As such the key structures of this new age can be found in its dominant cultural sites, namely theme parks and shopping malls. In fact, she states that "the intertwining of consumption and carnival is now such that the differences between the two are ever harder to discern."¹¹ Whereas modernity removed the economic sphere to a domain all its own, postmodernity returns the economic, through consumption, to a place in which everyone can participate and negotiate. The shopping centre is quite understandably the ultimate example of people taking back their right to

⁹Rob Shields, "Spaces for the subject of consumption", in Rob Shields (ed.), *Lifestyle Shopping - The Subject of Consumption*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p.11.

¹⁰Lauren Langman, "Neon Cages - Shopping for Subjectivity", in Rob Shields (ed.), *Lifestyle Shopping - The Subject of Consumption*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p.41.

¹¹Langman, p.42.

celebrate their everyday lives in whatever manner they choose.

Accompanying the facility to determine meaning within the consumption sphere is the manner in which individuals both determine and assume their particular images of self and identity. Under the rubric of postmodernity, the individual is free to assume any identity that he or she chooses. Gone is the modernist notion of collectivising and categorising everyone into rational groups and/or classes. Instead, individual subjectivities are made manifest throughout consumer culture. Once again, this is conclusively illustrated in the shopping centre. Rather than settling into the pattern of shopping and subjectivity as preferred by the owners of both the means of production and the shopping centres themselves, the postmodern consumers of amusement society continually play with the construction of new images of the self. The postmodern subjectivity,

[while] gendered, and reflecting ethnic and class origins [finds its common construction] out of the resources of the social and environmental milieu [which] gives it a certain cross-class and trans-gender consistency.¹⁷

Here, Robert Shields is referring to the idea that there is a 'mass-consumption persona' operating within postmodernity that readily accepts the notion that even though specific individuals may vary in their ethnic, economic or gender background, they can still use the mall both as a place for consumption and possible resistance:

Even the most disadvantaged have demonstrated an ability to steal the opportunity for pleasure in the 'clever art' of appropriation; an invisible poaching of luxurious 'climatized' environments (air-conditioned and heated, humidified and dehumidified until just right) through vicarious

¹⁷Shields, p12.

observation, gratuitous *flanerie* and window shopping, or cheap luxury.¹³

Within the confines of the shopping centre, everyone and anyone is free to present themselves as utterly a 'middle-mass purchaser' as the next shopper.

While the shopping centre helps to define new modes of subjectivity on an individual basis, it also serves to delineate fresh interpersonal relationships in the form of small groups, and models of social totality. Shields states that these experimental constructs of human subjectivity are being 'browsed through' and 'tried on' in much the same way as someone might shop for clothes.¹⁴ Underlying these new subjectivities is their reliance on a particular space or place in order to have any real meaning. Thus, one's individuality becomes somewhat 'place-specific' realigning itself within different contexts. As a result, rather than defining oneself as an autonomous rational *individuum*, as was the case for classic forms of individualism, the postmodern actor assumes multiple 'identifications' through a series of site-specific *tribes* in which many different masks may be worn based on varying groups and surroundings. "A *logic of identity* is replaced by a more superficial, tactile *logic of identification*; individuals become more mask-like *personae* with mutable selves."¹⁵ Shields cites the example of a spider and its web as being analogous to the postmodern persona wherein people are at the centre of "social

¹³Shields, pp12-13.

¹⁴Shields, p15.

¹⁵Shields, p16.

and stylistic webs of their own making."¹⁶ As a result, there is actually a breakdown of individualism even in the midst of the reliance on group-imposed and personally endowed identifications. This further challenges the modernist view of social identity being based on such things as class or race alone.

Instead, individuals have the opportunity to freely align themselves with any social group at any given time. Economic status, ethnic background (and perhaps even gender) are not at the centre of the postmodern conception of society. There is a shift away from predetermined perceptions of who someone is in favour of an open-ended understanding that someone can be anyone. As such, people can affiliate themselves with whomever shares their specific tastes.

Rather than being merely a site of material consumption, the shopping centre has thus also become a site of *shopping for subjectivity*.¹⁷ Postmodern consumers,

legitimate the reality that we are *all* more likely to have clusters of often contradictory identities and biographies available for specific situations rather than an enduring sense of self.¹⁸

Critics of postmodernity often criticize this lack of a stable identity, maintaining that without a clear definition of individuality people are never truly able to distinguish their own subjectivities. Instead, they weave back and forth between what might be considered

¹⁶Shields contends that these postmodern webs of identification are different than the autonomous, disconnected and monadic ego-centred identities of bourgeois individuals. (Shields, p16.)

¹⁷The phrase, "shopping for subjectivity" is drawn from Lauren Langman's article, "Neon Cages - Shopping for subjectivity" in Shields (ed.) *Lifestyle Shopping - The Subject of Consumption*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p40-82.

¹⁸Langman, p67.

contradictory life worlds. In postmodernity, these life worlds run the gamut from the mundane to the fantastic, converging at the mall. Whereas modernity sought to separate everything into different categories, postmodernity, as exemplified by the mall, combines all categories into one both in terms of what one can do or buy, and who one might see or become.

This convergence becomes problematic, however, when the places or objects on which an individual or 'tribe' is relying for the evolution of subjectivity are based not on anything 'real', but instead, on a simulation. Baudrillard termed this notion of perfect simulation, the *hyperreal*. He asserted that hyperreality occurred when there was no longer any difference between the real and the abstract, the object and the image. When the image has been manufactured so completely that its origin no longer exists, when the simulation appears more real than the 'real', that is the postmodern moment in which hyperreality attains its greatest significance. The simulation has fundamentally lost its referent. It becomes little more than one signifier in an endless chain of signifiers.

For Baudrillard this 'regime of simulation' could also be called *contemporary culture* wherein there is an "incessant production of images with no attempt to ground them in reality."¹⁹ This production of images can certainly be found manifesting itself in the shopping centre. Within the confines of the shopping centre, everything has become a simulation. The appearance of the centre itself, which was once modelled after the traditional downtown streetscape, has become the definitive definition of what a

¹⁹Jean Baudrillard, in Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture - An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary*, (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1989), p56.

shopping space should look like. Similarly, the attempt by mall designers to mimic foreign and exotic locales has caused the mall version of reality to seem more real (and accessible) than the actual sites. What they have done is endeavoured to bring "a sense of place to a placeless environment."²⁰

This 'sense of place' is not real however, and individuals in search of an identity are only ever partially satisfied. In an effort to overcome the loneliness of modernity and to locate a true subjectivity,

people flock to malls where 'proto-communities' of strangers seek clothes, cultural products and techno-gadgets that promise gratification or at least recognition through possession.²¹

This attempt to locate subjectivity, then, becomes an empty search within the realm of simulation. Any effort to locate a meaningful identity is met with little more than false images and facsimiles of the real.

But, in this postmodern world of multiple images and simulations, the postmodern consumer has attempted to negotiate his or her own particular meanings from the manifold number of potential meanings. Where this has become the most emancipatory for the individual is in his or her ability to alter previously held notions of the shopping centre and the consumption process to meet individual wants and needs. And while this quest to uncover meaning in whatever way possible may at times incorporate simulations rather than the real, it at least allows for the potential to seek out meaning and

²⁰Rob Shields, "The Individual, Consumption Cultures and the Fate of Community", in Rob Shields, (ed.), *Lifestyle Shopping - The Subject of Consumption*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p105.

²¹Langman, p74.

subjectivity on an individual rather than a collective level.

It must also be remembered that while postmodernity seeks to understand the development of subjectivity in contemporary culture, it is always and ever interested in the myriad ways in which the economic realm intersects with this search for identity. For postmodernity is nothing if it is not a theory of a consuming culture. Fredric Jameson maintains that "every position on postmodernism in culture...is also at one and the same time, and *necessarily*, an implicitly or explicitly political stance on the nature of multinational capitalism today."²² Running through all of postmodern thought is the notion that the production and subsequent consumption of goods and services is at the heart of contemporary society, and that all relationships and interactions revolve around that process. David Harvey has linked postmodernism with,

...the changing social and spatial structures of capitalism, notably the development of global networks of production and new relations of consumption in urban public spaces which double as 'consumption spaces': the market, street vendors, and shopping centres. These emerge as key sites of symbolic consumption as well as of new social movements and groupings whose mixing appears to defy the accepted logic of social classes based on relations to the means of production.²³

What is often most apparent in theories of postmodernism is the changing role of both production and consumption in the formulation of society. Instead of privileging the production process and the inherent power of those owning the means of production,

²²Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism", *New Left Review*, (Vol 146, 1984), p55.

²³Rob Shields, "The Individual, Consumption Cultures and the Fate of Community", in Rob Shields (ed.), *Lifestyle Shopping - The Subject of Consumption*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p101.

postmodernism seeks to empower both the consumption process in general and individual consumers in particular.

Because postmodernity incorporates a fundamental shift in understanding of the role of the production and consumption realms in the formation of both society and individuals, it is necessary to first understand, where this consumption based point of view originated. By turning to an examination of the birth of consumer culture in Western society, it is possible to discern more concretely both what a 'consumer culture' entails, and what the importance of such an analysis is to the study of shopping centres in contemporary culture.

"BORN TO SHOP":
THE BIRTH OF CONSUMER CULTURE

Throughout North America, the development and proliferation of shopping centres is considered almost commonplace. But there was a time before the evolution of industrialism when the very notion of mega-structures on the outskirts of cities was utterly unimaginable. The impossible began to be considered feasible however because of an unprecedented surge forward in such areas as technology and communication. The technological ability to produce almost any commodity on a mass scale coupled with a communication infrastructure that allowed for wide distribution and advertising capabilities helped to establish a new society of consumers. These advancements also helped to promote the possibility that a place would have to be built in which to display and sell these goods to the consuming public. From early beginnings that included the first department stores, mail order businesses and chain stores, the shopping centre has come to be recognized as the ultimate symbol of consumer culture.

The Search for Consumer Culture's Origins:

A culture of consumption did not just materialize, however. The transformation took place over many hundreds of years and involved many different aspects of society. What becomes immediately apparent, however, is the fact that those people interested in the rise of consumer culture (economists, historians, and others) cannot agree on a starting date as to exactly *when* this "consumer culture" emerged. Everyone seems to be

in agreement that a change certainly occurred, but when and why definitely remains a contentious issue.

Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the work of Grant McCracken (*Culture & Consumption*, 1988). McCracken begins his work by pointing to the fact that many different authors have attempted to pin-point the inception of the consumer revolution. And while many have done so, there has been very little agreement on the subject. McCracken does justice to defining this revolution when he states,

...this consumer revolution represents not just a change in tastes, preferences, and buying habits, but a fundamental shift in the culture of the early modern and modern world. The consumer revolution is now seen to have changed Western concepts of time, space, society, the individual, the family, and the state.¹

However, he does not furnish the reader with any better understanding of when *he* considers the consumer society to have begun. Instead, he simply provides a consolidated review of several other authors.

One such author is Chandra Mukerji (*From Graven Images: Patterns of Modern Materialism*) who dates the consumer revolution back as far as fifteenth and sixteenth century Europe. She states that in sixteenth century England there was increased social competition among Elizabethan noblemen which led to augmented spending in terms of such things as housing, hospitality and clothing. Because England was of such a hierarchical nature it was only logical that a change in spending among the nobility also necessitated a change in spending for subordinate social groups. Mukerji states that "in

¹Grant McCracken, *Culture & Consumption*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p.3.

Elizabethan England [we see] a consumer explosion of extravagant proportions."²

Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb, (*The Birth of a Consumer Society-The Commercialization of 18th Century England*, 1982) choose not to delve quite so far into the historic record to determine the dates of the consumer revolution's beginnings. Instead, they select a consumer boom in eighteenth century England as the time when consumer tendencies became firmly entrenched in the functioning of society. The major burden of these authors is,

...to show that consumer behaviour was so rampant and the acceptance of commercial attitudes so pervasive that no one in the future should doubt that the first of the world's consumer societies had unmistakably emerged by 1800.³

Very briefly, they attribute this consumer behaviour to such things as the intellectual climate at the time, English society (the nobility, classes, etc.), the growth in the city of London, and the domestic (mostly female) servant class.⁴

Stuart Ewen (*Captains of Consciousness*, 1976) can be found at the other end of the historical spectrum, claiming that the consumer revolution did not occur until well into the twentieth century. He openly admits that factories for mass production first appeared in the 1830s and 1840s, but maintains that it was not until the 1920s that

²Chandra Mukerji in, Grant McCracken, *Culture & Consumption*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p.15.

³Neil McKendrick (et al), *The Birth of a Consumer Society-The Commercialization of 18th Century England*, (London: Europa Publications Ltd., 1982), p.21.

⁴McKendrick lists other key factors as the commercial capacity of London, the development of advertising, marketing and distribution techniques, the increase in wage rates, and, a fall in food prices." (p22-23)

consumerism first appeared in the form of what Ewen calls, "an aggressive device of corporate survival."⁵ He asserts that in order to have a society of mass consumers it was first necessary to have those potential consumers *habituated* into the consumption process. For Ewen, this habituating process took the form of mass advertising. He states that in the 1920s the mass advertising industry really began to become a significant force in society and, as a result, producers were able to advertise their mass produced products, creating a society of mass consumers. "With the wide-scale implementation of mass production in the 1920s, advertising and the ideal of mass consumption were catapulted to the foreground of modern economic planning."⁶

While the above authors tend to have very dissimilar opinions as to when consumer culture originated, others are inclined to be somewhat more consensual about when the consumer culture first came into existence. Michael Schudson (*Advertising, The Uneasy Persuasion*, 1984) chooses to date the transformation's emergence at around 1850 and then continuing on into about 1930. He believes that the appearance of factories and department stores during the nineteenth century was crucial to the development of the new culture.⁷ As the number and variety of goods available on the market increased so too did people's desire to buy these products rather than produce them privately in the home or on the farm. Key to Schudson's argument for these particular dates is his strong

⁵Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness-Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture*, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1976), p. 54.

⁶Ewen, p.51

⁷Michael Schudson, *Advertising, The Uneasy Persuasion*, (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1984), p.156.

belief in the importance of advertising at this time. He is quick to point out, however, that he does not see advertising as the "original or prime cause of consumer culture". Instead, he feels that advertising "arose in response to social and economic changes in a mobile market society."⁸

Similar to Schudson's argument is that of William Leiss, Stephen Kline and Sut Jhally (*Social Communication in Advertising*, 1990). They maintain that there are two basic types of advertising; 'informational' and 'transformational'. Informational advertising occurs when people are specifically told something about a product or a company's characteristics. Transformational advertising takes place when there is an attempt on the part of the advertiser to alter the attitudes of consumers toward certain brands, products, etc.⁹ Leiss, Kline and Jhally maintain that this shift in advertising began to occur in the late 1800s and early 1900s at the same time as society began to shift from an industrial to a consumer culture. They attribute this change to such things as the production of goods in non-familiar settings, the enormous amount of available goods, the dramatic rise in incomes, the dissolution of ethnic and/or community ties, etc.¹⁰ Most importantly, they point out that with a rise in income and leisure time, advertisers could now appeal not just to people's *needs*, but to people's *wants*. This subsequently opened up the market for an entirely new set of products.

In keeping with Leiss, Kline and Jhally's reasoning surrounding the shift in turn-

⁸Schudson, p.168.

⁹William Leiss (et al.), *Social Communication in Advertising*, (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1990), p.50.

¹⁰Leiss, Kline and Jhally, p51-58.

of-the-century advertising is Warren I. Susman's argument (*Culture as History - The Transformation of American Society in the 20th Century*, 1984) concerning a "communications revolution."¹¹ Susman echoes the argument put forth by Leiss, Kline and Jhally when he expresses his belief in the effort made by the advertising industry to stimulate the needs and awaken the desires of the consuming public in order that they might consume an entirely new set of products. He contends that, "[in] the new world of abundance-leisure-consumer-pleasure orientation, more attention could be paid to gratification of personal needs of all kinds..."¹² Also in keeping with other authors is Susman's positioning of the consumer revolution in the historical record. He argues that in the 1870s, Americans were taught to think of themselves as *consumers*:

He [sic] was encouraged increasingly...not to hoard his savings...but to spend and spend...Leisure was rapidly becoming almost as important as labour, and he must learn a pleasure ethic...¹³

The title of Simon J. Bronner's book, *Consuming Visions - Accumulation and Display of Goods in America 1880-1920*, gives an explicit reference as to when Bronner would place the appearance and growth of a culture of consumption. He too emphasizes the significance of urbanization, new production techniques and, new technologies on the

¹¹Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History - The Transformation of American Society in the 20th Century*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p.257.

By this he means "the fundamental way in which goods, services, people, and ideas are put in motion over space by the application of new forms of energy (steam and electricity) and newly developed machines." (It is arguable that Susman can be defined as a technological determinist, but that is not of key importance here.)

¹²Susman, p.112.

¹³Susman, p.111.

changing landscape of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Bronner goes so far as to entitle America "The Land of Desire" where it had once been known as "The Land of Comfort":

Americans beheld the promise and prestige of new goods in advertisements, catalogues, magazine illustrations and stories, novels, theatres, train stations, restaurants, hotels, expositions and fairs. More than a new way of providing for one's sustenance, consumer behaviour spawned new professions, institutions, desires, and outlooks.¹⁴

Implicit in Bronner's argument is the notion that the men and women living during this age were certainly preoccupied with attaining wealth, but at the same time, they were equally anxious as to what they should do with their new-found wealth. As he writes,

Americans wondered what to make of this recent good fortune, what to do with it, how to show it, and what it meant for the future. *They embraced it, but worried about it.*¹⁵ (Emphasis mine)

Bronner's appreciation of the uneasiness of men and women living during the late 1800s and early 1900s leads directly into the second major issue that needs to be dealt with in terms of analysing the birth of consumer culture, that of the *social* repercussions of the time. In other words, it is necessary now to examine more precisely *what* was going on in turn-of-the-century society that permitted this consumer boom to occur and what the effects of those changes were both for the people of that period and for future generations.

¹⁴Simon J. Bronner, *Consuming Vision - Accumulation and Display of Goods in America 1880-1920*, (New York: Norton & Company, 1989), p.26.

¹⁵Bronner, p.50.

The Social Repercussions of Consumer Culture:

It is probably safe to assume that if it had not been for the period of rapid industrialization, traditional society, as it is now known, would have continued relatively unscathed. Men and women would have tolerated their living conditions because they knew no other form of existence. However, with the Industrial Revolution and ensuing consumer revolution people were given the taste of an entirely new way of life. This change was focused mainly around the introduction of consumer commodities on an unprecedented scale. Instead of relying on one's local community to provide the essentials of life, people were able to purchase mass-produced items as never before. Traditionally, manufactured goods had included the basics; the products people required, but could not generally produce for themselves. In 1878, they would have been comprised of such things as wool, wood, iron, wheat, sugar, spices, lead, tin, tea, tobacco, etc. But with this period of the rise of capitalism, and ensuing consumer boom, mass-produced, assembly-line products began to flood the marketplace. Instead of just the raw materials, producers provided the public with the finished product. By 1889, the manufacturing process was providing finished lumber in the place of cut wood; breadstuffs had replaced wheat. Other new commodities included agricultural implements (mowers, reapers, ploughs, etc.), bricks, carriages, sewing machines, paper, cosmetics, glassware, gunpowder, and much more.¹⁶ By 1900, mass production had invaded every

¹⁶*Statistical Abstracts of the United States, 1900*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901.)

sector of the manufacturing process. Ready-made clothing became possible with the mass production of items such as buttons, zippers, and lace. The use of chemicals, drugs and dyes altered a wide range of products. As the number of component parts grew, the possibilities for more and more production possibilities became endless.

In Canada, by 1923 the top ten industries in terms of capital investment, cost of materials and gross value of products were, in descending order: pulp and paper, flour and grist-mills, saw-mills, slaughtering and meat-packing, butter and cheese, automobiles, electric light and power, cotton yarn and cloth, sugar refineries, and castings and forgings.¹⁷ This list of industries alone demonstrates the growth of manufacturing within Canada at the expense of more personal (or household) production.

Not only did people's lives change irreversibly because of the great change in their purchasing habits, but the very manner in which they had learned to think was gone forever as well. People began to formulate a new type of knowledge based on the myriad of new experiences they were encountering. Their very world, natural, technological, social, personal, and moral was undergoing an exceptional series of changes.¹⁸ With every new scientific and technological achievement, the traditional belief in an almighty God began to disappear. A belief in Divine Transcendence was replaced with a conviction in the power of individual freedom and reason. Where men and women had

¹⁷*The Canada Yearbook 1925*, (Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1926), p.411. It is interesting to note that the pulp and paper industry rose from third place in 1921 to second place in 1922 and up to first place by 1923. Its gross production for 1923 was \$184 414 675 which is almost \$30 000 000 more than that of the flour and grist-milling industry (the next closest industry).

¹⁸Susman, p.106.

looked to the Bible for guidance, they now turned to the power of experimentation and observation to provide insight on important issues. Technological progress and the business people behind it came to replace religion and the clergy in terms of prestige:

The industrial invasion of American culture drastically affected the nature and role of religion in American life. Religion increasingly lost prestige, so that it came to be reserved for one morning weekly.¹⁹

In this consumer society, people began to value their identity more as *consumers* than producers. It is difficult to classify this change as occurring for everyone simultaneously however. It most certainly developed in different ways and at different times for very different people. Teenagers probably started deriving their identity massively from consumption before other social categories. This was likely because they were suspended between childhood and adulthood, between employment and school, between responsibility and irresponsibility. Their identity did not come from any institution except inasmuch as it told them what they were not: you are not an adult, not allowed to drive, vote, drink, not allowed to sign contracts, etc. Likewise, women may have been earlier adopters of the ethic of consumption for many of the same reasons as teenagers: lack of institutional placement other than the home, free time, diminished responsibility, and so on. Conversely, until quite recently, men, and more particularly businessmen, continued to derive their identity more from production than consumption. Their uniform, three-piece business suits were indicative of this 'production-based identity'. Any attempt at garnering an individual style was considered anti-establishment.

¹⁹Samuel P. Hays, *The Response to Industrialism: 1885-1914*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p.22.

But just as the move into consumerism varies with social groups, it also varies with commodities. Although men may have been drab dressers, they were also prime targets for cars in the 1950s. And nothing was probably more expressive of an identity than the automobiles of the 1950s. Likewise, women were induced to begin smoking in 1925. Teenagers began drinking Coke and eating hamburgers, etc.

Once their minds had been opened to the possibility of new things, the men and women of the time learned to embrace many new discoveries. Possibly most important, was the new conception of time and space. The introduction of communication technologies, what some have called a "communication revolution" occurred concurrently with a new consumer culture. The ability to transfer both information (knowledge) and material goods changed the way people looked at time and space. Gone were the times when it could take weeks to relay information from one part of the country to another on horseback. Instead, the growing network of telegraph lines and railroad tracks brought commodities, both tangible and intangible, to a national marketplace.

In the United States, the railroad was constructed between 1820 and 1915 to provide a nationwide transportation system. By 1915, the railroads claimed to have approximately 250 000 miles of track across the country with every major community serviced by this extensive system.²⁰ With the barriers to distribution removed, producers were able to sell to consumers throughout the country as never before. "They [railroads] opened every part of the country to the products of modern industry and by stimulating

²⁰Hays, p.5.

mass consumption greatly encouraged the growth of mass production."²¹

This growth in mass production was greatly aided by the brisk rise of the corporation. Generally, businesses had been operated previously according to either the single proprietorship or the partnership. This granted the owners of the businesses full control over the affairs of the business. This type of personalized service suited localized economies quite well. Corporations only existed where the public interest intruded. This included such things as turnpikes, railroads, banks, insurance and utilities companies. However, after the Civil War the number of corporations grew steadily. Most important to the developing consumer market, was the growing prevalence of the manufacturing incorporation.²² Increased distribution capabilities created through the railroad allowed these large businesses to move their products across the country.

Greater productivity was not the only repercussion created by the rise of the corporation however. Larger companies meant that there were fewer people self employed and more who were wage earners. This led to greater separation between labour and management functions. Firms understandably grew in size and necessarily became more impersonal and bureaucratic. With an increase in size also came an increase in specialization and efficiency:

Mass production also depended upon improved techniques, of which standardization of parts and processes was especially significant. Repetitive production of a standard item, independent of the vagaries of the

²¹Hays, p.7.

²²Robert Higgs, *The Transformation of the American Economy, 1865-1914*, (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1971), p.40.

individual craftsman, was the heart of the technical revolution.²³

New communications also worked together with the infrastructure created by the railroad to bring information instantly to an entire nation. The telegraph developed by Samuel F.B. Morse in 1844 and the telephone, as invented by Alexander Graham Bell some thirty years later (1876) served to revolutionize the manner in which information was not only received, but transmitted. It was no longer necessary to rely on the antiquated method of horse and buggy (or even trains) to relay news, either written or verbal. Instead, any significant information could be sent through telegraph or telephone lines without delay. Consequently, while the railroads were assisting in opening up the national (and international) marketplace for the distribution of commodities, the new communications technologies were similarly working to bring the nation together with the development of a national news and information system. This was central to a consumption society because without a unified mass market of consumers, a consumption-based culture would never have been functional.

Previously, there had been several prominent newspapers in the major cities of the United States, but the introduction of telecommunications allowed these newspapers to send stories of national interest through the wires to many different cities throughout the country. In an unprecedented manner, men and women from New York to Los Angeles could read the same story by the same reporter on the same day, regardless of where in

²³Hays, p.10.

Mass production was first used by Eli Whitney in the late nineteenth century to produce guns. It was dramatically employed by Henry Ford for 'progressive line production' in 1914.

the country the original story was produced.

It was not just news stories, however, that were being transmitted around the country. The growth and development of advertising and a national advertising industry was nothing short of remarkable. It would certainly be accurate to state that advertising existed long before the birth of an Industrial or Consumer Revolution, but never before had the messages of the advertisers been able to reach so wide an audience.

Various writers have pondered the notion of whether a consumer culture spawned advertising or whether advertising aided the development of consumer culture, but Michael Schudson may sum up the divergence best. He claims that it is virtually impossible to state with any sort of certainty the way in which the relationship between society and advertising developed:

To the extent that advertising arose in response to social and economic changes in a mobile society, it is difficult to see it as an original or prime cause of consumer culture. To the extent, however, that technological developments in industrial manufacturing precipitated growing investment in distribution and sales of advertising, advertising can be seen as a somewhat independent, not solely reactive, force in American society.²⁴

Regardless of the complexities of the advertising/social trends issue, it is undeniably true that changes in advertising are linked to the growth of a consumer society.

The very concept of advertising suggests that there is a group of potential consumers in the marketplace that could be persuaded to buy one particular product over

²⁴Nowhere was the growth in production greater than in the materials needed to build the railroad in the first place. Stimulated enormously by the growth of the railroad system, the iron and steel industry became the foundation of industrial America. For instance, in 1875, the railroad alone consumed over half of the iron produced in the United States. (Schudson, p.168.)

another. While the idea of advertising was not new to the business community, the idea of being able to reach people on a mass scale was.

This opportunity for mass dissemination of advertising messages was greatly aided by the rapid urbanization process that was taking place throughout both Great Britain and the United States. The migration of men and women from scattered rural areas into densely settled urban settings allowed advertisers to reach a much larger audience at a greatly reduced cost. In England, for instance, the population of London grew from some 200 000 inhabitants in 1600 to 900 000 citizens by 1800.²⁵ Similarly in the United States, the number of cities with populations over 100 000 grew from nine to fifty between 1880 and 1910.²⁶ This urbanization was the result of both the movement of rural peoples to the cities and unparalleled immigration. Between 1820 and 1930 over 37.5 million people came to America from foreign countries producing one of the most significant migrations in history.²⁷ By 1900, immigrants comprised 40 per cent of the population of America's twelve largest cities.

In order to better reach this newly formed citizenry, advertisers found it necessary to alter some of their advertising techniques. Possibly of the greatest consequence was the shift away from the product as the key aspect of the advertisement to the significance

²⁵McKendrick, p.21.

²⁶Bronner, p.38.

For an excellent breakdown of the population of various United States cities see, Robert Higgs, *The Transformation of the American Economy, 1865-1914*, (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1971), p58-66.

²⁷Hays, p.94.

of the *consumer*.²⁸ Instead of relating the many components of a particular product, the advertisements portrayed various images of persons, social groups and settings in both real and fictitious scenes. "A bewildering set of verbal and visual signs for which the referents were unclear" was introduced in order to manipulate feelings rather than to present specific product characteristics.²⁹ Leiss, Kline and Jhally define these new image-oriented advertisements as having *imputed*, rather than *physical*, characteristics because specific lifestyle images and meanings are attached to the products.³⁰

Advertisers hoped that people could be persuaded to spend in ways previously unknown. In the 1870s, it was considered more socially acceptable to save one's earnings as much as possible with self-denial being equated with ideals of capitalism. But with the advent of a consumer society came the opinion that men and women were supposed to truly think of themselves as shoppers. They were encouraged over and over again to spend their money as never before.³¹

Assisting in the change in consumer attitudes were the ways in which advertisers promoted their products. Increasingly, they relied on *brand names* to boost familiarity with a product. The assumption was that once people were familiar with a reliable product they would continue to purchase products produced by the same company based

²⁸Leiss, Kline and Jhally, p.63.

²⁹Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears (eds.), *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), p.21.

³⁰Leiss, Kline and Jhally, p.68.

³¹Susman, p.111.

on the company name alone. Brand names provided a sense of identity and continuity with which the men and women of this time had been previously unfamiliar, thus reducing the potential risk involved in purchasing new commodities. This was especially important because it reduced the risk of buying substandard goods at a time when such a large number of products was reaching the marketplace. Similarly, once certain brand names became well-known throughout the country, being able to purchase these particular brands became a marker of social status.³² For a public that was becoming increasingly anonymous this was a fundamental means for reuniting them, if only temporarily. "Advertisements provided information about what goods were available for sale in a society where face-to-face contact was disappearing."³³ Comparable advertising techniques implemented during this time period to attract the attention of easily bored consumers included the use of illustrations, trademarks, slogans, etc.³⁴

Another key component in the growth of advertising was the development of the advertising agency. The first advertising agency in the United States was created by Volney B. Palmer (1799-1864) who began the business in Philadelphia in 1841. The agency was introduced to create the advertisement in order to complete the relationship between the producer who advertises, the medium that carries the advertisement, and the audience to whom the ad is directed.³⁵ Originally created to serve the interests of the

³²Schudson, p157-159.

³³Schudson, p.167.

³⁴Fox and Lears, (ed.), p.18.

³⁵Schudson, p.168.

media, the agencies quickly transformed themselves into an institution that served the various advertisers when George Rowell developed the 'open contract' system in 1875.³⁶ This system granted the advertising agency the flexibility necessary to develop and place the advertisements where it deemed best.

With the growth of mass advertising came the conflict over whether the advertisements were reflecting the ideals of the people who viewed them, or whether they were working to create false needs within the people. While this debate often focused on advertising, it was also a reflection on society as a whole. Questions were raised as to whether newly introduced products responded to an observed demand or whether they were developed only to serve the interests of the business class. Understandably, the status of advertising within this consumer culture paralleled the position of the products themselves.

Those most distressed by the new wave of products and advertisements felt that wants were simply being contrived in order to create a society of dependent consumers. Galbraith termed this the "dependence effect" to describe the fact that if production were to increase, wants must be effectively contrived. Without this contrivance, increased production would not occur.³⁷ Consumption was viewed as a form of captivity which left people powerless in terms of both production and policy-making.³⁸ Ewen has stated that,

³⁶Schudson, p.171.

³⁷John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, (4th Edition), (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1984), p.132.

³⁸Fox and Lears, (introduction, x).

...businessmen hoped to move beyond just being captains of industry toward a position in which they could control the entire social realm. They aspired to become captains of consciousness.³⁹

This was achieved in two related ways; the first was to socialize the workers in such a way as to gain their fidelity while at the same time exploiting their labour. The second was through the use of advertising. Ewen claimed that the notion of social control of the workers had to expand beyond the factory and as a result, the advertising industry developed in order to act as a tool of social order within the community.⁴⁰

Creating this control throughout society was contingent upon the idea that people could be mass produced just as easily as any other commodities. Through advertising, people could be habituated into the consumption process in such a way that they were no longer satisfying their own personal needs, but instead, the historic needs of capitalist productive machinery.⁴¹ It was the job of advertising to keep people perpetually dissatisfied with their current station in life. As long as they were dissatisfied they would continue to buy more and more commodities in the belief that more merchandise could make them happy:

To some advertisers, the implication was clear that human minds were not only malleable, but manipulable. And the most potent manipulation was therapeutic: the promise that the product would contribute to the buyer's physical, psychic, or social well-being; the threat that his [sic] well-being would be undermined if he failed to buy it.⁴²

³⁹Ewen, p.19.

⁴⁰Ewen, p11-15.

⁴¹Ewen, p35-36.

⁴²Fox and Lears, p.19.

Advertising was also thought to echo society through what has been defined as the death of creativity. This view, held especially by ministers, women, the new middle class, and the new intellectuals, was erected around the fear that modern industrialism was a threat to the 'creative' individual. They believed that human values would be replaced by material values to the detriment of society.⁴³ From this point of view, then, it is possible to see that the story of consumer culture also could have been told according to those who opposed it. Ultimately, those in opposition to a new culture of consumption were those who disapproved of people *having fun*, enjoying themselves, and not putting in what *they* deemed to be the requisite amount of effort. This was exemplified in the campaigns against drinking, the purity campaigns, the struggle for film censorship, etc. The point, of course, is not that social ills do not exist; it is that the existence of social ills does not dispense anyone from treating their fellow citizens as rational human beings. Naturally, this anti-fun sentiment was (and still is) never expressed as such. It is invariably expressed as the defence of a higher goal: creativity, the purity of the race, etc.

Other authors, however, believed that the marketplace only provided instruction (not manipulation) in how to match needs and wants with the "available stock of goods and consumption styles"⁴⁴ Through the implementation of advertising, people were provided with a set of social cues that transmitted information about such things as style and personal behaviour. Instead of being tied to the typical forms of needs-satisfaction

⁴³Hays, p.75.

⁴⁴Leiss, Kline and Jhally, p.65.

depicted by a traditional society, people were free to experiment with many different formats. Too rarely was the possibility considered that, "...consumer goods were fascinating for consumers of the 19th century because they were increasingly the residence of cultural meaning and new opportunities for defining self and the world."⁴⁵ People had the opportunity, as never before, to satiate their appetites for whatever they wished, provided they could afford it. They were able to emulate those in higher social positions and to become socially mobile. "To enjoy the act of purchase was no longer seen as the prerogative of the rich."⁴⁶ Perhaps Susman said it best when he stated that at that time, buying things should not have been viewed as intrinsically wrong. And further, that "the culture of abundance was not largely the result of evil machinations to control and distort human life."⁴⁷ In a similar fashion, McCracken points to the fact that commodities may in fact have been one of the chief instruments of a materialist culture's survival, one of the ways in which its order was created and maintained.⁴⁸

Regardless of whether commodities are viewed as good or evil (Marx's notion of the commodity as a fetish, *Capital*, Vol I), there is no doubt that an increased opportunity to purchase these products contributed to an ever-widening gulf between those people who possessed the financial means necessary for consumption and those who did not. In the

⁴⁵McCracken, p.24.

This view was fully realized in subcultural (Hebdige) and consumption-based (Nava) studies that privileged consumption as a site of individual meaning.

⁴⁶McKendrick, p.25.

⁴⁷Susman, (introduction, xxix).

⁴⁸McCracken, (introduction).

last third of the 19th century there was an increasingly vast social cleavage between on the one hand, discontented farmers and workers, and on the other, the wealthy who spent their fortunes in 'conspicuous consumption'.⁴⁹ While the rich were enjoying all the luxuries a consumer culture had to offer, the urban masses were being forced to live a life of poverty; banished to the new urban slums with all the others who could no longer afford to live as active members of a consumer culture.

A culture of consumption also brought about the birth of an entirely new social category: that of the new urban middle class. This group, made up of clerical workers, salespeople, government employees, technicians, salaried professionals, etc., rose in numbers between 1870 and 1910 from 756 000 to 5.6 million.⁵⁰ This was a significantly faster increase than for any other social group, or for the population as a whole. Constantly aspiring to a higher station in life, the members of this group looked upon their jobs as merely stepping-stones to bigger and better positions. At the same time, they believed that increased wealth and social position were equivalent to greater independence. For them, a culture of consumption presented a multitude of new possibilities. Unfortunately, the historical record has shown that at precisely the same time as the new middle class was increasing in numbers, the opportunities for achieving social independence were progressing far more slowly.⁵¹

⁴⁹Hays, p.37.

For a detailed look at the concept of 'conspicuous consumption', see Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, (Toronto: Random House of Canada, Ltd., Reprinted 1939).

⁵⁰Hays, p.73 (Statistics are indicative of American society.)

⁵¹Hays, p.74.

It is virtually impossible to conclude with any real certainty precisely when a society based on consumption emerged, or exactly how such a society affected the men and women who lived through it. It is possible, however, to state unequivocally that what transpired between the late 1800s and early 1900s changed the face of society forever. In a single generation the country had switched from a homemade to a store-bought society.⁹ Certainly, there must have been moments during the early days of consumerism when people felt they were at the mercy of the production realm; being coerced into buying products that they neither wanted nor needed. Conversely, however, there must have also been periods when these people were thrilled with the efficiency and convenience of new innovations.

With the dawn of consumer culture and all that it entailed: large-scale manufacturing, demographic shifts, increased advertising, increased leisure time, the creation of a single, mass market, etc. it is important to remember that possibly the greatest transformation arising out of this early twentieth-century period was the shift in how people viewed themselves. The thing which is most characteristic of consumer culture is the fact that identity comes as much, if not more, from *consumption* than from *production*. And as consumption became increasingly significant to the lives of individuals, the *places* in which they shopped became similarly important. Just as the identity of consumers changed through consumption, so too did the shopping environment transform in relationship to consumer culture. It is this particular metamorphosis that is

⁹Bernard A. Weisburger, *The New Industrial Society*, (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1969), p.15.

"BUILDING A BETTER MOUSETRAP": THE HISTORY OF THE SHOPPING CENTRE

Shopping centres have not always dotted the urban landscape of today's world. In fact, the mega-structures that have come to be recognized as icons of contemporary culture are a relatively recent phenomenon. But while shopping malls as they are known today may be moderately new, their history and evolution is intrinsically linked to the burgeoning consumer culture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

As outlined in the previous chapter, turn-of-the-century society experienced an unprecedented period of both economic growth and technological progress that was directly related to the period of rapid industrialization. More efficient production processes meant that manufactured goods were available to the general public as never before. Employment, which had generally been found in rural farming communities, was relocated to urban centres in which factories were situated. Simultaneously, and no doubt under industry pressure, the road and canal systems were vastly improved allowing for greater ease in transportation, both of goods and people. North America and Great Britain were both undergoing a period of rapid urban expansion. With that expansion, came the need to transform not only the way in which people shopped, but also the *place* in which they shopped.

THE SHOP

The shop itself, however, did not simply emerge spontaneously with industrial society. It has been a part of history since as early as the 11th century. And while the actual design of the shop from that period until the 18th century changed very little, the

definitive meaning of the word 'shop' changed a great deal. In its earliest usage, 'shop' was used to designate anything from a hawker's tray to a market stall to a warehouse. 'Shop' embraced any and every location where selling took place. It was the term 'standing shop' which was used to single out a specific retail unit, although before the 18th century, that unit would have been found within the confines of a house.¹

Shops of the pre-modern period had wooden shutters which were divided horizontally in place of windows "with the lower half hinging downwards to form a counter and the upper half fastening above to give a display and selling space."² In the larger shops, a counter was added to the inside of the shop and by the end of the 17th century the most common retail shop was found on the ground floor of a house furnished with both a counter and shelves. "Craftsmen, such as tailors, cobblers, and metalworkers made and sold their products where they lived."³ There was little change to this basic shop design or retailing fashion (haggling over price) except in areas with a high percentage of wealthy shoppers who were able to pay for a unique shopping experience that included royal treatment and a more luxurious shopping environment.

It was not until the early 1800s that the demand for commodities increased and the original pattern of selling hand-made goods from one's own dwelling changed. Urban

¹Margaret MacKeith, *The History and Conservation of Shopping Arcades*, (London: Mansell Publishing Ltd., 1986), p8.

The idea of a 'standing shop' is in keeping with what would be considered a shop today. This was in opposition to an 'open shop' which was little more than a shed or lean-to built on front of the house.

²MacKeith, p8.

³Rodney Fitch and Lance Knobel, *Retail Design*, (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1990), p10.

populations continued to grow and be housed in high density lodgings far removed from the rural economy. As families became less reliant on their own ability to produce the necessities of life, they turned more and more to the retail shop to obtain any and all necessary merchandise. An ever-increasing abundance of ready-made goods removed much of the need to produce items personally. And with an increased demand for mass produced goods came the emergence of such things as department stores, multiple shops and entrepreneurial investment in town centre commercial development. Mainly, this development was centred around the establishment of the 'shopping arcade'.

THE SHOPPING ARCADE

Although the shopping arcade may have had its roots in 12th century Middle Eastern cultures (because of the need to contend with fierce climatic conditions)⁴, it was not until the end of the 18th century that colonnaded shopping sidewalks began to emerge in France:

Covered top lit passages for the rich, the idle, the fashionable and the growing middle class, provided spectacle and display, free from the vagaries of weather, the dangers of traffic and the dirt of the unmade and fouled streets...[They] created the opportunities to redevelop, to widen, realign or build new roads and buildings. Large profits and an assured income were realized by producing in single development modern shops, residential accommodation and safe pedestrian routes.⁵

This French prototype of the Parisian arcade was developed between 1781 and 1786 in order to generate extra revenue for the French royal family. Even then, the

⁴For a complete history of the shopping arcade before 1850 see MacKeith, p9 14.

⁵MacKeith, p.14.

arcade was used as a meeting place for the elite, and after the French Revolution, as a meeting place for all classes. This interlocking network of narrow passages lit by skylights eventually linked the entire centre of Paris allowing for the free flow of pedestrians throughout the city centre. Combining such pleasures as cafés and salons with shops, the shopping arcades came to replace the traditional market place as a cultural, social and retail centre.⁶

Originally a class phenomenon, these arcades might sound more like contemporary theme parks than what is normally considered an arcade. Nevertheless, it was these Parisian shopping arcades which gave rise in the 1920s and 1930s to Walter Benjamin's theory of the *flâneur*, the unoccupied, lazy, somewhat self-absorbed, and available spectator of the masses. Indeed, in the 1860s, Baudelaire, considered by many to be the greatest symbolist poet, wrote about the flâneur wandering the streets of Paris, available to experience any sensation, stopping briefly beneath the arcades to enjoy a cigarette and observe the spectacle of mass life. There is a connection between shopping and mass spectacle. The arcade draws masses of people in a particular festive mood, crowds looking for a feast of the senses and discovering, beyond the goods, the feast of density, the pleasure of being in a crowd, of seeing and being seen, and of riding upon a crest of noise and tumult, and especially upon the wave of abundant consumer goods.

While the war between Britain and France kept the pleasures of the Parisian arcade away from the London crowd during the early 19th century, it was not long before London also, with the development of the Royal Opera Arcade, experienced the covered

⁶MacKeith, p15.

passages of the Parisian shopping arcades. The success of this arcade led to the prompt establishment of many other shopping arcades throughout Britain. In similar fashion to today's shopping centres, they were situated wherever a growing population coincided with a shortage of retail shops.⁷

The first shopping arcade in North America, the Greek Revival Weybosset Arcade, was built in Providence, Rhode Island in 1827. Similar arcades also appeared in Philadelphia and New York. The largest and most daring, however, was The Arcade in Cleveland, Ohio, built in the mid-1850s. Heralding the department stores that would soon follow, this innovative iron-framed structure boasted five floors of shops and offices which surrounded a central light-well. A unique glass and steel roof helped to contain both private spaces and vertical and horizontal public thoroughfare.⁸

As the new mass market of the 19th century, under the pressures of industrialization and urbanization, continued to expand across both Europe and America, the quantity of goods available and the subsequent demand for them also increased. In order to meet the requirements of the new urban population, increased retail space became imperative. The need for greater space was satisfied with the creation of the *department store*.

⁷It is interesting to note that between 1818 and 1879, London saw the development of only two shopping arcades. This was due mainly to the fact that Londoners also experienced a different kind of retail shopping known as the 'bazaar'. Its name was meant to suggest, not an exotic environment, but a place in which an extraordinary array of goods were available. As such, the emergence of the 'bazaar' is seen as a precursor of the department stores which were to follow.

⁸MacKeith, p21.

THE DEPARTMENT STORE

While often considered an American phenomenon, the first department store, like the early shopping arcade, had its foundation in Paris. The retailing partnership of Madame and Monsieur Boucicaut resulted in the first department store in Paris in 1852. Initially conceived of as a drapery store, 'Bon Marche' incorporated by 1860 separate departments for dresses, coats, millinery, underwear, and shoes. Even more innovative than the various departments, however, was the Boucicaut's attitude toward their customers. They encouraged total freedom of access while tempting their customers with carefully crafted displays and offers. Furthermore, unlike previous shops in which bartering had been acceptable, the merchandise in the department store carried clearly marked fixed prices which precluded bargaining.⁹ The fixed prices were set at levels calculated to make profits by moving merchandise through the system as quickly as possible. By making a small profit off various items the store was able to draw in more customers thereby ultimately turning a large profit. This notion of 'turning stock' represented capital that could reap continual profit if it was invested in things that sold well.

The idea of display for display's sake also generated a new social phenomenon that was not so useful: shoplifting. With an increase in displayed goods, the seduction of luxurious merchandise at affordable prices, the manipulation of space for the presentation of abundance, and eventually for the comfort of the shopper, meant that some people found the blandishments of shopping irresistible. The department store may

⁹Fitch and Knobel, p11.

have bred the first pathology of the consumer age in shoplifting. People had always stolen from merchants but this innovative shoplifter stole not out of necessity but out of an inner compulsion to enjoy luxury.¹⁰

In the United States, A.T. Stewart built the largest early department store, the 'Marble Palace', along these same principles. While his selection of merchandise was too limited to be officially deemed a 'department store', he nonetheless provided an example for others to follow.¹¹ By 1862, the Marble Palace covered an entire city block in New York City and rose eight stories into the air. Throughout the 1860s, Stewart saw anywhere from 15 000 to 60 000 people a day pass through the doors of the store. These customers were served by a retailing sales force of 1 000 clerks which Stewart described as "simply machines working in a system that determines all their actions."¹² Unlike the department stores of today in which cash registers and clerks can be found throughout the various departments, the clerks working at the Marble Palace did not personally handle any cash. Instead, all money was handed to runners who then took it to a central cashier.

Following the example of the 'Bon Marche' and the Marble Palace, other department stores of vast size and scope began appearing across both North America and Europe. In London, Marshall and Snelgrove and Selfridge's soon emerged. Across the ocean, Macy's, Bloomingdale's and Lord and Taylor opened in New York while Marshall

¹⁰Obviously, the idea of departmentalization also contributed to the retail success of the department store. By categorizing stock into different departments, the ones that were unprofitable were easily recognized and could be dropped.

¹¹Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed - The Making of the American Mass Market*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), p206.

¹²Strasser, p206.

Field's and Schlesinger & Mayer began business in Chicago.¹³

At that time, the initial department stores were said to more closely resemble warehouses than the extravagant shopping spaces of later years. Developed along the same lines as the gridiron streets of the outdoor city, the indoor traffic aisles often left customers "footsore and bewildered by the monotonous acres of merchandise."¹⁴ Department stores were criticized as being 'monsters', 'inventions of the devil', 'vultures' and 'producers of crime, sorrow, and disgrace'.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the role of the department store in people's lives continued to expand. Whereas the first shopping arcades were designed to cater to society's elites, the department store attempted to reach a wider array of consumers from both the upper, middle and lower classes of society.

It became the goal of the department store owner to display and provide goods that, while giving the appearance of luxury items, were actually obtainable by the consuming public. Through the manipulation of the store environment, department stores made middle-class merchandise appear lavish. They did so through the use of display for its own sake, using such things as windows, mirrors, lighting and coloured fabrics to create a more convivial atmosphere.¹⁶ Daniel Boorstin argued that "department stores

¹³Fitch and Knobel, p12.

¹⁴Morris Ketchum, Jr., "Shops and the Market Place", *Architectural Record*, (October 1958), p200

¹⁵Michael Schudson, *Advertising the Uneasy Persuasion - Its Dubious Impact on American Society*, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1954), p150.

¹⁶Strasser, p209.

It is interesting to note that it was 'Marshall Field's' that introduced electricity to the department store in 1882, the same year as the Edison Company opened the first commercial power station in the United States. Within five years, large and small

democratized luxury by putting expensive goods on display before any customer who cared to peruse them." Schudson refutes this claim, however, as being too simplistic. Rather, even in the early department stores a demarcation was made between ordinary and high-priced items. In an attempt to cater to the wealthy, the department stores provided an appropriately elegant, and simultaneously forbidding, setting for those products. For instance, in 1891 Macy's introduced a ladies' waiting room which Macy's advertisements described as "the most luxurious and beautiful department devoted to the comfort of ladies to be found in a mercantile establishment in the city."¹⁷ Schudson goes on to state that luxury was actually made *more* visible, public and explicit through the department store. And instead of providing equality in consumption they simply encouraged a democracy of aspirations and desire.¹⁸

However, the display of seemingly endless merchandise was not the only thing that altered the shopping experience for turn-of-the-century consumers. Indeed, during the 1880s and 1890s, department stores also began to provide a wide assortment of new services within the confines of the store itself. For example, Macy's provided both a soda fountain and a lunchroom, but full-scale restaurants soon became common. By the close of the century,

stores provided telegraph offices, public phones, lost-and found departments, post offices, ladies' parlours, free checking, child care, and first-aid stations. Nearly all offered charge accounts. Some provided live background music, sponsored lectures and plays, and incorporated branch

department stores alike were lit by electricity.

¹⁷Schudson, p151.

¹⁸Schudson, p151.

libraries.¹⁹

Paul Nystrom wrote in 1915 that the department store had become a "club house and amusement place for women." There were 'silence rooms' for tired shoppers, beauty parlours, stores that featured opera performances, employment services for domestic help, and banking and brokerage services. For people who either chose to stay at home or were unable to get to the store personally, stores like Wanamaker's in Philadelphia offered a 24 hour a day telephone service.²⁰

For all of their convenience, however, department stores remained a fundamentally urban entity catering to regional, urban clientele. This was mainly due to the fact that prior to the 1920s, rural citizens still did not have the ease of transportation brought about by the automobile to transport them to the cities. For those people living in rural communities, mass merchandising took the form not of the department store, but of mail-order catalogues.

MAIL-ORDER MERCHANDISING

Beginning with Montgomery Ward in 1872, mail-order catalogues set-out to reach the population not served by urban retail shopping. In 1884, Montgomery Ward produced a 240-page catalogue which listed upwards of 10 000 items, a number which reached 24 000 by the early 1890s.²¹ Following Montgomery Ward's lead was the

¹⁹Strasser, p210.

²⁰Strasser, p210.

²¹Strasser, p213.

company that has since become synonymous with mail-order merchandising, Sears-Roebuck, and Co. Beginning with the sale of watches, and quickly expanding to jewellery, silverware, firearms, sewing machines, clothing and other merchandise, Sears (as it eventually became known) boasted a 786-page catalogue by 1897. By 1900, Sears had surpassed Montgomery Ward in sales and set out to expand the company across the country on a state-by-state basis.²²

Mail-order businesses, however, like department stores, also met with opposition from local business interests. Small-town newspapers attacked the mail order houses as foreign interests that would eventually destroy regional business. Sears and others responded by stating that they simply advertised the actual price of an item and that local merchants were probably overcharging for the same merchandise. Similarly, historians have argued in retrospect that the face of small-town retailing was bound to change in an era of improved roads, the automobile, motion pictures, improved communication systems - in short, the march of technological progress.²³

THE CHAIN STORE

While local merchants were asking patrons to shop at home, in order to protect and preserve the American way of life and to fight against big business, another challenge to those very ideals was emerging in the retail environment. The chain store, which by the end of the 1920s did more than one-fifth of America's total retail trade, was emerging

²²Strasser, p213.

²³Strasser, p219.

as one of the most significant innovations of the retail world. The largest and best established of the early chain stores was the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company (the A & P) which began in the 1860s as a tea and coffee firm. Almost from the beginning, A & P conducted mail-order business and built retail stores. Through the 1880s and 1890s, the company expanded into a wide variety of grocery lines and by the 1900s, operated nearly 200 stores in 28 states.²⁴

Even though the chain store principle was utilized first by companies that offered a wide selection of merchandise, it nonetheless became most popular with stores that specialized in single-commodity sales. This seems to suggest that shoppers were attracted less by the nature of the merchandise itself than by the reassuring familiarity provided by a particular chain store. What was most interesting about the development of the chain store phenomenon was the fact that it arose as the very antithesis of department stores such as Macy's or Selfridge's. Whereas the large department stores offered a carefully designed environment, personal assistance and some aspiration to luxury, the early chain stores were actually rather drab and lacking in any particular architectural style:

Their sole concession to visual identity was usually a bold fascia, in which typestyle and colour scheme combined to create often powerful images, some of which grew into popular icons...The object here was simply to reassure the customers of a standardized quality of service, wherever they might be...the ultimate effect of the ubiquitous shopfront however, was to establish feelings of loyalty, reassurance, and stability within the

²⁴Strasser, p222.

Other successful chains included the Great Western Tea Company which later became Kroger Grocery and Baking Company and Frank W. Woolworth who began in 1879 with one store and expanded to fifty-nine by 1900.

customer.²⁵

THE SHOPPING CENTRE

As chain stores, mail-order houses and department stores became firmly embedded in the shopping culture of the early 20th century and as their numbers swelled across North America, it was only logical that the next step in the evolution of retailing would be the establishment of the retail shopping centre. The entrenchment of department and chain stores throughout the country coupled with society's reliance on mass merchandising, whether in an urban or rural setting, set the stage for the amalgamation of retail outlets under one roof.

Building upon design and retail innovations prior to World War II, shopping centres emerged out of the post-war period as possibly the most significant retailing institution in history. While many different types of shopping malls have emerged across North America,²⁶ it is only necessary to outline the evolution of the contemporary shopping centre according to several key types.

A) The Out-of-town Regional Centre

Possibly the most powerful in its ramifications on both the form of today's cities and the design of the centres' themselves was the *out-of-town regional centre* which set the agenda for shopping centre design for the next twenty years. The very first centres,

²⁵Fitch and Knobel, p13.

²⁶For a complete historical summary of the various types of shopping centre see Barry Maitland, *The New Architecture of the Retail Mall*, (London: Architecture Design and Technology Press, 1990), p12-36.

unlike what is more common today, were not completely enclosed under one roof. Instead, they consisted of clusters of shopping pavilions, normally of a loose and informal configuration, surrounded by large surface car parks. The areas between the pavilions were then paved and used as open pedestrian walkways. As the somewhat erratic pattern of these centres became more simplified and regular, the mall layout became firmly established as a viable location for shopping. As with any mall, the out-of-town regional centres were dependent upon the tenant mix within the shopping pavilions. With the understanding that one or two key 'anchor' stores were the prime attraction for consumers, developers arranged smaller stores around the larger ones to sustain the flow of pedestrian traffic throughout the pavilions. This led to a search for the optimum cluster design which culminated in the classic forms of mall design - the pinwheel, dumb-bell, 'U', and cruciform plan arrangements.²⁷

As this first stage of mall development was being clarified, a second stage was being perfected at the Southdale Centre (1956) near Minneapolis, Minnesota. Unlike any mall that had come before it, Southdale was fully enclosed under one roof complete with a heating and cooling system and indoor landscaping. Rather than the rambling nature of the shopping pavilions, Southdale incorporated a more compact lay-out with two superimposed mall levels around a central, double-height space known as 'centre court'.²⁸

²⁷Maitland, p13.

²⁸This type of mall design was introduced to Canada in the establishment of Yorkdale Shopping Centre (1964) in Toronto.

These centres, which were planned for the most part during the 1960s, resembled that of any standardized product. They were available in only a limited number of models, had a range of reproducible features, and could be applied to almost any green-field site of sufficient size. As with most things, however, the proliferation of these centres gave way to changes in their design which amounted to the next stage in mall development. The early 1970s had witnessed quite simple mall plans which had been designed through the use of long straight frontage lines to expose the greatest number of storefronts to the largest number of consumers possible.

With the third stage of mall development, however, these long lines gave way to more complex and irregular lay-outs with compressed plans in order to eliminate extended travel distances for pedestrians. This shift was exemplified through the opening of Woodfield Mall (1971) in the suburbs of Chicago. Woodfield Mall, in addition to its enlarged size, was much more aesthetically pleasing than previous shopping centres. Mall ceilings, floor levels and shopfronts were all carefully shaped and modelled, and natural daylight intermingled with artificial lighting to create the effect of one single enormous department store.²⁹

In the Ottawa region, the concept of the this third stage of out of town regional centre is best exemplified by Bayshore Shopping Centre in Nepean and Place d'Orleans located in its namesake, Orleans.

Bayshore, unlike what its name suggests, is not located on the waterfront. Instead, it echoes the placement of most other malls of its type; it is immediately

²⁹Maitland, p15.

accessible from Ottawa's Queensway which runs directly by its doors. Servicing a primary market of 105 000 people and a secondary market of 450 000, Bayshore caters to the ever-expanding Ottawa suburbs of Nepean and Kanata. While Bayshore certainly characterizes the compressed feeling of this third stage of mall design, it does not rely on any complex lay-out to entice customers. Instead, it has maintained the traditional 'dumb-bell' design with two large department stores anchoring each extremity of the mall. A variety of shops and services can then be found lining the corridors between the two department stores. Originally built in 1973 as a two-storey mall by Cambridge Shopping Centres, Bayshore was renovated in the mid-1980s to include a third floor, thus allowing the retail mix of the mall to include everything from low-end to high-end merchandise. Highly successful in terms of people traffic, Bayshore, which touts itself as a community-oriented centre, sees some 2 million people pass through its doors each month.⁴⁰

Like Bayshore, Place d'Orleans is also characteristic of this third stage of enclosed mall development although that was not always the case. In the past several years, Place d'Orleans has undergone extensive renovations to update both its size and its image. Originally built in 1979 as a mall consistent with the second stage of mall design, it has grown to include some 261 stores and two floors. Possibly the greatest reason for the mall's expansion has been the rise in population of the surrounding Orleans area.

While Bayshore located itself in the already established suburbs west of Ottawa,

⁴⁰CF *The Canadian Directory of Shopping Centres*, (Toronto: Maclean Hunter Limited, 1991), p153.

Place d'Orleans has grown in direct relationship to the migration of people to the east of the city. Mall developers, Marathon Realty Company Limited, admit to the fact that the centre's redevelopment in the early 1990s was somewhat ahead of its time, thus validating the current 84% occupancy rate of the mall. They are not concerned, however, stating that the mall was built approximately five to ten years ahead of its time in terms of the population it will service.³¹ Nevertheless, even while undergoing some growing pains, roughly 600 000 people pass through the mall's doors each month.

B) The Urban Regional Centre

While out-of-town regional centres worked to alter the landscape of the North American suburbs, it was the *urban regional centres* that transformed the face of the actual downtown city centre. Also known as the 'city centre precinct', these malls tended to dominate the urban centres of Europe rather than North America because the cities of Europe were attempting to rebuild downtown cores that had been devastated by war. In a similar fashion, the very make-up of the European city tended to privilege the importance of the city centre. In North America, however, massive suburban expansion paved the way (quite literally) for the growth and development of the out-of-town regional centres.

In older city centres, the urban shopping malls incorporated the complex shopping developments into the existing city streets by covering over streets and assimilating

³¹Information was obtained through an interview with Cindy Lowell, Promotion Manager for Place d'Orleans, October 16, 1992.

existing shops and offices. Through the elimination of automobile traffic, pedestrians were free to stroll through the enclosed streets of the downtown at their leisure. In newer town centres, it was more feasible to actually build a new structure solely for the purpose of retailing and integrate it into the formation of the downtown core. While these malls were originally relatively small in size, newer models have been able to transfer the size and scope of the out-of-town centres into the downtown streetscape. Two major projects, Market Street East (1977) in Philadelphia, and the Eaton Centre (1977-1980) in Toronto demonstrated the dramatic possibilities of locating a huge shopping centre in the core of a city. In Europe, though they still may be substantial in terms of their size, they are more pragmatic in their form, "insinuating themselves into the existing texture of the city, and adopting contextualist strategies for the design of their exterior forms."³² In Great Britain, this has been exemplified by such malls as the Queensgate Centre (1982) in Peterborough and the Ealing Broadway Centre (1984) in London.

In present-day Ottawa, it is the Rideau Centre that certainly serves as an exemplar of the urban regional centre. Located in the heart of the downtown core of Ottawa proper, the Rideau Centre is by far the most recognizable and prosperous of any of the malls in the Ottawa region. Opened in 1983 by the Viking Rideau Corporation, the centre boasts an astounding 1.6 million people per month (or 400 000 people per week) in terms of traffic. The mall serves a primary market population of 700 000 and a secondary market of approximately 900 000 people with annual sales reaching upwards

³²Maitland, p24.

of \$250 million.³¹

Sanctioned in 1992 as an 'official tourist destination', the Rideau Centre, unlike any of its competitors in the region, is legally permitted to open on formal holidays. This, coupled with its close proximity to Parliament Hill and the bustling Byward Market, gives the Rideau Centre a special status within the city. It is both a shopping centre and a destination. Serving as a satellite site for community events, the Rideau Centre is more than a marketplace, it is a *meeting place*. As such, the Rideau Centre, more than any other in the Ottawa region, has begun to cross the line between shopping centre (regardless of type) and theme centre.

C) The Theme Centre

A third type of shopping centre that will be introduced here is that of the *theme centre*. Building upon the idea of a shopping centre mixed with a festival marketplace, these centres might mix such things as eating places, tourist-oriented small shops, professional offices, retail shops, and so on. Often found in waterfront locations, these centres incorporate galleries, bridges, decks and verandas into their irregular building design in an attempt to mimic both the village street and the village square. What is most interesting is their unabashed effort to intermingle the regional architectural styles of different historical periods. For instance, Seaport Village in San Diego combines Victorian San Francisco with Mexico, while Ports O'Call Village in San Pedro (near the Los Angeles Harbour) blends a New England seacoast with ante-bellum Southern

³¹Cf *The Canadian Directory of Shopping Centres* (1991), p170.

architecture.³⁴

THE MEGA-MALL

Extracting the key facets of the out-of-town regional centre, the urban regional centre and the theme centre, developers in the mid-1980s introduced the public to the mega-mall. In many ways it was so much larger in size and so much more spectacular than anything that had come before, that the mega-mall appeared to be setting a new standard in the progression of mall design. Unlike the urban regional centres which at least attempted to camouflage themselves within the streetscape, the 'mega-structure' necessary for the mega-mall became a proclamation of the mall's complete break with any notion of blending into the surrounding territory. Instead, the mega-mall took the philosophy of the downtown core and comprehensively rebuilt it within the confines of a single building. Windowless walls and precisely located entrances turned a blank face to the rest of the city.³⁵ Of course, the blank walls of the mega-malls were not entirely different from the shopping centres which preceded them; it was more the sheer vastness of these 'empty' space that provided cause for some alarm. The mega-mall did not dispose of the city street however; instead, it consciously moved the city street into the structure itself.

Rather than simply outlining the key characteristics of the mega-mall in general

³⁴ Toronto's Harbourfront would certainly fall under this heading as well.

³⁵ William H. Whyte, *City: Rediscovering the Centre*, (New York: Doubleday, 1988), p206

terms, however, it is probably more appropriate to specifically describe the first mall of its type in the world. **The West Edmonton Mall.** Located on the outskirts of Edmonton, Alberta, the West Edmonton Mall stretches across a suburban space equivalent to that of one hundred football fields. "Seen from above, [West Edmonton Mall] resembles an ungainly pile of oversized boxes plunked down in the middle of an enormous asphalt sea, surrounded by an endless landscape of single family houses."¹⁶ Until the completion of the 'Mall of America' in the United States in 1992, the *Guinness Book of World Records* listed West Edmonton Mall as the world's largest mall, covering some 480 000 square metres. At that time, its next closest rival was the Del Amo Mall in Los Angeles, taking up approximately 300 000 square metres.

While its very size seems to preclude everything that came before it, West Edmonton Mall is, in many ways simply more of the same. Certainly, it boasts upward of 800 shops, 11 department stores and 110 restaurants. What the promotional literature does not state however, is that in many cases those 800 stores consist of duplicates or triplicates of a single retail outlet. What *is* innovative though, is the incorporation of the world's largest indoor amusement park, water park and parking lot. In addition, the mall contains a full-size skating rink, a 360-room hotel, a lake, a nondenominational chapel, 20 movie theatres, and 13 nightclubs. In short, to an unrivalled degree, West Edmonton Mall had found the seemingly perfect formula for the incorporation of retail sales outlets with leisure pursuits. Whereas pre-existing shopping centres were designed almost solely

¹⁶Margaret Crawford, "The World in a Shopping Mall", in Michael Sorkin (ed), *Variations on a Theme Park*, (New York: The Noonday Press, 1992), p3

for the purpose of retailing, at the West Edmonton Mall this was no longer true. It did not matter to any great degree whether people came to shop or to play. It only mattered that they came, and upon their arrival, that they consumed any and all of what the mall had to offer.

"BUILDING A BETTER MOUSE":
MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND CONSUMER RESISTANCE

It is not only the look, size and scope of the shopping centre that have changed over the last forty years. The very way in which consumers *use* the mall has also changed. Consumers are no longer merely spectators of what the mall has to offer. Instead, they actively engage in the exercise of locating their own individual meaning out of the many choices found within the mall environment. People frequenting the shopping centre may choose to shop (and many do), but that is not necessary. Their option to use the mall as a meeting place, a rest area, or simply as a location for browsing and people-watching is as acceptable as their desire to use the centre for consumption purposes.

They are not alone, however, in their altered roles; mall developers and promoters have come to recognize this transformation and are fighting to stay abreast of it. Understandably, it would be virtually impossible for a shopping centre to remain open and functioning if no one who passed through its doors consumed anything. The shopping centre would become little more than an empty space with little or no purpose. But by expanding both the mandate and the options within the centre, mall administrators have sought to keep the interest of shoppers. In some cases, this has meant the introduction of a vast array of consumer services and community events. In other instances, it has led to the development of amusement and leisure activities. For while the function of the shopping centre may have changed for the consumer, for the administrators, the purpose of the mall remains the same – to serve as the centralized location for consumption. This has required increasingly sophisticated strategies of seduction and fascination.

There is an obvious paradox here. While the public is generating ever more complex ways to use the mall for non-economic reasons, mall management is, at the same time, seeking to sustain the financial viability of the shopping centre. The dilemma then becomes one of individual power and subjectivity versus corporate control and supervision. Through an examination of these diverse interests in the *new* role of the shopping centre it may be possible to determine whether the individual has acquired greater autonomy and subjectivity within contemporary society, or conversely, if control is located elsewhere; in this specific case, in the hands of mall management.

Managing the Mall: The Control of Private Space

For mall administrators, the question of who ultimately has control within a mall setting is a simple one: they do! Without hesitation, they argue that even though the mall appears to be a public place, it is in fact a *privately-owned* environment. As such, promoters have the weighty task of making the centre seem as open and public as possible while at the same time strategically planning the management and control of everything that occurs within the confines of the mall. This may include such diverse things as the placement of mall entrances, the location of seating, the retail tenant mix, and mall protection and security. In an article entitled, "Shoppers' Heaven", author Michael Salter, describes his perception of what people look like as they emerge from a shopping centre:

Watch people walking out of the mall after several hours of shopping: they stop for a moment, blinking in the light. Where did they put the car?

Why did they buy all this stuff? What happened in there, anyway? Whatever it was, it didn't happen by accident. It was an experience carefully engineered by developers, retailers, store designers, architects and interior landscapers. A veritable horde of shopping-centre professionals has spent decades fine-tuning what they now call the 'retail drama', a stage play of concrete, marble, glass and goods that's designed to make you buy more stuff than you ever knew you wanted.¹

Here, the authors are assuming that the consumers themselves had no control over what transpired while they were in the mall. Instead, they were covertly manipulated through the mall's structure and design to make purchases that were unnecessary. Echoing the idea that the shopping centre numbs the mind of all who enter it, Crawford conforms with the words of Joan Didion (*On the Mall*, 1979) when she states that the mall is "an addictive environmental drug, where one moves for a while in an aqueous suspension, not only of light, but of judgement, not only of judgement, but of personality."²

In many ways, everything about the physical organization of the mall is designed to control the flow of consumers through the seemingly endless corridors of shops and stores. Defined as 'articulation', this purposeful attempt at controlling people traffic exposes as many people as possible to as many storefronts as possible. All aspects of the shopping centre are fashioned to suggest that there is something else just around the next corner, just out of view that is deserving of the consumer's attention. "Narrow spaces [open] into larger spaces, and then [decrease] again...curved walls also tend to

¹Michael Salter, *et al*, "Shoppers' Heaven", *Report on Business Magazine*, (June 1989, p62).

²Crawford, p14.

Here, the mall seems to be situated as a precursor of artificial reality.

lead people on, both physically and in terms of their field of vision."³ Articulation is further reinforced through the placement of escalators and staircases at focal points, thus exposing the shopper to as great a variety of store options as possible. At one time, developers tried to hide these circulation spaces away in non-descript areas of the mall, but today they choose instead to *celebrate* them "with grand staircases, escalators moving dramatically through the space, and wallclimber or scenic elevators"⁴ heralding the movement of people from one place to another.

Accompanying this strategic planning of the movement of people is the pivotal placement of the actual stores themselves. Once again, nothing is done haphazardly. Contributing to the distinctive 'retail mix' of any shopping centre, each store is granted a predetermined location within the mall. For many malls, including The Rideau Centre in Ottawa and Bayshore in Nepean, this means that higher-end merchandise can be found on the third level of the mall, while lower-end or discount merchandise is found on the ground floor. This allows for an easy demarcation between the types of people that any particular store would most like to attract. By clustering stores of similar quality together the job of the consumer is made easier. Everything he or she might want can be found close by.

Regardless of the amount of money or time that any particular shopper has to spend, the retail mix of the shopping centre, whether it be a regional mall or a mega-mall, is carefully crafted to make it appear as though the consumer is being offered a

³Fitch and Knobel, p186.

⁴Fitch and Knobel, p186.

wide degree of choice. A plethora of storefronts, signs and logos greet the consumer at every corner of the centre catering to the notion that even though all of the stores are conducting business under one roof, they must still be operating independently. This is often not the case, however. Regardless of whether one examines shopping centres across Canada or simply chooses to study one particular mall from one particular Canadian city the findings are often the same. Shopping centres exhibit a high degree of homogeneity in both the retail mix of the malls and in the ownership of individual retail outlets. In fact, Canadian shopping centres offer few surprises in terms of their tenant mix. "[A] major shopping centre is virtually identical to its counterparts across the country. It feels the same, it looks the same, and it markets the same assortment of goods and services in the same shops."

Perhaps the greatest reason for these structural similarities lies in the fact that the number of actors operating within the shopping centre industry is very small. In Canada, 10 development companies, 60 retail corporations, and five leasing brokers effectively control the major shopping destinations of Canadian consumers. From a development perspective, three major firms - Cadillac-Fairview, Trileta and Cambridge - manage the operations of 21 of the country's 37 largest malls. This means that they are in control of more than 54% of the total gross leasable mall space in Canada."

And in similar fashion to the lack of players on the development side of the

¹Ken Jones, "Mega-chaining, corporate concentration, and the mega malls", *The Canadian Geographer*, (Vol 35 No 3, 1991), p241.

²For a complete breakdown of the shopping centre, developer, mall size, and number of stores within each of the largest malls in Canada see Jones, p242

industry, there are comparably few participants on the retailing side of the market. This further adds to the lack of diversity among Canadian shopping centres. It is certainly arguable that shopping centres would be unable to survive if it were not for the success of chain stores both on a national and international basis. Chain stores provide a degree of familiarity and recognition for consumers even in settings that may be unfamiliar. As a result, chain stores render a certain amount of assurance to mall management in terms of providing the mall with revenue. But while consumers may be acquainted with particular stores and merchandise, they are often unaware of the actual ownership of those particular outlets. In many cases, "chains deliberately mask their common control of various retail sectors by creating a variety of store names, that are intended to appeal to particular market segments."⁷ By purposely identifying their outlets under a variety of corporate banners, these chains (and some could be called 'mega-chains') market virtually the same merchandise but target different consumer groups. For instance, a chain such as *Kinney* associated with shoe sales actually operates 788 outlets across Canada including "Kinney Shoes", "Fredelle" and "Woolco Shoes", but also owning "Canary Island", "Champs", "Footlocker", "Lady Footlocker", "Randy River", "Sportelle" and "Raglans" which all happen to be clothing stores. *Kinney* also controls various other less well-known stores, but what is most important to recognize is that what appears to be competition within the mall environment is actually a corporate cornering of a specific type of market. Adding further to the chain store confusion is the manner in which the stores are actually located in the shopping centre. It is not uncommon in the layout of

⁷Jones, p244.

the mall to find stores of differing names but with the same chain owner placed in the same area. Often, "chains will negotiate adjacent spaces in the mall for their outlets in order to assure the creation of a recognizable fashion node."⁸ By clustering in a similar location, the chains present the image of choice to consumers, but are instead effectively eliminating any opportunity for choice at the corporate level. Only the most knowledgeable of consumers will be cognizant of the fact that a particular group of stores is owned and operated by the same company.

The success of the retail mix is compounded when the assembling of stores occurs around the mall's centre court. In many cases, this is the area around which all the 'best' shops, or 'the prime mixes', are located. Centre court is the principle meeting place within the mall. It is the place in which all corridors or aisles converge and as such, generates the most traffic flow. Only the most exclusive stores can afford to locate themselves there, catering to the consuming elite. In a multi-level mall, these stores usually can be found on the upper floors "allowing their patrons to gaze down on the plebeians below."⁹

Almost in opposition to this careful planning of traffic articulation and store placement, which are designed to stimulate the consumer into purchasing, are the other "architectural tricks" used by mall designers which seemingly contradict flagrant commercial considerations:

⁸Jones, p247. For a complete analysis of chain store domination by shopping centre see Jones, p246.

⁹Salter, *et al.*, p64.

Dramatic atriums create huge floating spaces for contemplation, multiple levels provide infinite vistas from a variety of vantage points, and reflective surfaces bring near and far together. In the absence of sounds from outside, these artful visual effects are complemented by the 'white noise' of Muzak and fountains echoing across enormous open courts. The resulting 'weightless realm' receives substance only through the commodities it contains.¹⁰

This intermingling of aesthetic interests with commercial factors creates a "perceptual paradox brought on by simultaneous stimulation and sedation" and is described by William Kowinski in *The Mall of America* (1985) as *mal de mall*. In the more precise jargon of mall administrators this paradox is purposely employed to create what is known as The Gruen Transfer (named after architect Victor Gruen). This transfer occurs at the precise moment when a 'destination buyer', someone with a specific purchase in mind, is transformed into an 'impulse shopper' through the careful coordination of the sights and sounds of the shopping centre. Supposedly, this point is easily recognizable through the "immediately visible shift [of the shopper] from a determined stride to an erratic and meandering gait."¹¹

While the slowed pace of an impulse shopper may provide clues to the success of a shopping centre's coordination of design and lay-out characteristics, a lingering shopper is not always a welcome shopper. One of the greatest threats to the balanced indoor world of the shopping centre occurs when those people who enter its doors are considered undesirable visitors. The shopping centre is a city unto itself and with that reputation it carries the dubious distinction of importing both the good and bad elements of city life.

¹⁰Crawford, p14.

¹¹Crawford, p14

While the shopping centre certainly brings together a vast array of people in the manner of the traditional town square or public park, it necessarily also entertains certain people who are intent on disrupting the centre's equilibrium. When walking down an outdoor city street today, certain things have come to be expected - musicians, panhandlers and the rather peculiar are almost considered commonplace. But while they are seen, they are at the same time basically ignored. Patrons of indoor 'mall streets', however, neither wish to see nor can they ignore such oddities. They do not want to observe them within the mall under any circumstances. "The [shopping centre] may choose to look like an indoor street, but of course it is not. It is built on a perception rather than a reality... We want you to think of it as a street so you'll come in and shop."¹

Being a user of a shopping mall entails having different:

expectations, understandings, and spatial competence from, for example, the set of understandings involved in shopping on a British high street. In the high street, there is a much more clearly marked separation between public pavement, where certain types of behaviour and 'crowd practice' are acceptable, and the privately controlled store area where the same behaviour is not. Being in the tightly policed, semiprivate interior of a mall is quite different from being 'on the street'.²

It thus becomes the responsibility of a qualified security team to adequately control and penalize any and all persons who do not conform to the image of what mall management deems acceptable.

The issue then becomes one of whether the mall is a *public* or a *private* place.

¹Stephen Godfrey, "Streetproofing: Stephen Godfrey examines the myth of the mall", *The Globe and Mail*, (Tuesday, November 5, 1991), pC1

²Rob Shields, 'Social spatialization and the built environment: the West Edmonton Mall', *Environment and Planning*, (Vol 7, 1989), p148.

As defined by Canadian law, a 'public place' is one where "the public goes, a place to which the public has or is permitted to have access and any place of public resort."¹⁴ By definition then, a shopping centre *is* a public place; it is not, however, public property. All shopping centres are privately owned and as such, their patrons are subject to the rules and regulations of *The Trespass Act* of each individual province. Architect Barry Sampson of Toronto has stated that, "[shopping centres] are exclusive realms from which bums, rowdy teenagers and people with no evident purchasing power are evicted."¹⁵ Toronto's Eaton Centre is an oft-cited example of how the control of people within the mall is manufactured. Approximately one million people pass through the doors of the Eaton Centre each week without incident, but security will evict about five hundred people over the same time period. John Garner, spokesman for Cadillac-Fairview Corporation, (owner of the Eaton Centre), has said that mall management has the right to determine who can use the mall and to what purpose because it is private property. Others, like Toronto alderman Jack Layton, feel that *everyone* has the right to be in a shopping mall, provided they are not causing any type of disturbance or damage. According to Layton, management does not have the right to exclude people because they do not like the way they look.¹⁶

It is interesting to note that the shopping centres which seem to face the greatest

¹⁴R.S. Vasan (ed.), *The Canadian Law Dictionary*, (Don Mills: Law and Business, 1980), p302.

¹⁵Bill Gladstone, "Public use of private space", *Maclean's*, (Vol 98 No 31, August 5, 1985), p49.

¹⁶Gladstone, p49

threat from 'undesirables' are those located in downtown urban settings, such as Toronto's Eaton Centre or the Rideau Centre in Ottawa. Because of its location in downtown Ottawa, the Rideau Centre presents itself as a warm haven for people with nowhere else to go. As a result, security personnel may evict up to 100 people a week from the building. But generally, it is not considered a hang out for local thugs and vagrants. Instead, the Rideau Centre has had to find a way to supervise a great deal of transient people traffic. Functioning as a waiting area for the city's public transportation system and acting as a gateway into the Byward Market's nightlife, the centre has to keep its doors open longer than any other mall in the area. In fact, the mall's doors are only locked for a total of four hours each night between 2:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. For the other twenty hours in the day, security is hard at work in the task of keeping people moving through the mall.

At West Edmonton Mall, safety is maintained in a somewhat different manner. The mall's security headquarters, known as 'Central Dispatch', is prominently showcased behind a glass wall. Operating as a high-tech command post with banks of closed circuit televisions and computers, Central Dispatch constantly monitors the people and spaces within the mall. "This electronic Panopticon surveys every corner of the mall, making patrons aware of its omnipresence and theatricalizing routine security activities into a spectacle of reassurance and deterrence."¹ The theatricality of the mall's security is further enhanced by the presence of a collection of mannequins on 'Bourbon Street'. The less desirable elements of society are depicted on this new Orleans streetscape in

¹Crawford, p27

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PM-1 3 1/2" x 4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
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permanent poses of abandon. "[Drunks], prostitutes, and panhandlers act out transgressions forbidden in the mall's simulated city."¹⁸ At West Edmonton Mall, at least, unwanted members of society are acknowledged but only when they are lifeless and only to the extent that it is impossible for them to cause any harm. Undesirables may be admitted, but only in a form that is utterly controllable.

This seems to create a sort of urban contradiction in that while at the same time as they are attempting to garner as many patrons as possible, shopping centres are also trying to screen out certain people under the banner of 'private property'. For this reason, some architects and designers now say that the shopping centre is not a truly public or private place; instead it falls into the new category of a 'quasi-public space'.¹⁹ It can be neither definitively public nor private, only a complex intermingling of the two. While the reasons for this inability to clearly label the shopping centre as public or private are many, it may be as a result of the 'people factor' that an explicit differentiation cannot be made. For whenever an attempt is made to control the public, it seems to find a way to usurp the power of those striving to make the rules.

Playing the Mall: The Search for Individual Identity and Meaning

Regardless of whether the shopping centre is considered a public or a private place, or some complex combination of the two, it is undeniable that its role in society,

¹⁸Crawford, p27.

¹⁹Gladstone, p50.

and in individual people's lives has changed. It is no longer only a place of commodity consumption, but instead a realm in which individuals, whether they be young or old, male or female, black or white can actively engage in defining their own meaning and identity out of what the shopping centre has to offer. While it may be true that mall management seeks to restrict the possible number of options available to mall patrons, it is also true that they do not necessarily succeed. Today's consumers have the ability to recognize the strategies being devised to entice them to consume and as a result, are able to differentiate between what mall administrators would like them to do and what they themselves want to do:

To suggest that shopping malls are manipulating wizards able to induce unsuspecting patrons into money-spending frenzies or irrational purchases not only insults the public's intelligence but also pays unwarranted homage to mall designers and management.²⁰

It is acknowledged that shopping centre administrators do in fact wield a certain amount of control within a mall setting, but it is similarly recognized that these people do not exercise absolute authority. Instead, men and women come to the shopping centre in search of a meaning and identity that is often beyond the sway of mall managers.

When shopping centres are defined using the religious metaphor of 'cathedrals of consumption' it is often because those employing the phrase equate patrons of the mall with a religious congregation that is powerless,

led like sheep through the rituals and meanings, forced to 'buy' the truth on offer, all the truth, not selective bits of it. Where the interests of the Authority on High differ from those of the Congregation down Low, the

²⁰Jeffrey S.P. Hopkins, "West Edmonton Mall as a Centre for Social Interaction", *The Canadian Geographer*, (Vol 35 No 3, 1991), p270.

congregation has no power to negotiate, to discriminate: all accommodations are made by the powerless, subjugated to the great truth.²¹

Whether one has religious beliefs or not, the similarities between a place of worship and a shopping centre are often hard to dismiss, so much so that they have prompted at least one author to devote an entire book to the examination of the mall as a secular cathedral.

Ira G. Zepp, in his book, *The New Religious Image of Urban America: The Shopping Mall as Ceremonial Center* (1986), argues that shopping centres have replaced traditional places of worship as the new sacred spaces of our generation. Holding to a non-sectarian definition of 'religion', which states that human beings need to re-link, re-bind, re-connect and re-concile themselves with each other and nature, Zepp claims that the shopping centre has become the site of just such a re-connection. This has occurred through the introduction of such religious symbols as water (linked with healing, cleansing, baptism, etc.) and vegetation (the cosmic tree, symbol of renewal and rebirth, etc.). He further equates the mall with a cathedral or church through a discussion of the 'centre': the place to which all aisles and corridors lead. In Zepp's estimation, the idea of the centre court comes about through the ancient religious need for an *axis mundi*, an axle or pole around which our world turns and without which our world would collapse. It is the centre that disperses power and provides strength and renewal for all who come in contact with it.²² While Zepp's book is nothing if not a definite stretch of the

²¹John Fiske, *Reading the Popular*, (Massachusetts, USA: Unwin Hyman, Inc., 1989).

²²Ira G. Zepp, *The New Religious Image of Urban America: The Shopping Mall as Ceremonial Center*, (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, Inc., 1986).

imagination, it does present the idea that shopping centres at the very least provide an alternative space to traditional notions of where one might locate meaning.

The religious metaphor begins to breakdown, however, when the focus of the comparison shifts away from the actual building itself to that of the power of the consumer:

Shopping malls and the cultural practices, the variety of shoppings that take place within them, are key arenas of struggle, at both economic and ideological levels, between those with the power of ideological practice (Althusser), hegemony (Gramsci), or strategy (deCerteau) and those whose construction as subjects in ideology is never complete, whose resistances mean that hegemony can never finally relax in victory, and whose tactics inflict a running series of wounds upon the strategic power. Shopping is the crisis of consumerism: it is where the art and tricks of the weak can inflict the most damage on, and exert most power over, the strategic interests of the powerful.²³

For Fiske, the shopping mall is seen as a terrain of consumer guerilla warfare and as such is entirely in opposition to the metaphor created by religion. Like Zepp, however, Fiske takes his analysis to extremes. In this case, giving the individual maximum control over the shopping centre experience and removing any real sense of power from mall designers and administrators. It is more likely, however, that the search for power and identity within the mall falls somewhere between the two, acknowledging managerial supervision but admitting to proficiency of consumers to freely play both within and around any predetermined parameters.

Shopping centres, then, have been appropriated as sites of deflected or displaced resistance. "Even the most disadvantaged have demonstrated an ability to steal the

²³Fiske, p14.

opportunity for pleasure in the 'clever art' of appropriation; an invasive 'poaching' of luxurious and 'climatized' environments...through vicarious observation, gratuitous *flanerie* and window shopping, or cheap luxury."²⁴ Being free to window shop, 'hang out' or just be an onlooker enjoying the crowds have become validated features of contemporary urban life. *Flanerie*, which had possessed a very gendered character has become a widespread pastime among "new, middle-mass consumers".²⁵ So much so, that shopping centres now rank first as the most frequented public spaces.

But any possible notion of the democratization of the consumption process would be lost in the mall setting if all anyone ever did there was vicariously observe and take part in the act of consumption. Ultimately, they would achieve nothing other than the fact that they had been participants in the process. The participation becomes important when it is seen as being part of the ritual of membership in a certain *consumption community*. Shields sees this as having a strange sort of psychology to it:

Merely to be in attendance at the 'court of commodities' (Benjamin, 1973) is to claim one's status as a consumer, which under a capitalism which reduces people to their function in an economist equation, is to assert one's *existence* and to be recognized as a person. Being a consumer, with the right to attend these rituals seems to have almost overtaken the importance of being a citizen. In the mind of the consumer, this 'one-dimensional' existence is affirmed just by *being there*: the *possibility* of participating in consumption even if not actually doing so.²⁶

As such, the success of the shopping centre (for its patrons), seems to lie in the

²⁴Rob Shields, "Spaces for the subject of consumption", *Lifestyle Shopping - The Subject of Consumption*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p12-13.

²⁵Shields, "Social spatialization and the built environment", p149.

²⁶Shields, "Social spatialization and the built environment", p159.

way it is appropriated by its users, the *flaneurs*. Like Urry's 'post-tourist' who has recognized that tourism is nothing more than a game played for status, today's 'post-shoppers', as *flaneurs*, play at being consumers in complex, self-conscious mockery:

The entire experience is thus inverted into its ironic mirror image. This tinges the complicitous self-implication and apathy of the *flaneurs* and latter-day shoppers with parody. The effect is to disrupt the pretentiousness of Mall with its museum relics and respatialization of reality. The users, both young and old, are not just resigned victims, but actively subvert the ambitions of the Mall developers by developing the insulation value of the stance of the jaded, world-weary *flaneur*; asserting their independence in a multitude of ways apart from consuming.²⁷

Possibly the most notorious in their subversion of the traditional conception of 'proper' mall protocol, are today's adolescents. Free from the controlling hands of both parents and teachers, many young people spend as much time in shopping centres as they might at school or home. The mall has become the place wherein these people attempt to locate their own particular community of peers, and similarly, their own individual identities. Through both choice and economic necessity, they do not frequent the mall in order to purchase commodities. They are there because for them, the shopping centre has become a *social* centre. "Androgynous teenaged mall-jammers, doing more looking than shopping, go to the malls to kill time, an apt notion in a society that destroys history and replaces it with a high-tech dystopia."²⁸ For adolescents, the *social* centre has become the nucleus around which social life revolves and upon which a 'pseudo-community' is built. Distinct stores and/or areas of the mall are staked out as the specific

²⁷Shields, "Social spatialization and the built environment", p160.

²⁸Lauren Langman, "Neon Cages - Shopping for Subjectivity", p58.

territory of members of communities of consumption. Adolescent groups with common cultural capital "confirm not only the self-presentations constitutive of an emergent identity, but integrate the person into particular groups that affect subsequent life trajectories."²⁹

Shopping and Leisure

A nationwide study conducted in the United States by the International Council of Shopping Centres (1990) found that almost one-third (thirty-one per cent) of respondents viewed shopping at a shopping centre as a 'recreational pastime'. A further ten per cent described it as 'partly a necessity' but also as 'partly leisure'.³⁰ Statistics such as these point to the reality that people frequenting today's shopping centres do so because they see the mall as a site of recreation rather than only a site of commerce. If it is in fact true that patrons of shopping centres are engaging in activities other than shopping, then it must also be true that there is something else there for them to do, something to pique and maintain their interest. For surely, the pleasure attained from simply browsing or people-watching would wear off for even the most astute mall-goer. When a relationship can be found between shopping *and* leisure, however, it is possible to understand more clearly the reasons why so many people find gratification in going to

²⁹Langman, p59.

³⁰Edgar L. Jackson, "Shopping and Leisure: Implications of West Edmonton Mall for Leisure and for Leisure Research", *The Canadian Geographer*, (Vol 35 No 3, 1991), p280.

While it is true that these statistics reflect the feelings of American respondents, it is most probable that they similarly represent the attitudes of Canadian mall-goers.

the mall.

It is possible to discern four main relationships between shopping and leisure: (1) independence (shopping as purchasing); (2) shopping *for* leisure; (3) shopping *and* leisure; and (4) shopping *as* leisure.³¹

Independence (Shopping as Purchasing)

In the interest of comprehensiveness it is important to include 'independence' if only to recognize that not all shopping involves or implies a leisure component. In some instances, shopping is considered little more than a chore that must be completed. It is by no means considered a leisure activity, but instead, shopping is *work*. As such, it would be more appropriate to define this type of shopping as 'purchasing' in order to adequately distinguish it from any form of leisure-related activity linked to the word 'shopping'. From one perspective, 'shopping as purchasing' is virtually ubiquitous, ranging from the corner store to the mega-mall. The relative emphasis may change, however, when one considers the *scale* of the purchasing being done. On the smallest of scales (ie. the corner store), shopping is effectively synonymous with purchasing. This implies a high factor of rationality on the part of the consumer for it appears as though there is little, if anything else to do but make purchases. On a grander scale, though,

³¹All information regarding the types of relationships between shopping and leisure are taken from Edgar L. Jackson's article, "Shopping and Leisure: Implications of West Edmonton Mall for Leisure and Leisure Research". While his argument is based solely on the West Edmonton Mall, his findings are certainly adaptable to any mall environment.

As with any categorization, these distinctions are not mutually exclusive, but may incorporate one, two, or more of them at any given time.

purchasing becomes somewhat less important as it is replaced by the act of 'shopping'. It follows, therefore, that as one moves up through the hierarchy of shopping centres, purchasing declines in relative importance while other forms of shopping become increasingly dominant. It also follows that shopping becomes less an 'activity' and more an 'experience' toward the upper end of the mall hierarchy.

Shopping for Leisure

As the title suggests, shopping *for* leisure involves the acquisition of goods such as books, records, hobby supplies, games, and sports equipment for use during subsequent leisure time. It implies the use of reason in the service of one's sensations, in the act of rationally seeking one's pleasures. Although it is important to recognize this type of shopping as having a relationship to the study of leisure, there is nothing particularly pertinent to the study of either leisure pursuits or consumer behaviour that warrants any in-depth analysis at this time.

Shopping and Leisure

It is in the context of this third relationship, shopping *and* leisure, that contemporary malls have come to garner a certain amount of fame, and possibly, notoriety. Recreational facilities have begun to appear in shopping centres throughout North America both as secondary and *prime* functions of the individual malls. 'Shopping and leisure' implies that one is available to experience the many sensations the mall environment has to offer. In this respect, he or she is the true *flâneur*; not irrational, but

not fully rational either. In a sense, it is a bracketed rationality in order that sensation may be pressed to the forefront.

While specific venues may feature one or two entertainment areas like Quebec City's Galeries de la Capitale shopping centre, which features an Olympic-size skating rink, ferris wheel, roller coaster, carousel, and other rides, it has been the West Edmonton Mall which, on an unprecedented scale, has merged the idea of a leisure centre with the more traditional perception of a retail shopping centre.

In addition to the Fantasyland Hotel, West Edmonton Mall contains two leisure facilities which are neither directly owned nor operated by the mall's owners, Triple Five Corporation. These include a bingo hall and three cinemas (with a total of nineteen screens). Much more renowned than these, and certainly much more unusual from the standpoint of being located in a shopping centre, are five main centres of recreation which are owned and operated by the mall's developers. They include 'Pebble Beach Golf Course', an eighteen-hole miniature golf course; 'the Ice Palace', an NHL-sized skating rink, used for informal skating, clubs, lessons and exhibitions; 'Deep Sea Adventure', with dolphins, four 24-passenger submarines, a replica of the *Santa Maria*, and an underground mini-zoo, with displays of sharks, penguins and reptiles; the 'World Water Park', housing a wave pool and twenty-two slides and other attractions, including volleyball courts, hot tubs, a children's wading pool, a playground, an artificial tanning deck, and an outdoor sun deck. It is estimated that the Water Park alone is able to handle up to 10 000 people at any given time; and, 'Fantasyland', which includes the triple-loop Mindbender roller coaster, a smaller roller coaster, the Drop of Doom, a

carousel, a children's play area, boats, a train, electronic games arcades, and numerous other rides.

Taking the blueprint of the West Edmonton Mall and expanding on it even further, Triple Five Corporation in conjunction with other partners, opened the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota in August 1992. Purported to be even bigger than Disneyland and Walt Disney World combined, the Mall of America expects to draw an estimated 45 million visitors per year. According to Nader Ghermazian, one of the developers, there is no reason to go anywhere else: "A kind of Taj Mahal of shopping malls, it will be larger...than Red Square, contain almost twice as much steel as the Eiffel Tower and have enough space to hold 20 St. Peter's basilicas."³² In addition to approximately 400 specialty stores, the mall features a landscaped theme park called 'Knott's Camp Snoopy' and occupied by the Peanuts characters made famous by Charles Schultz. The mall also contains the first-ever 'Lego Imagination Centre'; 'Golf Mountain', a two-level miniature golf course; and 'Underwater World', a 4.8 million litre walk-through aquarium.

Shopping as Leisure

In this fourth type of relationship between shopping and leisure, shopping is actually considered *to be* leisure. Here, the *flaneur* is seen as a restricted sensationalist. Instead of being available to sensation in general, he or she is available to a specific range of sensation. This implies a rationality which is operating on the basis of *experience*.

³²"The Shopping Mall of Dreams", *Newsweek*, (December 23, 1991), p44.

This might include such things as filling time, window shopping, browsing, and watching other people participating in recreation. Of more interest here may be the way in which shopping as leisure takes on a form embodied in (but not necessarily confined to) the idea expressed in the frequently seen bumper stickers, 'Born to Shop' and 'Shop till you drop'. Shopping as leisure in all its manifestations clearly requires a minimum size facility and range of stores, as it would be essentially impossible to 'shop till you drop' at the local convenience store. Essentially, the experience of shopping as leisure is linked to a specific stage of mall development.

When the act of shopping becomes a leisure activity in itself, it implies that shopping has moved away from being something that has to be done, and instead, has become something that people *want* to do. Shopping has become an *experience*. This idea of shopping as an experience suggests several things.³³ First, shopping as leisure implies time and money which, if not unlimited, are relatively unconstrained. Second, it may imply, depending on personal circumstances, the absence of additional constraints such as the ability to shop without having to take the children along. Third, it involves shopping for oneself rather than for others, with the possible exception of gifts. Fourth, it is associated with particular types of goods (ie. clothes rather than groceries). Fifth, it implies buying things that are 'wanted' as opposed to 'needed'. Sixth, it suggests a relatively more significant component of pleasure, either at the stage of anticipation or during the experience itself, than is likely to be associated with any of the other aspects

³³These suggestions are taken from Edgar L. Jackson's article, "Shopping and Leisure: Implications of West Edmonton Mall for Leisure and Leisure Research", *The Canadian Geographer*, (Vol 35 No 3, 1991), p282-285.

of shopping discussed previously. Last, it demands a minimum number and range of shops and, perhaps, associated facilities such as restaurants, and bars, either for socializing with accompanying friends or merely for rest and relaxation before returning to the shopping fray.

It is these last two categories - shopping *and* leisure, and shopping *as* leisure that warrant further consideration. It appears as though shopping centres are becoming more and more like theme parks while, at the same time, consumers are continuing to find their own personal pleasure and identity out of their existence.

"NOWHERE, ANYWHERE, ELSEWHERE AND SOMEWHERE": SHOPPING CENTRE AS UTOPIAN THEME PARK

When one thinks of leisure and leisure pursuits, the mind often drifts away envisioning sun-drenched sandy beaches or snow-covered mountains and ski chalets. For some, leisure is time spent at the family cottage; for others it is the opportunity to experience other cultures and locales. For many, though, the ultimate in leisure settings can be found in just one of two related places - Walt Disney World in Florida and/or Disneyland in California. Most certainly for Americans, and potentially for citizens the world over, Disney World is considered the utopia of leisure. Up to 100 000 tourists pass through the front gates of the park in Orlando, Florida on a 'good day'. That adds up to approximately 30 million people a year who cumulatively spend upwards of \$1 billion annually within the park.¹

Simulated Elsewhereness

As any follower of popular culture will know, however, there is much more to Disney World than the location. The Disney empire transcends the mere physicality of its sites to include an aura that has become all-pervasive. Through such things as a television channel, countless films, and decades of ingenious and massive advertising

¹These staggering numbers include neither Disneyland in California, Tokyo Disneyland, nor Euro Disneyland in France. Michael Sorkin, "See you in Disneyland", in *Michael Sorkin (ed.), Variations on a Theme Park*, (USA: HarperCollins Canada Ltd., 1992), p205.

which have sold billions of dollars of Disney merchandise, the company has placed itself at the forefront of what contemporary culture symbolizes. It is said that more people know Mickey Mouse than either Jesus or Mao, causing Michael Sorkin to postulate, "Who doesn't live in Disney World?"

The literal placemaking of Disney World is said to have several possible origins. One hagiographer states that the idea came to Walt Disney in 1938, on a trip to the Chicago Railroad Fair. After fulfilling a childhood dream of being allowed to climb behind the throttle of a historic locomotive, Disney is said to have gone home and built a miniature railroad around his own home. Another story claims that after a visit to a conventional amusement park, Disney was utterly disgusted by the park's failures in hygiene. His fantasies of transport and cleanliness were realized in 1955 with the opening of Disneyland in Anaheim, California. And right from the beginning, the park was meant to have been something of a utopia, the alpha point of hyperreality. Its early publicity touted is as:

...something of a fair, an exhibition, a playground, a community center, a museum of living facts, and a showplace of beauty and magic. It will be filled with the accomplishments, the joys, the hopes of the world we live in. And it will remind us and show us to make those wonders part of our lives.²

While these initial definitions of exactly what the park would encompass may appear somewhat unclear, the immediate origins of the park are entirely clear. It was designed in conjunction with ABC television and the Mickey Mouse Club series, and as such, became the first location that was ever conceived simultaneously with a television

²Sorkin, p206.

series. The relationship between Disneyland and television goes far beyond the temporal, however. "Television and Disneyland operate similarly, by means of extraction, reduction, and recombination, to create an entirely new, antigeographical space."³ On television, traditional strategies of coherence are constantly eroded in the perpetual juxtapositions of the daily broadcast schedule. The quintessential experience of television, that of hopping from one program to another through the technology of the remote control, has created path after path through the unlimited universe of televisual space. The same can certainly be said for Disneyland "with its channel-turning mingle of history and fantasy, reality and simulation."⁴ Just as television attempts to portray and substitute for daily life, so too does Disneyland project a similar synthetic vision and simplified experience which stands in for the more unrestrained complexities of the city. "...Disneyland's innovation lies not in its fantasy of regulation but in the elision of its place-making. Disneyland is the Holy See of creative geography, the place where the ephemeral reality of the cinema is concretized into the stuff of the city."⁵

Disneyland did not just emerge from a vacuum, however. It developed out of a long line of circuses, festivals, and fairs that have existed throughout history. In similar fashion to P.T. Barnum's circus, Disneyland ventures to tout itself as a celebration of the existing order of things while at the same time disguising itself from that reality. And understandably, Disneyland also has an ancestry in the amusement park, especially Coney

³Sorkin, 208.

⁴Sorkin, p208.

⁵Sorkin, p227.

Island:

Like Disneyland, Coney Island offered itself as a kind of opposition, an Arden of leisure in symbiosis with the workaday city. Steeplechase Park, Luna Park, and Dreamland established the basic elements of this new machinery of pleasure. Their evocations of travel in time and space, lilliputianization, physics-defying rides, ecstatic relationship to new technology, efficient organizing architecture of spectacle and coercion, and aspirations to urbanism - all harbinger apotheosis at Disneyland.⁶

In addition to circuses and amusement parks, however, Disneyland's most direct ancestor may in fact be the World's Fairs which originated in the late 18th century and culminated in the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations held in London in 1851. This World Fair was considered the first great utopia of global capital. Housed in Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace, it embodied both the very progress of industry and some notion of paradise. Laid out like a cathedral and filled with greenery and merchandise the Crystal Palace was, as Sorkin describes it, a climate-controlled reconciliation of Arcadia and industry, a garden for machines.

It is this notion of the 'garden' that becomes central to the understanding of the World Fair's relationship to Disneyland. For the manufactured garden of the eighteenth century symbolized the dislocation of the visitors from the actual sites themselves. And the theme park finds its meaning in this relationship between what, or where, is real and the simulated world created within the confines of the parks themselves. In these theme parks the enduring focus is to permanently recreate nature, not as civilization's antithesis, but as its playground. The playground Disney has created is a fantastic world, a 'better' version of reality, an edited copy of the original:

⁶Sorkin, p208.

At Disneyland one is constantly poised in a condition of becoming, always someplace that is 'like' someplace else. The simulation's referent is ever elsewhere; the 'authenticity' of the substitution always depends on the knowledge, however, faded, of some absent genuine. Disneyland is in perpetual shadow, propelling its visitors to an unvisitable past or future, or to some (inconvenient) geography...One has gone nowhere in spite of the equivalent ease of going somewhere. One has preferred the simulation to the reality. For millions of visitors, Disneyland is just like the world, only better.'

The Theme park and the Mall

Just as theme parks endeavour to create a sanitized, synthetic world, so too do shopping malls offer their patrons a simulated, artificial environment. For simulation to occur, there must necessarily be something 'out there' to resemble. This resemblance can then range across a broad spectrum to incorporate things that are vaguely reminiscent of a real object to exact duplications of the original. In the case of the shopping mall (or the theme park) the very landscape itself has taken on the characteristics of other places. These simulated characteristics are used to "evoke a sense of 'elsewhereness' through the attempted manipulation of time and space...[and also] as the basis for questioning and thus understanding...the social activity that gives these places their iconic meaning...of elsewhere."⁸

⁸Sorkin, p216.

⁸J. Hopkins, "West Edmonton Mall: Landscape of Myths and Elsewhereness", *The Canadian Geographer*, (Vol 34 No 1, 1990), p4.

By 'iconic meaning' Hopkins is referring to the process of signification that links (in semiotic terms) the signifier (material object) to the signified (mental concept). In this case, an 'icon' is being defined as a type of sign (something that, on the grounds of a previously established social convention, can be taken as something standing for something else) in which there is a direct and noticeable relationship between the real object and the simulation.

The concept of 'elsewhereness' is not necessarily new however.

The basic idea of imitation or mimicry inherent in the concept is a form of play as old as the human desire for amusement. The notion of 'simulacrum', the exact duplication of that which never really existed, dates back to Plato. More recently, Relph's exploration of 'disnification' (an absurd, synthetic place made up of a surrealistic combination of history, myth, reality and fantasy)...and 'imagineering' (the imaginative engineering of deception or manufactured and manipulated illusions) have made explicit the idea of (re)creating other times and settings in landscapes.⁹

Contemporary shopping centres and mega-malls most certainly typify these notions of disnification (a purposeful play on words?) and imagineering as they reflect the trend in North America toward specialized, self-contained, built environments and the unprecedented and unparalleled annexation of the city's retail *and* social life into a corporate, self-contained, artificial environment. Furthermore, whereas theme parks such as Disneyland are generally isolated entities, a step removed from people's everyday routines, and whereas world fairs are temporary and amusement parks seasonal, the spectacle of the shopping centre is integrated into the everyday lives of people and is open year round.¹⁰

Understanding just how elsewhereness has developed in the shopping centre environment is best appreciated by examining the specific evolution of the West Edmonton Mall as it is by far the best example of both disnification and imagineering in a shopping mall.

Through a generally improvisational process, in which the ideas of other shopping

⁹Hopkins, p4.

¹⁰Hopkins, p8.

centres and amusement areas were collected and expanded, West Edmonton Mall owners, Triple Five Corporation devised the conceptual plan for the mall. Initially intended as just a 'large mall in Canada', West Edmonton Mall opened in 1981 with the first phase of what eventually became a three phase centre. 'Park Lane' with its tree-shaded benches reminiscent of those found in a city park represented the formal introduction of an icon related to place into the mall. In 1983, following the success of Phase I, the Ghermazian brothers opened Phase II integrating two more placial icons into the mall setting - the skating rink (Ice Palace) and the amusement park (Fantasyland).

As the mall continued to grow, so too did its unprecedented mixture of recreation, entertainment, and retail components. This union of shopping and leisure activities culminated in Phase III of the mall. The retail segment opened in 1985 with 300 shops, and by 1986 Fantasyland was operating with its indoor water park, hotel, petting zoo, etc. "This ad hoc conceptual approach, in conjunction with 'fast-tracked' construction...produced an increasing sense of elsewhere-ness and thematic incongruities as one moves west from Phase I toward Phase III."¹¹ Certainly, the curious mixing of recreation and retail outlets was done in order to draw people into the centre and keep them there. As well, the milieu of elsewhere-ness helps to divert the attention of the mall-goers away from the mall as a retailing institution and toward its spectacular design effects.

Most importantly, West Edmonton Mall's design "constitutes a response to the

¹¹Hopkins, p9.

Construction moved along so quickly, in fact, that blueprints were being designed as construction proceeded.

sense of 'placelessness' that had saturated shopping centres by the early 1980s."¹² By introducing special features into West Edmonton Mall, Triple Five had achieved a certain distinct identity from a world of generic malls which helped to lessen, but did not eradicate, this sense of placelessness:

It interferes with the users' construction of a coherent 'meaning-full' spatial practice according to the conventions of the rational, *legible* spatial arrangements of modernity...This spatial confusion is heightened by the bricolage of historical settings, throwing off-balance the ordered progression of history. There are no transitional spaces. The Mall appears as a nonrational assemblage held together only by the threads of pedestrian footsteps which link these drifting historical stage sets into a spatial whole.¹³

Like most malls, "[West Edmonton Mall] could have been built anywhere, and in this sense it is nowhere in particular."¹⁴ Developers, however, want people to think of the shopping centre as somewhere special, not just anywhere and nowhere. They have tried to create it as some location other than merely a mall in Edmonton; a place 'elsewhere'.

To be elsewhere, however, means that one is utterly unable to recognize *where* one is located. The shopping centre (and the theme park) are incapable of providing their patrons with any notion of a sense of place; just as they borrow from their surroundings, they deny the surroundings within:

Where, indeed is *here*? And when? Is it night? Or day? Is it spring?
Or winter? You cannot see out. You do not know what city you are in,

¹²Hopkins, p10.

The term 'placelessness' (coined by Relph, 1976) is used to denote locations and physical structures that do not reflect the unique, vernacular or local ways of the immediate surroundings of a place or landscape.

¹³Shields, p156.

¹⁴Hopkins, p10.

or if you are in a city at all. Perhaps it is a complex out by the airport or at a new interchange. It could be on the West Coast. It could be on the East. It could be in a foreign country. The piped music gives no clue. It is the same music everywhere. It is the same place everywhere. You are in the universal controlled environment.¹⁵

In this place of elsewhere, the shopping centre has been constructed as its own enclosed city and here again, it comes to resemble the self-contained setting of the theme park.

The Enclosed City

The City Beautiful movement was the first great model for the new city to be born in America. Originating in the 1892 Fair in Chicago, this movement prescribed elaborate symmetries, monumental beaux-arts architecture, and abundant parks and greenery. Anticipating the theme parks which were to come, the City Beautiful had a fascination with sumptuousness, visible order, and parks. Expanding on the ordered notion of City Beautiful, the pressures of mass settlement and expanding technology created other visions of regulation within the city. These imaginings generally took on one of two forms. The first was aligned chiefly with the rationalist, geometric manner of Le Corbusier whose vision of the city was one of regimentation interspersed with a flourishing landscape. Rather than providing a solution to the dreariness of the industrial city, however, it only served to further the notion of alienation.¹⁶

Modernism produced another version of the city, however, and it was this notion

¹⁵Whyte, p221.

¹⁶Sorkin, 212.

of the 'garden city' (expostulated by Ebenezer Howard) that proved to be more central to the formulation of a theme park such as Disneyland. Similar to Le Corbusier's vision of a city which included a lush landscape, this image of the city also embraced the idea that the renaturalization of the 'denatured' city would somehow strip it of its dread. Garden cities were intended to be small cities constructed on the outer perimeters of already existing metropolises. They were meant to function as an escape valve or release from the tension and overcrowding of the old city. Combined with this attractive plan was the strict regulation of traffic.¹⁷

Most certainly, the organization and scale of either Disney World or the various Disneylands is precisely that of the garden city:

Located on the urban perimeter, they are, as phenomena, comparable to the office parks at other intersections in the highway system, if sited now for convenience of access by leisure commuters. Internally, they are also ordered according to a strict model. Radiating from a strong centre - occupied by the totemic castle of fantasy - the parks are arranged in thematic fiefs (Tomorrowland, Frontierland, etc.), which flow into one another. While the ground plane is given over to pedestrian circulation, the parks' perimeters and airspace are the terrain of elaborate transport systems: trains, monorails, and aerial gondolas.¹⁸

Once again, the shopping centre echoes the organization of the theme park. In itself, an 'enclosed garden city', the shopping mall takes the idea of a built structure and couples it with lush greenery in precisely the same way that the historic garden cities, and

¹⁷Sorkin, p212-213.

This included separation of pedestrians and vehicles and a scale of distances convenient for persons on foot. Formally, the result was generally a single centre and a radial plan, united by loops of circulation.

¹⁸Sorkin, p215.

subsequent Disneyland theme parks did. The sprawling, non-descript exterior of the shopping centres gives way to beautifully crafted atriums, fountains, and glass ceilings inside. And whereas the garden city has its central park and Disneyland has its towering magic castle, the shopping centre has its centre court. As discussed earlier (cf p84), this central court is the location around which everything else revolves. Around the shopping centre, one finds a network of transportation systems similar to what would be found around a theme park. Highways and public transportation routes weave their way around the outer perimeter of the mall site permitting easy access: "Megastructures are for people who have cars. Essentially, they are an extension of the freeway culture, and while they provide access to downtown [or the suburbs], they also provide an almost closed circuit insulated from it."¹⁹

In addition, the shopping centre has also borrowed the notion of the strict control of the internal environment from this garden city/theme park model. As outlined earlier, the security and management of the mall community are of paramount importance. Like the garden city and the theme park, the shopping centre is a carefully constructed space within which certain behaviour is both expected and enforced. What may be most interesting, however, is the fact that strict enforcement, both within Disneyland and the shopping centre, is generally unnecessary. Patrons of both environments appear to regulate themselves. The total control of the environment is a fantasy of pure power,

¹⁹Whyte, p206.

An excellent example of this can be found at Houston Center where one can drive a car in from the freeway to the centre's parking garage, walk through a skyway to one tower and then to another, work, shop, eat, etc. and then head back to the garage and the freeway without ever having set foot in the actual city of Houston at all.

referring to people's fear of others, their desire for order, and the security that comes from sameness. Mall administrators would likely repeat the words of Jeffrey Katzenberg, head of Disney's movie division, when he says that Disney World is thought of as a medium-sized city with a crime-rate of zero: "Although the claim is hyperbole (petty larceny mainly leads to expulsion from the kingdom, more serious infractions to the summoning of adjoining police forces), the perception is not: the environment is virtually self-policing."²⁰ This means that the gaze of authority, probably represented in the excessive order and 'cuteness' of the architecture, has been internalized. The internalization has been made easy by the pleasure dividend which has also been built into the park.

Perhaps the ultimate in the coming together of the shopping centre and the theme park in today's city can be found in Disney's latest endeavour, the town of *Celebration*. Rather than adapting to the surrounding territory or relying on the rules and regulations of someone else's city council, the Disney corporation has begun a massive redevelopment project that includes the construction of its very own 'Disney-town'. "The town, which will be sprinkled with identifiable 'Disney touches' is expected to include housing subdivisions, a village centre, schools, businesses, a golf course and a *shopping centre*." [emphasis mine]²¹ The mind boggles to think that one might never have to leave

²⁰Sorkin, p231.

The problems addressed by the Disney environment are quintessentially modern: crime, transportation, waste, the relationship of work and leisure, the transience of populations, the growing hegemony of the simulacrum.

²¹Tony Lofaro, "Disneyland building its own town", *The Ottawa Citizen*, (Saturday, October 24, 1992), pL2.

one's hometown again. Literally everything has been included in the definitive city of pleasure. At least in this case, the shopping centre has not simply become like a theme park, it has been thoroughly subsumed by it; any distinction between a place of pleasure and a place of commerce have been entirely removed.

The Utopia of Transience

People visiting these sites (theme parks and shopping centres) do so for the pleasure they find there. They seek an environment that will grant them a certain amount of enjoyment and freedom without the hassles of the everyday. "The...visitor seeks and delights in the relationship between what he or she finds and its obverse back home, terrain of crime, litter, and surliness."²² Whether it be a shopping centre or a theme park, patrons are motivated to partake of the sights and sounds immediately surrounding them. At least momentarily, they are removed from the drudgery of everyday life. But these are not settings in which one can linger for very long. Disney Corporation has devoted a great deal of attention to ensuring that line-ups never last more than 45 minutes and never less than 15 minutes. It is a trick to take advantage of people's desire for movement, for something to eat or drink, to occupy people's time without totally frustrating them.

Regardless of the length of one's visit, however, one always has to leave and return to the world outside. As much as Disneyland or a shopping centre would like to be considered its own urban locale, it really cannot hail itself as such. They both invoke

²²Sorkin, p231.

urbanism without ever producing a city:

Rather it [Disneyland] produces a kind of aura-stripped hypercity, a city with billions of citizens (all who would consume) but no residents. Physicalized yet conceptual, it's the utopia of transience, a place where everyone is just passing through. This is its message for the city to be, a place everywhere and nowhere, assembled only through constant motion.²³

In this hypercity, traditional streetscapes have been replaced with a simulation. In his book, *City - Rediscovering the Center* (1988), Whyte makes the claim that cities have lost the conventional notion of what a city should look like. Typical city streets have been removed, and in their place can be found overhead skyways and underground concourses that remove any need to actually walk along the streets. It is his belief that people want to have the traditional version of the city streetscape back and as a result, in places like Disneyland *and* shopping centres, "people pay good money to walk along a simulation of a regular, old-fashioned street, with stores and cafes and doors and windows."²⁴

The Experience(d) Shopper

If the shopping centre has become like a theme park, and if shopping and leisure

²³Sorkin, p231.

²⁴Whyte, p216.

It is Whyte's belief that people want to have the old version of the tree lined, pedestrian-filled city back. He states that building "simulated cities" for people who do not like the modern city has not been such a good idea after all. His prognosis is that megastructures like contemporary shopping centres are in decline, that people want to return to "the real thing" - a marketplace that respects the outdoor environment - a place where you know where you are.

can now be considered one and the same, then there must also have been a comparable shift in the way people consume, contingent upon a similar change in people's appropriation of personal identity and subjectivity. Regardless of the various control mechanisms that have been put in place by mall management, individuals have still managed to seize a certain amount of meaning for themselves. Arising out of this play with the dominant meaning structure, there has emerged an entirely new way of viewing the shopping centre, and by extension, the very process of consumption. This view of gratification through consumption which has developed out of the "transformation of persons from workers into modern consumers in a global market-place may well have been the greatest social change since industrialization."²⁵

To be a 'consumer' in a contemporary shopping centre no longer implies that one will indeed consume in the traditional, or literal, sense. The individual still retains the title of 'consumer', but he or she may never actually engage in the consumption process as it has been typically conceived - making monetary purchases and acquiring goods. Instead, this new consumer inverts the very notion of consumption by turning it away from its status as the mere end result of the production process and the powerlessness it implies, into a site of power in itself. According to Shields, these 'post-shoppers' exploit the possibilities of the mall for their own purposes through erratic and conflicting usages. Somehow, simply being in attendance is affirmation enough of one's existence.²⁶ Existence is affirmed simply by *being there*, through the possibility of participating even

²⁵Langman, p41.

²⁶Shields, p159.

if one does not.

The consumption of unreal spaces, however brief, for purposes of pure experience, unrelated to shopping, shows much more than Shields claims, however. Whereas Whyte views it as a protest *against* modernity and a yearning for a return to the pre- or proto-modern city, it also indicates a great sophistication on the part of consumers. They know what they want, where to get it, and how to get it. The mall inhabitant may be a crazed shopper, but is also a highly rational, satisfaction-seeking individual. The identity being sought may have several rationales: an escape from the present and hence a quest for stability and/or inner-direction; a flight from fear and insecurity and hence an expression of insecurity and rage; a wish for partial integration into consumerism and hence a stab at self-differentiation; total absorption into consumerism and hence the Frankfurt School's worst nightmare of the alienated individual.

Individual selfhood is most often expressed in the everyday practices and typifications which form an individual's cultural base: "Thus, in a differentiated society with a plurality of 'life worlds', there are specific regions for self-presentation where certain salient aspects of an identity may be realized."²⁷ The shopping centre is just one such region. It provides an excellent point of study for viewing the relationship between people's everyday routines and some sense of empowerment and subjectivity. According to Langman, this search for selfhood can be considered as an oscillation "between spheres of domination and empowerment, roughly corresponding to the worlds of routine work

²⁷Langman, p45.

on the one hand, and the shopping mall on the other."²⁸

Malls allow not only incorporation into the worlds of consumption-based lifestyles and identities but as spatial sites of modern hegemony, shopping centres allow a degree of contestation, reinterpretation and often mobilization, if not in fact, fantasy...the mall offers empowerment through hyper-real gratification.²⁹

For Langman, and other sociologists, human behaviour is viewed as springing not from the self, but from the social/industrial context which allows for either empowerment or domination. Of course, context is extremely important, but if it were everything, there would be absolutely no human variation whatsoever. By employing the notion of 'empowerment', Langman (and others) produce an entirely negative concept of power, referring to those moments when people break away in protest. But what sparks that protest? 'Pleasure', conversely, is an entirely positive concept of power, referring to the inner drive or potential that spurs people on, and not necessarily in the mode of protest. The shopping centre is the site where the struggle for fun and the search for profit meet. Consumption as it is played out in the shopping centre, then, has come to be a fundamental component of the individual's search for identity.

Subjectivity in a consumption-based culture is not stable however. Instead, there is a constant array of identities at play within the individual which are often "decentred, fragmented, and differentially expressed and experienced depending on *context*." (emphasis

²⁸Langman, p46.

²⁹Langman, p60-61.

In this particular instance, Langman is referring to the specific relationship between teenagers and shopping centres. Her insights into the search for identity are certainly relevant to the study as a whole however.

mine)³⁰ These incongruities of selfhood legitimate the reality that people are more likely to have clusters of contradictory identities which emerge in certain situations rather than an enduring sense of self. The 'shopping mall self' seeks substantiation in consumption to 'buy' a more gratifying subjectivity than what he or she might otherwise possess. Echoing Kroker (1989), Langman suggests that what the individual finds instead is a lonely micro-circuitry of desire, ideology and expenditure where 'normal' beings, as if in a trance, head to the mall, consume and depart only to return again in mutated forms.³¹

Rather than seeing shopping centres as sites of resistance then, Langman (and others) consider them to be like "a modern 'panopticon' in which the search for subjectivity locks people into 'neon cages' of consumption, sentenced to lifetimes of shopping for subjectivity." Further, these 'neon cages' are seen as institutions which reflect amusement society "as a concentration camp (Brittain, 1977), the person as an inmate (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972), and the chains forged of commodified signs and narrative texts that make oppression opaque."³² Freedom of interpretation, or the ability to subvert the dominant codes consists of little more than conformity to simulacra.

Putting it mildly, this seems an overly pessimistic perspective on the capacity of

³⁰Langman, p67.

For example, the blending of identities can often be witnessed in the nightly newscast which features human interest stories like the banker who is also a rock singer, or the male jock who crochets in his spare time.

³¹This might remind one of George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* where the graves give up their dead and zombies are born again to go to the mall to the shop because this was the most important place in their earthly lives.

³²Langman, p72.

the individual to garner any jurisdiction whatsoever over his or her own identity. Langman, following in the footsteps of the Frankfurt School appears deeply cynical about the power of people to resist control and indoctrination. The vision offered by Langman, however, is ultimately too bleak in that it denies the ability of individuals to resist indoctrination and propaganda; it sees them as puppets of capitalist control.

It is surprising, therefore, that Langman *herself* should have escaped the control. What is it about her or other theorists like her that allows them to rise above the fray and enlighten everyone else? Is this not a contemptuous view of the mass which needs its enlightened leaders, only now the leaders are critical theorists rather than the Ghermazian brothers? In short, does not the analysis maintain the relationship to authority which it claims to criticize? Does it not require people to pay homage to the insights of the theorist just as the theorist claims capitalism requires the masses to pay homage to it?

No doubt Langman (and others) are acting out of good faith, but their generosity need not preclude scepticism. It is also possible, as Mica Nava argues, that more power lies with the consumers than with producers. It is also possible to envision the shopping centre not from the point of view of those who own it, but from the point of view of those who are merely shoppers and rarely granted a voice in consideration of consumption. As it has been demonstrated throughout this paper, even in the face of certain control mechanisms, individuals, in various capacities have been able to play with these controls in a process that delivers individual gratification through consumption. By attributing significance to the point of consumption, this viewpoint is often considered

radical and visionary in its analysis of capitalism³³ because it decimates the traditional notion of power ultimately resting with the producers, not the consumers. In a consumption society, it is the *experience* of shopping, rather than the act itself that takes on greater meaning and as such, it is the *experience(d)* shopper who can find pleasure in the continuous play of interpretations within society whether that be a theme park, a shopping centre, or society as a whole.

³³See Mica Nava, "Consumerism Reconsidered: Buying and Power", *Cultural Studies*, (Vol 5 No 2, May 1991), p167.

CONCLUSION:

Shopping centres are a major contemporary phenomenon. Their very existence attests to the fact that the ideals of production, and perhaps to a greater extent, consumption, are fundamental components of today's culture. Regardless of social or economic status, ethnic background or gender, *everyone* shops. It would be impossible in a consumption culture to do otherwise. And it is because of this predilection for shopping that shopping centres have become such an extraordinary component of society. Children, teenagers, adults, and senior citizens all use the shopping centre as a convenient site for consumption. But as this paper has shown, the shopping centre has also been used for much more. For contemporary culture, the shopping centre has become the definitive site for the integration of a place of commerce with a place of pleasure.

It is the amalgamation of the economic (production and consumption) and the cultural (the construction of meaning and identity) spheres that is at the heart of postmodern shopping centre, and correspondingly, postmodern theory. For without some complex intermingling of both the economic and the cultural, the study of contemporary shopping centres would undoubtedly be incomplete, if not utterly futile. Examining the shopping centre as solely a product of economic relations would certainly have provided insight beyond the scope of this paper into such things as the ownership of the centres, their income potential, and their retail structure. It would not, however, have allowed for any examination of the *social relations* which also exist within the mall environment.

Undertaking a purely cultural analysis would have allowed for an exhaustive study of social relations with respect to the relations of individuals and others, as well as the way in which individuals view themselves. By contemplating the shopping centre as merely one text among many, cultural theorists would argue that the shopping centre has to be critically examined in order to determine any and all underlying meanings. As important as a cultural approach is, however, the exclusion of economic forces cannot be overlooked. For in a study of *shopping* centres it is imperative that some notion of production (and consumption) be taken into account. Indeed, without any reference to its commercial significance, an analysis of shopping centres would be virtually irrelevant. For this reason, then, the dialectic of modernity and postmodernity allows for the exploration of many different avenues of study. It is able to examine the status of social relations within society while at the same time offering some interpretation of the shifting perspective of production to consumption. The study of the contemporary shopping centre is indeed a complex one and postmodernity directly refers to this high degree of complexity and the various degrees of change which occur in a postmodern consumer culture.

Originally intended solely as a place of commerce, shopping centres arose out of the modernist period at a time when the rational ordering of things was considered to be of the utmost importance. Shopping centres, which replaced the traditional image of the downtown streetscape, were considered a new area of consumption that would be both streamlined and profitable. This perfectly rational answer to the shopping process removed any need for the shopper to think independently. Everything had been pre-

arranged and pre-determined, from the placement of seating, to the clustering of stores had been meticulously orchestrated to make the shopping experience as rational as possible. A few key players, namely developers and administrators, exercised control over the entire process, removing any likelihood that individuals, as consumers, could produce their own interpretation of what the shopping centre actually *meant* for them.

It would appear, however, that people *did* begin to search for their own meaning out of what the mall had to offer. Regardless of the many control mechanisms put in place by mall management, individuals sought to expropriate these controls. Consequently, the utterly ordered, rational vision of modernity begins to break down and in its place can be found a perception of society where a multiplicity of possibilities are both accepted and celebrated for their diversity. In stark contrast to the collectivising moment of modernity, *postmodernity* reasserts the power of the individual to formulate his or her own meanings out of whatever is made available, thus allowing for the formation of unique identities. In the specific case of consumer culture, this would allow for the possibility that individuals, as consumers, have both power and potential within the social system. Rather than being constrained by the tenets of modernity, individuals are free to play within the shopping environment. This might involve making purchases but not necessarily so. As consumers in a postmodern marketplace, individuals are just as likely to be found in the shopping centre solely for the purpose of watching other people or meeting friends. Some would argue that this postmodern subject is little more than a 'dithering idiot', swimming about in a sea of possibilities but never actually settling on any particular one. It is important to note, however, that the postmodern

subject does not wholly reject the rationality of modernity. He or she is not being irrational, he or she is just not being entirely rational either. For postmodern consumers this has allowed for the reconceptualization of the shopping centre and the role it plays in the individual lives of consumers. Any certainty that people going to the mall will necessarily shop is removed and in its place can be found only the possibility that they *might* do so.

Mall management is aware of this metamorphosis in the consuming public and has had to work diligently to stay abreast of it. Understandably, a shopping centre would have little material purpose for its owners if everyone who came there never purchased anything. For its owners, at least, a shopping centre is still a commercial enterprise which generally would be useless (from a production point of view) if no one ever spent any money there. By expanding both the mandate and the options available within the centre, though, administrators have sought to keep the interest of shoppers alive through increasingly sophisticated strategies of both seduction and fascination.

The obvious question arising out of this struggle between mall management and consumers, then, is who *ultimately* has the most power? Is it the owners and managers, or is it the individual consumers? Perhaps these questions are not the most important ones to be asking, however. Perhaps it is of greater significance to ponder whether the notion of control is, in effect, a concept which no longer figures seriously in postmodern culture. Perhaps everyone, whether an owner, or a producer, or a consumer, is equally as able to attain some level of personal meaning at various moments in the consumption process. For owners, this might be achieved through the development of a new type of

leisure activity within the mall environment, one that draws people into the centre and keeps them there. For producers, this might be found in the production of an innovative commodity which people consume in vast numbers. For consumers, meaning might be located in the simple act of turning the shopping process into a leisure activity; removing its original intent and replacing it with something that provides individual pleasure and fun.

Undeniably, shopping centres have become important sites for the acting out of this fun on the part of consumers. As a leisure site, in its own right, the shopping centre has taken on many of the characteristics thought to traditionally reside in more specialized tourist destinations. As a 'leisure centre', the shopping mall has incorporated recreational facilities as both secondary and primary examples of what the mall has to offer. As a leisure site, the mall provides the same attractions as might be found at any number of theme parks or other tourist attractions across North America. Similarly, shopping has itself *become* leisure. No longer simply something that people have to do, shopping has evolved into something that people *want* to do. It has become something to be experienced.

This experience of shopping, nevertheless, takes place in a fully controlled, synthetic, and simulated environment. Here again, the disparity between the mall managers and the consuming public comes to the forefront. Like a theme park, the shopping centre is a carefully contrived simulation of the 'real' world. Operating at the level of the hyperreal, it has utterly removed any concept of what it is referring to. Instead, the shopping centre has become the consumers' reality. The exotic locales and

simulated environments it successfully recreates are often more real and attainable than anything the average person would ever be able to experience. In this place of elsewhere, the developers have attempted to create a space that is distinctive, not just anywhere. They want their patrons to believe that their shopping experience is unique when actually it is not. To enter a shopping mall is to enter the universal controlled environment, an environment that is, generally, common to all shopping centres regardless of location or tenant mix.

Again, however, people using the mall have been able to recognize this place of elsewhere for what it means to them. It remains a place of pleasure wherever and however it is presented. No longer simply a cog in the wheel of the production process, the shopping centre has come to represent a potential site of opposition to that very process. And for consumers, it stands as a location in which they can express a great deal of sophistication and finesse with respect to what they *want* out of what contemporary society has to offer. Because postmodernity allows for the possibility that there can (and will) be a myriad number of potential meanings surrounding the shopping centre, it grants individuals the freedom to move about that environment picking and choosing the meanings, actions and identities that provide the greatest amount of satisfaction. As a result, the modernist conception of what a shopping centre should be and should mean, necessarily begins to decay. Equally as important, the modernist notion of what a *consumer* should be and should mean similarly fragments to be replaced by individuals who are proficient in the construction of individual meaning. In a consumption society, it is the *experience* of shopping, and by analogy, the *experience(d)*

shopper who finds pleasure and fun in the endless play of interpretations made available through a consumer culture.

The study of contemporary shopping centres has allowed for specific insights into only one particular element of consumer culture which has successfully linked concepts of economics with notions of pleasure. Certainly, contemporary theme parks also operate in a similar fashion, but what about the rest of society? Will schools, for instance, have to adopt a similar philosophy of business mixed with amusement in order to make everyone happy? Taking another example, one could argue that the political sphere has already incorporated this idea into its ideology. If this phenomenon is occurring throughout society, one must understandably wonder whether this alliance of economics and pleasure is something to be challenged or something to be celebrated. Is it to society's benefit or disadvantage to link them, or is it an inevitable consequence of postmodern consumer culture that the search for amusement and individual identity unavoidably involves incorporating the economic realm? Certainly, these are fundamental issues and questions that need to be acknowledged. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to do so, it is assumed that the ideas introduced here might be employed in such a way as to respond to these thoughts in a meaningful way.

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