

# Artists, Aestheticisation and the Field of Gentrification

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[Paper first received, October 2002; in final form, May 2003]

**Summary.** Gentrification involves the transition of inner-city neighbourhoods from a status of relative poverty and limited property investment to a state of commodification and reinvestment. This paper reconsiders the role of artists as agents, and aestheticisation as a process, in contributing to gentrification, an argument illustrated with empirical data from Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Because some poverty neighbourhoods may be candidates for occupation by artists, who value their affordability and mundane, off-centre status, the study also considers the movement of districts from a position of high cultural capital and low economic capital to a position of steadily rising economic capital. The paper makes extensive use of Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the field of cultural production, including his discussion of the uneasy relations of economic and cultural capitals, the power of the aesthetic disposition to valorise the mundane and the appropriation of cultural capital by market forces. Bourdieu's thinking is extended to the field of gentrification in an account that interprets the enhanced valuation of cultural capital since the 1960s, encouraging spatial proximity by other professionals to the inner-city *habitus* of the artist. This approach offers some reconciliation to theoretical debates in the gentrification literature about the roles of structure and agency and economic and cultural explanations. It also casts a more critical historical perspective on current writing lauding the rise of the cultural economy and the creative city.

Two recent vignettes illustrate how gentrification has become not a sideshow in the city, but a major component of the urban imaginary (see Wyly and Hammel, 1999; Badcock, 2001). Richard Florida, author of *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002a), a book eagerly embraced by mayors and economic development planners in the US (Eakin, 2002), visited Toronto in June 2002 and expounded on what makes successful cities work

today's economy—places such as San Francisco, Seattle, Boston, New York, Minneapolis, Chicago, Paris, Dublin and, yes, Toronto. These regions share some curious traits. They're well-known havens for music from rock to world beat; they're cauldrons for artists of all styles and persuasions. And they are open, tolerant places where gays, bohemians and immigrants want to live (Florida, 2002b).

Look at the cities and regions thriving in

Note that these are all central cities occupied by an urbane middle class, places where

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gentrification is well-established, housing precisely those creative workers identified as key actors in Florida's thesis. In a related development, the London department store, Harvey Nichols, an enterprise like Selfridges for which historically only London had been worthy, recently opened its doors in Edinburgh. Its senior international buyer observed that the store, with its own interest in an urbane middle class, wanted "to be part of the rejuvenation programmes in cities in the UK", having noted the recent rise of a putatively new fashion market for home décor, fancy restaurants and designer boutiques in certain cities outside London (Freeman, 2002). The women's buyer at Selfridges, which began its own decamping from London to Manchester in 1998, added with a rare touch of humility, "We don't think Manchester needs us; we know it is Manchester that can help Selfridges".

There are two interesting points that emerge from these vignettes: first, the degree to which both urban boosters and corporate managers are "building upon the foundations of gentrification" as Blair Badcock (1995) put it in a seminal paper that traced gentrification's trajectory forward into the new economy. Secondly, in these accounts, creativity—whether expressed in art or fashion—is seen to act as an independent variable as a promoter of economic development. Relations are rarely quite this simple, of course, but it is worth noting the way causality is seen to work by decision-makers. It is not Manchester that needs Selfridges, but Selfridges that needs Manchester. This paper pursues some of the relations between art, aestheticisation and commodification in the residential landscapes of the creative city. The strategy will be to move between empirical specificity and theoretical propositions in order to deepen the first and make the second historically and geographically accountable.

### **The Artist and the Redemptive Act of Creation**

Carole Itter is an artist. Her speciality is assemblage art—the collection of found ob-

jects, the discarded, the obsolete, urban refuse. Critics see her work as subversive of a destructive consumerism

Her pleasure in reviving this detritus of the city constitutes her mode of opposition to the various forces of alienation at work in the dominant culture (Hurtig, 1989, p. 36).

Her themes are both urban and regional. "Often the locality", she has written "has a large influence on the art" (Itter, 1989, p. 28). For an exhibit at the Vancouver Art Gallery, she constructed a 30-foot-long spill of urban detritus entitled '*Where the Streets are Paved with Gold: A Tribute to a Canadian Immigrant Neighbourhood*'. Reflecting life in the Strathcona neighbourhood, a poor older district near the city's downtown where she lives among new Canadians, the piece is multilayered in its meanings. Hundreds of found objects are united as members of an imaginary cobble-stoned street—indicative of the artist's multicultural belief in unity from diversity. The gold finish to each object and the presence of several ladders in the assemblage signify the path of upwardly mobile aspirations to a new national identity, sanctified perhaps by a former church organ at the end of the 'street' that emits random sounds and a sporadic improvised version of '*O Canada*' (Richardson, 1991; Rosenberg, 1991). But the assemblage also evokes an ironic critical commentary, highlighted by the artist

These useless wooden articles, remnants of our society's determined overproduction, are fake gold and question the splendour once promised to newcomers. My 'street' is nothing but junk, cast-offs from a country hell-bent on destroying natural resources (quoted in Richardson, 1991, p. 1).

It is precisely this act of transformation that will be discussed in this paper, the movement of a product, and indeed a place, from junk to art and then on to commodity. The discussion will draw upon varied sources including ethnographic interviews conducted with artists in Vancouver, surveys including the national census and the work of other

researchers. The principal theoretical guide is Pierre Bourdieu and his two important books, *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) and *Distinction* (1984).<sup>1</sup> A basic task of the paper is to extend Bourdieu's theses about the aesthetic disposition and the relations between economic and cultural capital to the inner-city land market. Of course, the case is not being made that an understanding of the aestheticisation of place is all that needs to be known about the incidence of gentrification. However, I would argue that it opens up some seminal ways of thinking about the restructuring of urban space in post-industrial cities, where the exaltation of representation over function is far from the ethos of the industrial city and its muscular modernism, glorified in the efficiency and utilitarianism of mass production.

Ms Itter has reflected on the symbiotic relationship between her art and her neighbourhood

In my Vancouver neighbourhood, I have moved around from one old rented house to another, so often that sometimes I think I'll throw up the next time I look at a gallon of white latex. But what these antiquated generally drafty places have always provided is a history, a mess, a vast collection of other people's junk, discarded but not tossed out, just left behind. The more dilapidated the outdoor storage sheds the better. Being a consummate collector, I can't help but regard junk as material filled with possibilities (Itter, 1989, p. 29).

She has lived in various houses in Strathcona for over 20 years because it is cheap, because it is an intimate environment and because of the richness of culture and conversation. She has played a role in community development, recording local memories in an oral history project. On her city block, occupied by a number of artists, there are "More Masters' and PhDs than any block in Vancouver" (interview). Indeed in the 1990s, Strathcona felt the first tangible stirrings of gentrification as more commercially successful artists—like kdlang—arrived, and the earliest synagogue in the city, for 50 years a boys'

and girls' club, underwent a second conversion, to condominiums.

Immersed as she is in First Nations' culture of the Pacific Northwest, Carole Itter's status as a collector identifies her as a regional artist retracing ancient life-paths of collecting and scavenging from a munificent nature. But her association with the aesthetic reconfiguration of junk also locates her with two of the archetypal characters Walter Benjamin identified with modern urban life, the rag-picker and the poet (Benjamin, 1973). For Benjamin, the rag-picker is a heroic urban figure, akin even to the historian for, in gathering the unwanted scraps of the modern city to reconfigure them in a more useful form, he or she represents an allegory of "redemptive practice" (Gilloch, 1996, p. 165). The poet-cum-artist was no less an archetypal figure for "The poets find the refuse of society on their street and derive their heroic subject from this very refuse" (Benjamin, 1973, p. 79). The reconfiguration of matter involves also the reconfiguration of meaning; an act of transformation has converted junk to valued products.

There is, at one level, a sense of a sleight of hand in this creation of the art work. The mystery of revaluing is heightened in the case of assemblage art and its use of found objects. As one of Itter's critics has put it, we are in the presence of an "alchemy of art ... an illusion of enchantment" (Rosenberg, 1991); another sees 'fantastic', 'uncanny', 'ghostly' character in the assemblage, 'seductive in its mystery' (Hurtig, 1989). The act of creation, the language of renewal, the practice of redemption of a spent force, has something of a metaphysical quality. This same wide-eyed amazement at the capacity to create meaning, apparently from nothing, was present in Jonathan Raban's profound engagement with the beginnings of gentrification in London around 1970. In one section of his book, Raban, puzzled, reflects on a retailing enigma, shops that glory in what he calls 'useless consumption'. His perceptive eye comes to rest on a store that sells only white-painted Moroccan bird cages. Here, spells are surely cast in a

new form of urban production and consumption which “transforms junk into antiques, rubbish into something rich, strange, expensive and amusing” (Raban, 1974, p. 95; Ley, 1996).<sup>2</sup>

What can be said about such an arbitrary production and consumption system? First, in its distance from the *déclassé* mass-produced products of the malls and high-street chain stores, the Moroccan bird cage, like the art-work, establishes symbolic value through a claim to difference and authenticity, the authenticity of craft production in a setting seemingly detached from modern production and marketing. Here, there is an aesthetic disposition that transforms ordinary materials into valued objects, a

stylisation of life [where] nothing is more distinctive, more distinguished, than the capacity to confer aesthetic status on objects that are banal or even ‘common’ (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 5).

Moreover,

Cultural consecration does indeed confer on the objects, persons and situations that it touches a sort of ontological promotion akin to a transubstantiation (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 6).

An appreciation of such symbolic value requires a certain *savoir faire*, so that appropriation of the object serves as a citation of distinction in the social space of urban cultures. In the increasingly complex world of the arts and the applied arts (including home furnishing), there is a growing need for cultural intermediaries to intervene to aid in the act of interpretation (Zukin, 1991).

In the juxtaposition of assemblage with retailing, can also be seen a parallel orientation of the artist and the entrepreneur. Both are profoundly concerned with the creation of value. There are, of course, seemingly different concepts of value at stake. ‘*Where the Streets are Paved with Gold*’ is a polyvalent work, but a fundamental part of its meaning, most certainly for its artist, is as a critical project, informed by environmental and post-colonial sentiment, directed against

the creative destruction of the market system. Against the ravages of the market seen so pathetically in the effects upon nature and First Nations’ society, not least in the clear-cut hill-slopes and disease-emaciated and de-territorialised Native settlements of the Pacific Northwest, a voice of artistic dissent is raised. This critical spirit of artistic expression has become part of the high ground of oppositional politics to corporate abuses (Braun, 2002).

### The Field of Cultural Practice

More generally, the intentionalities of the artist and the entrepreneur seem to move in opposite directions. The anti-bourgeois, anti-conformist dispositions of the artist sit uneasily with the servant of a mass society. Life on the edge, the preferred social location of the artist, undercuts the disciplined convention of the organisation man. Artists are frequently disdainful of the market system and its commodification that dumbs down the creative act into the language of filthy lucre, that requires that the sacred space of the studio be ravaged by the ‘gangsterism’ of the art world (Watson, 1989; Deutsche, 1996).

In Bourdieu’s (1984) social space diagrams, the polar opposites within the middle class are frequently provided by commercial entrepreneurs and industrialists on the one hand and cultural producers on the other. These locations in social space are defined by two axes: the volume of capital, from high to low, held by different class fragments; and, the nature of that capital, whether cultural or economic capital. The positions of selected occupations in social space also correspond with social and family characteristics as well as lifestyle preferences, measured across many variables—for example, art, leisure, food and furnishing preferences. On these axes, within just the dominant class, Bourdieu observes a series of partly overlapping social groups, moving along a continuum of selected occupations with distinctive associated lifestyle clusters, from artistic producers who have high cultural capital and low economic capital to teachers, to other

professionals and engineers, and finally to industrial and commercial employers, whose position at the high economic capital pole in social space bears no overlap with the artistic producers at the opposite pole of high cultural capital.

Bourdieu gives a dialectical answer to the question of whether personal preference or commercial exposure shapes lifestyle tastes. He identifies instead a 'homology' between producers and their clients, where each shares an equivalent position and needs the other, and their mutual relationship reproduces both the production and the consumption spheres. Despite origins in the conceptually separated fields of production and consumption, "an objective orchestration of two relatively independent logics" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 230) leads to the following resolution

Thus the tastes actually realized depend on the state of the system of goods offered; every change in the system of goods induces a change in tastes. But conversely, every change in tastes ... will tend to induce, directly or indirectly, a transformation of the field of production. There is therefore no need to resort to the hypothesis of a sovereign taste compelling the adjustment of production to needs, or the opposite hypothesis, in which taste is itself a product of production (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 231).

To revert to the earlier illustration, Manchester and Selfridges need each other for their mutual reproduction. Each is part of a broader field of relationships, already in place, constantly structuring as it is restructured. This concept of the '*cultural field*' as shall be seen, is a valuable component of Bourdieu's approach to the world of art and the artist.

No less important than the divergent tendencies of economic and cultural capital are their points of interaction. Bourdieu identifies the field of cultural production as occupying a dominated position, but a position nonetheless on the dominant axis of class relations. Middle-class origins and/or

high levels of education, frequently both together, are required to establish the aesthetic disposition. The important point is that the aesthetic disposition, affirming and transforming the everyday, is a class-privileged temperament. Through the considerable cultural capital of its creative workers, it is a feature of the dominant class, whereas—because of their weak economic capital—it belongs to a dominated faction of this class. But within its own field, the aesthetic disposition contains considerable autonomy particularly in its criteria for recognition and prestige which are determined by those within the field itself. While the 'vulgar' pole of the field may measure success in worldly terms, the autonomous pole confers recognition purely within the terms of reference of art itself. Here is "a systematic inversion of the fundamental principles of all ordinary economies", for both profit and worldly influence are demeaned (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 39). This characteristic "explains the failure of all forms of economism, which seek to grasp this anti-economy in economic terms, to understand this upside-down economic world" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 40). Such valuing of the worthless and rejection of mainstream consumerism is precisely the enigma of Jonathan Raban's Moroccan bird cage and 'the alchemy' of assemblage art like Ms Itter's.

At the same time, within the cultural field there is an abiding struggle to shape legitimising principles between these autonomous criteria of an *avant-garde* and the compromising criteria of market-determined values. So there is a tendency towards an insidious subversion of the other-worldliness of an autonomous aesthetic disposition, which is predicated, reasons Bourdieu, upon "the suspension and removal of economic necessity and by objective and subjective distance from groups subjected to those determinisms" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 54).<sup>3</sup> Its locus within the dominant class defines the sociology of the aesthetic disposition and thus its availability to dominated members of that class. Provocatively, Bourdieu identifies bourgeois adolescents and women who are

typically excluded from the economic and political power held by men in their class as sometimes adopting responses of aesthetic appropriation or resistance

Bourgeois adolescents ... sometimes express their distance from the bourgeois world which they cannot really appropriate by a refusal of complicity whose most refined expression is a propensity towards aesthetics and aestheticism (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 55).

Such a *habitus* is one example of a 'stylisation of life', most fully realised by artists, that informs and is formed by aesthetic views and practices—including, as will be seen, the occupation and valorisation of space.

There has been a long tradition in art history of extolling the creative individual, the artist, the anguished performative genius. There is, of course, immense personal creativity in art works, and here it seems as if, partly for his own disciplinary objective of establishing sociology over against philosophy in the French academic canon, Bourdieu (1993) tends towards an over-socialisation of the artistic project. But he is surely correct to state that a hagiographic celebration of individual artistic genius is a hugely incomplete analysis—for art is part of a much broader social terrain, reminiscent of Sharon Zukin's narrower, but evocative term, the artistic mode of production (Zukin, 1982). The social contexts of art have become a significant emphasis in recent art criticism, extending earlier work such as Becker's (1982) study of the art world, with its fellow artists, colleges and critics, its bars and hang-outs, buyers and patrons, galleries and museums, to a much tougher critique of the social consequences, for some even the social purposes, of art which have much to do it seems with the politics of displacement (Deutsche, 1996).

The artistic mode of production involves social relations between different players in the art world, but Bourdieu (1993) makes that analysis more formal as he considers in addition the conditions that permit an autonomous artistic field, exemplified in the slogan

'art for art's sake', to exist at all. In other words, art should be understood not only as a material product with a creator, not only as a symbolic product with an audience and set of facilitators who bring it to the attention of the audience, but also as a manifestation of positions within the artistic field as a whole, the positions of predecessors and contemporaries, of valued and devalued, of dominants and dominated. Bourdieu regards the artwork as a joint creation. It is not just the creation of the artist, other than in a crude material sense, for its value has to be received and confirmed in an intersubjective art world. But this art world is itself shaped by the whole field of cultural production.

The quasi-magical potency of the [artist's] signature is nothing other than the power, bestowed on certain individuals, to mobilize the symbolic energy produced by the functioning of the whole field, *ie.* the faith in the game and its stakes that is produced by the game itself (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 81).

Value should be understood as socially produced in a 'game' involving the artist, the art-world and also the social conditions producing the art-world, including the position of the art-work in an historical space of genres, techniques and patterns of recognition. "In short it is a question of understanding works of art as a *manifestation* of the field as a whole" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 37). Now what does this argument have to say to gentrification as an aestheticisation of urban space? What defines the field of gentrification?

### The Field of Gentrification

Bourdieu's development of the field of cultural production as the proper site for the creation of value is a powerful heuristic and the remainder of this paper will extend it to think of gentrification also as a field of relationships, practices and historical traces. This historical standpoint, so emphasised by Bourdieu, is critical, for there are fragments of precedent and memory that are part of the cultural codes of the gentrification 'game'

and that shape the field into the present. A first step is to establish some of the key relationships in the field: first, the type of capital held by artists, and, secondly, their position within the dominant class, albeit as Bourdieu would have it, as the dominated segment of the dominant class.

In North America, the life of the artist is an invitation to voluntary poverty and here is the first manifestation of a calculus that is incomprehensible to economism. Surveys abound highlighting the minimal economic capital of the artist. A 1993 analysis of Canada's cultural producers found artists in the lowest niches; painters and sculptors reported a mean annual net income from cultural activity of under \$8000, dancers, musicians and writers, \$15 000 or less (Statistics Canada, 1995). A few years earlier, a Toronto survey had discovered that half of a sample of visual and performing artists had registered a net loss in art-related income the previous year (Social Data Research, 1990), while in New York an ethnography of urban artists in SoHo estimated that only 1 in a 100, at best 1 in 20, would achieve commercial success (Simpson, 1981). In art, as in statistics, the significance level seems to stop at 5 per cent. Or does it? For the deep deficit in economic capital is relieved by a surfeit of cultural capital. Remember Carole Itter's assessment of the density of graduate degrees on her block in Strathcona. The survey of Canada's cultural producers revealed the same pattern. Although economically impoverished, artists had very high levels of education, with 51 per cent possessing university degrees—more than three times the national workforce average.

Not only the appropriation of high levels of cultural capital, but also the discipline and achievement of learning an aesthetic disposition, identify artists as members of the middle class. Correlations of the location of artists in Canadian cities in the 1970s identified them as overlapping with the residential areas of higher socioeconomic status, if sometimes on their margins in districts whose gentility has become frayed at the

edges (Ley, 1996). This interdigitation is evident, for example, in several of Margaret Atwood's Toronto novels where characters move between the social worlds of artist or writer in Cabbagetown or the Toronto Islands and such middle-class bastions as the University of Toronto and the Royal Ontario Museum, showing joint membership of a larger professional middle class in the central city. So, too, the studios of art colleges are filled by the children of middle-class parents. At Vancouver's art college

The students are protected and middle-class. They face 10 years of apprenticeship after 4–6 years of little to no income. They have wonderful ideas but not the means to follow them through. One hundred and fifty graduate each year. A lot of them are very quickly on welfare (interview with assemblage artist).

Here, succinctly, is Bourdieu's concept of rich cultural capital, limited economic capital, but nonetheless membership of the dominant class.

Artists, however, are very special members of the middle class for they stretch its imagination, its desires, even its practices, beyond its norms and conventions. The artistic lifestyle, like the creative art-work, deliberately presses the borders of conventional middle-class life, while at the same time representing its advancing, colonising arm. In a more abstract discussion, Habermas (1983, p. 5) declared that "the avant-garde must find a direction in a landscape into which no one seems to have yet ventured". But this venturing is part of a broader field of relationships where the dialectical ties between artistic imagination and middle-class convention may lead to a synthesis in the aestheticised product. One such valorised product is space.

### Artists' Spaces

As modern art attempted to create a world for itself with greater independence from the patronage of the church, the court and the aristocracy, so artists congregated in large

modern cities such as Paris, New York, London and Berlin, close to the art world, their market and, perhaps, most important, close to each other. Various *avant-garde* movements have been synonymous with urban life (Marcus, 1989), and so it remains today. Artists remain disproportionately associated with large urban areas. In 1991, just over half of Canada's artists were located in the three principal cities of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Further specificity exists within these three metropolitan areas, for, against a national standard (of 1.0), suburbs are under-represented as homes for artists, while central cities are overrepresented. Average location quotients of 0.97 in the suburbs contrasted with a quotient of 2.46 in the central city. The 1996 Census of Canada uses a new occupational classification that permits a more precise specification of artists' occupations. Now against the standard of the metropolitan area as a whole (= 1.0), a location quotient of 2.95 is identified for artists in the City of Toronto, compared with a figure of 0.62 in the remainder of the metropolitan area. Similar, if less polarised profiles existed in Montreal (1.87, 0.68) and Vancouver (1.65, 0.74). Moreover, adding the older occupational classification shows a steady increase in centre-city concentration in each of the four censuses from 1981 to 1996 in each metropolitan area. Within the inner-city neighbourhoods, quotients are even higher (Figures 1 and 2). In Toronto, a semi-circle of tracts around the downtown area registers quotients in excess of 4.2; in Vancouver a broken circle of tracts around downtown has values of 2.5 or greater. This is a remarkable development considering that Toronto and Vancouver have consistently had the most expensive housing markets in the nation. Artists must be enduring considerable sacrifices of both housing quality and affordability to maintain this residential habit. Once again, their behaviour defies economic rationality, confirming that they are marching to a different drummer.

Repeating the evidence of the Census, a survey of artists in Toronto identified the importance of a central location as part-and-

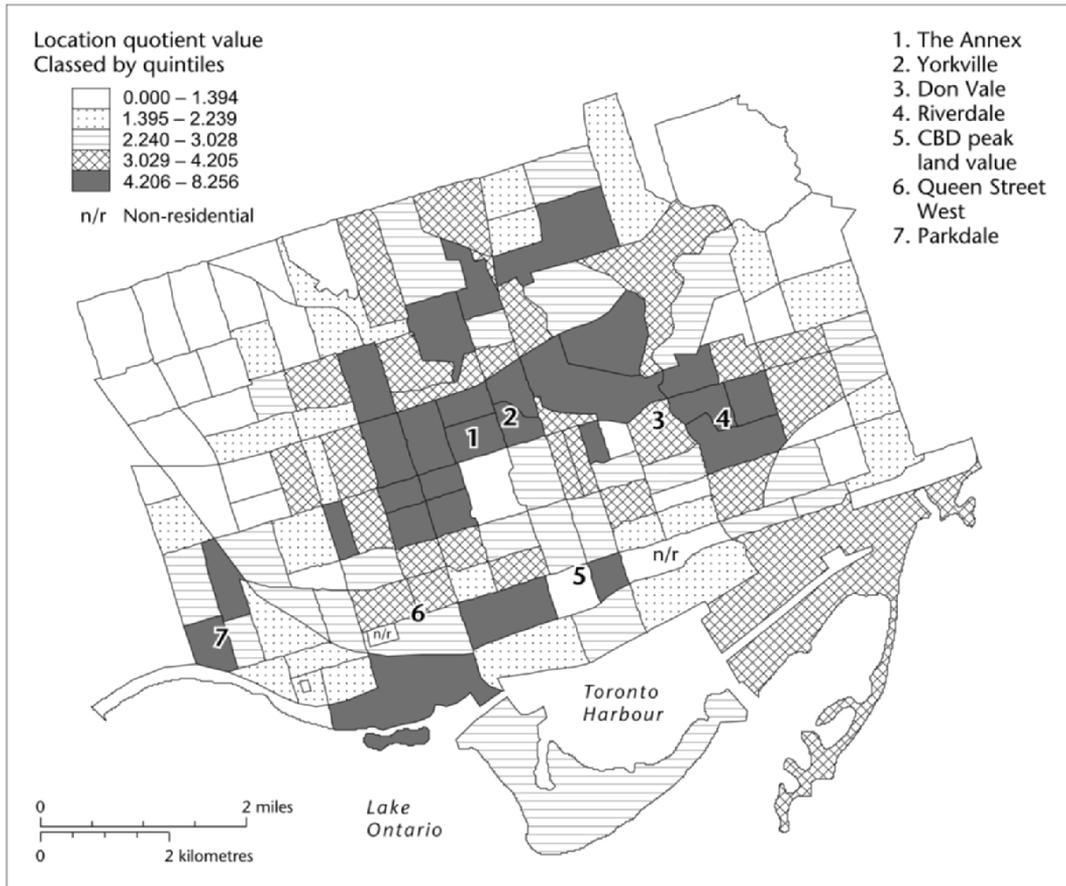
parcel of the artistic *habitus*. Among important locational requirements, 86 per cent specified a residence in downtown Toronto and (supporting Richard Florida) 85 per cent required a 'socially tolerant' district (Social Data Research, 1990). Interviews with artists in Vancouver add some flesh to this skeleton and revealed that not just any central-city neighbourhood will do. A sculptor showed the keen spatial differentiation that may take place

Artists need authentic locations. You know artists hate the suburbs. They're too confining. Every artist is an anthropologist, unveiling culture. It helps to get some distance on that culture in an environment that does not share all of its presuppositions, an old area, socially diverse, including poverty groups.

Poverty areas (like Carole Itter's Strathcona) also offer cheaper rents, making a cultural virtue of economic necessity. In contrast, areas, including areas formerly occupied by artists, lose their allure with redevelopment even if heritage preservation or historical or cultural theming is part of the new landscape. A painter revealed the cultural as well as economic limitations of such redeveloped districts, including the festival market of Granville Island, very popular with Vancouver's inner-city professionals

I used to work with Dunderave printmakers on Granville Island, a dreadful place, Disneyland. You can't ever park there, it's too planned, too sanitised. It's better if the city keeps out, rents get too high, the place becomes too sanitised. The live-work spaces the City set up in Yaletown are too expensive and sterile. They're alright, you know, if you like wall-to-wall clean.

The live-work spaces, frequently marketed as artists' lofts, are rarely popular (or affordable) with many artists. An artist interviewee confided that she "doesn't know anyone who lives in these artists' studios". What she sees there and in other redeveloped central-city settings is something other than authenticity.



**Figure 1.** The spatial concentration of artists in inner-city Toronto, by location quotient, 1996.

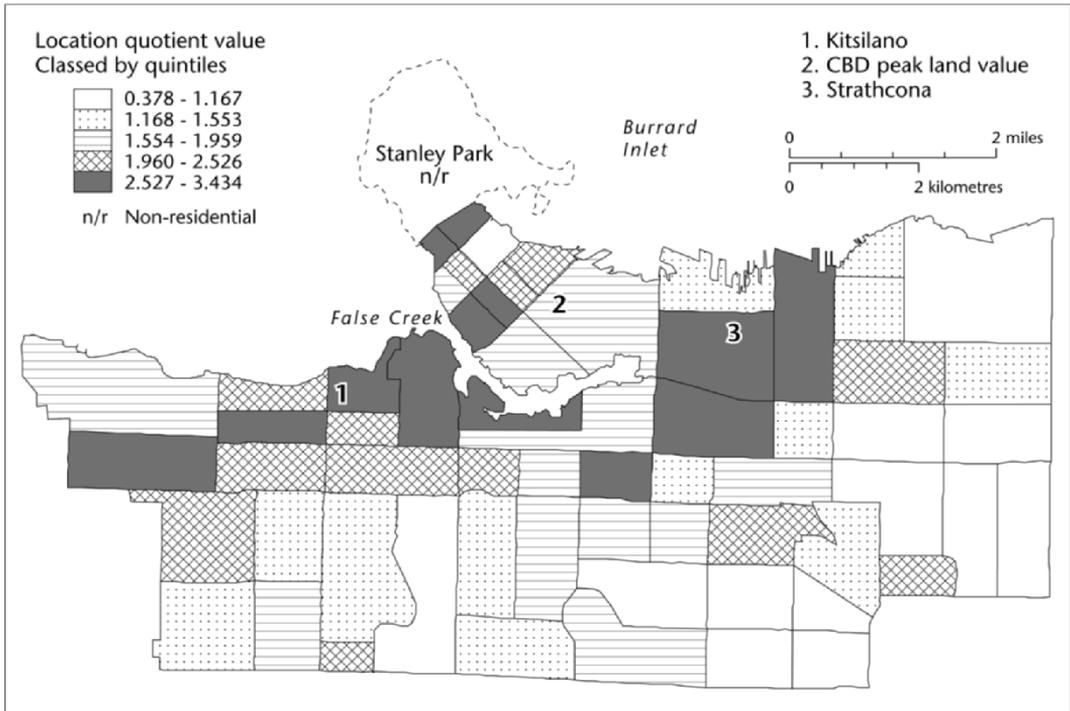
Commodification is what I see. Gastown looks pretty but there's nothing for me there. Is it a romantic notion that brings people to places like Granville Island? There's no place there for me.

Once again, the aesthetic disposition inverts the normal ranking of stimuli. Those commodified sites that are popular, even popular with middle-class professionals, are subject to aesthetic rejection, while what Bourdieu (1984, p. 40) might class as ordinary and everyday, even plebeian, are subject not only to aestheticisation, but to aesthetic approval. "An old area, socially diverse, including poverty groups" can be valorised as authentic, symbolically rich and free from the commodification that depreciates the meaning of place. For the aesthetic disposition, com-

modified locations, like commercialised art, are regarded as sterile, stripped of meaning: "there's nothing for me there". The suburbs and the shopping mall, emblems of a mass market and a failure of personal taste, are rejected. The related but opposing tendencies of cultural and economic imaginaries reappear; spaces colonised by commerce or the state are spaces refused by the artist. But, as scholars know, this antipathy is not mutual; the surfeit of meaning in places frequented by artists becomes a valued resource for the entrepreneur.

### The Historical Geography of Gentrification

As stated earlier, Bourdieu's concept of the



**Figure 2.** The spatial concentration of artists in inner-city Vancouver, by location quotient, 1996.

field of cultural production has a strong historical dimension, for precedents and traditions establish the rules of the game and the positionality of players on the field. So, too, gentrification research should pay attention to the historical sweep of a form of urban restructuring that dates in many cities to the late 1960s. The present argument in a nutshell is that the origins of gentrification included the establishment of an urbane *habitus* that drew its identity from a perspective rich in cultural capital but (initially) weak in economic capital.<sup>4</sup>

On Bourdieu's social space diagrams, some overlap occurs between the space of artists and the space of youth. Both have low levels of economic capital and typically higher levels of cultural capital than their parents. In addition to this formal relationship, there may also be a lifestyle relationship as the aesthetic disposition and the artist's lifestyle become either a refuge or a site of resistance for youth from bourgeois values (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 55). This is

where historical context becomes significant in establishing the positionality of the field of gentrification, for the 1960s saw the ascendancy of a set of circumstances *that overdetermined an elevated valuation of cultural capital*. The adolescence and young adulthood of the 'baby boom' was the dominant demographic trend in many Western societies and the opening of new universities declared the movement of this cohort into higher education, the site for the acquisition of cultural capital and "the major factor affecting arts participation" (Crane, 1992, p. 149). Secondly, the long economic boom of the post-war era created for a larger population the distance from necessity that Bourdieu regards as a prerequisite for the cultivation of the aesthetic disposition. Thirdly, the maturation of the welfare state institutionalised a critique of an unfettered market system. Faced with the excesses of an unselfconscious complex of private and public corporations, it is little wonder that this decade saw the proliferation of youth-based

social movements, including the anti-war movement, civil rights, environmentalism and the student movement itself. The convergence of a large youth cohort, their movement into higher education, a spirit of dissent against the military-industrial complex, corporate capitalism, even the conventions of the bourgeois family—all were tendencies that elevated the prestige and the authority of an oppositional cultural competence for significant fractions of the youthful middle class.

The centrality of cultural discourse and practice in the student movement is evident from contemporary texts. Writing in an edited volume on *Student Power* in 1969, Stuart Hall observed that

In post-industrial societies, what has in traditional Marxist analysis been labelled the ‘superstructure’ plays a more central, autonomous and self-producing role (Hall, 1969, pp. 184–185).

He evoked “a new kind of politics of post-modern post-industrial society: the politics of cultural rebellion” (p. 196). Perhaps he was taking his cue from a slogan hurled by youthful rebels at the Sorbonne during the events of May–June 1968

The bourgeois revolution was judicial; the proletarian revolution was economic. Ours will be social and cultural so that man can become himself (Yinger, 1972, p. 202).

The place of cultural capital in these events of the 1960s may also be judged in terms of their centrality for intellectual life in France and beyond. Whatever else it was, May–June 1968 was a major literary event; some 300 book-length interpretations and recollections had appeared within 12 months, over 1000 in the space of 6 years (Turkle, 1975; Marcus, 1989). Emergent from the same era in France were the beginnings of post-modernism and post-structuralism, two of the intellectual movements that comprise the cultural turn that has proved so powerful a force in the social sciences and humanities in the past 25 years, and both of them movements critical of an earlier intellectual history where posi-

tivism and structuralism represented modernist philosophies of science largely bereft of nuanced cultural analysis.

Not surprisingly, the positionality of social groups shows that the locus of greatest support for the student movement was in the disciplines where cultural study was most highly concentrated. A review of American universities revealed that the arts and social sciences were the primary home of the critical impulses of the student movement with steadily decreasing support through natural sciences, law and medicine, business and engineering, with agricultural students the most resistant cohort to a new cultural politics (Lipset, 1979). A second review of both American and Canadian campuses reached the same conclusion (Quarter, 1972). Student radicalism was most pronounced in such social and cultural fields as social work, liberal theology, architecture, music and library science within a broader matrix of the arts, humanities and social sciences. The most conservative students were in engineering, law and business programmes, with the natural sciences and other professional faculties (such as medicine) falling in between. The gender profile of disciplines supportive of the student movement resonates with the importance of gender in a later gentrification literature and with the role of the professional woman (Mills, 1989; Germain and Rose, 2000). The arts, humanities and social sciences had the highest proportions of women, while disciplines further from this faculty, notably business and engineering, remained male preserves, certainly in the late 1960s. The symmetry between the position of disciplines and faculties supporting the student movement and Bourdieu’s social space diagrams is of the greatest interest. The disciplines closest to cultural production provided the core of student dissent, a typical political position for the other-worldliness of the aesthetic disposition. These positional relations will be returned to later, in the context of gentrification.

In such a milieu of valorised cultural capital, it is perhaps not surprising that there was simultaneously a huge increase in artistic

producers. In the US and Canada their rate of growth exceeded the increase in the labour force by three-fold in the 1970s and, in Canada, expansion continued at twice the level of labour force growth in the 1980s. Certainly, part of the growth can be attributed to new forms of state subsidy and the commodification of the art market (Crane, 1992; Deutsche, 1996), although this explanation itself suspends the question of why art became a higher priority for the state. Moreover, despite such capitalisation, the trickle-down effect has been limited, for the arts-based income of a vast majority of artists remained very low. The modest direct effect of state subsidies is reflected in the small variation in numbers of cultural producers between different jurisdictions despite significant differences in government support. The 1996 Census revealed that metropolitan Vancouver, for example, had a marginally higher proportion of artists in its workforce than Montreal, although per capita grants to the arts at mid-decade were three times higher in Montreal than in Vancouver (RCPSC, 1997). Increased capitalisation is an insufficient explanation for the growth of cultural producers. Truer to the ends of art itself is a commitment among a broader population to the integrity and authority—the symbolic capital—of cultural competence, particularly in concert with an historic decline in the prestige of both the state and corporations.

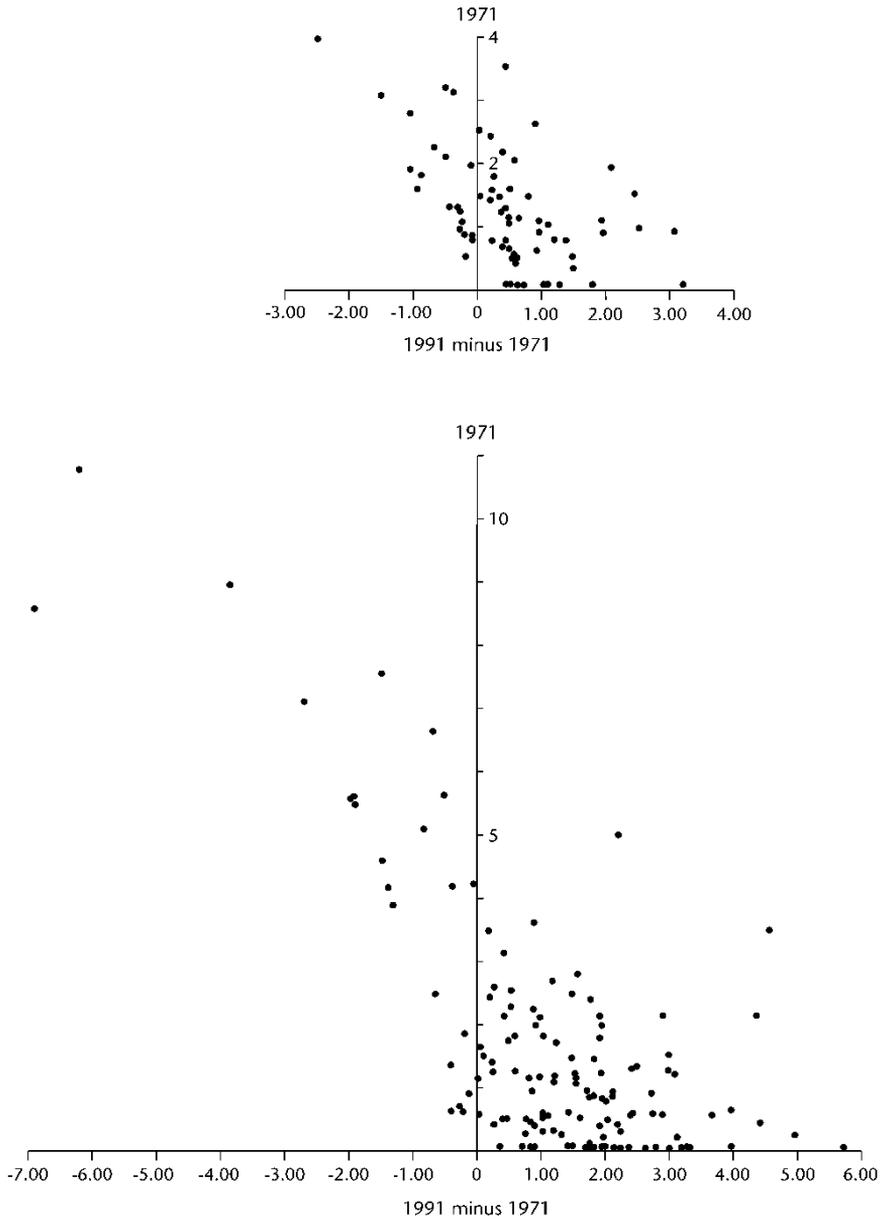
### **Dynamic Relations within the Field**

Bourdieu's analysis of relations between social classes and class fragments is presented as an essentially stable tableau of regularised cultural practices predicated upon the variable tenure of cultural, economic and social capital. Gentrification in contrast is predicated on socio-spatial change, the transfer of residential occupancy across class boundaries. In the final section of the paper, Bourdieu's model of intergroup relations within the dominant class will be animated against the dynamism of the historical geography of the 1960s and 1970s. The particu-

lar interest, in gentrification, is in charting this interaction across space.

Learning the field of gentrification is facilitated by a cadre of cultural intermediaries in real estate, travel, cuisine, the arts and home decorating.<sup>5</sup> This cosmopolitan cadre, akin to the varied agents of the art world, disseminates knowledge about neighbourhood sites and the rules, resources and rituals of the gentrifier's lifestyle. For example, Julie Podmore (1998) relates how some of the central-city loft-dwellers she interviewed in Montreal were introduced to the lifestyle of loft-living from movies they had seen set in New York. An international reach among these intermediaries is not unusual. A characteristic lifestyle feature in the Toronto-based *Globe and Mail* describes gentrification in New York's Lower East Side, "the latest cutting-edge quarter among New York's purveyors of cool" (Forman, 2002). This article quotes the Anglo manager of the most fashionable restaurant in this reinventing district who cut his teeth running a lounge in the Marais, an equivalent gentrifying space in Paris. So Paris, New York and Toronto are drawn together in a common discursive space—all of them also entries in Richard Florida's list of creative cities.

It is not surprising that artists' spaces have undergone some expansion in many large cities in light of the significant growth of the artistic vocation; by the 1990s, a metropolitan area like Toronto of 4–5 million could identify half a dozen districts in the central city with concentrations of artists. But there is considerable temporal instability to the location of artists in these neighbourhoods. In Toronto, the concentration of artists in 1971 favoured the downtown edges of middle-class north Toronto, centred around the counter-cultural district of Yorkville where Leonard Cohen and Joni Mitchell played the coffee houses. Over the next 20 years, some erosion in artists' numbers occurred in this section, while diffusion took place into the cheaper districts east and west of downtown (see Figure 1). Similarly in Vancouver, the 1971 concentration in the innermost tracts in the city's middle-class west side—notably



**Figure 3.** The changing concentration of artists in census tracts, 1971–1991, in Vancouver (above) and Toronto (below), against concentrations in 1971.

Kitsilano, site of the establishment of the Greenpeace Foundation in 1971—had dispersed by 1991 east of the downtown peninsula into some of the poorest census tracts in the city, including tract 57, Carole Itter’s Strathcona (see Figure 2). Indeed, there is a surprisingly consistent negative relationship

between the presence or absence of artists in 1971 and their decline or growth by 1991 (Figure 3). In Toronto, while most tracts in the central city showed increased location quotients from 1971 to 1991, the 10 highest-ranking tracts in 1971 all saw an absolute decline in the concentration of artists in the

next two decades. Displacement of artists around the inner city is clearly afoot.

Here, the discussion returns to the complex relationship between cultural and economic capital in the cultural field. The aesthetic disposition of the artist that rejects commercialisation, values the commonplace and redemptively transforms junk to art may be, indeed *is*, converted into economic capital by varied actors who may include artists themselves, other residents or the development industry. In an historic context where cultural capital has enjoyed high symbolic value, an economic valorisation of the aesthetic disposition has frequently led to an increase in property prices; one study showed a six- to ten-fold inflation of prices in deeply devalued sections of inner Chicago in a decade following the settlement of artists and their followers (Cole, 1990). The result is the displacement of artists to cheaper districts. Toronto artists who lived in Yorkville, the Annex and Don Vale in 1971 have subsequently relocated to Riverdale, Queen Street West and now Parkdale (Slater, 2002), but in each instance price inflation has followed on behind. Eventually, they could be displaced from the city altogether—a precedent that has been occurring for more than a decade in New York (Cole, 1987; Hughes, 1990).

The relationship between artists and gentrification is not inevitable but it is frequent, and should not be surprising in light of the previous discussion of the valorisation of cultural competency among segments of the middle class. In the four largest Canadian cities, the presence of artists in a census tract has been one of the strongest statistical predictors of subsequent gentrification in that tract (Ley, 1996). A similar result emerged from a study by the National Endowment for the Arts that also identified the links between the presence of artists and gentrification in US cities (Gale, 1984).

The population that follows artists does not enter the field haphazardly, but in a succession that is shaped by their proximity to the aesthetic disposition and cultural competency of the artist. The aesthetic appropriation of place, with its valuation of the

commonplace and off-centre, appeals to other professionals, particularly those who are also higher in cultural capital than in economic capital and who share something of the artist's antipathy towards commerce and convention. Like the artists, they are indifferent to the charms of suburban life and have stretched an alternate topography of meaning across the space of the metropolis (Caulfield, 1994; Ley, 1996). A study of 11 older neighbourhoods that gentrified in Montreal showed that, early in the process, artists were heavily overrepresented, with smaller surpluses of professionals in the social sciences and education, and with an underrepresentation of professionals in medicine, the natural sciences (including engineering) and especially managerial and administrative positions (Table 1). As gentrification continued, growth of most of these occupations occurred, although within the first decade artists remained the most strongly overrepresented. Typically, social and cultural professionals and pre-professionals are early successors to artists, including such cultural producers as intellectuals and students, journalists and other media workers, and educators, to be followed by professionals with greater economic capital such as lawyers and medical practitioners, and finally by business people and capitalists. All the while, disposable income and property prices rise, with gentrification eventually representing significant reinvestment in the inner-city housing market (Ley *et al.*, 2002). Note that the succession here is along the same occupational continuum identified repeatedly by Bourdieu within the dominant class, from a position of high cultural capital and low economic capital, through a position of lower cultural capital but high economic capital. So positional relations within the dominant class identified in France in the late 1960s for a variety of social characteristics and cultural practices remain robust enough to describe the order of occupational succession in gentrifying districts in North American cities a few decades later. It is important as well to emphasise that these positional relations are defined both by economic and cultural capi-

**Table 1.** Overrepresentation and underrepresentation of middle-class sub-groups in Montreal inner city neighbourhoods, 1981

	Artists	Social sciences	Education	Medicine	Natural sciences	Managerial/administrative
<i>Gentrification beginning</i> Neighbourhoods which gentrified in 1980s <sup>a</sup>	33	12	3	- 10	- 15	- 35
<i>Gentrification underway</i> Neighbourhoods which gentrified in the 1970s <sup>b</sup>	53	29	48	39	16	14

<sup>a</sup>Carré St-Louis, Centre-Sud, Mile End, Parc Lafontaine, Plateau Mont-Royal, Sud-Ouest.

<sup>b</sup>Centre-ville, McGill, Notre-Dame-de-Grâce (east), Outremont, Lower Outremont.

Sources: Ley (1996), derived from Dansereau and Beaudry (1985, Tables A1, A2).

tal—neither one nor the other, but both together.

Further evidence of the robustness of these positional relations within the dominant class is the congruence between the settlement sequence of gentrifiers and the serried ranks of sympathisers of student radicalism in the 1965–75 period of rising valorisation of an oppositional cultural politics. Students more likely to support critical politics had selected disciplines higher in cultural competencies, and those disciplines reappear in the professions that are the first to identify with the cultural aura of artists' spaces. A high level of cultural competency is associated with those who claim proximity to the artist in both geographical and political space. Part of the allure of gentrification is such a claim to a position, culturally and politically, on the edge—with, for some, the Faustian satisfaction that in a society that valorises the aesthetic disposition, in due course the accrued cultural capital of a location can be traded in for economic capital, as the edge becomes a new centre.

## Conclusion

In some respects, this paper has been an extended reflection on the stage model of gentrification that describes the successive cohorts of professionals who enter inner-city neighbourhoods in a typical but by no means inevitable sequence. But Bourdieu's theoret-

ical work on the field of cultural production carries the argument some way beyond this empirical generalisation. First, it problematises the positionality of these cohorts in terms of their possession of different (and in some respects oppositional) forms of capital, despite their common membership in the dominant class; secondly, it alerts us to the fact that, besides the key actors, the gentrifiers, there is also a set of facilitators, what Zukin has called cultural intermediaries, the equivalent of the art world for artistic producers. But, thirdly, we are reminded that the gentrification field has an historical geography that provides precedents and codes that continue to shape the present.

The complexity of the field, including the possession and pursuit of different forms of capital by different actors, has some important theoretical implications for the study of gentrification. First, while agency matters, it is an agency that is already structured by the rules of the field. So, for example, the economic valorisation of the aesthetic disposition is intrinsic to relations in the cultural field. It is scarcely the 'fault' of the cultural producer. So, too, to blame artists for the gentrification that so often follows their residency in a district is a misplaced charge; it is the societal valorisation of the cultural competencies of the artist that brings followers richer in economic capital. Secondly, the interdigitation of economic and cultural competencies and pursuits in the gentrification

field makes any statement of monocausality questionable (see Hamnett, 1991). It is not a matter of whether economic or cultural arguments prevail, but rather how they work together to produce gentrification as an outcome.

Indeed, it has been argued that relations between cultural and economic capital in the gentrification field must be seen not only together but must also be placed in historical context. The period coinciding with the beginning of widespread gentrification witnessed a heightened valorisation of cultural capital due to the convergence of several societal trends: the long post-war boom that for many repelled economic necessity—an important pre-requisite according to Bourdieu for the fine-tuning of the aesthetic disposition; the movement of the ‘baby boom’, the dominant demographic cohort in many advanced societies, into higher education, the nursery for acquiring cultural capital; the maturation of the welfare state, with its implicit critique of unconstrained economism; and the all-too-visible excesses of public and private corporations that removed the lustre from the market-place. Together, these trends overdetermined the youth-dominated social movements of the 1960s and the elevation of cultural competencies, inflating the prestige—that is, the symbolic capital—of the artist. The practice of the artist led in a different direction from economism; it invoked the path of voluntary poverty, and rules and rituals that reversed conventional society. The aesthetic disposition frequently rejected commercialised middle-class products, practices and places, while upholding the off-centre, the ordinary and obsolete, even the plebeian. The redemptive eye of the artist could turn junk into art. The calculating eye of others would turn art into commodity, a practice as true of the inner-city property market as of the art work.

For, while rejecting the commodification of the art world as ‘gangsterism’, the cultural producer has little or no control over an induced market, the movement of art works and art spaces into the domain of economic capital. Since the mid 1970s, there has been

no diminution in such valorisation of cultural capital—indeed, quite the opposite. A new societal configuration, perhaps developed most fully in the US (Lees, 2000), that includes public deficits and debts, a defensive and retreating welfare state, resurgent neo-liberal economics and a harsher and more individuated civil society (Smith, 1996), has appropriated cultural production. There has been movement from festivals to festival markets, from cultural production to cultural economies, to an intensified economic colonisation of the cultural realm, to the representation of the creative city not as a means of redemption but as a means of economic accumulation.

So the paper returns finally to the art work with which it began and reveals another layer of its polyvalent content. ‘*Where the Streets are Paved with Gold*’ expresses perhaps a deeper irony than the artist intended. Not only does it proclaim the antipathy between cultural and economic capitals, the artist’s reflection on the wastefulness of the market and the fragile hopes of an immigrant population, but it also alludes to a deeper dialectical relationship. For the artist’s very presence, the deployment of a critical aesthetic disposition on the streets of old neighbourhoods, has become a principal tool for goading on gentrification, thereby lining with gold the pockets of buyers and sellers in the inner-city property market.

## Notes

1. For other applications of Bourdieu’s work in the gentrification literature, see Bridge (2001a, 2001b) and Butler and Robson (2001).
2. Consider the pattern of furniture purchases among the dominant class in Bourdieu’s study of French taste: most favoured is an antique store, followed by a specialised shop and then an auction or flea market. Least favoured of all is a furniture purchase from a department store. The sequence here is from art to craft (the Moroccan bird-cage shop) to junk to mass; of particular interest is the elevation of junk (pre-owned with a capacity for ‘redemption’) over the department store, the source of new, standardised objects (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 78). Significant, too, is the

affinity of artistic producers within the dominant class, for the flea market, or 'junk' (p. 262).

3. Of course, there are many cases where 'co-optation' by the temptations of the art market embraces cultural producers. Interviews with 50 artists in Vancouver suggested that detachment from these pressures remains an ideal held, sometimes zealously, by most. Such an ideal is certainly compatible with the material poverty of their vocation.
4. For a much fuller development of this argument, see Ley, 1996.
5. There has been considerable discussion of the role of the property industry in gentrification (see, for example, Bridge, 2001a; Ley, 1996; and, from a somewhat different perspective, Smith, 1996).

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