Crime, Space and Disorientation in the Literature and Cinema of Los Angeles

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I, Alexander John Pavey confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

Participation in the rhythms and processes of twentieth-century capitalism depended upon physical mobility, particularly in a city as geographically dispersed as Los Angeles. This fluid individual mobility also served to justify the introduction of new law enforcement practices that increasingly sought to rationalize urban space. How did the literature and cinema of Los Angeles represent the experiences of citizens for whom mobility was both vital and potentially incriminating? Within such an environment, I propose, successful orientation became particularly crucial. I develop an original but historically grounded theorization of disorientation as a concept through which to interpret the unease and vulnerability of individual protagonists as they navigate the city. Whilst drawing on a wide body of theoretical sources, my research remains rooted in the close analysis of cinematic and literary texts, and the specific historical and geographical context with which they engage.

The automobility of Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe allows him to navigate the dispersed topography of 1940s LA, but his investigations are often ineffectual and leave him weary and jaded. The protagonist of Chester Himes's *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945) struggles to orientate himself within a wartime Los Angeles in which racism is manifested spatially. Himes's novel provides a lens through which to view the experience of 1970s South LA depicted in the films of Charles Burnett and Haile Gerima, in which the city's African-American community confronts disorientating conditions of circumscribed movement and arbitrary incrimination. Law-enforcement officials exert spatial control in the novels of Joseph Wambaugh and James Ellroy, but they also find themselves compromised by jurisdictional conflicts. Pursuing careful analyses of character, form and setting, this project explicates some of the compelling and troubling visions of urban experience that Los Angeles has prompted, and challenges a critical tendency to elide aspects of the city's racial past.

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I am indebted to my supervisor, Professor Matthew Beaumont, for his perceptive advice and persistent encouragement throughout this project. My secondary supervisor, Professor Philip Horne, and the wider Department of English Literature and Language at University College London have also provided stimulating and appropriately challenging feedback, in both formal and informal situations, that has been instrumental in shaping my research. The warm and supportive atmosphere amongst the 2011 English PhD cohort continues to serve as a source of encouragement. I'm particularly grateful to Karina Jakubowicz for organizing the thesis writing workshops in which the later chapters of this thesis were first drafted, and for solidarity during the latter stages of this research. Rebecca Roberts-Hughes and Tom Norton have provided support and inspiration over many years of friendship, throughout our various literary and academic endeavours. They stand here for the many other friends, too numerous to name, who deserve thanks: All Hallows crew, Warwick crew, Walthamstow crew, and beyond. Alex Dutton, Charles Shanks, Nicola Regan, Rich Smith — never completely lost. The contribution to this project of my parents, Maureen and Norman Pavey, and my brother Mark is immeasurable. They have never faltered in their support, and I owe them love and gratitude, as I do to my extended family of Richardsons, Paveys, O'Hanlons, Chorltons and Becks. Finally, and most importantly, my wife Alice and our son Lenny — for every decision we've made, and the adventures to come. We walk together.

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Introduction

> No matter how smart you think you are, you have to have a place to start from; a name, an address, a neighbourhood, a background, an atmosphere, a point of reference of some sort.
> Raymond Chandler, *The Long Goodbye* (1953)[1]

The Image of the City: Orientation in Mid-Century Los Angeles

During the 1950s, Kevin Lynch conducted empirical research in three North American cities — Boston, Jersey City and Los Angeles — with the aim of considering 'the visual quality of the American city by studying the mental image of that city which is held by its citizens'.[2] Lengthy interviews were held with small samples of residents to evoke their own images of their physical environment, which included descriptions of specific routes and places, subjective sketches of areas, and the description of imagined journeys through the city. This data was cross-referenced to construct a tentative 'group image' of each area, then compared with the visual 'reality' of each city at the time, to provide the basis for further hypotheses about the nature of urban experience. The results of this research were published in Lynch's 1960 monograph *The Image of the City*.

The overriding concern of Lynch's work was city design — with how we might build or remodel cities to be highly *legible*, thereby making them more pleasant, satisfying places in which to live. Individual orientation, Lynch suggested, entails the establishment of a clear 'environmental image' composed of various constituent parts: paths, landmarks, edges, nodes and districts.[3] Different urban structures are more or less amenable to this process — the physical composition of the city can facilitate or frustrate the 'purposeful mobility' that is the 'original function' of the environmental

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[1] Raymond Chandler, 'The Long Goodbye', in *The Big Sleep and other novels* (London: Penguin Books in association with Hamish Hamilton, 2000), p. 451.
[2] Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Publications of the Joint Center for Urban Studies (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), p. 2.
[3] Ibid., p. 8.

image.[4] This suggests, Lynch concluded, that planners might speculate further about how city design could be better attuned to the needs of city dwellers.

The Image of the City is a short book that has exerted an influence well beyond the restricted terms of reference Lynch established. Although his sample sizes were small (and by no means representative of each city's diverse social structure), his empirical approach was innovative. As Donald Appleyard notes in appraising the significance of Lynch's work, the fields of urban planning and city design had not previously attempted to begin with the experiences of ordinary city dwellers — how they perceived and understood the environment in which they live.[5] This aspect made it an influential early work in what came to be called environmental psychology, in addition to its impact within the field of urban planning, upon which it has had 'a profound effect' in both teaching and practice.[6]

Outside of these immediately relevant fields, *The Image of the City* has also been influential in cultural studies, and particularly in relation to urban and spatial theory and the so-called 'spatial turn'. This influence can be traced in part to Fredric Jameson's important 1984 essay 'Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism'.[7] There, Jameson mobilized Lynch's concepts to play an allegorical role: the process by which individuals orientate themselves in the metropolis serving as a

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[4] Ibid., p. 124.

[5] Donald Appleyard, 'The Major Published Works of Kevin Lynch: An Appraisal', *The Town Planning Review*, 49.4 (1978), 551–57 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40103644> [accessed 5 June 2017] (p. 551).

[6] Gert-Jan Hospers, 'Lynch's The Image of the City after 50 Years: City Marketing Lessons from an Urban Planning Classic', *European Planning Studies*, 18.12 (2010), 2073–81 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2010.525369> (p. 2073). Philip L. Pearce and Michael Fagence provide an extensive overview of Lynch's significant influence on the fields of planning studies and environmental psychology in 'The Legacy of Kevin Lynch: Research Implications', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23.3 (1996), 576–98 <https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(95)00112-3>. To take just one further recent example, Magdalena Zmudzinska-Nowak's has applied Lynch's principles of 'legible' city space to an analysis of central European post-war planned communities: Magdalena Zmudzinska-Nowak, 'Searching for Legible City Form: Kevin Lynch's Theory in Contemporary Perspective', *Journal of Urban Technology*, 10.3 (2003), 19–39 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1063073032000175390>.

[7] Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *New Left Review*, 146 (1984), 53–92. The essay is also included in, and provides a title for, the later collection of Jameson's writings: *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 1–54.

model for the 'cognitive mapping' that, for Jameson, is demanded by the state of late capitalism, through which the subject might situate herself within the otherwise disorientating global networks of postmodernity.[8] Jameson's call for an aesthetic of cognitive mapping in subsequent works has recently been taken up by Alberto Toscano and Jeff Kinkle in their *Cartographies of the Absolute* (2014). Toscano and Kinkle analyse a diverse corpus of visual and narrative works that, they suggest, provide 'glimpses into, or distant refractions of, the functioning of a global political economy; works that address the place of individuals and collectives within this "sublime" system'.[9]

This thesis will not endeavour to identify further examples of works that map the totality of global capitalism, in the manner that Toscano and Kinkle have done so effectively. I will suggest, within more modest terms of reference, that the literary and cinematic works considered here implicitly present a consistent 'narrative proposition', as Toscano and Kinkle put it, about some of the social forces that shaped Los Angeles in the twentieth century. And it is Kevin Lynch's work that will provide a first point of reference for this analysis: his theorization of urban experience, his characterization of Los Angeles's form at mid-century, his focus on individual mobility, and in particular his vivid descriptions of the unease or even trauma that disorientation can entail.

If *The Image of the City* is an investigation into how city design might be better attuned to the needs of city dwellers in which Los Angeles serves as one of three case studies, it is also, on another reading, one of many accounts of twentieth-century Los Angeles in which residents struggle to navigate the city's dispersed topography, and in which their experiences are marked by moments of unease and disorientation. Lynch's

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[8] Jameson refines and expands upon this conceptualization in his later essay 'Cognitive Mapping', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 347–60.
[9] Alberto Toscano and Jeff Kinkle, *Cartographies of the Absolute* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2014), p. 20

respondents, he noted, repeatedly used certain words to characterize the city: '"spread-out," "spacious," "formless," "without centers"', and their common image of Los Angeles was of 'an endless spread', which was associated with spacious residential areas but also carried 'overtones of weariness and disorientation'.[10] They found Los Angeles 'difficult to organize or comprehend as a whole', and the areas they pictured most vividly were ones that they found 'rather alien or even menacing'.[11] The dispersed urban form that Lynch's interviewees described has been the subject of extensive further scholarship by urban theorists and historians. Later researchers would argue that the development of Los Angeles marked a significant departure from the 'concentric ring' structure theorized by the Chicago School of urban studies, of consistent growth outwards from a defined centre into suburban districts.[12] This novel quality has variously been described as 'fragmented' (Robert Fogelson), 'decentralized' (Michael Dear, Greg Hise), 'extended' (Richard Weinstein), 'centrifugal' (Edward Dimendberg), or, in Jean Baudrillard's memorable phrase, as a city 'in love with its limitless horizontality'.[13] The significance of Lynch's analysis is his focus on the subjective experience of this urban structure, and particularly the 'overtones of weariness and disorientation' with which it is associated.

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[10] *The Image of the City*, p. 40.

[11] Ibid., p. 43.

[12] On the contrast between the urban structure of Los Angeles and the Chicago School model, see Dear and Flusty, 'Postmodern Urbanism'. Recent scholarship has sought to challenge the LA school's characterization of Chicago School urbanism; see Steven P. Erie and Scott A. MacKenzie, 'From the Chicago to the L.A. School: Whither the Local State?', in *The City, Revisited: Urban Theory from Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York*, ed. by Dennis R. Judd and Dick Simpson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), pp. 104–34.

[13] Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850–1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Michael Dear, 'In the City, Time Becomes Visible: Intentionality and Urbanism in Los Angeles, 1781–1991', in *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Edward W. Soja and Allen J. Scott (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 76–105 (p. 94); Greg Hise, 'Homebuilding and Industrial Decentralization in Los Angeles: The Roots of the Post-World War II Urban Region', *Journal of Urban History*, 19 (1993), 95–125; Richard S. Weinstein, 'The First American City', in *The City*, pp. 22–46; Edward Dimendberg, 'From Berlin to Bunker Hill: Urban Space, Late Modernity, and Film Noir in Fritz Lang's and Joseph Losey's M', *Wide Angle*, 19.4 (1997), 62–93 (p. 78–9); Jean Baudrillard, *America*, trans. by Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2010), p. 54.

Lynch concluded *The Image of the City* with his hopes for the near-redemptive

heights that urban planning might reach:

> By the intensity of its life and the close packing of its disparate people, the great
> city is a romantic place, rich in symbolic detail. It is for us both splendid and
> terrifying. [...] Were it legible, truly visible, then fear and confusion might be
> replaced with delight in the richness and power of the scene.[14]

The fact that the experience of 'terror', 'fear' and 'confusion' is invoked in this vision

reflects a tendency that runs throughout *The Image of the City*. In emphasizing the

individual's vital need to orientate themselves effectively in their environment, it is the

troubling effects of *dis*orientation that Lynch evokes particularly vividly: 'A good

environmental image gives its possessor an important sense of emotional security. [...]

This is the obverse of the fear that comes with disorientation'.[15] In one of the most

striking passages, he writes:

> To become completely lost is perhaps a rather rare experience for most people in
> the modern city. [...] But let the mishap of disorientation once occur, and the
> sense of anxiety and even terror that accompanies it reveals to us how closely it
> is linked to our sense of balance and well-being. The very word 'lost' in our
> language means much more than simple geographical uncertainty; it carries
> overtones of utter disaster.[16]

Orientation has high stakes in *The Image of the City*, and when it fails, it has potentially

revelatory implications.

The hypothesis underlying this thesis is that the experience of disorientation can,

as Lynch suggests, bring to light assumptions and conditions that structure our

experience, but are not usually apparent. Philosopher Ami Harbin writes:

> The bodily ease of felt orientation is like this: we can be most likely to notice
> that we were at ease only when we become partially or seriously disrupted,
> when we are no longer able to recognize or interact with objects, people, or

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[14] *The Image of the City,* pp. 119–20.
[15] Ibid., pp. 4–5.
[16] Ibid., p. 4.

occasions in ways that were once habitual. Indeed, we are often most able to recognize our orientations when we become disoriented.[17]

In the essay in which Fredric Jameson deploys Lynch's framework, disorientation has similarly revelatory potential, with his experience of the Bonaventure Hotel in Downtown Los Angeles signalling that 'mutations' in built space have occurred in the conditions of late capitalism. The disorientating qualities of the Bonaventure serve, for Jameson, as 'something like an imperative to grow new organs, to expand our sensorium and our body to some new, as yet unimaginable, perhaps ultimately impossible, dimensions'.[18] Common to these diverse accounts, and central to my own thesis, is the implication that disorientation can prompt questions about the experience of space that are otherwise elided in everyday experience, and that representations of such states have the potential to explore the consequences of these revelations for individual subjects in a particularly powerful manner.

One way to account for the force with which Lynch invokes disorientation is to consider the aspects of urban experience that are elided in his account, due to the restricted terms of his investigation. Conceived primarily for an audience of urban

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[17] Ami Harbin, 'Bodily Disorientation and Moral Change', *Hypatia - A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 27.2 (2012), 261–80 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2011.01263.x>. (p. 265). See also Edward S. Casey's suggestion that the concept of *place* has historically been under-analysed because it is seemingly such an obvious fact of human existence: we take for granted that we are 'implaced beings', and 'presume that the question is settled, that there is nothing more to say on the subject', except when we are 'disoriented or lost'. *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. x.

[18] 'Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', p. 80. The Bonaventure Hotel featured in several theoretically inflected accounts of Los Angeles during the 1980s: both Jean Baudrillard and Edward Soja anchored their reflections on postmodern urban space, or postmodernism in more general terms, to the architecture of the Bonaventure (*America*, pp. 62–3; Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), pp. 243–44). Bill Brown observes that Jameson's experience of the Bonaventure Hotel has become 'one of the most famous (indeed, most fetishized) scenes in the theoretical archive of postmodernity', prompting students of critical theory to undertake pilgrimages to the hotel only to be 'disappointed by the banality of their spatial confusion'. See 'The Dark Wood of Postmodernity (Space, Faith, Allegory)', *PMLA*, 120.3 (2005), 734–50 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25486210> [accessed 5 May 2017] (pp. 735–36). For discussions of the Bonaventure Hotel grounded in the history of its redevelopment and relation to the wider city, see Norman M. Klein, *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory*, New updated ed. (London: Verso, 2008), p. 85; Mike Davis, 'Urban Renaissance and the Spirit of Postmodernism', *New Left Review*, 151 (1985), 106–13 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1301904324?accountid=14511> [accessed 10 July 2017].

planners, Lynch investigates how urban form relates to the psychology of city-dwellers, and envisions city design practices informed by those subjective experiences. If the different districts of a city are clearly visually differentiated from each other, for example, then citizens can orientate themselves more effectively as they move through the city. Lynch's framework is less concerned with the socio-economic forces that shape the composition of such districts. In this context, Casey Shoop's observation about Lynch's sample demographics is telling: 'while Lynch is attentive to the clear class bias of his surveyed respondents, he avoids the subject of race entirely'.[19] Urban districts and the borders that divide them are frequently formed as a consequence of forces less benign than the motivations of enlightened city planners. The boundaries that circumscribed African-American communities in Los Angeles during the 1940s, for example, were a consequence of racially restrictive housing covenants that actively sought to restrict black residential mobility. They maintained *de facto* segregation that was legally grounded, and frequently enforced by acts of individual and institutional violence. For citizens in such a spatial context, the intensity of the 'anxiety and even terror' that accompanies disorientation reflects their vulnerability to such violent practices.

On Lynch's terms, urban spaces that prompt disorientation rather than facilitating purposeful movement constitute problems to be corrected, or serve as examples to be avoided. More broadly, though, disorientation may not be a symptom of poor city design, but rather the consequence of other spatial practices with very different ends. The constituent parts of the environmental image — elements of the urban structure that individuals apprehend and navigate — neither solely nor primarily arise from the application of disinterested urban planning principles. They reflect social,

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[19] 'Corpse and Accomplice: Fredric Jameson, Raymond Chandler, and the Representation of History in California', *Cultural Critique*, 77 (2011), 205–38 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/cultural_critique/v077/77.shoop.html> [accessed 5 May 2017] (p. 236 n. 9).

political and economic relations, and are manifestations of power and ideology. These

aspects do not necessarily relate primarily to the visual quality of the built environment,

but they are nevertheless central to the individual's ability to orientate themselves and

move purposefully through the city. On these terms, the theoretical framework that best

complements *The Image of the City* is the concept of 'territoriality' outlined by

geographer Robert David Sack. Territoriality, as Sack defines it, is 'the basic

geographic expression of influence and power, [and] provides an essential link between

society, space, and time'.[20] Territories are created not when places are identified by the

establishment of circumscribed boundaries, but when those boundaries are specifically

used by individuals or groups to exert power and influence: they entail 'an assertion of

control with the implication of sanctions for transgressions'.[21]

Other scholars building on Sack's work, including Jennifer Wolch, Michaael

Dear and Dolores Hayden, have emphasized the potential complexity of such territorial

networks, and that the power and influence exerted in the creation and maintenance of

such territories is not homogenous:

> Any locale is […] at once a complex synthesis of objects, patterns, and
> processes derived from the simultaneous interaction of *different levels of social
> process*, operating at *varying geographical scales and chronological stages*.[22]

Different manifestations of territoriality extend over both a horizontal plane (the

contiguous borders of different neighbourhoods, counties or states) and a vertical plane

(in which the local, state, federal or regional power operates). In the most basic terms, a

single neighbourhood in a North American city is at once under municipal, state and

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[20] Robert David Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History*, Cambridge Studies in Historical
Geography (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 216.
[21] Robert David Sack, 'Human Territoriality: A Theory', *Annals of the Association of American
Geographers*, 73.1 (1983), 55–74 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.1983.tb01396.x> (p. 56).
[22] Jennifer Wolch and Michael Dear, 'How Territory Shapes Social Life', in *The Power of Geography:
How Territory Shapes Social Life*, ed. by Jennifer Wolch and Michael Dear (Boston: Unwin Hyman,
1989), pp. 3–18 (p. 7). Italics in original. See also Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban
Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), pp. 22–29.

federal authority, and enclosed by their respective territorial borders, whilst also being adjacent to other surrounding neighbourhoods. A wide range of different agencies and institutions will be mandated to exercise some degree of control over that single neighbourhood; this is to say nothing of the actions of local groups (from resident's committees to criminal gangs) and even individuals to delimit their own boundaries of influence. Wolch and Dear describe the analysis of these complex territorial networks as a 'geographical puzzle', in which a given locale must be unravelled into 'its constituent elements and processes'.[23]

Orientation within the modern metropolis, then, should be understood to involve the apprehension not only of its material form, but also of its territorial boundaries and the practices that maintain them. On such terms, the potentially revelatory implications of disorientation concern the subject's relationship to super-individual networks of power and influence that are manifested spatially. In this study, it is twentieth-century Los Angeles that will serve as the 'geographical puzzle' to be, if not solved, at least partially reconstructed. In a series of literary and cinematic texts set in the city, individual protagonists are situated in relation to such territorial networks; as they struggle to orientate themselves and move purposefully through Los Angeles, they experience moments of disorientation that reveal their own vulnerability.

Establishing the Boundaries of the City

This research project analyses the literature and cinema of Los Angeles from across the twentieth century, focusing particularly on works set in the city between the 1940s and the 1970s. It is concerned with the psychology and mobility of individual protagonists as they navigate the city's complex topography: its diverse neighbourhoods,

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[23] Wolch and Dear, 'How Territory Shapes Social Life', p. 7.

jurisdictional borders, and racial and social boundaries. Beginning in the early decades of the twentieth century, Los Angeles grew in a dispersed and increasingly decentralized manner that prefigured the urban form that would develop later in the century in cities across the United States, and beyond. Within this landscape, mobility — and automobility in particular — became increasingly central to everyday life. For urban subjects, participation in the rhythms and processes of twentieth-century capitalism depended upon physical mobility, but this fluid individual mobility, and the anonymity it permitted, was also treated as potentially suspect by the state. It served to justify the introduction of new law enforcement practices: techniques that sought to rationalize urban space, fix identities and track the movements of citizens. Those who policed the city's laws and borders did so with increasingly 'scientific' certainty, even though such techniques were in practice potentially flawed and open to abuse. In this environment, individuals were obliged to account for their movements — to be in possession, at all times, of the alibis that could serve as their defence against incrimination. For African Americans and other racial and ethnic groups, avoiding transgression was particularly vital, and they were required to discern social and geographical boundaries that were both ambiguous and aggressively enforced.

How did the literature and cinema of Los Angeles represent the experiences of citizens for whom urban mobility was both vital and potentially incriminating? Within such an environment, I suggest, successful orientation becomes particularly crucial. The concept of *orientation* — being in alignment with the cardinal points, and therefore by extension being comfortably attuned to one's surroundings and circumstances — has been present in English since the sixteenth century.[24] In late nineteenth-century psychology, however, orientation came to be understood as a mental faculty, and in turn

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[24] 'orient, v.', *OED Online* (Oxford University Press) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/132526> [accessed 5 May 2017].

a specific conceptualization of disorientation as *symptom* developed, denoting not only confusion regarding spatial position but also disruptions to the subject's identity and chronology. This pathologization of disorientation, which persisted throughout the twentieth century, offers a critical resource for interpreting the predicament of the modern urban subject. Successful orientation depends upon the individual maintaining a stable, or rationalized, conception of time, space and identity. In states of disorientation, the rationalization of these categories breaks down, undermining the subject's ability to move and act purposefully, and to account for their movements. The disorientated individual risks being unable to provide a satisfactory alibi, and they are therefore left vulnerable to false or malevolent incrimination. Moments of disorientation are not only epistemologically disturbing — they reveal the inherent vulnerability of the individual in a society in which mobility is treated as suspect.

The remaining sections of this introduction will provide an overview of the scholarly background and critical context — including a brief survey of particularly salient aspects of the history, geography and culture of Los Angeles — followed by an outline of my methodology and summary of each chapter. In general terms, I am particularly indebted to the historical and critical scholarship that has helped inform my approach to conceptualizing incrimination and disorientation. Simon A. Cole, Allan Sekula, Tom Gunning and Peter J. Hutchings, for example, have all focused on what Hutchings calls (after Foucault) 'technologies of the subject' — the manner in which new policing and forensic techniques were mobilized to address the challenge posed to authorities by the potential for anonymity in the modern metropolis.[25]

If this work helped establish a structure for my own research into criminalistics and the history of policing in Los Angeles, my approach to disorientation was to some

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[25] See Michel Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. by Patrick H. Hutton, Luther H. Martin, and Huck Gutman (London: Tavistock, 1988), pp. 16–49, esp. p. 18.

extent inspired by Anthony Vidler and David Trotter's exploration of 'spatial

pathologies'. In *The Uses of Phobia*, Trotter combines a historicist and philosophical

approach to literary criticism, relating the depiction of phobic experiences in

(predominantly high cultural) literary works to existentialist and phenomenologist

philosophy as well as to the history of psychiatry. Drawing on late nineteenth-century

psychiatric literature, he has sought to 'investigate phobia, not as a psychological

condition but as a robust and versatile moral, political, and aesthetic resource'.[26] In

doing so, he raises the question of the phobic subject's 'particular, and therefore

diagnostic, connection to what we might want to call modernity', asking 'Is being

phobic a way to be modern?'[27] Trotter's treatment of phobia draws upon Anthony

Vidler's examination of spatial pathologies and the architectural uncanny, in which the

latter gives an account of how the spatial conditions of modernity have historically been

associated with the experience of psychological distress. Together, their work has

served as a valuable reference point for my own approach, in which threat of

disorientation in the twentieth-century metropolis, invoked at mid-century by Kevin

Lynch in relation to city design but implicated in a wider network of psychiatric

pathologization and rationalization, provides a critical resource for the analysis of a

diverse set of cultural works.[28]

In the nineteenth-century industrialized world, urban populations increased

dramatically and the nature and significance of 'the city' was transformed. Emerging

scientific disciplines such as psychology, psychiatry and sociology were applied to the

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[26] David Trotter, 'Introduction', in *The Uses of Phobia: Essays on Literature and Film* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 1–16 (p. 1).

[27] Ibid., p. 3.

[28] Elsewhere, Trotter has written insightfully about the symbolic significance of technologies such as the telephone and the railway in terms that similarly overlap with my own focus on (particularly audio) technology. See 'E-Modernism: Telephony in British Fiction 1925–1940', *Critical Quarterly*, 51.1 (2009), 1–32 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8705.2009.01843.x>; 'Telephone-Wires', *History and Technology*, 29.3 (2013), 278–83 <https://doi.org/10.1080/07341512.2013.858522>.

conditions of metropolitan life, and this new 'culture of interpretation', as Vidler writes,

often focused on the ways in which the conditions of metropolitan life impacted upon

individual psychology and potentially threatened society at large:

> The space of the new city was now subjected to scrutiny as a possible cause of
> an increasingly identified psychological alienation […] of the metropolitan
> individual, and further, as an instrument favoring the potentially dangerous
> behaviour of the crowd.[29]

Georg Simmel's 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' (1903) has a significant place

in this tradition; in it, Simmel characterizes the experience of the metropolis as one in

which the individual seeks 'to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence

in the face of overwhelming social forces, of historical heritage, of external culture, and

of the technique of life'.[30] Simmel frames his enquiry as an investigation into the

relationship between the individual and 'super-individual' aspects of life:

> An enquiry into the inner meaning of specifically modern life and its products,
> into the soul of the cultural body, so to speak, must seek to solve the equation
> which structures like the metropolis set up between the individual and the super-
> individual contents of life. Such an inquiry must answer the questions of how
> the personality accommodates itself in the adjustments to external forces.[31]

Implicitly or explicitly, the narratives that are the focus of this thesis themselves

confront precisely this dilemma, in relation to one particular external force of

modernity: the juridical expression of the tendency towards rationalization, an

imperative supported by new technology and systems of knowledge, bureaucratic rather

than moral in essence, and open to abuse and manipulation. In Simmel's terms,

disorientation can be seen as one possible reaction to the unprecedented range of

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[29] Anthony Vidler, 'Agoraphobia: Spatial Estrangement in Georg Simmel and Siegfried Kracauer', *New German Critique*, 1991, 31–45 <https://doi.org/10.2307/488425> (p. 34).
[30] Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. & trans. by Kurt H. Wolff (New York: The Free Press, 1950), pp. 409–24 (p. 409).
[31] Simmel, p. 409.

stimuli, potentially overwhelming in their complexity, intensity and quantity, that

confront the modern city dweller.

Although primarily focused on architectural history and theory, Vidler's work is

informed by a deep engagement with historical and theoretical accounts of urban

experience in the fields of literature, psychology and philosophy. He identifies a

concern with the relationship between individual consciousness and modern urban

space that unites writers as diverse as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Charles Baudelaire, Karl

Marx and Edgar Allan Poe; on this reading, the experience of the metropolis came to be,

from the nineteenth century onwards, increasingly characterized in terms of alienation,

estrangement, shock, and anxiety.[32] From the twentieth century, Vidler also draws upon

the critical theory of philosophers associated with the Frankfurt School, including

Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer —

thinkers who were similarly concerned with alienation and estrangement in their critical

analysis of modern society.[33] Many members of this circle escaped Nazi Germany and

took up residence in Southern California; significant works including Adorno and

Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) and Adorno's *Minima Moralia:*

Reflections From Damaged Life (1951) were written in Los Angeles during this period

of exile. Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis of contemporary art, culture and society,

and particularly American mass culture, was profoundly influenced by their experience

of Southern California, and their critique of the 'culture industry' was in turn significant

in shaping academic contemporaries' view of American society and Hollywood in

particular.[34] Whilst I do not utilize their theoretical frameworks directly in my analysis

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[32] Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press, 1992), pp. 4–6.

[33] *The Architectural Uncanny*, pp. 8–9; *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001), pp. 64–99.

[34] On the 'culture industry' see Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. by John Cumming (London: Verso, 1997), pp. 120–167. For reading's of Adorno's aesthetic theory

below, the importance of the Frankfurt School, broadly defined, for subsequent urban

studies scholarship cannot be understated, and as such, they have undoubtedly

influenced my research, even if only indirectly.

Benjamin's 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire' (1939) has been enduringly

influential in relation to the theorization of urban experience, with his consideration not

just of Baudelaire but of Bergson, Proust, Poe, and ultimately 'the price for which the

sensation of the modern age may be had: the disintegration of the aura in the experience

of shock'.[35] In conceptualizing this shock experience, occasioned by the modern

metropolis, Benjamin drew upon psychoanalytic theory, and the writing of Sigmund

Freud in particular.[36] Freudian terminology is similarly deployed in Vidler's *The

Architectural Uncanny*, which takes as its point of departure Freud's 1919 paper 'Das

Unheimliche'. For Freud, the uncanny represents the return of the repressed —

experiences that are frightening because they bring back into consciousness memories

of earlier stages in our psychic development. Significantly, for Vidler, Freud's paper

also establishes a relationship between the uncanny and 'the spatial and

environmental'.[37] This allows Vidler to incorporate Freud into his account of spatial

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and the influence of the culture industry thesis, see Ehrhard Bahr, *Weimar on the Pacific: German Exile Culture in Los Angeles and the Crisis of Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 56–78; Lutz Koepnick, *The Dark Mirror: German Cinema Between Hitler and Hollywood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). pp. 6–12. See also the discussions of German exile culture in Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 2006), pp. 46-54, and Russell A. Berman, 'British Expatriates and German Exiles in 1930s–1940s Los Angeles', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of Los Angeles*, ed. by Kevin R. McNamara (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 49–57.

[35] Walter Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 152–96 (p. 190). For a concise overview of Benjamin's influence on urban studies see Fran Tonkiss, *Space, the City and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), pp. 119–26; for a comprehensive treatment, see Graham Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

[36] 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', pp. 156–59. One of the targets of Adorno's critique of mass culture was the popularization and 'conventionalization' of Freudian psychoanalysis that he encountered in Southern California. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. by E.F.N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 1978), pp. 60-66; Nico Israel, 'Damage Control: Adorno, Los Angeles, and the Dislocation of Culture', *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 10.1 (1997), 85–113 <https://doi.org/10.1353/yale.1997.0005> (pp. 97–99).

[37] *The Architectural Uncanny*, p. 23.

pathologies: at the turn of the twentieth century, he suggests, the uncanny came to be 'identified with all the phobias associated with spatial fear'.[38]

Although it is deployed to different analytical ends, my own discussion of the late nineteenth-century pathologization of disorientation in Chapter One below is indebted to Vidler's account of the 'psychologization' of spatial anxiety, and like Vidler I refer to psychoanalytic and psychiatric texts of the period to inform my conceptual history of disorientation. My approach in subsequent chapters, however, is not orientated towards psychoanalytic readings of the literary and cinematic texts under discussion. Such readings, drawing not only upon Freud but also Jacques Lacan, have played a significant role in the development of Film Studies as a discipline, for example, and feminist film theory in particular.[39] They continue to offer valuable insights into issues of gender, spectatorship, reception and agency in film — notably, to take an example relative to the texts discussed below, in relation to film noir.[40] It is another methodological approach apparent in film noir criticism of the last fifteen years, however, that has influenced my own research more directly — scholarship that draws upon social scientific methods in its analysis of cultural representations of urban experience.

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[38] Ibid., p. 6.

[39] For discussions of the centrality of psychoanalytic theory to the development of film studies, and feminist film theory in particular, by influential feminist film scholars, see Laura Mulvey, *Fetishism and Curiosity* (London: British Film Institute, 1996), pp. 1–15 and Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 4–10. For other examples of psychoanalytic approaches to film theory, see Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. by Celia Britton and others (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 2005)*; Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, ed. by E. Ann Kaplan (London: Routledge, 1990).

[40] See, for example, Kelly Oliver and Benigno Trigo, *Noir Anxiety* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); *Women in Film Noir*, ed. by E. Ann Kaplan, Revised and Expanded Edition (London: BFI Publishing, 1998); *Shades of Noir: A Reader*, ed. by Joan Copjec (London: Verso, 1993), especially Elizabeth Cowie, 'Film Noir and Women', pp. 121–65 and Joan Copjec, 'The Phenomenal Nonphenomenal: Private Space in Film Noir', pp. 167–98. For a discussion of 1940s 'pop Freudianism' as a influence on film noir, see Frank Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 45–55.

Edward Dimendberg has used terminology and thinking found in Henri Lefebvre and Siegfried Kracauer to explore the specific spatiality of film noir, which he argues reflected the anxiety prompted by the compressed centripetal space of the modern city.[41] The end of the film noir cycle in the 1950s, Dimendberg suggests, arose out of a shift towards dispersed, centrifugal space in cities such as Los Angeles, which other cinematic forms and genres were better placed to explore. The work of Mark Shiel has sought to take seriously the resources afforded by what he calls 'the increasing prominence given to space and spatialization in the recent study of culture and society', founded on the belief that 'cinema is the ideal cultural form through which to examine spatialization'.[42] Shiel has pursued a quantitative analysis of the primary locations of Hollywood films during the 1940s and 1950s, in which the increasing frequency with which Los Angeles was used as a setting is read in macrogeographical terms, as reflective of the city's increasing economic significance and the corresponding relative decline of New York City during the post-war period.[43]

Shiel and Dimendberg's works are particularly valuable for their attempts to counter a tendency that Shiel identifies in earlier film noir criticism: that it has 'engaged very little with the local geography of film noirs, whether set in Los Angeles, New York, or other cities', and that it has 'tended to theorize the genre in terms of a generic American urban modernity'.[44] The noir city, he suggests, has predominantly been considered as an abstraction, and the significance of specific filming locations and

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[41] Edward Dimendberg, *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[42] Mark Shiel, 'Cinema and the City in History and Theory', in *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context*, ed. by Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 1–18 (p. 5).

[43] Mark Shiel, 'A Regional Geography of Film Noir: Urban Dystopias On- and Offscreen', in *Noir Urbanisms: Dystopic Images of the Modern City*, ed. by Gyan Prakash (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 75–103. See also his *Hollywood Cinema and the Real Los Angeles* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012).

[44] 'A Regional Geography of Film Noir', p. 77.

material shifts in the structure of urban development have been left unexplored.[45] Every

city, of course, is a heterogeneous structure in which districts and even individual streets

and buildings have qualities that mark them out from the specific metropolis of which

they are a part; equally, any given city, taken as a totality, differs in profound ways from

any other urban space. Discussions of 'the city' in relation to film and literature always

entail a significant degree of generalization that inevitably elides historical and

topographical detail.[46] In focusing exclusively on narratives set in Los Angeles, this

research will be somewhat less prone to such generalization than would be a study

concerned with, for example, 'disorientation and the twentieth-century American city',

but it will not be immune to it. There is, nevertheless, specific value in restricting the

scope of this investigation to a specific location, insofar as it allows for an enquiry that

is more sensitive to the reappearance of specific topoi and the significance of specific

historical allusions. The urban conditions, social forces and law-enforcement practices

that provide context for my analysis were not unique to Los Angeles, and although I

have not done so here, the ideas I develop in subsequent chapters could, I believe, be

applied more broadly. Within the confines of a doctoral research project, however,

focusing on Los Angeles has allowed me to establish connections and contexts that

might otherwise go unnoticed, whilst also discouraging any tendency to generalize too

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[45] Dimendberg makes the same point, suggesting that 'treating the city as expression of some underlying myth, theme, or vision has tended to stifle the study of spatiality in film noir as a historical *content* as significant as its more commonly studied formal and narrative features' (*Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity*, p. 9). Another critic whose work complements the approach pursued by Shiel and Dimendberg is Eric Avila, whose account of Hollywood's representation of 'urban blight' in Los Angeles focuses on the Bunker Hill neighbourhood in particular. See *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 65–96.

[46] Norman Klein makes this point with an eloquent and witty thought experiment: 'Whenever students ask me what I mean by saying that movies, by definition, will fictionalize any location where they are shot, I answer with a challenge. Go to a supermarket, I explain, and buy a tin of coffee. Check where the coffee was made. Suppose the label says Colombia. Then brew a cup, and sit in a comfortable chair in half light, very meditative and ideal for concentration. Then sip slowly, and try to guess precisely where in Colombia the beans were picked. That process essentially parallels the relationship that movies have to the location where they are shot--a plantation setup along a chain of production in a vast export industry.' Norman M. Klein, 'Staging Murders: The Social Imaginary, Film, and the City', *Wide Angle*, 20.3 (1998), 85–96 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/wide_angle/v020/20.3klein.html> [accessed 5 May 2017] (pp. 91–2).

broadly about the representation of 'the City', rather than the specificity of the city in question.

'Lines burned into minds': Navigating Los Angeles

Prior to the last two decades of the twentieth century, the significance of Los Angeles, and Southern California more broadly, had been documented in an insightful and sometimes idiosyncratic way by a number of journalists, historians and essayists. Early works by Morrow Mayo (*Los Angeles*, 1933) and Carey McWilliams (*Southern California: An Island on the Land,* 1946) were later complemented by the important regional commentaries and histories of Reyner Banham, Christopher Rand, Robert Fogelson, Joan Didion and Kevin Starr. During the 1980s, Dolores Hayden's work in the city combined profound insights into the conceptual significance of place and memory with research into the histories of women in Los Angeles, particularly women of colour.[47] Hayden's influence on the city can be seen in both the works of public art and commemoration created through her 'The Power of Place' project, and in the rich tradition of feminist scholarship on the history of Los Angeles that has developed over the last thirty years.[48] Those decades have also seen an explosion of interest in Los Angeles as a subject more generally; it has been the subject of a vast number of monographs and journal articles in a wide array of academic fields.

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[47] See *The Power of Place* and also her later reflections on the project in 'Claiming Women's History in the Urban Landscape: Projects from Los Angeles', in *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space*, ed. by Iain Borden (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001), pp. 358–70.

[48] Many of these histories are cited elsewhere in this research, but a very brief selection of such scholarship would also include: Lynell George, *No Crystal Stair: African-Americans in the City of Angels* (London and New York: Verso, 1992); Jeanne Theoharis, '"Alabama on Avalon": Rethinking the Watts Uprising and the Character of Black Protest in Los Angeles', in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights–Black Power Era*, ed. by Peniel E. Joseph (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 27–54; and 'W-A-L-K-O-U-T: High School Students and the Development of Black and Brown Power in Los Angeles', in *Neighborhood Rebels: Black Power at the Local Level*, ed. by Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 107–29; Laura Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006); Kelly Lytle Hernández, *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771–1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

Mike Davis's *City of Quartz* (1990) is perhaps the single most influential late twentieth-century reflection on the history, geography and culture of Los Angeles. In his first chapter, Davis traces a history of Los Angeles culture structured around the dichotomy of 'sunshine and *noir*'. On Davis's reading, Los Angeles narratives can be broadly divided into works that idealize the city — its climate, its opportunities, its uniqueness — and those counter-narratives that seek to demonstrate the vapidity, corruption or oppression that lie beneath the 'sunshine' façade of the city's various boosters.[49] Davis was not the first to note this dichotomy in attitudes to the city; the 1941 preface to the WPA guide to Los Angeles acknowledged that 'for many decades the city has suffered from journalistic superficiality; it has been lashed as a city of sin and cranks; it has also been strangled beneath a blanket of unrestrained eulogy'.[50]

For Davis, Los Angeles 'has come to play the double role of utopia *and* dystopia for advanced capitalism', and both of those judgements have been cited to justify further changes to the city's structure — visions of imagined pasts, presents or futures as determining forces in the city's actual development.[51] The 'LA School' urban theory of the 1980s and 1990s, specifically the writers who used Los Angeles as the model through which to explicate 'postmodern' city form, can offer useful theoretical tools and data for any analysis of twentieth-century Los Angeles.[52] In the enthusiasm with which some late twentieth-century theorists sought to identify in Los Angeles the shape of the

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[49] *City of Quartz*, ch. 1. On some of the limitations of Davis's 'schematic compression of the history of writing about Los Angeles', see Eric Avila, 'Essaying Los Angeles', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of Los Angeles*, ed. by. McNamara, pp. 177–90 (pp. 187–88).

[50] John D. Keyes, 'Preface 1941' in Federal Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration, *Los Angeles in the 1930s: The WPA Guide to the City of Angels*, ed. by David Kipen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011) [1941], pp. xxxi-xxxii (pp. xxxi).

[51] *City of Quartz*, p. 18.

[52] For a collection of essays that provide an overview of some of the key figures within the informal group, as well as demonstrating the often very different methods of its members, see *The City*, ed. by Soja and Scott (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). A systematic case for the existence of a discrete 'LA School', attempting to reconcile the varied approaches and terminology of individual theorists into a single 'postmodern urban problematic', can be found in Michael Dear and Steven Flusty, 'Postmodern Urbanism', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 88.1 (1998), 50–72 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2563976> [accessed 5 May 2017].

urban future, however, one can sense the same exceptionalist tendency that was at work

in the 'Boosterism' of a century earlier; as Davis suggests, 'by hyping Los Angeles as

the paradigm of the future (even in a dystopian vein), they tend to collapse history into

teleology and glamorize the very reality they would deconstruct'.[53]

As Davis's 'sunshine and *noir*' framework demonstrates, the city has always

been idealized, and there have always been attempts to reveal the darker 'true' nature of

the city in the face of such idealization — the grubby reality beneath the gloss. In such a

context, the disparity between appearance and reality can become particularly charged

with significance. Maintaining that very disparity is of course central to the industry

most closely associated with the city: filmmaking. Thom Andersen, in his video essay

Los Angeles Plays Itself (2003), rightly makes pains to emphasize that Los Angeles is

not reducible to Hollywood, and that the majority of LA residents have no involvement

in the movie industry.[54] It is nevertheless an influential fact that part of the city's image

is bound up with image-*making* — with the illusions and assumed identities of

Hollywood's cultural output.[55] As Edward Soja writes, Los Angeles is deeply enmeshed

with an industry centred on 'insistently [substituting] reel stories for real histories and

geographies', which contributes to 'the confusing interplay between fantasy and reality

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[53] *City of Quartz*, p. 86.

[54] 'That's another presumption of the movies: that everyone in Los Angeles is part of their "industry" or wants to be. Actually, only one in forty residents of Los Angeles County works in the entertainment industry. But the rest of us simply don't exist', Thom Andersen, *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, 2003. The film itself is not commercially available due to the complexities of copyright, but a transcript of the script can be accessed online: 'Los Angeles Plays Itself: Transcript' <http://filmkritik.antville.org/stories/1071484/> [accessed 5 May 2017].

[55] On the early development of the cultural symbolism of 'Hollywood' see John Parris Springer, *Hollywood Fictions: The Dream Factory in American Popular Literature* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000). For useful surveys of Hollywood in fiction see Chip Rhodes, 'Hollywood Fictions', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of Los Angeles*, ed. by McNamara, pp. 135–44; Mark Royden Winchell, 'Fantasy Seen: Hollywood Fiction Since West', in *Los Angeles in Fiction: A Collection of Essays*, ed. by David M. Fine, Revised edition (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), pp. 147–68. Shiel's *Hollywood Cinema and the Real Los Angeles* focuses on the film industry's relationship with and representation of Los Angeles during the studio era. For a recent discussion of post-war Hollywood and the decline of the studio system in relation to several infamous crimes (including the murder of Elizabeth Short, the 'Black Dahlia') see Jon Lewis, *Hard-Boiled Hollywood: Crime and Punishment in Postwar Los Angeles* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).

that pervades everyday urban life in the City of Angels'.[56] Within such an environment, a sense of disorientation, even if only brief and apparently benign, might well be considered an inevitable side effect. Despite the significance of Hollywood in the history and culture of Los Angeles, however, I have elected to avoid pursuing a reading of disorientation grounded in the potentially illusory or 'unreal' qualities of the city. Correspondingly, the texts I analyse most extensively are not predominantly concerned with 'Hollywood' as an idea or a locale.

In attempting to take account of narratives not always given due prominence in accounts of the city, South Los Angeles is the single area that receives the most sustained focus in this thesis. A year after the Watts Rebellion of 1965, in which the predominantly African-American areas of South Los Angeles experienced five days of arson, looting and protest, Thomas Pynchon noted that 'Watts is country which lies, psychologically, uncounted miles further than most whites seem at present willing to travel'.[57] Since then, much vital scholarship has sought to bridge, in academic terms, the gap that Pynchon identified, by bringing to light the experiences of African Americans and other racial and ethnic groups within the city. Such vital research — by Gerald Horne, Josh Sides, Douglas Flamming, Dolores Hayden, Eric Avila, Norman Klein, and Julian Murphet, amongst many others — has been indispensible in informing my own analysis of works that centre on African-American experiences of the city.

The topography of Los Angeles is, of course, central to any attempt to orientate oneself in the city. The responses of Kevin Lynch's Angeleno interviewees led him to summarize their common image of the city as 'an endless spread'; more evocative is a direct quotation from one of his respondents: 'It's as if you were going somewhere for a

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[56] Edward W. Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000). p. 136.

[57] Thomas Pynchon, 'A Journey Into The Mind of Watts', *The New York Times*, 12 June 1966 <http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/05/18/reviews/pynchon-watts.html> [accessed 8 February 2017].

long time, and when you got there you discovered there was nothing there, after all'.[58]

The huge amount of undeveloped land in the Los Angeles basin in the early twentieth

century meant that Los Angeles grew steadily outwards from its original centre, giving

the city a horizontally dispersed quality. Within this dispersed geography, the car

became central to Los Angeles life — a cliché in discussions of the city, but one that

exists with some justification. As Soja and Scott write of the development of Los

Angeles in the first two decades of the twentieth century, 'the booming regional

complex was effectively forged into a single functional unit by the automobile (in 1920,

Los Angeles was already ahead of all other major American cities in automobile

registration and use)'.[59] Automobility would continue to decisively shape the form of

the city: by 2000, nearly one-half of the land in Los Angeles was devoted to car-centred

environments, including streets, freeways and car parks.[60]

As the wider Los Angeles metropolitan area congealed over the first-half of the

twentieth century, once-independent municipalities such as Hollywood and Watts were

annexed. 'Municipal boundary making and territorial incorporation,' as Edward Soja

writes,

> produced the most extraordinary crazy quilt of opportunism to be found in any
> metropolitan area. Tiny enclaves of county land and whole cities such as
> Beverly Hills, West Hollywood, Culver City, and Santa Monica pock-mark the
> 'Westside' bulk of the incorporated City of Los Angeles.[61]

This gradual, patchwork development also led to peculiarities, such as the status of

West Hollywood, an area of less than two square kilometres to the east of Beverly Hills,

surrounded on three sides by the city of Los Angeles, yet an administratively separate

city under the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department rather than

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[58] p. 40, p. 41.
[59] 'Introduction to Los Angeles: City and Region', in *The City*, pp. 1–21 (p. 6).
[60] John Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 193.
[61] *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 244.

the LAPD. Such a topography created districts with particular, although by no means static, socio-economic characters — something that is common, of course, to any large urban area. It does also, however, potentially lend greater significance to borders and boundaries and their influence on individual experience and identity: whether that be the invisible boundary lines created by the racially restrictive covenants that drastically restricted the social mobility of African-American residents prior to their being ruled unenforceable by the Supreme Court in 1948, or the fraught borders between gang territories.

Los Angeles offers a notably rich corpus of criminal intrigue and psychological malaise, from film noir to the cinema of David Lynch, and from James M. Cain and Raymond Chandler to James Ellroy and Walter Mosley. If Los Angeles is the city of Philip Marlowe, the city of the private eye, it is also the city of the LAPD, probably the most culturally significant police force in the US during the twentieth century, and an organization that provokes fascination, dismay and loathing in equal measure. This cultural significance can be traced back to *Dragnet*, the radio and then television series of the 1950s which was produced with the cooperation of the department, and which projected the department's ideal of itself (and more particularly the vision of its chief, William H. Parker): professional, precise, rigid, uninterested in compromise or conciliation.[62] As James Lasley writes,

> Parker's idea of reform was based on the operational philosophy that police corruption was a product of cops that got too physically, emotionally, and politically close to the community. He believed that distance between police and the public was the key to stemming the tide of corruption that plagued LAPD in the past.[63]

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[62] On the development and influence of *Dragnet* see Ronald J. Schmidt, *This Is the City: Making Model Citizens in Los Angeles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

[63] James Lasley, *Los Angeles Police Department Meltdown: The Fall of the Professional-Reform Model of Policing*, Advances in Police Theory and Practice Series (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2013), p. 4.

The fame and influence that Parker courted as he restructured the LAPD along professional and often militaristic lines are inseparable, today, from the consistent accusations of brutality and racism that the department has received — charges that are inseparable in turn from the frustration and despair that were manifested in the 1965 and 1992 riots.

Within the framework of this study, there is another element of LAPD history that is as relevant as Parker's ideal of the resolute, unyielding and unsympathetic patrol cop: the enthusiasm with which the department has historically adopted new technologies and 'scientific' policing methods. In the 1920s August Vollmer was a significant early proponent of the application of science and technology to the collection and analysis of evidence, the fixing of time, space and identity, and the rationalization of crime via statistical collection and analysis. In 1924, at the end of a year serving as LAPD Chief of Police, he presented a comprehensive plan to the city council for an 'integrated system of scientific police administration and crime prevention'.[64] Any attempt to understand the late twentieth-century LAPD's technologically assisted drive to *police space* should be grounded not only in an analysis of the professionalization of the Parker era, but in the introduction of the lie detector, fingerprinting, statistical analysis and geographical reorganization overseen by August Vollmer during the 1920s.

In 1936 Vollmer, recently retired from a long and influential career in law enforcement, returned to one of his persistent preoccupations — warning of the increased mobility that modern life afforded criminals, and the threat this posed to effective law enforcement. 'For the transgressor', he wrote, 'geographical boundaries have been obliterated: they still impose a baffling impotence upon the officers of the

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[64] Gerald Woods, *The Police in Los Angeles: Reform and Professionalization* (New York: Garland, 1993), p. 78.

law.'[65] Historian R.J. Smith has characterized the racialized geography of Los Angeles during the same period in starkly contrasting terms: 'Everywhere there were borders, as dangerous to breach as if they were electrified. Everywhere there were lines burned into minds.'[66] The disjunction between these two statements encapsulates the complex predicament of individual citizens in pre-war Los Angeles, and identifies a dynamic that would persist in later decades, particular for members of the city's African-American community. If the outcome of successful orientation is, as Kevin Lynch outlined, 'purposeful mobility', then the conditions of twentieth-century Los Angeles frequently threatened to complicate and undermine that mobility.

Disorientation and Suspect Mobility: Methodology

In its underlying focus on the representation of vulnerable and arrested movement, this thesis contributes to the recent growth of humanities scholarship that engages with questions of mobility. In 2006, Mimi Sheller and John Urry proposed that a 'new mobilities paradigm' was emerging within the social sciences, in response to the fact that the field had previously been 'static in its theory and research', and had not 'sufficiently examined how, enhanced by various objects and technologies, people move'.[67] This 'mobility turn' has encompassed research in diverse academic fields, including transport studies, geography, anthropology and sociology; it has also increasingly engaged with literary and cultural texts.[68] The close readings that form the

[65] August Vollmer, *The Police and Modern Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1936), p. 4.
[66] R. J. Smith, *The Great Black Way: L.A. in the 1940s and the Lost African-American Renaissance* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), p. 43.
[67] Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'The New Mobilities Paradigm', *Environment and Planning A*, 38.2 (2006), 207–26 <https://doi.org/10.1068/a37268> (p. 212).
[68] See, for example, Peter Merriman, *Mobility, Space and Culture* (London: Routledge, 2012); Gijs Mom, *Atlantic Automobilism* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014); Charlotte Mathieson, *Mobility in the Victorian Novel: Placing the Nation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Lynne Pearce, *Drivetime: Literary Excursions in Automotive Consciousness* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016); Julia Leyda, *American Mobilities: Geographies of Class, Race, and Gender in US Culture* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2016); the essays collected in *Researching and Representing Mobilities: Transdisciplinary*

major part of this thesis are situated within a historical and geographical framework that is sensitive to the ways in which individual navigation within twentieth-century Los Angeles was implicated with, and threatened by, forces that sought to circumscribe mobility.

Throughout this study I draw on a wide range of historical and critical sources, including criminal investigation handbooks and works of criminological theory, municipal history and geography, newspaper archives, and early twentieth-century psychology, as well as relevant works of literary and film criticism. I have sought to combine a rigorous use of relevant scholarship and methods drawn from historical, geographical and social studies with sustained close readings of specific literary and cinematic works. Fuller summaries of each chapter of this thesis are given below, but in more general terms, this thesis begins with a chapter that establishes a historical and conceptual framework for my discussion of disorientation and incrimination. The following four chapters are more closely concerned with a relatively small selection of specific authors or works, pursuing a sustained analysis of certain texts informed by the framework established in Chapter One, and by the social history and political geography of Los Angeles.

My approach, then, is an interdisciplinary one that combines close textual analysis with social scientific methods and sources. It stems from a conviction that an integrated methodology such as this, applied to texts that engage with specific urban spaces, can provide unique insights into both the texts themselves and the history of the city in question. There are, however, limitations to such an approach — perhaps most importantly, in the tension between the necessarily rather small corpus of texts that can be given sustained close readings, and the possibility of drawing broader socio-political

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Encounters, ed. by Lesley Murray and Sara Upstone (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) and *Perspectives on Mobility*, ed. by Ingo Berensmeyer and Christoph Ehland (Amsterdan: Editions Rodopi, 2013).

conclusions that can be seemingly implicit in the use of historical and social scientific

methods. It is therefore important to qualify the extent to which such conclusions can be

drawn from this approach, and to precisely frame the contentions that underlie this

thesis. I would not maintain that my analysis of specific novels and films conclusively

demonstrates the presence of certain tendencies, social forces or spatial conditions. Such

an argument would clearly, at the very least, need to be grounded in a much larger

corpus of texts; even then, care would arguably need to be taken to avoid treating that

corpus in a rather instrumentalist manner that elides the complexity of their status as

fictional texts.[69] Rather, I propose that certain conditions and social forces can be

identified through primary and secondary historical research, and there is value in

analysing specific cultural texts in terms of how they serve to construct or contest the

operation of those forces. Such an approach can, I believe, provide a unique perspective

on both the historical conditions and the fictional texts in question. It is this hypothesis

that has determined my selection of novels and films receiving sustained analysis.

Although I will discuss below other methodological considerations relevant to my

corpus, my overriding concern has been with fictional texts that explore the complex

relationship between disorientation, incrimination and mobility in relation to the

historical geography of Los Angeles, and that do so in a heuristically valuable manner.

One of the methods I have used to support this approach is mapping, a technique

that is increasingly deployed in sophisticated ways within both film and literary

studies.[70] Tools such as Google Maps and Mapbox Studio are currently both very

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[69] Literary geographer Marc Brosseau cautions against such instrumentalist tendencies whilst arguing for a dialogical approach to the study of geography and literature in 'Geography's Literature', *Progress in Human Geography*, 18.3 (1994), 333–53 <https://doi.org/10.1177/030913259401800304>, p. 349.
[70] The scholar probably most influential in inaugurating this 'cartographic turn' was Franco Moretti, with his *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1999), and the later *Graphs, Maps, Trees* (London: Verso, 2007). Recent edited collections devoted wholly or in part to the theory and practice of mapping narrative texts include *Mapping Cultures: Place, Practice, Performance*, ed. by Les Roberts (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); *Literary Mapping in the Digital Age*, ed. by David Cooper, Christopher Donaldson, and Patricia Murrieta-Flores (London and New York: Routledge, 2016);

effective at visualizing geographical data for online viewing, and very accessible to researchers without specialized knowledge of Geographic Information System (GIS) software. Throughout this research, one of the ways I sought to engage with the geography of my primary texts was to record references to specific locations in Los Angeles, and then to convert those locations to specific coordinates of latitude and longitude and visualize the resulting data using Google Maps. This allowed me to better establish the topography of each text: to identify areas of the city that are particularly prominent in them, to make comparisons between the geography of different works, and to appreciate the distance or proximity between different locations.[71] In these terms, mapping was one further means by which to gather research data, alongside other methods such as close textual analysis or reference to secondary critical sources.

The maps reproduced in this thesis were produced using the QGis, a powerful program capable of manipulating geographical data in a far more complex manner than I have undertaken here. Online mapping tools are, in my experience, less effective at producing maps designed to be reproduced in print, so where such maps were required, the data that had been initially analysed in Google Maps was transferred into QGis and exported in a format suitable for inclusion. These maps serve to illustrate specific analytical points, or to provide relevant geographical context for the reader, rather than representing the limits of what was mapped in the course of this research.

American Studies scholar Paul Giles, reflecting on the history of aesthetic theory and the current status of literary criticism, has argued that literature is a 'constitutionally

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Cinematic Urban Geographies, ed. by François Penz and Richard Koeck (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), ProQuest Ebook Central <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucl/detail.action?docID=4913687>; *Literature and Cartography: Theories, Histories, Genres*, ed. by Anders Engberg-Pedersen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017). See also Tom Conley, *Cartographic Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), and the 'Cinematic Cartography' special issue of *The Cartographic Journal* (46.1, 2009).

[71] This last point was particularly beneficial given my somewhat limited experience, as only an occasional visitor, of the geography of Los Angeles – in some cases it highlighted aspects of the texts' geography that might be self-evident to a resident of the city.

impure' category that, due to its 'parasitical' relationship to history, philosophy and culture, projects not certainty but *disorientation*.[72] Literary works, Giles suggests, 'explore points of imaginative congruence and crossover between mind and matter, subjective vistas and geographical horizons'.[73] This presents a challenge for critics that this thesis will, within its own boundaries, attempts to confront: to be 'not just meticulous readers, nor methodical cultural historians, but [...] both simultaneously'.[74] While Giles's concern is specifically literature, however, my corpus encompasses both novels and films set in Los Angeles, and this has its own distinct methodological implications that merit discussion.

Amongst scholars, the question of the relationship between film and literature has at times been a divisive one, often implicated with value judgements about the inherent value of one medium over the other, and with debates over disciplinary boundaries within the academy. Much criticism has implicitly or explicitly insisted upon maintaining a fundamental binary distinction between film as an image-based medium and literature as a linguistic one, emphasizing that they are separate representational spheres or semiotic systems — treating them, in the words of George Bluestone, one of the earliest and most influential writers on the relationship between film and the novel, as forms that are 'overtly compatible, secretly hostile'.[75]

Disciplinary boundaries have been contested particularly forcefully in relation to the issue of adaptation. Across the second half of the twentieth century, academics specializing in the cinema worked to establish Film Studies as a discrete field. Other

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[72] Paul Giles, 'Aesthetic Matters: Literature and the Politics of Disorientation', *SubStance*, 42.2 (2013), 99–113 <https://doi.org/10.1353/sub.2013.0018> (pp. 103, 105).
[73] Ibid., p. 107.
[74] Ibid., p. 104.
[75] George Bluestone, *Novels into Film: The Metamorphosis of Fiction into Cinema* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1957), p. 2. For an overview and critique of these issues (what she calls the 'word/image wars') in literature and screen studies, see Kamilla Elliott, 'Novels, Films, and the Word/Image Wars', in *A Companion to Literature and Film*, ed. by Robert Stam and Alesandra Raengo (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 1–22.

scholars, often ones based primarily in English departments, adopted a more 'literary'

approach to cinema that was implicitly or explicitly situated in opposition to the

psychoanalytic or 'apparatus' theories perceived to be dominant in Film Studies. These

'literary' perspectives frequently focused on screen adaptations of literary sources, and

specifically on the question of fidelity — highlighting, in effect, the ways in which film

adaptations failed to be true to their literary source material, and at the extreme,

suggesting the inherent superiority of the written word.[76] More recently, adaptation

studies has taken a turn away from an (arguably sometimes overstated) concern with

fidelity, with scholars adopting intertextual approaches to the relationship between film

and literature or more sociologically-orientated analysis of institutional and material

contexts.[77]

These considerations are certainly not irrelevant to the texts considered in this

research.[78] Many of the novels discussed here have been adapted for the screen,

including nearly all of Chandler's novels, Joseph Wambaugh's *The New Centurions* and

half of James Ellroy's 'LA Quartet'.[79] Chandler's *The High Window* (1942), for

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[76] This necessarily brief account inevitably simplifies these complex disciplinary histories. For a more extensive and critical overview see Thomas M. Leitch, 'Where Are We Going, Where Have We Been?', in *The Literature/Film Reader: Issues of Adaptation*, ed. by James M. Welsh and Peter Lev (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2007), pp. 327–333; David L. Kranz's essay in the same volume, 'Trying Harder: Probability, Objectivity, and Rationality in Adaptation Studies', pp. 77–102; Brian McFarlane, 'Reading Film and Literature', in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, ed. by Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 15–28.

[77] For one of the most influential arguments for a more intertextual approach to adaptation see Robert Stam, 'Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation', in *Film Adaptation*, ed. by James Naremore (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000), pp. 54–76.

[78] An approach to adaptation that is both intertextual and sociologically inclined has much to bring to any consideration of the complex relationship between film noir and its literary influences, for example. For an insightful perspective on these issues, see R. Barton Palmer, 'The Sociological Turn of Adaptation Studies: The Example of Film Noir', in *A Companion to Literature and Film*, pp. 258–277. As early as 1991, Frank Krutnik's consideration of the 'principle determinants' of film noir involves an analysis of the institutional and economic factors that influenced post-war Hollywood's utilization of hard-boiled fiction as a source of material. See *In a Lonely Street*, pp. 33–44.

[79] See *The New Centurions* (dir. by Richard Fleischer, 1972), *L.A. Confidential* (dir. by Curtis Hanson, 1997), *The Black Dahlia* (dir. by Brian De Palma, 2006). Of the many screen adaptations of Chandler's novels, the most famous are *The Big Sleep* (dir. by Howard Hawks, 1946) and *Murder, My Sweet* (dir. by Edward Dmytryk, 1944). For an extensive treatment of Chandler's relationship with film (focusing both on screen adaptations of his work, and his own scriptwriting work), see Gene D. Phillips, *Creatures of*

example, was adapted into a film in 1947, re-titled *The Brasher Doubloon* and directed by John Brahm.[80] The film alters, omits or compresses many details of Chandler's plot, including elements central to my reading of the novel in Chapter Two below: Elizabeth Murdock, the novel's elusive antagonist, has her guilt publicly revealed in the final scene and is wrestled out screaming from the room by police officers; her culpability is demonstrated not by a photograph but through Marlowe's screening of incriminating film footage; a crucial moment in which the titular missing coin momentarily appears to exist in two locations, disorientating Marlowe, is absent from the film. There would be value in reflecting on these differences — not to the end of criticizing the film's lack of fidelity to the novel, but rather so as to consider how they inflect each text's treatment of disorientation and mobility. How differently is Marlowe's investigative method, his navigation of the spaces of Los Angeles, and his own vulnerability to incrimination constructed in *The Brasher Doubloon*, and how does that relate to the medium of the film and its institutional context? In what ways does the film differ from *Murder, My Sweet* (dir. by Edward Dmytryk, 1944) in this respect? It is the limitations of space alone that have prevented me from addressing these and many other similar questions, and I have through necessity restricted my sustained textual analysis to specific individual works, rather than considering the relationships between different adaptations.

The films and novels discussed here have, I would maintain, a common concern with the relationship between the psychological vulnerability of the urban subject, and the socio-political forces that structured and policed urban space. They arose, however, from different material and industrial contexts; they were also consumed by different

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Darkness: Raymond Chandler, Detective Fiction, and Film Noir (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000).

[80] For its British release the film retained the book's title. The plot of *The High Window* had previously been adapted as *Time to Kill,* directed by Herbert I. Leeds (20th Century Fox, 1942) as a 'Michael Shayne' mystery.

contemporary audiences, and have subsequently, to differing extents, been critically

reevaluated and granted a certain canonical status within their respective mediums. The

films discussed at the end of Chapter One, for example — *The Blue Gardenia* (dir. by

Fritz Lang, 1953), *In a Lonely Place* (dir. by Nicholas Ray, 1950) and *Whirlpool* (dir.

by Otto Preminger, 1949) — were all products of the post-war Hollywood studio

system: works of popular culture shaped by commercial considerations that were

retrospectively associated with the critically constructed category of film noir. *Killer of*

Sheep (dir. by Charles Burnett, 1977) and *Bush Mama* (dir. by Haile Gerima, 1976), in

contrast, were independent productions from filmmakers that situated themselves in

direct opposition to mainstream culture and Hollywood in particular. They sought,

amongst other concerns, to counteract stereotypical representations of African-

American life, and prior to their recent distribution on DVD they were generally

consumed through screenings at film festivals and in academic contexts.[81] Although it

has proved to be beyond the scope of this study, further consideration of these issues is

undoubtedly required, as part of a more comprehensive reflection on whether works

produced under specific conditions or popular with certain audiences were particularly

well-attuned to exploring disorientating experiences.

My choice of certain novels and films, and the absence of others, should not

therefore be taken to signify any intentional privileging of one form over the other. Nor

do I intend to elide the formal differences between literature and cinema; instead, I seek

to be sensitive both to the literary properties of the novels and to what Brian McFarlane

calls 'that battery of codes – some cinema-specific, some more generally cultural – that

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[81] For discussion of the reception of *Killer of Sheep*, focusing on the significance of the fact that the film was screened primarily within academic institutions and at film festivals rather than the African-American community, see David E. James, 'Toward a Geo-Cinematic Hermeneutics: Representations of Los Angeles in Non-Industrial Cinema – Killer of Sheep and Water and Power', *Wide Angle*, 20.3 (1998), 23–53 <https://doi.org/10.1353/wan.1998.0031> (p. 39) and Daniel Widener, *Black Arts West: Culture and Struggle in Postwar Los Angeles* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 264.

film draws on in the processes of signification'.[82] Both novels and films are fundamentally analysed here in terms of the environmental images they construct, and it is here, I would maintain, where there is valuable similarity: in the importance of their treatment of spatial experience, and their engagement with the specific geography of Los Angeles in particular. Whilst urban literature has for a long time been treated as having some degree of documentary value in its representation of urban environments, as a photographic medium location-shot film undeniably has a more profound ability to capture details of the spatial environment. In Los Angeles, the Bunker Hill neighbourhood on the edge of Downtown was redeveloped during the 1950s, largely erasing the architecture of an area that was once home to the city's elite, but which had come, by the postwar period, to represent urban blight in need of commercial renewal. In the decade prior, however, the neighbourhood had frequently served as a filming location: as Thom Andersen demonstrates in *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2003), the use of Bunker Hill as a setting in Hollywood productions of the 1940s, particularly in film noir, served to visually document the qualities of a space that would soon be physically erased.[83]

The relationship between film and space, moreover, operates on multiple levels, and through complex interactions between conditions of representation, production and consumption. There are not just the spaces represented in the text of the film — there are also the spaces of the film's industrial production, and the influence of that industry on the spatial politics of the surrounding area and beyond; the spaces in which that film

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[82] McFarlane, 'Reading Film and Literature', p. 20.

[83] Thom Andersen's 2003 film is comprised entirely of clips from films set on location in Los Angeles, and frequently focuses on the recurrence of specific buildings, landmarks or neighbourhoods. The film itself is not commercially available due to the complexities of copyright, but a transcript of the script can be accessed online: 'Los Angeles Plays Itself: Transcript' <http://filmkritik.antville.org/stories/1071484/> [accessed 5 May 2017]. On the use of Bunker Hill as a common shooting location in film noir, see Dimendberg, 'From Berlin to Bunker Hill', pp. 78–9; Mike Davis, 'Bunker Hill: Hollywood's Dark Shadow', in *Cinema and the City*, pp. 33–45; Klein, *The History of Forgetting*, pp. 51–58.

is consumed, from cinemas to home viewing. If cinema is indeed, as Shiel suggests, 'a peculiarly spatial form of culture', literature also has its own complex spatialities.[84] Recent critical work in the field of literary geography has sought not only to mobilize new methods in its analysis of the spaces represented within literary narratives, but also to attend to the social and spatial conditions of the production and reception of literary texts.[85] Not all of these issues are given extended consideration here. But my research is nevertheless informed by these spatial approaches to literature and cinema, and motivated by a conviction that they suggest points of confluence that justify an account that moves back and forth, with due analytical care, between film and literature.

It should be noted that I identified my key texts only after a considering a much larger corpus of Los Angeles-set literature and cinema. I began my research with the intention to focus on a broad range of texts, and to construct the different 'group images' of Los Angeles found in crime fiction and film noir. I was particularly interested in the reappearance of specific Los Angeles locations across different literary and cinematic works. The significance of particular districts, streets or buildings was to be explored, and the research would be structured around certain recurring topoi: Downtown; Hollywood; South-Central. It would, in other words, have been an attempt to combine Kevin Lynch's methods in *The Image of the City* with those of Franco Moretti, and an approach that also bore the influence of Thom Andersen's *Los Angeles Plays Itself* and the work of Mike Davis.

In beginning to undertake this research, however, I encountered certain common tropes that it seemed valuable to reconstruct historically and theorize, before

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[84] 'Cinema and the City in History and Theory', p. 5.
[85] For surveys of these developments in literary geography, see Angharad Saunders, 'Literary Geography: Reforging the Connections', *Progress in Human Geography*, 34.4 (2010), 436–452; Neal Alexander, 'On Literary Geography', *Literary Geographies*, 1.1 (2015), 3–6; Marc Brosseau, 'In, Of, Out, with and through: New Perspectives in Literary Geography', in *The Routledge Handbook of Literature and Space* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 9–27.

considering in depth how they function in key texts. This decision was particularly prompted by the realization that my reading of Raymond Chandler's novels made frequent reference to Philip Marlowe's experience of *disorientation*, and that disorientation plays a crucial and under-acknowledged role in Kevin Lynch's theorization of urban experience. Disorientation presented the opportunity to consider individual urban experience in relation to the specific spatiality of Los Angeles from an original perspective. Through my reading of Chandler I developed the hypothesis that disorientation could be related both to criminal investigation and to mobility. On these terms, the cultural works given critical attention in my research could be read as explorations of how specific social conditions could be seen to operate upon and threaten individual subjectivity.

This reorientation of approach took my research in new directions: into the history of law enforcement and criminal investigation in Los Angeles, and more deeply into the social history of the city. My concern with the ways in which law-enforcement practices — and the social forces governing such strategies — impinge upon individual experience means that fictional crime narratives have continued to form a significant part of my corpus. I have chosen, however, to avoid restricting this study to a specific genre or form, such as the hardboiled detective novel or the film noir. Working across different genres and sub-genres, and across a relatively wide historical period, I remain attentive to the generic context of the texts in question whilst resisting the tendency to assert rigid generic conventions, circumscribing narrow historical periods and a discrete canon in such a way that common themes and preoccupations across different media and over a wider historical period may be obscured.

Engaging deeply with the social history of Los Angeles also left me increasingly convinced that it was necessary to acknowledge the history of communities of colour in

Los Angeles — communities glimpsed only marginally, and frequently in a profoundly caricatured form, in the genre narratives with which I had initially been concerned. A consideration of the latter texts alone would provide only a partial and unsatisfactory account, because in historical terms it is African Americans and other ethnic minorities that have been most vulnerable to incrimination and restricted movement. Focusing on law-enforcement *practices*, and the ways in which they were implemented and experienced within different communities, allowed me to consider significant works falling outside the genre restrictions of crime fiction and film noir. As a result, the structure of this thesis places equal weight on narratives concerned with the experiences of African-American protagonists who are frequently confronted by a fundamentally racist power structure against which they are exposed to the constant risk of false accusation, unjustified arrest and conviction. These works, which explore individual responses to this spectre of arbitrary punishment and restricted movement, are not 'crime stories', insofar as they do not adhere closely to the generic conventions of noir fiction, the police semi-documentary picture or the detective novel. They are, however, narratives in which the threat of incrimination is a constitutive element of their protagonists' psychology, and serve as a necessary counterpoint to texts in which the perspectives of law-enforcement officials are privileged. Establishing this diverse framework is essential in order to consider the relationship between incrimination to disorientation in its full complexity; it has also allowed me to draw previously ignored associations and comparisons between works that have frequently only been considered within their specific generic or immediate historical context.

The novels and films that receive sustained analysis in this thesis were produced between the 1940s and the late 1980s; they are set however, within a slightly narrower timeframe that ends in the 1970s. Within this chronology, the chapters that follow can

be divided into two periods. Chapters Two and Three discuss Raymond Chandler and Chester Himes respectively, and both are concerned with Los Angeles in the early 1940s. Himes's *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945) and Chandler's novels, particularly *The High Window* (1942), are highly sensitive to the geography of 1940s Los Angeles, and present revealing contrasts and similarities when read within the same historical and conceptual framework. The following two chapters focus on works produced after 1970; there, interweaving and revealing dialogues are established with the earlier texts. In Chapter Four, the focus shifts to South Los Angeles in the 1970s, and films directed by Haile Gerima and Charles Burnett. This transition, from Himes's representation of wartime Los Angeles to the post-Civil Rights Act and post-Watts Rebellion context of Burnett and Gerima, allows for a consideration of both change and continuity in the history of African-American Los Angeles. Chapter Five concentrates on the perspectives of Los Angeles policemen in works that are also historical fictions: Joseph Wambaugh's *The New Centurions*, published in 1971 but set between 1960 and 1965, and James Ellroy's 1988 novel *The Big Nowhere*, set in 1950. Taken together, these two texts are concerned in part with the way figures of white, male authority — agents of incrimination — are themselves represented as vulnerable to the principles they enforce, and their presence here allows for a consideration of the ways in which they reiterate the dynamic that is present in Chandler's novels of the 1940s.

Thesis Outline

'The experienced historical geography of every urban landscape', Edward Soja writes, is 'eclectic, fragmentary, incomplete'.[86] Soja challenges the urge to envision exhaustive accounts of such complex landscapes:

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[86] *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 247.

> Totalizing visions, attractive though they may be, can never capture all the meanings and significations of the urban when the landscape is critically read and envisioned as a fulsome geographical text.[87]

What follows, then, is far from an attempt at a totalizing reading that seeks to place *all* Los Angeles fictions (or particular literary and cinematic genres) within a specific schema. The narratives that I analyse most closely are ones in which the tension between disorientation and incrimination is at stake in a particularly revealing manner; it was this was that was the single most significant criterion governing my selection of texts. As such, specific works, authors or filmmakers may be exceptional, rather than representative of their genre or of Los Angeles fictions in general. Equally, however, this research does not constitute an exhaustive account of disorientation and incrimination in Los Angeles culture. Rather, it seeks to open up the possibility of further research — into film noir and the female gothic melodrama; into the experiences of other ethnic groups in Los Angeles; into writers and filmmakers not discussed here, such as David Lynch — in relation to concepts that are examined here through the close reading of a narrow selection of texts. These literary and cinematic works engage with the specific history and geography of Los Angeles at different points between the 1940s and the 1970s. In doing, so they establish an image of the city in which protagonists' ability to successfully navigate the streets of Los Angeles is precarious, and orientation is shown to be as much a juridical imperative as a practical one. Dolores Hayden writes, 'People's experiences of the urban landscape intertwine the sense of place and the politics of space'; in the texts analysed here, there is a consistent politics of space underlying their diverse representations of the experience of Los Angeles.[88] The disorientating experiences of these individual city-dwellers have, as Kevin Lynch suggested, potentially revelatory implications, bound up as they are with a particular

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[87] Ibid.
[88] *The Power of Place*, p. 43.

socio-political force: the imperative to maintain order by rationalizing time, space and identity.

In the first chapter, I outline the conceptual framework and historical context for my analysis across the thesis as a whole. Beginning with a brief account of the history of criminalistics — scientific aids to criminal investigation — and North American policing practices more broadly, I argue that the 'scientific policing' of the early twentieth century was concerned with rationalizing time, space and identity, both to prevent and to investigate crime. This imperative was justified in terms of the anonymity and mobility that the modern city afforded individuals, and potential lawbreakers in particular. I use the term *incrimination* to refer to moments when such practices are directed towards individuals, whose identities are fixed and movements reconstructed or arrested in order to charge them with a specific transgression. A conceptual history of disorientation is then outlined, in order to demonstrate that the term developed increasingly pathological associations at the turn of the century, and was reconceptualized to refer not just to spatial confusion, but also to disruptions to chronology and personal identity. Building on this analysis, I define disorientation as *subjective spatio-temporal disruptions that undermine the capacity for movement, action and the construction of coherent narratives*.

The relationship between these two concepts, incrimination and disorientation, is central to my argument. Individual orientation within the twentieth-century metropolis occurs within the context of a super-individual tendency towards the rationalization of time, space and identity, facilitated by technology and systems of knowledge. One particularly forceful expression of that tendency derives from social concerns about the potential for criminality associated with an increase in anonymity and individual mobility. Criminal investigators seek to incriminate suspects by fixing fluid identities,

and establishing evidence of their movements and their presence at crime scenes. In response to this threat of incrimination, individuals are obliged to provide alibis that account for their movements. States of disorientation impair the ability to provide that account, placing the individual at greater risk of punishment. More insidiously, the perceived certainty offered by the technological means and systems of knowledge available to the investigator can itself prompt disorientation in the suspect. The incriminating narrative of the investigator may be one that the suspect is unable to offer a sufficient alibi against, even with an account they know themselves to be true — particularly when the tools of incrimination are misused by malevolent individuals, or are harnessed to support a system that is structurally hostile towards specific social groups.

In subsequent chapters, I analyse how the effect of this dynamic of disorientation and incrimination on individual protagonists is represented in a series of works set in Los Angeles. The private investigator occupies a distinct, liminal position — licensed to investigate certain, potentially criminal, situations, and yet lacking the authority held by other agents of law enforcement. The canonical Los Angeles private eye is Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe, and in Chapter Two I begin by considering the image of Los Angeles established in Chandler's novels in relation to Marlowe's mobile investigative method. The success of that method depends upon his ability to orientate himself and move purposefully through the city as he pursues and observes suspects. Throughout Chandler's fiction, Marlowe demonstrates an awareness of his own vulnerability to incrimination — a vulnerability that is most acute when he experiences moments of disorientation. The second part of the chapter considers *The High Window* (1942), both as an example of the tendencies outlined above, and for the ways in which Chandler complicates them. *The High Window* is a novel in which high-

speed movement, ambiguous spatial position and what sound studies scholar John Durham Peters terms 'simultaneity across distances' are intertwined with the anxiety over fluid identities that drives Marlowe's other investigations.[89] New technologies are harnessed by Marlowe as he investigates the disappearance of the Brasher Doubloon; they are also mobilized by the novel's antagonists, undermining Marlowe's search and often directly threatening his own safety. What distinguishes *The High Window* is the extent to which Marlowe's investigative method, rooted in the rigid environmental image derived from his topographical knowledge and mobility, is revealed to be not just fragile but ultimately ineffectual.

If Marlowe finds himself particularly vulnerable to incrimination because his investigations inevitably risk drawing the suspicions of the police, other groups in post-war Los Angeles suffered under a much more profound form of the same vulnerability. Chapters Three and Four both consider the conditions that structured the experiences of African-American citizens in South Los Angeles from the early 1940s to the mid-1970s. In Chester Himes's *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945), the focus of Chapter Three, Bob Jones's psychological state, his navigation of the city, and his negotiation of the social and racial boundaries of wartime Los Angeles, are closely linked. 'Restrictive covenants', in legally preventing non-white Angelenos from moving to certain neighbourhoods, formalized the subtle but insidious racism of mid-century Los Angeles, constraining the mobility of the black community in particular. Other invisible but powerful distinctions maintained divisions between different communities, making certain locations implicitly 'off-limits' to African Americans, despite the ostensible absence of the formalized segregation that marked the Jim Crow South. Bob Jones experiences violent confrontations and rigidly policed borders that threaten his mobility,

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[89] John Durham Peters, 'Phantasms of the Living, Dialogues with the Dead', in *Sound Studies*, ed. by Michael Bull, Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies, 4 vols. (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), i, 361–394 (p. 362).

and struggles to orientate himself in relation to the fluid boundaries of the city's racialized geography. Within such conditions, he is unable to avoid transgression despite his perceptive understanding of the city's spatial politics.

The possibility of unjustified arrest and false imprisonment, which black Angelenos were forced to consider an ever-present threat, had not just social but psychological implications. Socio-economic conditions also served to restrict the mobility of the city's black working class, particularly following the Watts Rebellion of 1965, which exacerbated the municipal neglect suffered by the Eastside of South LA. Chapter Four considers two films directed by members of the 'LA Rebellion' school of filmmakers in South Los Angeles during the 1970s. Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep* (1977) is a portrait of black family life that is particularly preoccupied with the psychological strain experienced by protagonist Stan (Henry Gayle Sanders). Repeated images of failed and arrested movement, and of the ever-present threat of violence, establish a context within which Stan struggles to orientate himself. Haile Gerima's *Bush Mama* (1976) represents an attempt to articulate the experiences of African-American women within the same context — depicting a young mother's developing social consciousness and increasingly fragmented subjectivity in response to the incarceration of her husband and the vulnerability of her young daughter. Disorientated by the contingency of life in working-class black Los Angeles, Dorothy (Barbara O. Jones) is provoked into violent retaliation.

In Chapter Five, I consider the experiences of Los Angeles law-enforcement officials, and particularly how they orientate themselves in relation to the division of the city into different districts. As the newly qualified police patrolmen in Joseph Wambaugh's *The New Centurions* (1971) learn how the LAPD exerts spatial control over its territory, they chart the development of their careers in relation to the different

geographical divisions to which they are assigned. In James Ellroy's *The Big Nowhere* (1988), ambitious LA Country Sheriff's Deputy Danny Upshaw navigates the city's jurisdictional topography, transgressing institutional and geographical boundaries that expose him to increasing danger. Despite operating with the authority of the LASD, Upshaw finds himself threatened with incrimination due to his discovery of corruption amongst his colleagues — notably Lieutenant Dudley Smith. Across *The Big Nowhere* and the two subsequent novels in Ellroy's 'LA Quartet', *L.A. Confidential* (1990) and *White Jazz* (1992), Smith's actions reveal the potential for the juridical rationalization of time, space and identity to be manipulated by immoral agents. Smith uses the resources of the police department and his own authority and investigative skill to enact his own principle of 'containment' — restricting certain vices, such as heroin dealing, to black South LA — and incriminating those who seek to frustrate his plans.

Taken together, these works demonstrate an underlying coherence in their representation of urban experience. They situate individual subjects in relation to the historical and geographical conditions of Los Angeles in specific periods, and in doing so, establish a common image of the city as a network of territorial borders that must be carefully negotiated. Attempts to police identity and mobility, ostensibly rational and disinterested, are shown to be susceptible to abuse and discrimination, and within this context, the stakes of disorientation are profoundly heightened. The concluding chapter reflects upon this common image, and on other significant associations between the texts discussed. It considers those works of literature and cinema in relation to the recent history of Los Angeles, and to further developments in criminalistics at the end of the twentieth century, in order to argue for their continuing relevance, and the relevance of the concepts developed in this thesis. To that end, I also suggest some ways in which the research here could be further developed — an undertaking that also serves

to acknowledge some of the many works and perspectives that are otherwise absent here, such as a thorough consideration of the experiences of Mexican Americans and other Latinx communities in Los Angeles.

One of those absences deserves further discussion here, however. It must be acknowledged that all of the texts discussed in depth below are the work of male writers or directors. In undertaking this research, I made certain strategic decisions: to focus on Los Angeles specifically; to analyse texts from 'crime' genres beyond their generic frameworks, and situate them in relation to other forms; to attend to the geography of the city in a nuanced manner by focusing on the representation of specific districts rather than the city as a whole; to avoid privileging 'Anglo' narratives of Los Angeles at the expense of other perspectives. As the research progressed, these decisions led to others: to place particular emphasis on South Los Angeles and on the history of African Americans in the city; to investigate the practice of criminal investigation in Los Angeles and the history of criminalistics; to explore how the experience of individual disorientation can be related to expressions of state authority and cultural concerns about anonymity and mobility in the modern city.

All of these decisions — which were of course affected, like any research project, by the pressures and constraints of time and resources, and by the continuing development of my own expertise — ultimately influenced the structure and content of this thesis in crucial ways. My corpus of primary texts evolved as part of this process, with one consequence being that several works once intended to have a more significant role, such as *In a Lonely Place* (Dorothy B. Hughes, 1950), *Lithium for Medea* (Kate Braverman, 1979) and *Illusions* (dir. by Julie Dash, 1982), were excluded. This does not serve to excuse, however, the gender balance of authors and filmmakers in this thesis; it

is my own failure to explicitly consider gender as a central aspect of the project from the outset that has contributed to its relative absence at the conclusion.

As feminist geographers Mona Domosh and Joni Seager highlight, 'Men and women have quite different experiences of rootlessness and fixity, of the hardships of forced movement and of the privileges of free movement'.[90] *Bush Mama*, discussed in Chapter Four below, focuses on the particular vulnerability experienced by African-American women in 1970s Los Angeles (albeit from the perspective of a male director). Other works by Gerima's peers at UCLA, including *69 Pickup* (dir. by Thomas Penick, 1969) and *A Different Image* (dir. by Alile Sharon Larkin, 1982), explore questions of gender and race in relation to women's movement through urban space, although they lack *Bush Mama*'s emphasis on how law-enforcement practices intersect with such themes. One of the ways in which both *Bush Mama* and *Killer of Sheep* are important, within the structure of this thesis, is for the different ways in which each film challenges the constructions of masculine vulnerability, insecurity and violence that are central to the other works discussed at length. From Chandler and Himes to Wambaugh and Ellroy, both white male authority figures and racialized male citizens of South Los Angeles respond to the threat of incrimination with violence and rage. Gerima and Burnett's films complicate this tendency, representing alternative masculinities and feminine perspectives, and with their inclusion I have sought to avoid an exclusive preoccupation with what Matthew Farish, writing on film noir, terms 'masculine journeys into ethical and spatial uncertainty'.[91]

It is nevertheless the case that more emphasis is placed below on the experiences of masculine protagonists. Alongside *Bush Mama*, my discussion of *The Blue Gardenia*

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[90] Mona Domosh and Joni Seager, *Putting Women in Place: Feminist Geographers Make Sense of the World* (New York: Guilford Press, 2001), p. 110.
[91] Matthew Farish, 'Cities in Shade: Urban Geography and the Uses of Noir', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 23.1 (2005), 95–118 <https://doi.org/10.1068/d185>, p. 104.

and *Whirlpool* in Chapter One makes clear that there is the need for a much more

substantial consideration of disorientation and suspect mobility in relation to gender.

This fuller discussion would need to take account of the ways in which urban space is,

within a patriarchal system, constructed as particularly dangerous for women, and of the

manner in which cultural texts produce and reproduce this discourse.[92] It would also

need to draw upon the rich history of scholarship exploring women's experiences of the

history and geography of Los Angeles, from Dolores Hayden to Mary Pat Brady,

Marsha Gordon and Allyson Nadia Field — writing that has frequently attended to

complex intersections of gender, ethnicity, sexuality and class.[93] It is only in these terms

that an adequate discussion could take place of the ways in which female characters

struggle to orientate themselves in Los Angeles in, for example, *Lithium for Medea*,

Illusions, *Play It As It Lays* (Joan Didion, 1970), *Kindred* (Octavia Butler, 1979),

Mulholland Dr. and *Inland Empire* (both dir. by David Lynch, 2001 and 2008), and *Die

a Little* (Megan Abbott, 2005).[94] This study is then, to use Edward Soja's phrase,

necessarily 'eclectic, fragmentary, incomplete'. It is my hope that these elisions — as

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[92] The work of Elizabeth Wilson has been particularly influential in exploring the contradictions in the way the modern city was conceptualized – as a site of masculine sexual freedom that was both alluring and threatening; as a place that offered women opportunities for self-determination and autonomy, but that was also filled with threats that left them vulnerable. See *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). For one example of an approach on these terms, see Lesley Murray and Hannah Vincent, 'Constructing the Mobile City: Gendered Mobilities in London Fiction', in *Researching and Representing Mobilities: Transdisciplinary Encounters*, ed. by Lesley Murray and Sara Upstone (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 57–77. For broader conceptual considerations of the relationship between feminism, gender, geography and place, see Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).

[93] Hayden, *The Power of Place*; Mary Pat Brady, *Extinct Lands, Temporal Geographies: Chicana Literature and the Urgency of Space* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Marsha Gordon and Allyson Nadia Field, 'The Other Side of the Tracks: Nontheatrical Film History, Pre-Rebellion Watts, and Felicia', *Cinema Journal*, 55.2 (2016), 1–24 <https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2016.0016>.

[94] Lynne Pearce discusses the experience of driving Los Angeles in *Play It As It Lays* in *Drivetime*, pp. 141–53. For a recent study of David Lynch's cinema particularly attuned to its spatiality, and to the specific Los Angeles settings featured in his later works, see Richard Martin, *The Architecture of David Lynch* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).

there are, no doubt, many others — are partially mitigated by, and do not fatally

undermine, any contribution that I have been able to make with this research.

Chapter One

'To become completely lost': Disorientation, Incrimination and the Mobile Metropolis

In 1936, former LAPD Chief of Police August Vollmer warned of the threat posed by criminals 'equipped with the "latest" inventions', and lamented that the police, in contrast, 'almost universally lack modern equipment'.[1] Two decades later William H. Parker, his most renowned successor, similarly cautioned that 'the modern criminal has availed himself of every modern technical advancement'.[2] Emphasizing the possibilities that new technologies opened up for lawbreakers in this way, and situating law-enforcement authorities as being in a constant arms race with criminals, served to justify the expansion of police powers and increases in departmental budgets. If the normalization of expanded police powers was inextricably bound up with the mythologization of criminal expertise, cultural works would play an important role in this process.[3] In the 1950s, the television series *Dragnet* was highly influential in establishing an idealized image of the LAPD grounded in Parker's vision of police professionalism and civic corruption.[4] Perhaps the single most comprehensive mythologization of both the institutional capabilities of the mid-century LAPD and the resourcefulness of the criminals they faced was the film that inspired *Dragnet — He Walked by Night* (dir. by Alfred Werker and Anthony Mann [uncredited], 1948).[5]

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[1] *The Police and Modern Society*, p. 4.

[2] W. H. Parker, 'Surveillance by Wiretap or Dictograph: Threat or Protection?', *California Law Review*, 42.5 (1954), 727–37 <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=bth&AN=10215172&site=ehost-live&scope=site> [accessed 5 May 2017] (p. 728).

[3] Shiel associates the shift from the expressionistic film noir of the 1940s to the more realist crime films of the late 1940s and '50s with a political shift rightwards that served in part to normalize 'the science, firepower and paraphernalia of modern law enforcement' (*Hollywood Cinema and the Real Los Angeles*, p. 233). For an extended analysis of this process, see Christopher P. Wilson, *Cop Knowledge: Police Power and Cultural Narrative in Twentieth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[4] Schmidt, pp. 78–86.

[5] For an analysis of the ways in which the 'realist aesthetic' of *Dragnet* both drew upon and diverged from the semi-documentary realism of *He Walked by Night*, see R. Barton Palmer, 'Dragnet, Film Noir,

Loosely based on a real-life crime spree conducted by a veteran in mid-1940s Los Angeles, *He Walked by Night* depicts the hunt for an unpredictable and enigmatic cop-killer and armed robber. A significant example of the semi-documentary, police-procedural style (or sub-genre) of film noir, it was shot on location in Los Angeles, and the film insists upon the authenticity of its depiction of police procedures. An early intertitle states, in language that would be adopted for the opening narration of *Dragnet*: 'This is a true story. The record is set down here factually — as it happened. Only the names are changed — to protect the innocent.' The film's opening voice-over is delivered over an aerial shot of Los Angeles, followed by a series of further location shots that serve both to demonstrate the heterogeneity of the city and to imply that the narrative will, like the police force it depicts, succeed in rationalizing urban space. This sequence is preceded by the main title card, in which the film's title is superimposed over a map of the city studded with drawing pins — a privileging of cartographic representation that similarly draws attention to the spatial practices of the police force.

The strategies and resources available to the LAPD are made evident immediately after the opening scene, in which an officer is shot as he returns home from his shift. A dragnet of four square miles is quickly set up around the crime scene, and anyone deemed suspicious is brought in for questioning. This assertion of spatial control is combined with other tactics that demonstrate the department's broader criminalistic capabilities, and particularly its ability to identify known criminals. As detectives work their way through the men caught up in the dragnet, one is identified as a former prisoner and is booked for breaching his parole. Another gives his name as Ralph Henderson, but his fingerprints identify him as someone else: 'You know it's a funny thing, Ralph, there's a guy around this town that's been wearing your fingerprints, only

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and Postwar Realism', in *The Philosophy of TV Noir*, ed. by Steven M. Sanders and Aeon J. Skoble (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008), pp. 33–48 (pp. 33–42).

his name is Pete Hannan.' Soon after, the investigating detectives visit the LAPD crime

laboratory, where forensic specialist Lee Whitey (Jack Webb) proudly demonstrates the

department's scientific expertise as he searches for latent fingerprints, analyses

nitroglycerin discovered at the scene, and uses a microscope to identify tool marks on

lock-picking equipment discarded by the killer.

The tension in the narrative arises from the suggestion that the target of the

manhunt may in fact be equal to the LAPD's resources and capabilities. The killer, Roy

Morgan (Richard Basehart), uses gloves to avoid leaving any identifying trace at the

scene of the crime, providing the crime lab with 'No fingerprints, no identification.

Nothing definite'. His familiarity with police procedures and access to their radio

network allows him to consistently evade capture and frustrate the investigation. He

uses an alias when selling the electronic devices he steals, and has a cabinet of different

licence plates he attaches to his car to evade identification. When he is first almost

caught by the police, he flees the scene into the system of storm drains beneath Los

Angeles, demonstrating a masterful knowledge of the city's topography that frustrates

attempts to reconstruct his movements; as the voice-over puts it, 'Here were 700 miles

of hidden highway, ideal for the use of someone who needed to hurry from place to

place without being seen.'

The capabilities of the post-war LAPD, as depicted in the film, ultimately

exceed even those of a suspect who is so shrewd it seems to the detectives as if 'he's

right there with us'. In the crime lab, ballistic analysis identifies consistent markings on

bullets used at multiple crime scenes. Witnesses from each crime scene are brought

together to create a composite image of the perpetrator's face, and copies of the likeness

are dispatched to various institutional networks across the country, as well as being

cross-referenced with the personnel records of other police departments in the Los

Angeles area. A match leads the detectives to the Hollywood Post Office, where one postman recognizes Morgan as living on his route. Through this careful navigation of complex local and national bureaucratic networks, the LAPD succeed in reconstructing Morgan's identity and the location of his residence. When he manages to flee once again into the city's storm drains the police are better prepared — they call for a map of the drain system and set up another dragnet. Despite his esoteric knowledge, his familiarity with these circulatory networks of the city, the police are able to exceed his mastery using the greater resources available to them. Morgan is cornered in the storm tunnels, and the police fire tear gas and then shoot him dead as he charges at them. The film ends with the same image of the 'City of Los Angeles Metropolitan Area' that opened the film, this time with 'The End' superimposed upon it.

Throughout *He Walked by Night*, Roy Morgan is shown to be the epitome of the technically adept lawbreaker that senior law-enforcement figures such as Vollmer and Parker warned of. More precisely, Morgan successfully evades the LAPD for much of the film because he harnesses his technical expertise in order to obscure his identity and facilitate his fluid movement through the city. The techniques that the LAPD investigators employ are, in turn, specifically directed at countering Morgan's mobility and anonymity: locating him within the 'vast area' over which the department has jurisdiction; fixing his identity in response to the pseudonyms and disguises he adopts; and arresting his movement, either by charging and imprisoning him or, when that fails, in a more violent and permanent manner.

The sections that follow will briefly outline the history of criminalistics — scientific aids to criminal investigation — and other modern policing strategies. Such practices have frequently been the means by which social anxieties about crime, specifically focused on the fluidity of identity and the mobility entailed by modern

networks of circulation, have been addressed. In seeking to rationalize space, identity and movement with an increasingly 'scientific' certainty, law-enforcement authorities justified their expanded powers with reference to the image of mobile and anonymous lawbreakers much like the antagonist of *He Walked By Night.* These strategies for circumscribing movement and fixing identity were, however, applied far more broadly. The process of *incrimination* — in which such practices were directed towards individuals — offers a valuable analytical tool through which to understand the position of individual protagonists as they navigate twentieth-century Los Angeles, whether they be criminals, investigators or law-abiding citizens. It is within this context that successful orientation attains a heightened significance.

'The establishment of personal identity': Anonymity, Criminology and the Metropolis

In the nineteenth century, industrialized western societies became increasingly urban in character. Within these societies, in which traditional social bonds were weakened, concerns about crime grew more acute, and criminality became the subject of scientific analysis. This was the period in which the principles of criminology began to develop, and specifically what is now termed 'classical criminology' — the writings of Caesar Beccaria, Jeremy Bentham and John Austin which, as Wayne Morrison suggests,

> strove to put forward a new form of objectivity, and a new set of determinate social laws. The modernity of classical criminology was to be knowledge-led and utilitarian. It was to turn its back upon irrational emotionality and non-purposeful ritual. All factors of social life were to become calculable, rule bound, and efficient.[6]

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[6] Wayne Morrison, *Theoretical Criminology: From Modernity to Post-Modernism* (London: Cavendish Publishing, 1997), pp. 86–7.

One expression of this tendency towards *rationalization* — defined by Max Weber as the belief that 'one can, in principle, master all things by calculation'[7] — was the statistical study of crime. The work of Adolphe Quetelet in Belgium in the mid-nineteenth century was crucial in this area, as was that of Gabriel Tarde in France at the turn of the century.[8] In the United States, the size of the country and the complexity of its structure made the process of accurately and consistently gauging fluctuations in the overall crime rate particularly challenging, but by 1930 the Uniform Crime Reporting Program had been instituted, and placed under the responsibility of J. Edgar Hoover's Bureau of Investigation.[9] Hoover would write of the programme the following year that 'The ultimate goal, of course, is the perfection of a complete and accurate index of the volume and fluctuation of crime in the United States'.[10] The analysis of crime statistics, however, is just one example of the ways in which the rationalizing aspect of classical criminology was supported by the development or appropriation of new systems of knowledge and new technologies.

As Simon A. Cole notes, 'In the wake of the industrial revolution, enormous numbers of people migrated from intimate rural villages to anonymous urban settings', and this potential anonymity was seen to threaten the enforcement of the law.[11] The process of criminal identification could not depend, as it had in more static and self-contained rural settings, on community recognition. The densely populated metropolis afforded criminals the opportunity to assume new identities, to misrepresent themselves and to evade punishment. In response to these conditions, institutional authorities

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[7] Max Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', in *From Max Weber*, ed. & trans. by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 129–56 (p. 139).
[8] On the influence of Quetelet and Tarde's work, see Sekula, pp. 19–24.
[9] For an official account of the founding of the UCR program, see 'About the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program', *FBI.gov* <https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2011/crime-in-the-u.s.-2011/aboutucrmain> [accessed 5 May 2017].
[10] J. Edgar Hoover, 'The Work of the Bureau of Identification', *The American Journal of Police Science*, 2.2 (1931), 101–7 <https://doi.org/10.2307/1147235> (p. 107).
[11] Cole, p. 8.

sought new techniques to, in Tom Gunning's words, 'reestablish the traces of individual

identity'.[12] Photography would prove to be one of the most effective technologies in this

respect: as Hoover himself noted in 1931, 'It was not until the advent of photography

that law enforcement agencies began the development of modern methods of criminal

identification.'[13] Photography offered law enforcement bodies the opportunity to index

and track the identities of criminals for whom giving a false name could otherwise serve

as an effective alibi; it was seen to have the potential, as Allan Sekula suggests, to

'[unmask] the disguises, the alibis, the excuses and multiple biographies of those who

find or place themselves on the wrong side of the law'.[14]

In the nineteenth century the ability of photography to counter the potential for

criminal anonymity was at its most powerful when combined with other systems of

knowledge, such as the anthropometry of August Bertillon. Prior to Bertillon (in the

work of Cesare Lombroso, for example) anthropometry had been concerned with

identifying the common physical characteristics of different criminal 'types'. Bertillon's

system, however, was concerned with identifying individuals — with distinguishing,

rather than noting conformity to archetypes.[15] The recording of extensive physical

measurements would supposedly ensure that an individual could be identified even if

they had adopted an alias or attempted to superficially disguise their appearance; as

Hutchings writes, '*Bertillonage* was an indexical, not a symbolic, system'.[16]

Bertillon's system was the immediate precursor of fingerprinting (dactyloscopy,

as it was known in the early years of its implementation), insofar as it seemed to offer

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[12] Gunning, p. 20.

[13] J. Edgar Hoover, 'Criminal Identification', *The American Journal of Police Science*, 2.1 (1931), 8–19 <https://doi.org/10.2307/1147300> (p. 8).

[14] Sekula, p. 6. See also Gunning, p. 20, and Cole, pp. 8–22 and *passim*.

[15] On the development and implementation of anthropometry, see Cole, pp. 33–59.

[16] p. 142. For further discussion on this aspect of Bertillon's system, with particular reference to the contrast between his approach and the work of Francis Galton, see Sekula, p. 19: 'Bertillon sought to individuate. His aims were practical and operational, a response to the demands of urban police work and the politics of fragmented class struggle during the Third Republic.'

the potential for the forensic identification of individuals with reference to an extensive archive of information. Pioneer of fingerprint classification E. R. Henry paid respect to Bertillon's work, acknowledging that 'It represents a scientific solution of what had long been deemed an insoluble problem'.[17] Henry's *Classification and Uses of Finger Prints* (1900) marked a significant development for the use of fingerprinting in law enforcement. Building on the earlier work of W. J. Herschel, Henry Faulds and Francis Galton, Henry established a system for classifying and subdividing fingerprints into different types, making the filing, retrieval and cross-referencing of individual fingerprints practical for law enforcement agencies. Henry's book would also articulate clearly the criminalistic imperative to rationalize identity that the conditions of modern society had made so pressing:

> The importance of being able to fix human personality, of being able to give each human being an individuality differentiating him from all others, under conditions that will ensure that this individuality can be convincingly and quickly ascertained in spite of all efforts that may be made to confuse it, cannot be overestimated.[18]

Despite Henry's work, as late as the early 1920s there remained scepticism about the long-term usefulness of fingerprinting in US law enforcement, due to the difficulty in cross-referencing records in a country the size of the US.[19] It was with the powers granted to the National Division of Identification and Information in 1924, after which fingerprint records began to be centralized under the jurisdiction of the National Bureau of Investigation, that such concerns were overcome. By 1929, Hoover could assert that 'the use of dactylography for the identification of criminals has rapidly

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[17] E. R. Henry, *Classification and Uses of Finger Prints* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1900), p. 62.

[18] Ibid., p. 61.

[19] See George F. Chandler and Albert B. Moore, *The Policeman's Art: As Taught in the New York State School for Police* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1923), The Internet Archive <https://archive.org/details/policemansartast00chan> [accessed 5 May 2017] (pp. 55–6). August Vollmer alludes to such scepticism in the opening to his essay 'The Scientific Policeman', *The American Journal of Police Science*, 1.1 (1930), 8–12 <https://doi.org/10.2307/1147252> (p. 8).

increased until today it is the most important factor in the identification work in the

United States'.[20]

The preceding examples would seem to reinforce the notion that, as Paul Kirk

wrote in his influential 1953 textbook *Crime Investigation: Physical Evidence and the*

Police Laboratory, 'the central problem of the criminal investigator is the establishment

of personal identity'.[21] This 'fixing of human personality' through the development of

criminal identification techniques, however, took place in a wider context of

rationalization: from statistical and geographical analysis to the establishing of crime

labs and the founding of the *American Journal of Police Science*. It is within this

context that concerns amongst criminologists and law enforcement figures can be seen

to relate not just to anonymity, but also to *mobility*.

'He respects no border lines': Suspect Mobility and Law Enforcement

Law-enforcement historian Jürgen Thorwald, enthusiastic about the additional

responsibilities assigned to J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI during the 1920s, wrote in

1965:

> Their greatest weapon was the technique of fingerprinting. In a country in which
> it was an easy matter for anyone to assume an alias, in which there was no such
> thing as identification papers, and neither registry offices for residents nor hotel
> reports for transients existed, criminals had a freedom of movement unknown in
> Europe. Fingerprinting became the only sure means of identification.[22]

As Thorwald implies, the criminalistic imperative to fix identity was profoundly

implicated with the mobility that modern life afforded individuals, particularly in the

United States. Indeed, the anonymity of the modern metropolis was in large part a

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[20] 'Criminal Identification', p. 13.
[21] Paul L. Kirk, *Crime Investigation: Physical Evidence and the Police Laboratory* (London: Interscience Publishers, 1953), p. 12.
[22] Jürgen Thorwald, *The Marks of Cain*, trans. by Richard Winston and Clara Winston (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), pp. 145–46

consequence of the greater social and geographic mobility that allowed individuals to migrate from villages to cities, and from one continent to another, leaving behind those who knew them. It was this mobility that undermined the 'informal system of personal acquaintance and collective memory' upon which criminal justice had been founded, prior to the Industrial Revolution.[23]

Historian Lawrence M. Friedman has argued that in the United States during the nineteenth century, 'the culture of mobility and the culture of criminal justice were deeply intertwined and deeply interinvolved'.[24] Geographical mobility was particularly central to American society — both in terms of migration to the 'New World', and in terms of movement across the continent's wide-open spaces. Within such a mobile society, certain crimes were particularly emblematic, and certain figures were considered suspect. Vagrants and hoboes, moving from place to place and lacking social connections, were treated with suspicion. Friedman identifies bigamy as a one of the crimes that was a particular source of concern and fascination to American citizens during the nineteenth century: its salacious nature aside, it was a crime that depended upon and was a 'perversion' of the mobility that was 'the very basis of American society'.[25]

The nature of such 'crimes of mobility' changed in the twentieth century, as the automobile became increasingly central to American life, and this development occurred particularly early in Los Angeles, where car ownership rates consistently outpaced the national average during the first half of the century.[26] As early as 1921, city authorities voiced concerns about the correlation between increased crime rates and

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[23] Cole, p. 8.
[24] Lawrence M. Friedman, *Crime and Punishment in American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), p. 209.
[25] Friedman, p. 201.
[26] In 1915, there was one car registered in Los Angeles for every eight residents; the national average was one per 48 residents. See Scott Bottles, *Los Angeles and the Automobile: The Making of the Modern City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 92–93.

citizens' enthusiastic adoption of the car. As LAPD Chief Lyle Pendegast framed it in that year, the popularity of the automobile had precipitated an unpredictable increase in crime, unsettling what had previously been a 'fixed relation between the population of any given community and the number of crimes committed therein annually'.[27] This instability was in part the result of an increase in traffic violations, injuries caused by reckless driving, and thefts of automobiles; it was also seen to be a consequence of the new speed and autonomy of movement that the car afforded criminals:

> [T]he motor car brought an invaluable aid to the hold-up man in making his escape. A party of hoodlums can hold up several pedestrians and be outside the city before the first dazed victim has been able to make a report of his misfortune.[28]

The popularity of the automobile did not only necessitate the creation of new categories of crime, such as traffic violations and auto theft — it was also, more broadly, perceived to facilitate a criminal mobility that threatened civilized society. This would be one of the main concerns that preoccupied criminologists in the post-First World War United States.

August Vollmer was one of the most prominent figures in American policing during the first half of the twentieth century. He served as Marshall and then Chief of Police in Berkeley between 1905 and 1932, and later founded the School of Criminology at the University of California, Berkeley. Throughout his career, he was instrumental in the adoption and popularization of many modern scientific policing practices, including fingerprinting, automobile patrols, the use of the lie detector, data

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[27] *Annual Report, Police Department, City of Los Angeles, California, 1920–21*, 1921, The Internet Archive: John Jay College of Criminal Justice Collection <https://archive.org/details/annualreportofpo1920losa> [accessed 26 April 2017], p. 4.

[28] Ibid., p. 4. See also LAPD Captain George S. McClary in 1924: 'Criminals operating in automobiles move readily from one city to another, committing innumerable depredations enroute, or rapidly travelling in stolen high-powered machines, they steal in one city and the next day sell their ill gotten loot in another several hundred miles distant, thus outwitting the municipal and county forces'. Quoted in Los Angeles Police Department and August Vollmer, *Law Enforcement in Los Angeles: Los Angeles Police Department Annual Report, 1924*, Criminal Justice in America (New York: Arno Press, 1974), p. 194.

collection and forensic crime scene analysis.[29] A 1921 *San Francisco Chronicle* article celebrated his achievements with the headline 'Most Remarkable Police Chief in World Enlists Science to Catch Criminals', and it was such acclaim that led to him being invited to take on the role of LAPD Chief of Police in 1923.[30] After a year in Los Angeles, Vollmer returned to Berkeley, frustrated by entrenched corruption and resistance to reform in both the police department and the city's political establishment.[31] His tenure was nevertheless influential, and included a reorganization of the department's geographic divisions to better reflect population density, the establishment of a police laboratory, and numerous other adjustments to LAPD organization and tactics. Although some of his reforms would initially be discarded after he left office, in the long-term, Woods suggests, the department accepted his 'basic theories of the need for scientific methods of detection, protection, administration, and selection and training of personnel'.[32]

Many of the new tactics Vollmer instituted in Los Angeles were attempts to counter the mobility of the modern lawbreaker who, as he later wrote, 'respects no boundary lines, conducts his operations where most convenient, and speedily flees from the jurisdiction of the local authority'.[33] In September 1923, the *Los Angeles Times* reported on his acquisition of fifty new automobiles to add to the department's fleet.

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[29] For a detailed account of Vollmer's influence on American policing, see Gene E. Carte and Elaine H. Carte, *Police Reform in the United States: The Era of August Vollmer, 1905–1932* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

[30] Will Marsh, 'Super-Police Trail Thieves By Radio', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 October 1921, p. E1, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: San Francisco Chronicle <https://search.proquest.com/docview/366184586?accountid=14511> [accessed 17 April 2017].

[31] On Vollmer's year in Los Angeles and the influence of his LAPD reforms, see Woods, *The Police in Los Angeles*, pp. 76–96. See also Carte and Carte, pp. 58–62. Vollmer's conclusions and recommendations for the reorganization of the LAPD were contained in the 1923–24 LAPD annual report, extracts of which were published as Los Angeles Police Department and Vollmer, *Law Enforcement in Los Angeles*.

[32] Woods, *The Police in Los Angeles*, p. 95.

[33] *The Police and Modern Society*, p. 4.

The piece emphasized his view that such modernization and expenditure was necessary because of the automobility already being utilized by the city's criminals:

> Chief of Police August Vollmer believes in an adequately motorized police force. The wisdom of this belief can readily be seen when it is understood that over 90 per cent of the major crimes committed in Los Angeles are accomplished with the aid of the automobile.[34]

A second article from the same year discussed the success of his 'Crime Crusher' unit: a newly established and highly mobile division without a fixed geographic beat. Instead, statistical analysis of recent crime reports was undertaken in an attempt to predict, each day, what types of crime were likely to take place, and in which area of the city.[35] The Crime Crushers would then, as Woods puts it, '[flood] the designated area, producing a sudden vast increase in police efficiency'.[36] The unit's operations were a significant early example of attempts by law enforcement to police space by proactively utilizing geographical and statistical analysis. Vollmer, quoted in the article, also emphasized that the squad had been focused on restricting the *mobility* of criminals by targeting automobile thefts, 'because most major crimes are committed with the aid of stolen automobiles'.[37]

Consistent with these press statements and practical reforms, one of the most consistent themes in Vollmer's articles and books on policing was the adoption of modern technology by criminals, and the consequences of their drastically increased mobility. This concern was articulated most forcefully in his 1936 textbook *The Police*

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[34] 'More Cars for Police: Fifty New Dodges Are Added to Fleet by Chief of Police August Vollmer', *Los Angeles Times*, 16 September 1923, section IV, p. 4, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Times <https://search.proquest.com/docview/161403483?accountid=14511> [accessed 17 April 2017]. All subsequent references to articles from the *Los Angeles Times* taken from the ProQuest digital archive unless otherwise stated.

[35] 'Crime Crushers Effective: Automobile Thefts Reduced 50 Per Cent and Officers Display Eagerness for Their Work', *Los Angeles Times*, 5 September 1923, section II, p. 1 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/161415315?accountid=14511> [accessed 17 April 2017].

[36] Woods, *The Police in Los Angeles*, p. 76. For another article enthusing about the Crime Crusher's use of a 'New Data System Uncanny in Accuracy of "Leads"', see '"Figger" Sleuth Dooming Crime: Sherlock Outdone by Little Columns on Paper', *Los Angeles Times*, 31 March 1924, section II, p. 3 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/161601530?accountid=14511> [accessed 17 April 2017].

[37] 'Crime Crushers Effective', p. 1.

and Modern Society, where he dwelled on the criminal's ability to exploit 'the

twentieth-century speed of communication and transportation which has made it

possible to express distance in terms of seconds, minutes, or, at most, hours'.[38] The

book discusses various categories of major crime, including homicide, robbery and

burglary, in terms of the particular challenges facing modern investigators. The case

studies illustrating these dilemmas demonstrate the extent to which mobility and

identity were intertwined in police practice. Paul "Red" Durney's use of a 'high-

powered automobile' is said to have allowed him to burgle up to a dozen homes a night;

the rapid movement that the car afforded Durney also made it 'impossible to identify'

him.[39] The same speed of movement also, as Vollmer frames it, made it unnecessary for

robbers to obscure their identities:

> The modern holdup man does not trouble to mask his face or hide in dark places.
> He does not need to conceal his identity, because he usually operates in a city or
> section remote from his residence, or travels from place to place to commit his
> depredations.[40]

Throughout Vollmer's writing, the implication is clear: policing practices that

rationalize time, space and identity are a necessary response to the fluid identity and

suspect mobility that are conditions of modern society.

Mid twentieth-century criminology and police science textbooks clearly

demonstrate the extent to which fixing time, space and identity were considered central

aspects of criminal investigation, and that new systems of knowledge were developed or

refined to these ends, even if current scientific and technical knowledge enforced certain

limitations. In *Modern Criminal Investigation* (1935), Harry Söderman and John J.

O'Connell detailed at length the means by which investigators can reconstruct the

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[38] *The Police and Modern Society,* p. 4.
[39] Ibid*.,* p. 38.
[40] Ibid*.,* p. 30.

movements of suspects using the diverse resources of the modern bureaucratic state.[41]

Their list of potential 'channels of intelligence' ranges from police department crime

index files and the Federal Passport Bureau to 'auto rental agencies', 'election board

records' and 'laundry and dry-cleaning establishments'.[42] Söderman and O'Connell also

include a chapter on the 'Traces of Vehicles', which explains a comprehensive system

of classification for tyre marks, with diagrams that echo Henry's classification system

for human fingerprints.[43] Vollmer and Alfred E. Parker discuss the necessity of fixing

'the exact time of a crime', and the potential for photography and even consultation

with 'astronomers and weather bureau authorities' to support this imperative.[44] Emory

Smith, reflecting on the 'fallibility of eyewitness testimony', warns 'how easy it is to err

in the matter of making computations of time and space, and how habit, bias and

suggestibility frequently warp what might otherwise be valid judgment.'[45] Charles

William Fricke's *Criminal Investigation: The Investigation of Criminal Cases, the*

Securing of Evidence and Its Proper Presentation in Court (1930), meanwhile,

emphasized that crime scenes carry traces not just of the perpetrator's identity, but also

their movements. The job of the investigator is to reconstruct those movements both

within the scene and outside of it: 'In checking the flight of the offender recourse should

be had to taxi drivers, railroads, airports and other methods of conveyance'.[46]

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[41] Harry Söderman and John J. O'Connell, *Modern Criminal Investigation*, First edition (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1935), pp. 34–39.

[42] *Modern Criminal Investigation* (First edition), p. 39.

[43] *Modern Criminal Investigation* (First edition), pp. 148–57. Compare with Henry, pp. 43–4.

[44] August Vollmer and Alfred E. Parker, *Crime, Crooks and Cops* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1937), pp. 13–14. See also Söderman and O'Connell's suggestion of establishing a chronology of events using a 'graphic comparison of time alibis' in *Modern Criminal Investigation*, Fourth edition (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1952), p. 53.

[45] Emory Smith, 'The Fallibility of Eyewitness Testimony', *The American Journal of Police Science*, 1.5 (1930), 487–95 <https://doi.org/10.2307/1147227> (p. 489).

[46] Charles Williams Fricke, *Criminal Investigation: The Investigation of Criminal Cases, the Securing of Evidence and Its Proper Presentation in Court* (Los Angeles: O.W. Smith, 1930), p. 44.

'Elsewhere, when...': Incrimination and the Alibi

Twentieth-century American police science was not only concerned with individual

identity as something to be fixed 'under conditions that will ensure that this

individuality can be convincingly and quickly ascertained in spite of all efforts that may

be made to confuse it'.[47] Movement, through space and in time, across jurisdictional

boundaries, at previously unimaginable speeds — this too was a condition of modernity

seen to challenge the authority and effectiveness of law enforcement. Fingerprinting,

after all, did not only offer a system of identification, but also the evidence of an

individual's presence at a certain *place* — the crime scene. As J. Edgar Hoover wrote,

> Fingerprints serve a dual purpose in criminal identification: namely, the
> detection of the criminal through the comparison of latent fingerprint
> impressions, left at the scene of a crime, with nature's unchanging and positive
> identifying marks as shown by the criminal's actual fingerprints; and secondly,
> the determination of the criminal's previous record by the maintenance of a file
> reflecting his arrests, convictions and sentences, positively identified through
> comparison of his fingerprints.[48]

Latent fingerprints offered a powerful opportunity — to fix identity in space, at the

scene of the crime. They could not also fix *time*: they could not be used to demonstrate

that the given individual was present at the very moment the crime was committed.

They were nevertheless unprecedented in their capabilities, and marked a shift towards

greater emphasis on the analysis of circumstantial evidence, and the criminalistic

methods supporting the analysis of such 'partly latent, partly visible, traces of a

crime'.[49] The imperative to fix identity, then, is one aspect of a fundamental

criminological principle that, in response to the mobility and anonymity of the modern

metropolis, necessitated practices that served to rationalize time, space and identity.

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[47] Henry, p. 61.

[48] J. Edgar Hoover, 'The National Division of Identification and Information', *The American Journal of Police Science*, 2.3 (1931), 241–51 <https://doi.org/10.2307/1147207> (p. 241). See also the very similar formulation in Kirk, pp. 391–92.

[49] Ferdinand Watzek, 'Searching for and Recording Circumstantial Evidence', *The American Journal of Police Science*, 1.3 (1930), 272–75 <https://doi.org/10.2307/1147153> (p. 272).

The nature of these practices have evolved over time, and continue to develop — from observing suspects first-hand whilst on patrol or transcribing witness statements, through fingerprint analysis and audio surveillance, to CCTV monitoring and the collection of DNA trace evidence. Underlying the use of all of these procedures and technologies, and central to modern policing, is the establishing of transgression by reconstructing the movements and fixing the identities of suspects. Such practices are ostensibly directed at criminals, and they are justified by invoking the kind of mobile and anonymous lawbreaker envisioned by criminologists, and mythologized in *He Walked by Night.* In the modern, anomic metropolis, however, the identity of all citizens is potentially fluid. And in a society rooted in movement — of labour, of capital — all subjects are impelled to exercise their own mobility. All citizens, in other words, are potentially subject to the methods of the 'scientific policeman'. It is symptomatic of this tendency that even August Vollmer — a progressive thinker who viewed the police as 'the highest kind of social worker' — would come to advocate universal registration through the fingerprinting of the entire population.[50]

Throughout this thesis, I will use the term *incrimination* to refer to situations where the rationalizing tendency of modernity is specifically mobilized to ascribe some form of transgression to an individual. Incrimination entails the construction of a narrative that, asserting its objectivity by appealing to a scientifically grounded certainty, seeks to fix time, space and identity.[51] Police investigators, for example, use

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[50] Joseph G. Woods, 'Introduction: The Legacy of August Vollmer', in *Law Enforcement in Los Angeles*, pp. i–iv (p. iii). See also Carte and Carte, p, 76. A contemporary report in the *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology* detailed the dozens of advantages Vollmer outlined for such a system, including 'Keeping track of migratory criminals' (p. 651) and 'Preventing criminals from roaming about and concealing their identity' (p. 652): 'Current Notes', ed. by Newman F. Baker, *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 25 (1934), 640–58 <http://www.heinonline.org.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/jclc25&collection=journals&id=654> [accessed 4 May 2017] (pp. 650–52).
[51] The following discussion of incrimination and the alibi refines and expands significantly upon ideas provisionally outlined in Alex Pavey, '"I'm There Right Now. Call Me": Unstable Identities and Irregular

the tools at their disposal to develop a narrative that establishes the presence of the suspect at the scene, during the period of time in which at a transgression is perceived to have taken place. The most theoretically straightforward example would the scene of a murder: an investigating detective drawing on the available evidence, whether direct or circumstantial, to demonstrate that a suspect was present when the victim was killed. It is vital, however, to recognize the broad application of this strategy within law-enforcement practices. For example, patrol car officers in 1940s Los Angeles observe a black man driving into the predominantly white neighbourhood of Huntington Park; they pull him over and demand to see his identification. A transgression is judged to have occurred, based on the officers' observation of his movements in relation to the social and spatial boundaries of the city. His identity and his spatio-temporal position have been fixed, to ends that are ostensibly juridical, but that are also profoundly implicated with discriminatory practices.

'Incrimination' is an appropriate term in part because it highlights a significant underlying principle, and one that the preceding example demonstrates — it is not inherently moral. By definition, incrimination depends not upon demonstrating guilt, but on establishing provisionally sound grounds for charging an individual with a crime.[52] The narrative of incrimination must persuade its audience that it correlates with the known facts of a crime, but it is not necessary for it to correspond with reality — only for it to convincingly appear to do so.[53] The defence required of those accused of a crime, whether they are guilty or innocent, is a counter-narrative that responds to and

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Distances from Raymond Chandler to David Lynch', *Tropos: The Journal of Comparative Cultural Inquiry*, 2.1, 50–60 <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.2057-2212.001>.

[52] 'To charge with a crime; to involve in an accusation or charge': 'Incriminate, v.', *OED Online* (Oxford University Press) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/94067> [accessed 5 May 2017].

[53] The OED definition of *incriminate*, at the time of writing, dates from 1900 and differs from that given in the open access Oxford Living Dictionaries (formerly Oxford Dictionaries Online). The latter and more recent formulation more explicitly acknowledges the contingent relationship between incrimination and guilt: 'Make (someone) appear guilty of a crime or wrongdoing'. 'Incriminate, v.', *Oxford Living Dictionaries* (Oxford University Press) <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/incriminate> [accessed 5 May 2017].

contests this narrative of incrimination: the *alibi*. An alibi is not fundamentally an assertion of innocence, but an attempt to provide a convincing counter-narrative that one was *somewhere else, when* a crime took place. The etymology of *alibi* emphasizes this spatio-temporal quality — it is derived from the classical Latin *alibī*, meaning *elsewhere* or *in another place*.[54] The definition of *alibi* provided in *The Policeman's Art* (1923) uses this formulation, whilst once again alluding to the 'mobility' of suspects:

> *Alibi*: The plea is a plea of "not guilty" on the ground that the accused was at some other locality when the crime was committed. [...] The distance and period of absence from the locality in the alibi are very important when taken in connection with the time and place of the alleged crime. Celerity of travel also plays an important part.[55]

The threat to the individual posed by forensic evidence can be understood in this context: conceptualized, far from unproblematically, as objective and unambiguous scientific facts, forensic traces fix the individual at the scene of the crime, refuting the alibi's claim that one was *somewhere else, when...*

Incrimination involves both a subject and an object: the investigator and the suspected transgressor. The complicating factor, which will be central to many of the narratives considered in this thesis, is that an individual can at once be an incriminating subject — an investigator, a detective, an instrument of power — and subject to incrimination. This arises, for example, in Chandler's fiction, where Philip Marlowe's liminal status as a private eye leaves him at risk of incrimination due to his frequent presence at crime scenes. The fact that the two roles of investigator and suspected transgressor are not fixed and exclusive states creates revealing narrative possibilities. Employed to investigate a blackmail attempt, the private eye finds himself under police suspicion for murder; stumbling upon corruption in his own department, the police

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[54] 'alibi, n., adv., and adj.', *OED Online* (Oxford University Press) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/4978> [accessed 5 May 2017].
[55] Chandler and Moore, p. 175.

officer is framed by colleagues eager to silence him. Such examples reveal a further crucial aspect of incrimination: its malleability. The contingent relationship between incrimination and guilt gives incrimination a particularly amoral force that is open to abuse and manipulation by those familiar with its techniques and principles.

As discussed above in relation to *He Walked by Night*, certain forms of crime narrative are prone to normalizing the expansion of police powers and mythologizing the technological certainty provided by criminalistic techniques. There are also narratives, I would suggest, that can play an implicitly or explicitly critical role in relation to this mythmaking certainty. In specific instances — particularly narratives in which the position of the subject and object of incrimination is complicated, or in which false or malevolent incrimination is in operation — the psychological consequences of that mythologization are explored. It is in such terms that *disorientation* has particular force.

Disorientation: The History and Pathology of a Concept

Although I will argue here for the importance of a conception of disorientation that is not *solely* spatial, orientation does have a fundamentally spatial aspect that is reflected in an etymology that can be traced back to one of the most fundamental, primitive experiences — the rising and setting of the sun — and through this, connotations of religion, orthodoxy and mortality. The 'orient', as a noun and adjective meaning 'That part of the world situated to the east of a particular point; eastern countries, or the eastern part of a country; the East', is present in English from the early twelfth century, coming from Anglo-Norman and Middle French, with its etymon in Classical Latin 'oriēns' — the eastern part of the world, the part of the world in which the sun rises.[56]

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[56] 'orient, n. and adj.', *OED Online* (Oxford University Press) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/132525> [accessed 5 May 2017].

The verb form of *orient*, meaning arranging something to face east, seems to have developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with particular reference to constructing churches on an east-west axis, with the altar at the eastern point, and of burying a body with feet towards the east.[57] From this, by extension, comes the sense of aligning a building or person with reference to the points of the compass, and later, the figurative sense of putting oneself in the correct position relative to (perhaps unfamiliar) surroundings. By the nineteenth century, *orientation* as a noun, encompassing these various senses, becomes established, along with the notion of orientation as a *faculty* enabling the individual to ascertain their 'bearings or relative position'.[58]

The idea that orientation is a faculty or process that bridges the gap between the subjective and the objective — that it is what allows the subject to situate themselves relative to the external world — is crucial, and it is at the heart of Immanuel Kant's 1786 essay 'What is Orientation in Thinking?' ('Was heißt: sich im Denken orientieren?'). Kant extends this concept of orientation analogically, to justify speculation about the existence of God despite the absence of any 'objective criteria of knowledge' that we could rely upon to make judgements (since 'the concept of an original *archetypal* being' is by definition outside the realm of possible experience).[59] In his conclusion, Kant also introduces questions of power and punishment into what has up to that point been a purely epistemological discussion. He warns that the assumption of God's existence based on subjective distinctions and without any knowledge of the object is justified (a 'rational belief'), but that any other such speculation on subjective

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[57] 'orient, v.', *OED Online* (Oxford University Press) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/132526> [accessed 5 May 2017].

[58] 'orientation, n.', *OED Online* (Oxford University Press) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/132540> [accessed 5 May 2017].

[59] Immanuel Kant, 'What Is Orientation in Thinking?', in *Kant: Political Writings*, ed. by Hans Reiss, trans. by H. B. Nisbet, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 237–49 (pp. 240–41).

grounds constitutes a lawless exercise of reason; free-thinking that inevitably prompts

repressive interventions by authority, because it leads to the denial of moral laws,

libertinism.[60]

The *OED* has *disorient* present in English from the mid seventeenth century,

and *disorientate* from the early 1700s.[61] Along with the literal sense of 'turning from

an eastward position', a figurative sense was also in use — as, for example, in the entry

in Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopædia* (1728):

> The Word is most frequently us'd in a figurative Sense, for the Disconcerting, or
> putting a Man out of his Way, or Element. Speak of Law to a Physician, or of
> Physic to a Lawyer, and they will all be disorientated.[62]

On these terms, disorientation is a social concern: to be disorientated is to find the terms

of the discussion unfamiliar, leaving one disconcerted and embarrassed. It is at the end

of the nineteenth century that the stakes of disorientation become that much higher.

William James's use of the term in an article from 1883 brings us closer to the sense of

disorientation as a bewildering or distressing loss of bearings. In reflecting on the

'indescribable alarm and bewilderment' experienced by deaf-mutes when plunged

underwater, James notes:

> Every one who has lost himself in the woods, or awakened in the darkness of the
> night to find the relation of his bed's position relatively to the doors and

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[60] Kant, pp. 247–9.

[61] 'Disˈorient, v.', *OED Online* (Oxford University Press) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/54878>
[accessed 5 May 2017]. 'Disorientate, v.', *OED Online* (Oxford University Press)
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/54879> [accessed 5 May 2017].

[62] Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopædia, Or, An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, 1st edition, 2 vols.
(London: Printed for J. and J. Knapton [and 18 others], 1728), I, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Libraries Digital Collections <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/HistSciTech.Cyclopaedia01>
[accessed 5 May 2007] (p. 225). The earliest use of *disorientation* cited in the OED relates the term to
church architecture. The Ecclesiological Society was a Victorian architectural society that advocated a
return to medieval styles of Anglican church architecture. In the course of judging St Mary's Church in
Wrexham 'disappointing, both architecturally and ritually', they noted in their journal *The Ecclesiologist*
that the church, 'by its intentional disorientation, looks very awkward by the side of its neighbour, the
new church of S. Mark.' The Ecclesiological Society, 'Notices and Answers to Correspondents', *The
Ecclesiologist*, XXI (1860), 397–402
<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=XpAQAAAAYAAJ&dq=The%20Ecclesiologist%201860>
[accessed 5 May 2017] (pp. 400–1).

windows of his room forgotten, knows the altogether peculiar discomfort and anxiety of such "disorientation" in the horizontal plane.[63]

In the late nineteenth century, the formalization of psychiatry as a discipline led to the identification of innumerable 'new' syndromes and symptoms. It was in the midst of this period of 'taxonomic fury', as David Trotter has memorably termed it, that *disorientation* expanded in meaning and significance.[64] In his influential 1982 article 'Disorientation States and Psychiatry', G.E. Berrios provides a comprehensive review of historic psychiatric literature in an attempt to synthesize existing conceptions of disorientation in clinical practice. It was at the end of the nineteenth century, Berrios suggests, that 'mental orientation began to be considered as an independent function', and as it did so, disorientation became in turn a failure of that function, a mental pathology.[65] In J.M. Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* (1902), for example, 'Orientation (mental)' has its own entry, separate from 'Orientation (bodily)', in which Baldwin notes:

> In mental disorders this power is frequently lost; the patient no longer recognizes or realizes his condition, his whereabouts, or his departure from his usual life. This condition is marked in insanities accompanied by hallucinations and systematic delusions. It is also characteristic of delirium, and of various forms of intoxication.[66]

Corpus analysis reinforces the conclusion that it was at the turn of the century that disorientation began to attain meaning and significance. There are no uses of *disorientation* recorded in the *Google Books American English Corpus* between 1810

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[63] William James, 'The Sense of Dizziness in Deaf-Mutes', *American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb*, 28.2 (1883), 102–17 <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.319510007080258;view=1up;seq=118> [accessed 5 May 2017] (p. 109).

[64] *The Uses of Phobia*, p. 3. See also David Trotter, 'The Invention of Agoraphobia', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 32.2 (2004), 463–74 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25058680> [accessed 5 May 2017].

[65] G.E. Berrios, 'Disorientation States and Psychiatry', *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 23.5 (1982), 479–91 <https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-440X(82)90161-4> (p. 480). Further references cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

[66] *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, ed. by James Mark Baldwin, 3 vols. (New York and London: Macmillan, 1902), II, Archive.org <https://archive.org/details/dictionaryphilo00baldgoog> [accessed 5 May 2017] (p. 242).

and 1889, and only five between 1890 and 1899, compared to 1183 in the following two decades alone.[67]

A series of such references occurs in a 1906 essay by the German physician Ernst Jentsch, 'Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen'. There, as part of his discussion of various 'states of psychical uncertainty', Jentsch notes that such states 'can show similarities with or transitions to the general disorientation that appears in psychical illnesses'.[68] Jentsch's essay is significant for another reason, however: its main concern is the *unheimlich*, the uncanny, and in his much more widely read and influential 1912 essay on the same subject, Sigmund Freud acknowledges Jentsch's work as the only other 'medico-psychological' investigation of the uncanny that he has encountered.[69] Freud's gloss of Jentsch's essay recognizes the significant role that spatial disorientation plays in the latter's model:

> [Jentsch] ascribes the essential factor in the production of the feeling of uncanniness to intellectual uncertainty; so that the uncanny would always, as it were, be something one does not know one's way about in. The better orientated in his environment a person is, the less readily will he get the impression of something uncanny in regard to the objects and events in it.[70]

Freud's own account of the uncanny does not focus on states of disorientation, and he judges Jentsch's theory unsatisfactory, yet as Anthony Vidler notes, Jentsch is important to Freud's reading because he 'underlined a first relation of the uncanny to the spatial and environmental'.[71] This relationship between space and the uncanny recurs

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[67] Mark Davies, *Google Books American English Corpus*, 2011, (Based on Google Books n-grams) <http://googlebooks.byu.edu> [accessed 5 May 2017]. Analysis of the smaller British English Corpus shows the same pattern, with just three uses of *disorientation* pre-1900, and 80 between 1900 and 1919. Mark Davies, *Google Books British English Corpus*, 2011, (Based on Google Books n-grams) <http://googlebooks.byu.edu> [accessed 5 May 2017].

[68] Ernst Jentsch, 'On the Psychology of the Uncanny' (1906), trans. by Roy Sellars, *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 2.1 (1997), 7–16 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09697259708571910> (p. 10).

[69] Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny (1919)', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. & trans. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953-1974), XVII: *An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works* (1955), 219–53 (p. 219).

[70] Ibid., p. 221.

[71] *The Architectural Uncanny*, p. 23.

throughout Freud's essay — notably, when he describes the uncanny feeling he experienced when, walking through an unfamiliar Italian town, he found himself inadvertently returning to the same street several times despite his efforts to leave it.[72] For Freud, it is the *repetitive* quality of this experience that is most significant; his uncanny wandering could at the same time, however, be read as a state of disorientation. Given that, as Laura Mulvey notes, spatial imagery plays a significant role throughout Freud's writings, the relationship between disorientation and the uncanny posited here suggests the potential for a more extensive consideration, beyond the confines of the present study, of disorientation in relation to psychoanalytic theory.[73]

A crucial shift in meaning occurred in parallel with the pathologization of disorientation that took place at the turn of the twentieth century: disorientation expands in the psychiatric literature to encompass not only spatial confusion, but also disruptions in *temporality* and *identity*. In a 1910 paper on alcoholic insanity, or 'Korsakov's Disease', for example, one cardinal mental symptom is determined to be 'disorientation to place, time and persons'.[74] A disorientated individual might fail to recognize a familiar location, get lost and become distressed. They might also, however, become confused as to the day, month or year, or how much time has passed; fail to recognize loved ones, or even lose a sense of their own identity. From his extensive historical

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[72] 'The Uncanny', p. 237.

[73] Laura Mulvey, 'Pandora: Topographies of the Mask and Curiosity', in *Sexuality and Space*, ed. by Beatriz Colomina (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), pp. 53–71 (pp. 66–67). Although an extended consideration of disorientation in relation to psychoanalytic theory is unfortunately beyond the scope of this research as formulated, it undoubtedly merits further investigation — particularly for the insights it would offer into the relationship between gender and disorientation. Such a reading would draw upon the important work of feminist theorists who have engaged with the Freudian uncanny, and with Freudian psychoanalytic theory as a whole, particularly in relation to gender, geography and space. In addition to Mulvey's essay above, see, for example, Rose, *Feminism and Geography*; Hélène Cixous, 'Fiction and Its Phantoms : A Reading of Freud's Das Unheimliche (The "Uncanny")', trans. by Robert Dennomé, *New Literary History*, 7.3 (1976), 525–48; Sarah Kofman, *Freud and Fiction*, trans. by Sarah Wykes (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), esp. pp. 121–62; Steve Pile, *The Body and the City: Psychoanalysis, Space and Subjectivity* (London & New York: Routledge, 1996).

[74] John Turner, 'Alcoholic Insanity (Korsakow's Polyneuritic Psychosis): Its Symptomatology and Pathology', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 56.232 (1910), 25–63 <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.56.232.25> (p. 40).

enquiry into the psychiatric literature, Berrios is thus led to conclude that

'Disorientation is a term used in clinical practice to refer to failures in orientation with

respect to time, space, and person, whether temporary or long lasting and whether

verbal or behavioural'.[75]

The triad identified here is a conceptualization of disorientation that continues to

be used in current scientific research, and to serve a diagnostic role in psychiatry.[76]

Most significant and influential, in the latter case, is its appearance in the American

Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*

(DSM).[77] This, then, is the context within which Kevin Lynch's consideration of

(dis)orientation in *The Image of the City* should be considered. Although his ostensible

concern is spatial orientation with reference to city form, in his evocation of the trauma

of disorientation he alludes to this broader conceptualization of disorientation as a

distressing pathology. Indeed, in an appendix titled 'Some References to Orientation',

Lynch cites a number of psychiatric and medical studies alongside anthropological

works concerned with wayfinding.[78]

Motion, of course, entails both the passing of time and passing through space,

and Lynch implicitly acknowledges the temporal as well as spatial aspects of orientation

in emphasizing the connection between orientation and *movement*. Wayfinding is a

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[75] 'Disorientation States and Psychiatry', p. 486.

[76] For an example of the former, see the extensive taxonomy of disorientation states across the three 'domains' of 'time, space, and person' outlined, with reference to the symptoms of epilepsy, in Michael Peer, Ronit Lyon, and Shahar Arzy, 'Orientation and Disorientation: Lessons from Patients with Epilepsy', *Epilepsy & Behavior*, 41 (2014), 149–57 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.yebeh.2014.09.055> (p. 151). The same triad is repeated, in relation to psychiatric diagnosis, in Barbara Schildkrout, 'Specific Mental Signs and Symptoms', in *Unmasking Psychological Symptoms* (John Wiley & Sons, 2011), pp. 149–222 (pp. 190–93).

[77] '**disorientation** Confusion about the time of day, date, or season (time), where one is (place), or who one is (person)' in American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fourth Edition, Text Revision (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2000), p. 822.

[78] *The Image of the City,* pp. 124–6. Lynch cites, for example, M. Binet, 'Reverse Illusions of Orientation', *Psychological Review*, 1.4 (1894), 337–50; Joseph Peterson, 'Illusions of Direction Orientation', *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, 13.9 (1916), 225–36 <https://doi.org/10.2307/2013795>; Pierre Marie and P. Behague, 'Syndrome de Désorientation Dans l'Espace [consécutif Aux Plaies Profondes Du Lobe Frontal]', *Revue Neurologique*, 26.1 (1919), 1–14.

kinetic activity enabling the individual to navigate his or her surroundings, and the environmental image 'has its original function in permitting purposeful mobility'.[79] Lynch expands on this idea by suggesting that orientation can provide 'a general frame of reference within which the individual can act, to which he can attach his knowledge. In this way it is like a body of belief, or a set of social customs'.[80] Disorientation, it can be inferred, frustrates action and 'purposeful mobility'. Ami Harbin has recently outlined a conceptualization of disorientation within the context of a philosophy of embodiment, where the relation between disorientation and action is similarly foregrounded. For Harbin, disorientation entails the feeling that 'relevant goals are not evident and reachable, and [...] relevant actions are ones we struggle to enact or envision ourselves enacting'.[81] Disorientation, then, is an experience that has implications for the individual's capacity for *movement* and *action*. As Harbin writes, 'movements that once came naturally are made to seem difficult'.[82] The 'purposeful mobility' that orientation allows has, as its mirror image, the uncertain movements and inertia of disorientation.

There is one further aspect of disorientation that it is necessary to consider. On Berrios's reading, 'Orientation entails a fine tuning between the subject and the internal representation he forms of the corresponding public reference system'.[83] Disorientation, in turn, involves 'a dislocation' between 'the orientation behaviour of the subject' and 'the consensual reference system'.[84] In psychiatric terms, the development of a disjunction between the 'public reference system' and the disorientated subject's internal representation of it is by definition pathological. Believing that one's wife of

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[79] *The Image of the City,* p. 124.
[80] Ibid., p. 126.
[81] 'Bodily Disorientation and Moral Change', p. 262. See also her *Disorientation and Moral Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), which expands on the thesis of her earlier article.
[82] 'Bodily Disorientation and Moral Change', p. 266.
[83] 'Disorientation States and Psychiatry', pp. 479–80.
[84] Ibid., p. 480.

twenty years is a stranger, that it is Christmas Eve at the height of the British summer, or failing to recognize the street on which one lives: all of these are considered symptoms of some disorder in the subject, not as ambiguities raising questions about the reference system itself. As Berrios allows, however, in writing of a 'public' or 'consensual' reference system, the terms in relation to which one is judged to be disorientated are socially constructed — they are a matter of consensus rather than objective reality. The disorientated subject experiences this ambiguity viscerally — the very trauma of disorientation arises from the complexity of doing so. Fictional narratives have the opportunity to explore the distress and uncertainty that this can entail, whilst situating the experience of disorientation in specific historical and cultural contexts. These narratives can in fact go even further, since they are capable of exploring the possibility that these 'public reference systems' themselves may in fact be unstable, or unreliable, or hostile.

The framework I adopt in order to better analyse the experience of disorientation as represented in literary and cinematic works is built on this conceptualization. I define disorientations as *subjective spatio-temporal disruptions that undermine the capacity for movement, action and the construction of coherent narratives*. Orientation can be considered a *subjective rationalization of time, space and identity*, and disorientation a failure of this rationalization. One or more aspects of the triad become disjointed — the question of *where, when* or *who we are* is no longer a straightforward proposition, and this ambiguity is deeply distressing. The consequences of disorientation are uncertain movements or stasis; it also involves a reduced capacity to account for one's movements and explain one's actions. Moments of disorientation, in their disruption of time, space and identity, constitute brief and troubling reminders that the categories by which we structure our experience may be fragile and contingent.

I do not suggest that the experience of disorientation is solely or even primarily a consequence of the criminalistic imperative to fix identity and arrest movement. There are, however, two related senses in which the relationship between disorientation, incrimination and the alibi has particular significance:

(1) States of disorientation impair the ability to account for one's movements, making one vulnerable to incrimination. Disorientation is traumatic because the stakes are not only psychological and epistemological but also potentially *juridical*. For all that it might be existentially troubling to find oneself exposed to the unstable foundations of everyday experience, such disruptions can at the same time expose the individual to a more visceral threat — that of incrimination, and the state-sanctioned punishment that can be its consequence. Incrimination is a rationalization intended to combat fluid identities and suspect mobility, and to overrule or disprove the alibi. If disorientation affects mobility and the ability to provide a coherent account of one's movements, it therefore serves the ends of incrimination.

(2) The threat of incrimination can itself be disorientating. Incrimination entails asserting a narrative about an individual that implicates them in a crime. That narrative may conflict with the subject's own recollection or understanding, and it may assert a scientifically grounded objectivity that makes it difficult for the subject to contest it. This disjunction between internal representation and external narrative, which also implies the threat of punishment, can itself be disorientating — particularly if the incrimination has been malevolently manipulated, arbitrarily applied or erroneously constructed. In this tension between disorientation and incrimination, the individual is

confronted with the fact of *competing* fictions, competing *perspectives*, in which they are implicated unwillingly.[85]

The individual rationalizes time, space and identity in order to navigate modern society, but discovers that society is engaged in the process of rationalizing them in turn, fixing their identity in time and space. When they are exposed to the force of incrimination, they are unavoidably confronted not just with the contingency of their own perspective, but with the need to provide an answer, an *alibi* (that *I* was *elsewhere, when…*), against a rationalization that threatens to punish them with incarceration or death. Disorientation, on these terms, is both a philosophical and a juridical problem, the alibi both an assertion of the individual perspective and a practical legal defence.

Criminalized Perspectives: Disorientation in Film Noir

Scholars have sometimes invoked disorientation as one of the characteristic elements of film noir. Frank Krutnik, for example, suggests:

> Instead of dealing directly with the social forces that have made the modern city so 'unliveable', *film noir* fixates upon the psychic manifestations of such disease. In the arena of the *noir* city, protagonists must confront both the strangeness of others and the strange otherness within — as *film noir'*s scenarios of disorientation and dislocation challenge their ability to chart an identity in *noir'*s expressionistic simulacrum of modern America.[86]

Robert Porfirio privileges a pessimistic sensibility over formal qualities such as lighting and sound in defining film noir, and he associates this sensibility with existentialism, which he defines as 'an outlook which begins with a disoriented individual facing a

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[85] Ami Harbin's profound account of the relationship between disorientation and moral agency follows a different, although not contradictory, trajectory to my treatment of disorientation in this thesis. The two senses in which I relate disorientation to incrimination here resonate with her treatment of disorientation and oppression: 'I situate disorientations and their morally significant effects in an understanding of oppression in two senses: (1) oppressive conditions can cause disorientations; and (2) contexts of oppression can be a location where the effects of disorientation can be especially important' (*Disorientation and Moral Life*, p. 32).

[86] Frank Krutnik, 'Something More than Night: Tales of the Noir City', in *The Cinematic City*, ed. by David B. Clarke (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 83–109 (p. 89).

confused world that he cannot accept'.[87] Porfirio was an important influence on other

critics analysing film noir in philosophical terms, such as Mark T. Conard, Read Mercer

Schuchardt and Jerold J. Abrams.[88] Conard in particular repeatedly identifies

disorientation as a constitutive thematic element of both film noir and neo-noir, which

he relates to the Nietzschean concept of the 'death of God':

> Seeing noir as a response or reaction to the death of God helps explain the
> commonality of the elements that critics have noted in noir films. For example,
> it explains the inherent pessimism, alienation, and disorientation in noir.[89]

William Luhr's recent discussion of *Murder, My Sweet* (dir. by Edward

Dmytryk, 1944), for its part, focuses on what he calls the film's 'strategies and themes

of disorientation', arguing that disorientation is at play on both a formal and a thematic

level.[90] Analysing the opening sequence, Luhr notes the presence of ambiguous shots

and confusing camera angles, abrupt jumps in time, and Marlowe's own confusion as he

recounts past events to the police whilst temporarily blinded. All of these elements, for

Luhr, amount to the establishment of 'major patterns of formal and thematic

disorientation for the viewer as well as for characters in the film'.[91] Such patterns recur

throughout the film: in its subjective depiction of Marlowe's drugged hallucinations, for

example, and in the narrative confusion that engulfs both Marlowe and the viewer.[92] In

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[87] Robert Porfirio, 'No Way Out: Existential Motifs in the Film Noir', in *Film Noir Reader* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1996), pp. 77–93 (p. 81).
[88] Mark T. Conard, 'Nietzsche and the Meaning and Definition of Noir', in *The Philosophy of Film Noir*, ed. by Mark T. Conard (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), pp. 7–22; Read Mercer Schuchardt, 'Cherchez La Femme Fatale: The Mother of Film Noir', in *The Philosophy of Film Noir*, pp. 49–68; Jerold J. Abrams, 'From Sherlock Holmes to the Hard-Boiled Detective in Film Noir', in *The Philosophy of Film Noir*, pp. 69–88.
[89] Conard, 'Nietzsche and the Meaning and Definition of Noir', p. 19. For another reading of film noir that cites Nietzschean thinking as a significant antecedent, see Jon Tuska, *Dark Cinema: American Film Noir in Cultural Perspective* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984).
[90] William Luhr, 'Murder, My Sweet', in *Film Noir*, New Approaches to Film Genre (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 73–99 <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444355956.ch4> (p. 73).
[91] Ibid., p. 76.
[92] Although his argument is not articulated in terms of 'disorientation', Kevin Hagopian's reading of *The Big Sleep* (dir. by Howard Hawks, 1944) covers similar ground in its focus on the complexity of the film's narrative structure – its 'massive accumulation of plot material, underexplained events, and insufficient motivations'. Kevin Hagopian, '"How You Fixed for Red Points?" Anecdote and the World

a similar vein to Conard and Porfirio, Luhr frames this disorientation as an existential

one: the representation of destabilized consciousness implicated in 'a mystery that is

indicative of an unstable world'.[93]

Within its more limited terms of reference, Luhr's approach goes furthest

towards conceptualizing disorientation and exploring its specific significance. His essay

aside, the references to disorientation in film noir criticism generally let it serve as a

generic signifier of psychological or existential unease. Certain film noirs in particular,

however, can serve as productive resources for demonstrating how the specific dynamic

of incrimination and disorientation outlined above can operate on a narrative level,

although it is not necessarily the most obvious or paradigmatic examples of the form

that provide the most compelling examples.

When Nino Frank, in his short but influential 1946 article, identified some of the

tropes of what would come to be designated film noir, he placed particular emphasis on

such films' preoccupation with perspectives of criminal protagonists: 'They belong to a

class that we used to call the crime film, but that would best be described from this

point on by a term such as criminal adventures or, better yet, such as criminal

psychology.'[94] *Double Indemnity* (dir. by Billy Wilder, 1944), perhaps the most

renowned Los Angeles-set film noir, is exemplary in this respect. The narrative centres

on Walter Neff (Fred MacMurray) as he and Phyllis Dietrichson (Barbara Stanwyck)

plan and execute the murder of Dietrichson's husband; it then depicts the fatal

consequences of Neff's notion that 'you could crook the house yourself, and do it smart,

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War II Home Front in *The Big Sleep* (1946)', in *Film Noir Reader 4*, ed. by Alain Silver and James Ursini (New Jersey: Limelight, 2004), pp. 33–51 (p. 34).

[93] 'Murder, My Sweet', p. 77. Luhr also relates these 'strategies of disorientation' to the film's generic context: as 'one of the earliest, full-blown *films noirs*' (p. 73), *Murder, My Sweet* distinguishes itself from the lighter-toned detective capers of 1930s Hollywood, he suggests, without yet being easily assimilated to the conventions of *noir* cinema.

[94] Nino Frank, 'A New Kind of Police Drama: The Criminal Adventure', in *Film Noir Reader 2*, trans. by Alain Silver (New York: Limelight Editions, 1999), pp. 15–20 (p. 15).

because you've got the wheel under your hand, you know every notch in it by heart'.

Throughout, the voice-over narration is Neff's, as he admits his culpability on a

dictation machine recording. From the perspective of the audience, Walter Neff's guilt

in *Double Indemnity* is never in doubt. His scheme to murder Mr Dietrichson is

represented in detail, and the film begins with an explicit confession: 'Yes, I killed him.

Killed him for money. And for a woman.'

There are other examples from the broad canon of film noir, however, in which

the guilt of the protagonists is more ambiguous — the audience, and even the

protagonists themselves, are left uncertain for much of these narratives as to who is

criminally responsible.[95] It is these films, which focus not so much on 'criminal

psychology' as on the psychology of the criminalized, that centre most decisively on the

relationship between disorientation and incrimination. In these narratives, the dramatic

stakes of the protagonists' uncertain guilt are heightened by the ostensible certainty of

the evidence against them: the investigators draw on modern policing practices that

appear to incontrovertibly incriminate them. The disjunction between the suspect's

subjective narrative of innocence — their alibi — and the investigator's apparently

objective narrative of incrimination is disorientating; that disorientation, in turn, makes

it more difficult for the suspect to provide a convincing alibi. These films establish Los

Angeles as an environment in which, as Janet Bergstrom writes of *The Blue Gardenia*,

'betrayal is well-motivated and easy, whilst clearing oneself is a matter of last-minute

chance and coincidence, and very difficult'.[96]

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[95] The generic status of several of these films is particularly unstable. The directors of *Whirlpool* and *The Blue Gardenia* both worked on some of the most significant examples of film noir: Otto Preminger directed *Laura* (1944) and *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (1950), whilst Fritz Lang's filmography includes *The Woman in the Window* (1944) and *Scarlet Street* (1945). Several elements of both *Whirlpool* and *The Blue Gardenia*, however — notably their focus on female protagonists placed under psychological pressure — suggest that they merit consideration in relation to what Helen Hanson terms the 'female gothic' film cycle. See *Hollywood Heroines: Women in Film Noir and the Female Gothic Film* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

[96] 'The Mystery of The Blue Gardenia', in *Shades of Noir,* ed. by Copjec, pp. 97–120 (p. 113).

Whirlpool (dir. by Otto Preminger, 1949) centres on Ann Sutton (Gene Tierney). Unhappily married and vulnerable, Ann is manipulated by the malevolent David Korvo (José Ferrer). Promising to cure her kleptomania, Korvo instead hypnotizes her so that she travels to the home of Theresa Randall (Barbara O'Neil), whom Korvo has murdered. When the police discover Ann at the crime scene she cannot recall how and why she came to be there, and she is charged with murder. Korvo manipulates other evidence to further implicate Ann: during a conversation with her in a hotel bar, he secretes the glass from which Ann has been drinking. Later, the police find it, and her fingerprints, inside Korvo's apartment itself — incriminating Ann by refuting her insistence that she never went up there. Unable to provide any satisfactory account of her movements in the face of the evidence against her, she begins to doubt her own innocence and sanity.

Ultimately the narrative of Ann's guilt is overridden by evidence that implicates Korvo in Theresa Randolph's death, and this allows the narrative to resolve itself into an ostensibly happy ending, in which Ann's innocence is recognized and she and her husband are reconciled. But what lingers is the contingency of that resolution. The malleability of incrimination means that, had Korvo succeeded in destroying the only evidence that risked implicating him, then his plot would have been successful: no alibi that Ann could have otherwise offered would have been sufficient against the weight of incrimination that Korvo had established against her.

Dorothy B. Hughes's 1947 mystery novel *In a Lonely Place* was adapted into a film directed by Nicholas Ray in 1950.[97] Early in the film, Dix Steele (Humphrey Bogart) invites a woman back to his Beverly Hills apartment, then rejects her flirtation and sends her home in a taxi. The next day, she is found dead, and Steele is questioned

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[97] For a discussion of the film's production see William Hare, *LA Noir: Nine Dark Visions of the City of Angels* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004), pp. 71–102.

as a suspect. His neighbour, Laurel Gray (Gloria Grahame) initially provides him with

an alibi, but his apparent innocence becomes increasingly ambiguous as he reveals

aggressive tendencies.[98] When he is initially released from custody after questioning,

Steele quips regarding the detective's interrogation, 'It was his story against mine, but,

of course, I told my story better'. The hubris of this statement soon becomes apparent,

however: a narrative of doubt and suspicion develops around Steele that infects even

those that love him. This increasing pressure is grounded in the police department's

ability to marshal its manpower and technical resources to threaten Steele with

incrimination. Despite his arrogant confidence, the disjunction between his own alibi

and the weight of suspicion building against him begins to disorientate Steele, and his

own actions begin to betray him. His behaviour in response to these circumstances only

makes him more suspect, both in the eyes of Laurel and from the audience's

perspective.

In Ray's film there is never a sense that Dix Steele doubts his own innocence,

only that he becomes increasingly aware of, and destabilized by, his inability to provide

a satisfactory alibi. *The Blue Gardenia* (dir. by Fritz Lang, 1953), in contrast, places

Norah Larkin (Anne Baxter) in a much more precarious position.[99] Inebriated at the

apartment of sleazy womanizer Harry Prebble (Raymond Burr), she fights off his

advances and then passes out. When she regains consciousness, Prebble is dead, and she

flees the scene unsure whether or not she is responsible. Norah becomes increasingly

fearful of her own guilt, and as she does so, she continually encounters the police: a

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[98] In Hughes's novel, Steele's guilt is unambiguous — it is gradually revealed, from a striking first-person perspective, that he is responsible for the murder of multiple women. Hughes's version of Steele is a figure who fully capitalizes on the mobility and anonymity that the city affords him. It makes clear that he has regularly moved, within the Los Angeles and previously across the country, to frustrate any investigation into his crimes. 'He walked into the night not knowing the way, not caring. He'd moved more than once during his seven months in California. He could move again.' (Dorothy B. Hughes, *In a Lonely Place* (London: Penguin, 2010), p. 12.)

[99] The film's production history, particularly in terms of the script's adaptation of Vera Caspary's short story 'The Gardenia', is detailed in Bergstrom, 'The Mystery of The Blue Gardenia'. See also Hare, pp. 103–29.

patrol car passes at the very moment she is burning her dress in her back-yard

incinerator; a uniformed officer is coincidently waiting outside her apartment as she

leaves; another officer is filling up his patrol car at a gas station just as she is making a

surreptitious telephone call. The presence of law enforcement becomes oppressive, both

reflecting and magnifying Norah's sense of vulnerability and guilt, and her movements

become increasingly fraught and uncertain. Norah is eventually exonerated when

another woman confesses to Prebble's murder. Even in this moment of relief, she is

unable to remember the night's events for herself, but the other woman's narrative

supersedes the narrative of incrimination that had built up around Norah, and she is able

to return to her normal life.

Twentieth-century criminologists keenly anticipated, as August Vollmer wrote

in 1935, 'the rapid development of scientific investigation in all the police departments

of the large cities of this country'.[100] In their enthusiasm for the possibilities of

criminalistics, they rarely allowed for the possibility that such techniques could err or be

manipulated, or questioned the principles that underlay 'scientific' detection.[101] As the

experiences of certain film noir protagonists suggest, however, it was not only

lawbreakers who were vulnerable to being treated as suspect. Dixon Steele, Norah

Larkin and Ann Sutton come under suspicion for different reasons: Ann's situation is

malevolently manipulated by a third party; Norah is incriminated by circumstantial

evidence; for Dixon, certain personality traits undermine his resentful attempt to

provide an alibi, and even those who love him come to doubt his innocence. In all three

cases, however, their attempts to prove their innocence are fraught and precarious; each

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[100] Vollmer, 'The Scientific Policeman', p. 12.
[101] Söderman and O'Connell made a rare acknowledgment in 1935 that 'During the last decade the question of forged fingerprints has been discussed quite frequently', but express confidence that such forgeries, rare though theoretically possible, can be uncovered through diligent analysis (*Modern Criminal Investigation*, first edition, p. 126).

of them, in the midst of such circumstances, experiences moments of disorientation that further undermine their ability to defend themselves.

Like these brief examples, the texts considered in the remaining chapters of this thesis are all concerned primarily not with 'criminal psychology', but with the perspectives of the ostensibly innocent: detectives, police officers, and African-American citizens of Los Angeles. If a film such as *He Walked By Night* served to normalize the expansion of police powers by appealing to the image of a shrewd, highly mobile lawbreaker, these narratives depict the anxiety experienced by citizens subject to those same powers. All of these protagonists are shown to be implicated in the networks of incrimination that structure and threaten modern subjectivity. These diverse works of fiction and cinema utilize a common location through which to portray powerful individual experiences of doubt, uncertainty and confusion. Such moments of disorientation are bound up with, and help make visible, a particular social force — the criminalistic implementation of technology and systems of knowledge to fix identity and reconstruct or arrest movement.

Chapter Two

'Overtones of Weariness and Disorientation': Retrospection, Reconstruction and Raymond Chandler's Los Angeles

In *The Little Sister* (1949), Raymond Chandler's fifth novel, private eye Philip Marlowe

reflects at length on the changes he has witnessed during his time in Los Angeles:

> 'I used to like this town,' I said, just to be saying something and not be thinking
> too hard. 'A long time ago. There were trees along Wilshire Boulevard. Beverly
> Hills was a country town. Westwood was bare hills and lots offering at eleven
> hundred dollars and no takers. Hollywood was a bunch of frame houses on the
> inter-urban line. Los Angeles was just a big dry sunny place with ugly homes
> and no style, but good hearted and peaceful.'[1]

The description recalls the city that Chandler himself encountered when he arrived in

Southern California in 1912. Born in Chicago but educated in London, it was a chance

encounter that led him to settle on the West Coast in his mid-twenties. Later, he would

write that he was 'the first writer to write about Southern California at all realistically';

certainly, his descriptions of the city were grounded in decades of experience.[2]

Living and working in Los Angeles for much of the 1910s and throughout the

twenties and thirties, Chandler witnessed significant changes in the region. Successive

waves of immigration drove a population boom: in the 1920s the regional population of

Southern California more than doubled, to 2.6m.[3] The amount of land available in the

Los Angeles County area, as well as legislation limiting the height of new buildings,

meant there was no imperative to build upwards and compress the new arrivals into the

kind of tenements found in New York City. Los Angeles grew in a patchwork fashion,

as surrounding neighbourhoods were annexed to the city or incorporated as independent

municipalities, and it developed multiple business centres. This was the beginning of

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[1] Raymond Chandler, 'The Little Sister', in *The Lady in the Lake and Other Novels* (London: Penguin, 2001), pp. 387–594. (p. 537). Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number.
[2] Letter to Jessica Tyndale, 12th July 1956 in *Selected Letters of Raymond Chandler*, ed. by Frank MacShane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p. 405.
[3] Soja and Scott, 'Introduction to Los Angeles: City and Region', p. 7.

the urban structure that citizens of the city would describe to Kevin Lynch during his

research in the 1950s: 'An endless spread, which may carry pleasant connotations of

space around the dwellings, or overtones of weariness and disorientation'.[4]

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the region's extensive network of

streetcars had facilitated the early stages of this horizontally dispersed growth.[5] It was

widespread automobile ownership, however, that would provide 'an unstoppable

impetus to the decentralization imperative'.[6] In 1915, Los Angeles County already had

the highest car-ownership rates in the United States[7], and this continued at 'a rate of

growth that far exceeded population growth, so that on the eve of the Great Depression

in 1929 there was already one car per three people in Los Angeles'.[8] As this

decentralized urban structure took shape in the two decades leading up to the Second

World War, residents of the city struggled to navigate streets that were ill-suited to the

increasing volumes of traffic. This period of Los Angeles's history has been

characterized, in a recent study by Jeremiah Axelrod, as seeing a 'crisis of legibility' in

which Angelenos struggled to orientate themselves in a booming and dramatically

evolving city:

> Through the course of the 1920s in Southern California, more and more
> Angelenos began to feel 'lost' in their own town. Residents, once so confidently
> able to make sense of their city, began during the 1920s to become disoriented.[9]

Mark Shiel has related this urban context to the slapstick comedies of Charlie Chaplin,

Harold Lloyd and Laurel and Hardy, noting that many of these films 'were concerned

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[4] p. 40–1.
[5] Eric Avila, 'All Freeways Lead to East Los Angeles: Rethinking the L.A. Freeway and Its Meanings', in *Overdrive: L.A. Constructs the Future, 1940–1990*, ed. by Wim De Wit and Christopher James Alexander (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2013), pp. 35–47 (p. 36).
[6] Dear, 'In the City, Time Becomes Visible', p. 94.
[7] Ibid., p. 93.
[8] Martin Wachs, 'The Evolution of Transport Policy in Los Angeles: Images of Past Policies and Future Prospects', in *The City*, pp. 106–159 (p. 113).
[9] Jeremiah B. C. Axelrod, *Inventing Autopia: Dreams and Visions of the Modern Metropolis in Jazz Age Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), p. 11.

with the comical efforts of citizens to orient themselves in the city's increasingly large, complex and fast-moving landscape'.[10] Other generic forms, such as the hard-boiled novel, would also be shaped by this landscape, and particularly by how the authorities responded to the specific law-enforcement challenges of policing the mobile metropolis. As LAPD Captain George O. Daudel warned in 1924, 'We are living in a fast age; we have jazz in our music, jazz in our gasoline'.[11]

As discussed in the previous chapter, during this period, the city's police force was gradually being modernized. In 1923 August Vollmer took on the role of Chief of Police, and instituted or broadened the implementation of various 'scientific' methods, such as statistical analysis, fingerprinting and the use of the lie detector. This also involved increasing the mobility of the department — enlarging its fleet of automobiles in a bid to counter the widespread use of the automobile by criminals, and to address the wide area over which it had jurisdiction. In 1921, the LAPD fleet amounted to 54 automobiles; by 1925 this had nearly quadrupled to 198, and by 1932 a further increase of almost 50%, to 286, had taken place.[12] Despite these increases, LAPD Chiefs and Commissioners consistently drew attention to their lack of manpower and resources, relative to the city's growing population and territorial expansion. In 1929, for example, the Board of Police Commissioners addressed the mayor directly regarding their concerns:

> Your Honor's attention is called to the fact that within the last few years there has been considerable territorial addition to the City of Los Angeles, which has made it the largest city in the United States, insofar as square mileage is

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[10] Shiel, *Hollywood Cinema and the Real Los Angeles*, p. 69.
[11] Quoted in *Law Enforcement in Los Angeles*, p. 169.
[12] *Annual Report, Police Department, City of Los Angeles, California, 1920–21*, 1921, The Internet Archive: John Jay College of Criminal Justice Collection <https://archive.org/details/annualreportofpo1920losa> [accessed 26 April 2017], p. 13; *Annual Report of the Police Department, City of Los Angeles, California, 1925–6*, 1926, The Internet Archive: John Jay College of Criminal Justice Collection <https://archive.org/details/annualreportofpo1925losa> [accessed 26 April 2017], p. 35; *Annual Report of the Police Department, City of Los Angeles, 1931–32*, 1932, The Internet Archive: John Jay College of Criminal Justice Collection <https://archive.org/details/annualreportofpo1931losa> [accessed 26 April 2017], p. 31.

concerned. However, during that time there has been no increase in personnel or equipment to the Police Department to adequately patrol this vast territory.[13]

At the height of this period of population and territorial growth, associated concerns over criminality, and new policing methods, Raymond Chandler was working as an executive in the oil industry. This was a phase in his life that would end in a personal crisis. Initially a skilled and respected employee, in the late 1920s Chandler's work was increasingly affected by his heavy drinking. He frequently went missing for days at a time, experiencing alcoholic blackouts after which he would often awake in unfamiliar locations; moments of alcohol-induced disorientation that would later find their way into his prose.[14] He was, as result, eventually fired from his position at the Dabney Oil Syndicate in 1932, and it was this defining event that led him to pursue a career as a writer: first, of short stories for pulp magazines such as *Black Mask*, and then as a novelist, beginning with *The Big Sleep* (1939).

Already, by that point, the Los Angeles that he had first experienced in 1912, and that Marlowe reminisces about in *The Little Sister*, had disappeared. The gaps between discrete communities such as Hollywood and Westwood were increasingly filled by new residential and commercial developments:

> By the onset of World War II, Los Angeles had been transformed from a small, if ambitiously spread out, city [...] to an increasingly decentralized metropolis committed unequivocally to the private automobile. In those two decades, the region had become a megalopolis of nearly six million inhabitants, featuring a topography of dispersed industrial, residential, and commercial sites spread over hundreds of square miles and fifty separate cities.[15]

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[13] *Annual Report of the Police Department, City of Los Angeles, California, 1928–1929*, 1929, The Internet Archive: John Jay College of Criminal Justice Collection <https://archive.org/details/annualreportofpo1928losa> [accessed 17 April 2017], p. 8. See also *Annual Report of the Police Department, 1925–6*, p. 5.

[14] For accounts of this period of Chandler's life, including his tendency to experience blackouts during drinking binges, see Tom Hiney, *Raymond Chandler: A Biography* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1997), pp. 61–69, and Frank MacShane, *The Life of Raymond Chandler* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), pp. 38–40.

[15] Axelrod, p. 18.

The continuous urban sprawl for which Los Angeles would become infamous had taken shape, and city planners had put in place plans for the new means by which citizens would navigate it: the freeway system.

This, then, is the context shaping Raymond Chandler's fiction: a novel, decentralized urban form of horizontally dispersed, contiguous areas traversed predominantly by the automobile; the adoption of new law enforcement practices to address concerns about the mobility of potential criminals; distressing moments of personal disorientation. Chandler's characters — particularly but not exclusively Philip Marlowe — navigate the streets of 1930s and 1940s Los Angeles, taking advantage of the fluid, independent mobility that the automobile and the freeway system affords them. As they do so, they are compelled to orientate themselves within the city's dispersed geography, and must be prepared to account for their movements, or else be at risk from those who would seek to incriminate them. Marlowe operates within this milieu, and is a particularly revealing figure through which to seek to comprehend it. As a private investigator, he shares characteristics with both police investigators and everyday citizens, and through his self-aware first-person narration the dilemmas of this position are articulated.

'A grotesque and impossible place': The Spaces of Chandler's Los Angeles

'Every great American author creates a cartography', Deleuze and Guattari suggest in *A Thousand Plateaus*.[16] If James M. Cain's success lay in identifying a certain lower-middle class malaise lying beneath the colonial-revival homes and catalogue furniture of Southern California, and Horace McCoy and Nathanael West both brought to life, in different ways, the Depression-era desperation of those hopelessly attracted to the

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[16] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London; New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 571 n. 18.

Hollywood dream, one of Chandler's great achievements was a vivid depiction of contrasting social types located in discrete communities within the broader sprawl of Los Angeles. Chandler, Mike Davis writes,

> choreographed the conflict of locales — Pasadena mansions, Bunker Hill tenements, Central Avenue bars, and Malibu beach homes — that made Los Angeles recognizably a city after its long apprenticeship as a back lot. His stroke of genius was the *frisson* created by Marlowe's ceaseless commutes between equally sinister extremes of wealth and immiseration.[17]

In Chandler's novels, we experience the decentralized city through the unifying perspective of Philip Marlowe, and it is in Marlowe's narration that the qualities of different districts are identified: 'His expertise is such that he can perceive the delicate differences between Pasadena, Santa Monica and Beverly Hills that make them separate entities within a larger envelope.'[18] Marlowe's identity as a detective is tied closely to his grasp of the topography of Los Angeles, and to his ability to orientate himself and move with relative ease across the city, linking together the different classes and social types contained in its diverse districts. As Fredric Jameson writes in his early essay 'On Raymond Chandler',

> Since there is no longer any privileged experience in which the whole of the social structure can be grasped, a figure must be invented who can be superimposed on the society as a whole, whose routine and life-pattern serve somehow to tie its separate and isolated parts together.[19]

In this, David Fine suggests, Marlowe is 'analogous to the picaresque hero who moves from one place to another, linking neighbourhoods, characters, and episodes together'.[20]

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[17] Davis, 'Bunker Hill: Hollywood's Dark Shadow', in *Cinema and the City*, pp. 33–45 (p. 36). See also Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 'Cities: Real and Imagined', in *Cinema and the City*, pp. 99–108 (p. 100).
[18] Tom S. Reck, 'Raymond Chandler's Los Angeles', in *The Critical Response to Raymond Chandler*, Critical Responses in Arts and Letters (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), pp. 109–15. (p. 110).
[19] Fredric Jameson, 'On Raymond Chandler', in *The Critical Response to Raymond Chandler*, pp. 65–87 (p. 69). This essay and the later 'The Synoptic Chandler' were republished in monograph form as Fredric Jameson, *Raymond Chandler: The Detections of Totality* (London: Verso, 2016). All references are to the original publications.
[20] David M. Fine, *Imagining Los Angeles: A City in Fiction* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), p. 120.

The spatiality of Los Angeles in Chandler's novels is highly differentiated and heterogeneous, and Marlowe discerns these qualities as he travels across the city's dispersed locales. This is one of the qualities that distinguishes Chandler's work from that of his hardboiled peers. In Raoul Whitfield's *Death in a Bowl* (1931), Ben Jardinn is a private investigator based in Hollywood, with an office on Hollywood Boulevard 'in a frame building two blocks from Grauman's Chinese Theatre'.[21] He is based, therefore, roughly three blocks along the boulevard from the fictional 'Cahuenga Building' out of which Philip Marlowe operates. This similarity aside, Jardinn's investigations range over a much smaller area than those in Chandler's novels. The action of the plot is centred on Hollywood: Jardinn's office; the restaurants around Hollywood Boulevard in which he meets clients and associates; his Laurel Canyon home in the hills immediately north of Hollywood. The scene of the crime that Jardinn investigates — the murder of a conductor during a performance — is the Hollywood Bowl, close enough for him to walk to there from his office (pp. 26–7). He does drive west along Wilshire Boulevard to visit an airfield on the coast and interrogate a suspect, and later arranges a rendezvous with his assistant Carol Torney at a 'beach speakeasy' (p. 118). In these rare forays beyond the vicinity of Hollywood Boulevard, though, the locations merely serve the mechanics of the plot. Jardinn needs to speak to Torney in secret, somewhere they will not been recognized. The airfield, meanwhile — realistically situated along the coast rather than in the more densely populated areas of the city in which Jardinn generally operates — allows for a dramatic scene in which the pilot under suspicion flees the detective's questions, takes off in a plane and then crashes. In both cases, the locations are given only the most cursory description, or are left unspecified. The urban space of Whitfield's novel, in other words, is not a network

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[21] Raoul Whitfield, *Death in a Bowl* (Harpenden: No Exit Press, 1988), p. 17.

of socially differentiated districts — it is one in which Hollywood, both as a neighbourhood and as an industry, is the vivid centre.[22]

Paul Cain's *Fast One* (1933) is another early example of a hardboiled novel set in Los Angeles. It is also a particularly violent and nihilistic example of the form, with an amoral protagonist operating in a city seemingly lacking any redeeming qualities or moral characters. Gerry Kells is a gambler and gangster from the East Coast who has moved out to Los Angeles for a quieter life, before being drawn into the city's criminal underworld, and deciding to capitalize on the opportunity: 'I'm going to run this town for a while — ride hell out of it'.[23] Kells is constantly in motion across the city as he murders, betrays and is double-crossed in return, whilst consistently evading capture by the police. The tempo of the narrative reflects this preoccupation with speed and motion, only letting up in the novel's final pages, where Kells's constant movement is finally arrested in an appropriately violent manner — a car crash as he attempts to flee the city. *Fast One* takes a vicarious pleasure in reflecting the cultural concerns about criminal mobility that were prevalent in the period. For all that Cain's novel appears to cynically relish the mayhem caused by its protagonist, it rather uncritically reinscribes contemporary anxieties; August Vollmer could have been describing Cain's protagonist when he wrote of the lawbreaker who 'respects no boundary lines, conducts his

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[22] Vincent Brook notes that the names of many of Whitfield's characters play on those of real movie industry figures, and suggests that 'Famous Studios', the fictional studio in the novel, 'abbreviates Paramount's one-time alias, Famous Players in Feature Plays'. Vincent Brook, *Land of Smoke and Mirrors: A Cultural History of Los Angeles* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013), p. 113.

[23] Paul Cain, 'Fast One', in *Omnibus* ([n.p.]: Resurrectionary Press, 2006), pp. 1–206 (p. 70). There is an implicit satirical mockery here of the manner in which Los Angeles grew its population in the early twentieth century, by marketing its idyllic climate and quality of life to migrants and retirees from other parts of the US. For an overview of this aspect of Los Angeles Boosterism in the early twentieth century, and of its 'debunking' in the writings of Morrow Mayo, Louis Adamic and Carey McWilliams, see Davis, *City of Quartz*, pp. 24–36. The period is covered more extensively by Kevin Starr's *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

operations where most convenient, and speedily flees from the jurisdiction of the local authority'.[24]

Gerry Kells operates over a much wider area of the city than Ben Jardinn does in *Death in a Bowl*. His movements are also described much more precisely in relation to the city's geography; a tendency that is demonstrated in the novel's opening sentence: 'Kells walked north on Spring. At Fifth he turned west, walked two blocks, turned into a small cigar store'.[25] Kells moves, though, through a largely homogeneous and centralized urban space, bordered by some occasionally glimpsed outlying territories — Beverly Hills, Long Beach. What Cain's Los Angeles lacks is any sense of differentiation between districts of the city, or vividness in their description. Describing the different environmental images held by his respondents in *The Image of the City*, Lynch distinguishes between 'concrete, sensuously vivid images, and those which were highly abstract, generalized, and void of sensuous content'.[26] He continues: 'an image might be both dense and abstract, as in the case of the taxicab dispatcher's knowledge of a city street, which related house numbers to uses along block after block, yet could not describe those buildings in any concrete sense'.[27] In these terms, Chandler's Los Angeles is relatively dense and vivid, the city in *Death in a Bowl* is thin and abstract, and Cain's is the highly dense and abstract image of the taxicab dispatcher:

> Rose drove. They went up Grand to Tenth, over Tenth to Main. When they turned into Main, headed south, Kells twisted around in the seat until he was almost facing Rose.[28]

> He went out and walked up Ivar to Yucca, west on Yucca the short block to Cahuenga. [...] He went into an apartment house on the corner and asked the night man if Mister Beery was in.[29]

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[24] *The Police and Modern Society*, p. 4.
[25] Cain, 'Fast One', p. 1.
[26] p. 88.
[27] p. 88.
[28] Cain, 'Fast One', pp. 19–20.

The most frequently repeated types of location in *Fast One* are the interiors of hotels and apartment blocks, clustered together relatively closely around Hollywood and in Downtown, that Kells and other characters have made their bases of operations. As a consequence, the novel evokes a predominantly centripetal spatiality in which, despite the distances covered by Kells, 'the atmosphere reminds one more of the enclosed space of Manhattan than of a sprawling Pacific landscape'.[30]

Given the changes that Los Angeles underwent between Chandler's arrival in the city in 1912 and the peak of his career in the 1940s, it is tempting to read the assertion of urban heterogeneity in his novels in relation to the conservative or nostalgic perspective of the long-term resident. The image of the city's past conjured in *The Little Sister* when Marlowe ruminates 'I used to like this town' is of spatially discrete communities separated by still-undeveloped land, rather than the continuous sprawl that had developed by the time Chandler was writing that the city 'has become a grotesque and impossible place for a human being to live in'.[31] Scott Bottles writes, in his account of the impact of the automobile on the development of Los Angeles, that as residential developments filled the vacant lots of the Los Angeles basin, these once-discrete communities 'became indistinguishable from the rest of the suburban sprawl so characteristic of the southern California landscape'.[32] It is certainly the case that other hardboiled contemporaries, less steeped in the region's recent history, were more concerned with the perceived homogeneity of the city. In James M. Cain's *Double Indemnity* (1943), Walter Huff — an Iowa native — apprehends Los Angeles in terms of its *sameness*:

> It didn't look like a House of Death when I saw it. It was just a Spanish house, like all the rest of them in California, with white walls, red tile roof, and a patio

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[29] Ibid., p. 59.
[30] Paul Skenazy, 'Behind the Territory Ahead', in *Los Angeles in Fiction*, pp. 103–25 (p. 107).
[31] Letter to Hamish Hamilton, 19th March 1951 in *Selected Letters of Raymond Chandler*, p. 268.
[32] *Los Angeles and the Automobile*, p. 185.

> out to one side. [...] All I saw was a living-room like every other living-room in California, maybe a little more expensive than some, but nothing that any department store wouldn't deliver on one truck, lay out in the morning, and have the credit O.K. ready the same afternoon.[33]

Marlowe's perspective on the city, in contrast, is always founded in the discernment of difference — of visual quality, of social class — and this discernment is rooted in his experience of historical change:

> I knew a good deal about Idle Valley, and I knew it had changed a great deal from the days when they had the gatehouse at the entrance and the private police force, and the gambling casino on the lake, and the fifty-dollar joy girls. ('The Long Goodbye', p. 442)

The relationship between this perspective and Marlowe's mobility in the novels merits further consideration. His investigations, as LeRoy Panek notes, 'literally cover a great deal of ground'.[34] There is a tendency in Chandler criticism, in emphasising the 'picaresque' aspects of Chandler's novels and the extended nature of the city they depict, to read Marlowe's mobility as the mastery of a then-new form of urban space, an unproblematic and unambiguous narrative function upon which to found further analysis:

> Like the freeway system of contemporary Los Angeles, Marlowe's field of perception is a trustworthy and efficient connector, a means of perceptual transit through an urban and social space that has metastasized beyond the confines of the traditional novel.[35]

Or, in Fine's words, 'Marlowe, the first motorized private eye in the most thoroughly motorized city in America […] moves with the kind of fluidity encouraged by the city's

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[33] James M. Cain, *Double Indemnity and The Embezzler* (London: R. Hale, 1981), pp. 1–2. *Double Indemnity* was published in book form in 1943, but first serialized in 1936. See John T. Irwin, *Unless the Threat of Death Is Behind Them: Hard-Boiled Fiction and Film Noir* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006), p. 71.

[34] LeRoy Panek, *Probable Cause: Crime Fiction in America* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1990), p. 146.

[35] Ernest Fontana, 'Chivalry and Modernity in Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep*', in *The Critical Response to Raymond Chandler*, pp. 159–65 (p. 159).

network of roads and highways into every enclave'.[36] On these terms, Marlowe's

mobility is the straightforward means by which he is able to navigate between the city's

contrasting locales. What has not been considered in such readings, and what I will

suggest in the remainder of this section, is that the highly differentiated image of diverse

locales contained in Chandler's novels is a *consequence*, textually, of Marlowe's need

to maintain purposeful movement by orientating himself within the city.

The environmental image, writes Kevin Lynch, 'has its original function in

permitting purposeful mobility'.[37] The subjective experience of urban space, the

perception of scale, proximity and relative position all fluctuate, both compared to

others' experience and to the material reality of the city itself. Every individual's

'environmental image' is a mental structure in which different elements (districts, paths,

edges, landmarks and nodes) interconnect. These images can be situated, Lynch

suggests, on a continuum of structural precision: from images in which the structure is

vague and disjointed, 'with vast gaps and many unrelated elements', through those with

some degree of flexibility and distortion, to those that are structurally 'rigid' and highly

precise.[38] At the former extreme, the city is disorientating to the extent that 'rational

movement [is] impossible without outside help'.[39] In the latter case, the individual is

able to navigate the city purposefully, with the structural rigidity of the image itself

allowing for navigational flexibility and adaptability: 'the possessor of such a map can

move much more freely, and can interconnect new points at will'.[40] When the different

elements of the physical environment are clearly and vividly defined and highly

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[36] Fine, *Imagining Los Angeles*, p. 120. On Chandler and the picaresque, see also Jameson, 'On Raymond Chandler', p. 69; Herbert Ruhm, 'Raymond Chandler: From Bloomsbury to the Jungle—and Beyond', *Tough Guy Writers of the Thirties*, ed. by David Madden (Southern Illinois: Carbondale, 1968), p. 178.
[37] *The Image of the City*, p. 124.
[38] Ibid., pp. 88–89.
[39] Ibid., p. 88.
[40] Ibid., p. 89.

differentiated, that environment is able to provoke a strong environmental image in the

observer, enabling them to orientate themselves successfully.

Contained as it is within a first-person perspective, we can understand the image

of Los Angeles in Chandler's fiction as constituting Philip Marlowe's environmental

image. Textually, the highly differentiated neighbourhoods of the Los Angeles region

are described in prose drawn from Marlowe's perceptions and experiences.

> Bunker Hill is old town, lost town, shabby town, crook town. Once, very long
> ago, it was the choice residential district of the city, and there are still standing a
> few of the jigsaw Gothic mansions with wide porches and walls covered with
> round-end shingles and full corner bay windows with spindle turrets. They are
> all rooming houses now, their parquetry floors are scratched and worn through
> the once glossy finish and the wide sweeping staircases are dark with time and
> with cheap varnish laid on over generations of dirt.[41]

The vivid language here clearly contrasts with the dense but abstract image of the city

found in *Fast One*: the area is situated historically as well as geographically through

strikingly visual and tactile descriptions that evoke both its turn-of-the century wealth

and its later decline – the 'cheap varnish laid on over generations of dirt'. Such

descriptions impose order on Marlowe's surroundings, allowing him to orientate

himself within the vast territory in which he operates. Tellingly, such descriptions

frequently occur when Marlowe is himself in motion, driving through specific

neighbourhoods or arriving at new destinations:

> Westmore was a north and south street on the wrong side of town. I drove north.
> At the next corner I bumped over disused interurban tracks and on into a block
> of junk yards. Behind wooden fences the decomposing carcasses of old
> automobiles lay in grotesque designs, like a modern battlefield.[42]

Here, the association of socio-economic decline with immobility is particularly striking.

Marlowe's own movement through the city contrasts with the images of 'disused

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[41] Raymond Chandler, 'The High Window', in *The Lady in the Lake and Other Novels*, pp. 3–188 (p. 50).
Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number.
[42] Raymond Chandler, 'The Lady in the Lake', in *The Lady in the Lake and Other Novels*, pp. 191–384
(p. 313). Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

interurban tracks' and the 'decomposing carcasses of old automobiles' that imply a precarious mobility which he maintains, in part, through the very act of observing and differentiating the spaces of the city.

Crucially, Marlowe's descriptions differentiate the city's neighbourhoods not just in relation to their visual quality (which is the focus of Lynch's analysis in *The Image of the City*), but in terms of their social character. This is a reading implicit in Fredric Jameson's essay 'The Synoptic Chandler' when he suggests that the 'socio-semiotic system' in Chandler's novels 'organizes people and their dwellings into a cognitive map of Los Angeles that Marlowe can be seen to canvass'.[43] In another passage of description prompted by Marlowe's observations as he drives through the city, he disdainfully encapsulates the entire community of Malibu in a series of disjointed images:

> More movie stars. More pink and blue bath-tubs. More tufted beds. More Chanel No. 5. More Lincoln Continentals and Cadillacs. More wind-blown hair and sunglasses and attitudes and pseudo-refined voices and water-front morals. ('The Little Sister', p. 452)

Just as Marlowe is always able to situate himself in specific neighbourhoods, and therefore to apprehend his position relative to the city as a whole, the social class of each district is clearly defined, and the people he encounters correspond to the social types he expects to meet.

The vivid characterizations of different neighbourhoods and communities in Chandler's Los Angeles, in which Marlowe discerns and emphasizes subtle differences between districts, can be read as a function of Marlowe's need to orientate himself within the city. The environmental image established in such descriptions allows

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[43] 'The Synoptic Chandler', in *Shades of Noir,* ed. by Copjec, pp. 33–56 (p. 53). Jameson's 'cognitive map' is equivalent to what Lynch usually terms the 'environmental image'; throughout this thesis I generally prefer Lynch's term, but where I use 'cognitive map' it should not be read in relation to Jameson's broader theorization, where it has different connotations.

Marlowe not just to navigate the city in which he lives, but to make progress in the investigations that are his livelihood. If Marlowe's skill as a detective equates, to a great extent, to his knowledge of the city of Los Angeles and his ability to navigate through it effectively, then disruptions to his attempts to organize, structure and identify his surroundings will also complicate the progress of his investigations — or at worst, fundamentally undermine them.

'The rules under which he operates': Incrimination and Disorientation in Marlowe's Investigations

Unlike his contemporary Dashiell Hammett — who had worked for the Pinkerton Detective Agency before pursuing a writing career — Chandler had no first-hand experience of law enforcement and investigation, and when he began writing detective fiction he referred to textbooks on criminal investigation to give his stories a degree of verisimilitude.[44] He would periodically ensure his understanding of legal and law enforcement processes was accurate and up-to-date: in 1950 he undertook research into the LAPD's facilities and procedures, and wrote to his lawyer with a long list of questions about the regulations governing licensed private detectives in California. 'The private detective of fiction is, of course, pure imagination', he wrote, 'But that is no reason why he should not know the rules under which he operates'.[45] Marlowe's investigations differ from those of police detectives or D.A.'s investigators, insofar as his primary responsibility is not gathering evidence to justify a criminal charge or to support a prosecutor's case.[46] His clients initially hire him to resolve specific matters without involving the police, and often it is not initially clear that any crime has taken

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[44] MacShane, *The Life of Raymond Chandler*, p. 63.
[45] Letter to Leroy Wright, 12th April 1950 in *Selected Letters of Raymond Chandler*, p. 215.
[46] Marlowe does have experience of working in such a role, however — in *The Big Sleep* he mentions to General Sternwood that he was once an investigator in the District Attorney's office, but was fired for insubordination (p. 7–8). Irwin suggests that this element of Marlow's biography is a wishful rewriting of Chandler's own experience of being fired from the oil industry (pp. 39–40).

place. In every one of his cases, however, Marlowe's enquiries uncover evidence of criminal acts (usually a combination of blackmail and murder), and his investigations are ultimately governed by the same principles adhered to by officially sanctioned criminal investigators: establishing incrimination by reconstructing the movements and fixing the identities of suspects.

'The central problem of the criminal investigator is the establishment of personal identity', as forensic scientist Paul L. Kirk wrote in 1953. [47] For Marlowe, whose investigations involve a profusion of aliases and obscured identities, strategies for resolving this problem are a central aspect of his method. Jameson correctly notes that 'Chandler's stories are first and foremost descriptions of searches'; in each of the novels (with the important exception of *The High Window*, which will be discussed below), these searches centre on a missing person.[48] In *The Big Sleep*, whilst Marlowe is initially hired by General Sternwood to investigate and resolve a blackmail attempt on his youngest daughter, it is the disappearance of Rusty Regan, his son-in-law, that proves to be the central mystery to be solved. Marlowe is hired to locate Orrin Quest in *The Little Sister,* Crystal Kingsley in *The Lady in the Lake*, and Betty Mayfield in *Playback*. In *Farewell, My Lovely* he begins searching for Velma Valento on his own initiative, when it becomes clear that the police are unwilling to seek her out. In *The Long Goodbye*, Marlowe is hired to locate alcoholic writer Roger Wade, and throughout the novel he persistently refuses to believe that his friend Terry Lennox has taken his life in Mexico after murdering his own wife.

In every case, these searches for missing persons are complicated by false identities, whether that be aliases assumed by the object of Marlowe's search, or by other individuals he encounters in the course of his investigation. In *Farewell, My*

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[47] Kirk, *Crime Investigation*, p. 12.
[48] Jameson, 'On Raymond Chandler', p. 83.

Lovely, Marlowe eventually discovers that the woman once known as Velma Valento has reinvented herself as 'Mrs. Lewin Lockridge Grayle', and is responsible for murdering the people who threaten to reveal her past. Early in *The Lady in the Lake*, a corpse believed to be that of Muriel Chess is discovered; the body is in fact that of Crystal Kingsley, and Muriel Chess (previously known as Mildred Haviland) has assumed Kingsley's identity. As Marlowe suspects, Terry Lennox has indeed faked his own death in *The Long Goodbye*; several plots converge to reveal that Lennox was once known as Paul Marston, and has reinvented himself yet again after plastic surgery. Marlowe encounters performers' stage names (Linda Conquest/Murdock in *The High Window*; Mavis Weld/Quest in *The Little Sister*), gangster's aliases (Steelgrave/Weepy Moyer in *The Little Sister*) and corrupt cops who obscure their identities ('Hemingway' in *Farewell, My Lovely*; Al Degarmo in *The Lady in the Lake*). It is eventually resolving the ambiguity of these fluid identities that allows to Marlowe to establish a clear picture of events and to solve the mystery at hand.

As outlined in the previous chapter, the alibi is the individual's defence against incrimination: a narrative account that counters the investigator's attempt to fix the subject's identity at the scene of the crime. *Alias* shares a Latin root with *alibi — alius*: other, or another — and the term derives from *aliās*: 'at another time, otherwise, in another place, elsewhere'.[49] The etymology of alias suggests why anonymity is often so threatening to the criminal investigator, and why false identities are so prevalent in Chandler's novels, since by their very nature they undermine the attempt to fix a stable identity in time and space. As such, they frustrate the progress of the detective's investigations — his attempts to establish what *has happened*, what crime has been committed and by whom.

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[49] 'alias, n. and adv.', *OED Online* (Oxford University Press) <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/4975> [accessed 5 May 2017].

The books Chandler referred to in the late 1930s included at least one of the textbooks written by Charles W. Fricke, a California judge who was also a prolific author of works on legal procedure and criminal investigation.[50] Like many of the other criminologists of the same period discussed in the previous chapter, Fricke was enthusiastic about criminalistics. He recognized the opportunities that new scientific techniques such as fingerprinting were creating for incriminating suspects and contesting alibis, allowing investigators to decisively fix the identities of individuals and demonstrate their presence at crime scenes:

> [T]he fingerprint of the accused on the scene of the crime is most conclusive evidence of his presence there. The value of fingerprints as evidence can hardly be overestimated. The most iron-clad alibi must fail if the fingerprint of the accused is found "on the job."[51]

In Chandler's fiction, the police are able to draw on such techniques in their investigations. In *The Lady in the Lake*, Detective Webber's investigation of the scene of Chris Lavery's murder is supported by a dedicated fingerprint technician upon whom he is able to rely for the time-consuming work of gathering latent prints:

> Webber pointed a finger at the curly-haired man and said: 'Downstairs in the bathroom, Busoni. I want a lot of prints from all over the house, particularly any that seem to be made by a woman. It will be a long job.' ('The Lady in the Lake', p. 300)

After Jules Amthor is arrested at the end of *Farewell, My Lovely*, we are told that he was quickly identified as an 'international con man', whose fingerprints were on file at police departments in London and Paris. Despite his characteristically cynical tone, Marlowe cannot help but be impressed by the efficiency of such a system: 'How the hell

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[50] MacShane, *The Life of Raymond Chandler*, p. 63.
[51] Fricke, *Criminal Investigation*, pp. 100–01.

they got all that since yesterday or the day before I don't know. These boys work fast when they feel like it'.[52]

Working alone as a licensed private investigator, Chandler's hero does not have access to the same techniques and institutional resources, but he is sometimes able to exploit other more generally available modern technologies that incidentally serve to incriminate his suspects. In both *The High Window* and *The Little Sister*, incriminating photographs play a significant role. In the former novel, images captured by chance of Elizabeth Murdock's first husband Horace Bright falling from a window prove that it was Murdock, and not her assistant Merle Davis, that pushed Bright to his death. In *The Little Sister*, photographs of a businessman named Steelgrave prove both that he is in fact the Cleveland gangster 'Weepy' Moyer, and that he had the opportunity to commit a murder: 'This photo is clear evidence of itself that at a certain time and place Steelgrave was not in jail and therefore had no alibi for the killing of Stein' ('The Little Sister', p. 572). More often, however, Marlowe pursues his investigations without being able to rely upon the criminalistic resources of his peers in law enforcement; and this has implications for his method.

For the solitary private eye, working in immediately pre- and post-war Los Angeles, an investigation proceeding on the principle of reconstructing movements and fixing the identities of suspects necessarily took the form of pursuit, observation and interrogation across the city's dispersed geography. As a result, Marlowe's investigative technique is fundamentally mobile — it is as much kinetic as it is rational or deductive. If the prevalence of the automobile allowed Los Angeles to develop in a dispersed fashion, then the consequence was a city in which automobile ownership was made vital; as R.J. Smith writes, in 1940s Los Angeles 'mobility became essential to

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[52] Raymond Chandler, 'Farewell, My Lovely', in *The Big Sleep and Other Novels*, pp. 167–366 (p. 363). Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

existence'.[53] The apparently picaresque quality of Chandler's novels, and Marlowe's status as the first 'motorized private eye' need to be understood in this context — in which investigations that depend upon pursuit and observation to fix identities in time and space take place across the great distances covered by the 'horizontally dispersed' city of Los Angeles. The automobile is central to Marlowe's ability to practically navigate the city; his mobility is equally dependant on his ability to rationalize space, organizing, structuring and identifying his surroundings to establish the kind of precise environmental image that Kevin Lynch describes.

Whether it be tailing a suspect to observe their whereabouts at a certain time or investigating a crime scene to find evidence that implies the suspect's presence (such as the convention of checking the ashtray for different brands of cigarette or for butts marked with lipstick), in Chandler's fiction facts are constantly revealed to Marlowe through his being, as the cliché goes, in the right place at the right time. In *The Big Sleep*, his memorable discovery of the corpse of Arthur Geiger with the drugged Carmen Sternwood sitting oblivious nearby is the earliest example of Marlowe's persistent habit of stumbling upon murder victims before they have been reported to the police.[54] He wryly acknowledges this tendency in *The Little Sister*: 'It was time for me to make one of my anonymous phone calls. Come and pick up the body, fellows. Who am I? Just a lucky boy who keeps finding them for you' (p. 514).

The repetition of such scenes serves to emphasize the private eye's peculiar relationship to the spatio-temporal aspects of criminal investigation, distinct from those of the police detective or the criminal. Despite his ostensible position on the side of justice, as a private contractor, his responsibilities to his own clients bring him into

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[53] Smith, *The Great Black Way*, p. 237.

[54] A non-exhaustive list of similar encounters would include the Marlowe's discovery of the following murder victims: Lindsay Marriot in *Farewell, My Lovely*; Elisha Morningstar, George Anson Phillips and Louis Vannier in *The High Window*; Chris Lavery, Muriel Chess and Mildred Haviland in *The Lady in the Lake*; Steelgrave, 'Dr Hambleton' and a Bay City building superintendent in *The Little Sister*.

conflict with established law enforcement figures, forcing him to balance his moral and legal obligations against his duty to his clients:

> The whole damn case was that way. There was never a point where I could do the natural obvious thing without stopping to rack my head dizzy with figuring how it would affect somebody I owed something to. ('The Little Sister', p. 594)

Marlowe's ambiguous status does not only test his loyalty and professional ethics; it also leaves him vulnerable. The private eye does not have the authority and jurisdictional responsibility of a police officer. When he encounters crime scenes, and particularly when his obligation to a client forces him to be evasive when explaining his presence to the police, Marlowe is at risk of making himself a suspect. He is, in other words, a potentially incriminated subject, in addition to being one who seeks to incriminate others. In *The High Window*, he reflects on the differences between his role and that of the police, wondering 'how it would feel to be a homicide dick and find bodies lying around and not mind at all, not have to sneak out wiping doorknobs' (p. 68–9). He alludes here to what is a subtle motif throughout Chandler's novels:

> The room felt cold. I locked it up again, wiped the knob off with my handkerchief, and went back to the totem pole.[55]

> The door was painted white and had a crystal knob. I turned the knob in my handkerchief and looked inside. […] I shut the closet door and went out of the bedroom, holding my handkerchief ready for more doorknobs. ('The Lady in the Lake', p. 272)

Compelled to obscure his presence at crime scenes, both to protect his clients and to avoid drawing the police's suspicion, Marlowe repeatedly uses his handkerchief to wipe surfaces clean of the latent fingerprints that might incriminate him. The modern criminalistic techniques available to the police have the potential to threaten Marlowe as much as they do the criminals he investigates.

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[55] Raymond Chandler, 'The Big Sleep', in *The Big Sleep and Other Novels*, pp. 3–164 (p. 30). Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

Marlowe's position, then, is precarious. He attempts to reconstruct the movements and fix the identities of suspects, but does so without the resources of a modern police department to support him. He therefore relies on pursuit and observation, which depends in turn on a highly differentiated city image in order for him to orientate himself and move purposefully in urban space. With his loyalties divided and his authority tenuous in the eyes of the police, the mobility he depends upon to pursue his investigations risks incriminating him. Marlowe needs to orientate himself, not only because his investigations depend on his mobility, but also because he is at risk of incrimination, and must provide satisfactory alibis to the police. It is for this reason that moments of disorientation play such a significant role in Chandler's fiction.

Marlowe is frequently knocked unconscious, to the extent that, as Chandler biographer Tom Hiney puts it, 'the blackout scene became a distinct trademark of Marlowe's adventures'.[56] In *Farewell, My Lovely,* for example, Marlowe is knocked out twice: during the early scene in which Marlowe is sapped from behind whilst accompanying Lindsey Marriot on a rendezvous with a group of jewellery thieves, and when he is beaten unconscious by corrupt police officers and then drugged in a Bay City sanatorium. Hiney associates the prevalence of such scenes in Chandler's novels with the blackouts that he experienced when he drank heavily. Indeed, in the second example from *Farewell, My Lovely*, Chandler alludes to the symptoms of severe alcohol withdrawal or *delirium tremens* (the 'DTs'): Marlowe struggles with hallucinations and temporal ellipses as he attempts to regain full consciousness, and as he does so, he hears a disembodied voice repeating 'You've got the dt's ... you've got the dt's ... you've got the dt's' ('Farewell, My Lovely', p. 281). It is perhaps telling that many of the earliest appearances of 'disorientation' as a symptom in psychiatric writings arise in discussions

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[56] Hiney, *Raymond Chandler: A Biography*, p. 63.

of Korsakoff's syndrome, a neurological disorder also known in the early twentieth century as 'alcoholic insanity' due to its association with alcohol abuse. One account, from 1910, identifies 'disorientation to place, time and persons' as one of the three cardinal symptoms of 'Korsakov's Disease'.[57] This experience of disorientation is likened to 'a state of stupor or pathological sleep, or rather to a very prolonged state of awakening from sleep'.[58]

Other scenes demonstrate clearly how the disorientation associated with such blackouts relates to Marlowe's need to reconstruct movement and his vulnerability to incrimination. He frequently regains consciousness in close proximity to dead or dying characters: Lindsey Marriot in *Farewell, My Lovely*; Mildred Haviland in *The Lady in the Lake*; Orrin Quest in *The Little Sister*. Such scenes are examples of the previously identified trope of Marlowe inadvertently discovering dead bodies and having to obscure his presence at such crime scenes. Marlowe's vulnerability in these cases, however, is much more acute. In each instance, the victim has been fatally injured by the same party who has knocked Marlowe unconscious. The most threatening and explicitly violent example arises in *The Lady in the Lake*, when he wakes to find himself doused in gin next to the brutally murdered Mildred Haviland, and almost immediately hears police officers gathering in the corridor outside. Here, he has been framed by corrupt Bay City detective Al Degarmo, Haviland's actual killer.

Marlowe is forced to account for his presence at such crime scenes under greater threat of incrimination, struggling with physical discomfort and the disorientating challenge of temporal ellipses. In *Farewell, My Lovely*, he awakes to the sound of an apparently disembodied voice attempting to chronologically reconstruct the time frame of recent events:

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[57] Turner, 'Alcoholic Insanity', p. 40.
[58] Ibid., p. 41.

> 'Four minutes,' the voice said. 'Five, possibly six. They must have moved quick and quiet.'
>> I opened my eyes and looked fuzzily at a cold star. [...]
>> The voice said: 'It could have been a little longer. Maybe even eight minutes altogether.' (p. 208)

It takes Marlowe a moment to realize that the disembodied voice is his own: 'I was talking to myself, coming out of it. I was trying to figure the thing out subconsciously' (p. 208). Even after overcoming this moment of disorientation regarding personal identity, Marlowe continues his attempt to establish a chronology:

> Okey, what I mean is, that would be 10.15, say. The place was about twelve minutes away. 10.27. I get out, walk down in the hollow, spend at the most eight minutes fooling around and come on back up to get my head treated. 10.35. (p. 209)

This brief attempt at reconstructing the movements of his attackers during the period of his blackout metonymically represents the process of Marlowe's investigations throughout the novels. The syntax, moreover, reflects his disorientation on a formal level. The uncertainty Marlowe's feels as he attempts to reconstruct events, and the sense of disembodiment he experiences, are communicated in prose that is uncharacteristically disjointed and ambiguous. For the reader accustomed to Marlowe's confident and articulate narration, the effect of this breakdown in Marlowe's verbal mastery is particularly powerful — it undermines what Jameson calls 'the premium placed on disabused lucidity by the voice-over format'.[59] What these blackout scenes, so prevalent in Chandler's writing, demonstrate is Marlowe's vulnerability to incrimination, a vulnerability heightened by states of disorientation.

If Marlowe's investigations — which are attempts to establish incrimination that depend on purposeful mobility — necessitate his successful orientation, moments of disorientation threaten the outcome of those investigations. Such moments also reveal

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[59] 'The Synoptic Chandler', p. 51.

his potentially precarious position as a private eye — his vulnerability to malevolent or inadvertent incrimination. Marlowe is indeed a 'motorized private eye'; he harnesses modern technology as he seeks to arrest the mobility and fix the identities of criminals. But Chandler engages with contemporary anxieties about suspect mobility in a sophisticated and critical way. Philip Marlowe is not a *de facto* police detective, restoring social order through his investigations. Through the fluid identities of Marlowe's antagonists, Chandler addresses longstanding cultural concerns regarding criminal anonymity in the metropolis. He also explores the inherent vulnerability of the individual within a society prone to treating mobility as potentially suspect, through the way he emphasizes Marlowe's position relative to the wider criminal justice system. The private eye, through the circumstances of his work, is acutely exposed to a vulnerability that is latent across society as a whole. He is aware of the risks involved in being unable to provide an alibi; of the ways law enforcement practices can be exploited to undermine legitimate accounts, and of how moments of disorientation can leave the individual incapable of accounting for his movements. In *The High Window* there are no scenes in which Marlowe is knocked unconscious. It is notable, rather, for the distinctive ways in which Chandler creates equivalent scenes that speak to this contemporary dilemma, in which Marlowe is left both disorientated and particularly at risk of incrimination.

'The detective does nothing': *The High Window* (1942)

Published in 1942, *The High Window* was the third of Chandler's seven completed novels. In his correspondence, he was generally self-deprecating regarding the quality of his own work; his provisional judgement on *The High Window*, however, was particularly negative. Having submitted the manuscript to his publisher, he wrote: 'I'm

afraid the book is not going to be any good to you. No action, no likeable characters, no nothing. The detective does nothing.'[60] *The High Window* does not, at first glance, suggest itself as a significant break with the conventions Chandler had worked within in his previous two novels. It shares with *The Big Sleep* and *Farewell, My Lovely* its Los Angeles setting, its central protagonist, and many of its tropes and character types. The later *The Long Goodbye* (1953), significantly longer than his other novels and more self-consciously literary in its focus on personal relationships and comparative lack of action, was certainly Chandler's most obvious attempt at a more artistically ambitious work. The subsequent critical response to *The High Window*, however, has frequently judged it to be distinctive, in subtle ways, compared to Chandler's other novels.

Fredric Jameson is perhaps the most notable example of this tendency. In 'The Synoptic Chandler', he proposes that only the first four Marlowe novels can be considered canonical.[61] Within this canon, *The High Window* is to be regarded as in some way unsatisfactory or inferior: it 'fails to cohere', on Jameson's reading, despite the fact that 'the same social and semiotic system is in operation in this novel as in the others'.[62] Drawing on Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1950), Jameson concludes that what *The High Window* lacks is the presence of a spatial 'outside' — scenes in which physical and theoretical boundaries, which are associated with both nature and death, are encountered.[63] Charles Scruggs follows Jameson in identifying

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[60] Letter to Blanche Knopf, 15th March 1942 in *Selected Letters of Raymond Chandler*, p. 20. Later in 1942, his view was a little more dispassionate: '*The High Window* was not the striking and original job of work that could be promoted into anything of consequence. Some people liked it better than my other efforts, some people liked it much less. But nobody went into any screaming fits either way' (Letter to Blanche Knopf, 22nd October 1942 in *Selected Letters of Raymond Chandler*, p. 22).

[61] 'The Synoptic Chandler', p. 33.

[62] 'The Synoptic Chandler', p. 45.

[63] Jameson is a frequently insightful critic of Chandler's work. His argument in 'The Synoptic Chandler', however, is grounded in a proposition — that *The High Window* 'fails to cohere' — that is vaguely defined and based largely on the generalization, made without reference to any other critical assessments, that it is 'a book not normally thought to be one of his best' (p. 38). Shoop has also rightly questions the 'putatively "canonical" status in Jameson's reading of the first four novels in Chandler's corpus' ('Corpse and Accomplice', p. 220).

some quality distinguishing *The High Window* from Chandler's other novels — for

Scruggs, it is that the novel implicitly engages with the continuing legacy of slavery,

locating 'the root presence of evil' not in the corrupt nature of the modern city, as in

Chandler's other novels, but 'in the obscure history of the nation's origins'.[64] Scruggs's

sensitive reading of *The High Window* brings out some of its most distinctive themes

and images: the weight of the past, the prevalence of repetition and replication, the

analogical status of Marlowe's chess playing, and the sense that he ends the novel

'[questioning] his own efficacy as a detective'.[65] He is too quick to dismiss the

significance of the urban, however, because in *The High Window* it is precisely in

Marlowe's complicated and compromised experience of the city that these other themes

and images intersect, and in which the novel's importance in relation to Chandler's

other works can be located.

   One distinguishing aspect of *The High Window*'s plot is the relative importance

of missing objects, missing persons and false identities. The first chapter begins with

Marlowe arriving at the Pasadena home of prospective client Elizabeth Bright Murdock.

There, Marlowe is hired to locate a missing object: 'A rare gold coin called a Brasher

Doubloon […] said to be worth over ten thousand dollars', taken from the coin

collection of Jasper Murdock, Mrs Murdock's deceased second husband (p. 10). Quest

objects appear in nearly all of Marlowe's cases: nude photos of Carmen Sternwood in

The Big Sleep; incriminating pictures of Mavis Weld with a reputed gangster in *The

Little Sister*; and the missing necklace in the sub-plot of *Farewell, My Lovely*, for

example. Chandler's other novels all ultimately centre, as noted above, on searches for

missing *persons* — searches complicated by aliases and assumed identities. *The High

Window* appears to gesture in the same direction when Mrs Murdock insists that her

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[64] Charles Scruggs, 'The Lawn Jockey and "The Justice We Dream Of": History and Race in Raymond Chandler's *The High Window*', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 48.2 (2012), 115–36 (p. 117).
[65] Ibid., p. 119.

daughter-in-law, previously and now once again known as Linda Conquest, has

disappeared and taken the missing coin with her. Conquest, however, is introduced only

as a means to the end of recovering the missing coin, and indeed Marlowe's search for

her proves to be relatively straightforward, and only very indirectly useful in recovering

the Brasher Doubloon. Although other crimes are uncovered in the course of Marlowe's

investigation, the quest to establish the location of the Brasher Doubloon will hold his

attention until the novel's conclusion.

The Brasher Doubloon is significant not just for its relative importance when

compared to the plot structures of all of Chandler's other novels, but for the specific

analogical role it plays in the narrative. Marlowe learns about the history of the coin

when he visits Elisha Morningstar, the numismatist based in the 'Belfont Building' in

Downtown Los Angeles. As he expounds to Marlowe at length on the seemingly

ephemeral details of the coin's provenance, Morningstar notes 'its maker was a private

goldsmith named Ephraim Brasher, or Brashear. Where the name survives it is usually

spelled Brashear, but not on the coin. I don't know why' (pp. 44–45). The

Brasher/Brashear distinction is ultimately irrelevant in plot terms, but it serves to

introduce an ambiguity regarding identity that is significant in light of a further

observation. Detailing the idiosyncrasies of the coin's manufacture, Morningstar

observes:

> The dies wore and had to be remade from time to time. With consequent slight
> variations in design which would be visible under strong magnification. In fact,
> it would be safe to say no two of the coins would be identical, judged by modern
> standards of microscopic examination. (p. 45)

The fact that the coin was produced through an inconsistent molding technique provides

Marlowe with a clue concerning the reasons for the theft: the coin would consequently

be easier to forge convincingly, provided that the forger could base the forgery on an

original. What is also striking in Morningstar's description is the implicit similarity to another technical process — the fixing of personal identity through the analysis of fingerprints. The association is reinforced if we compare the passage above with one from Fricke's *Criminal Investigation*:

> [T]hese ridge patterns differ so distinctly from one another that for all practical purposes we may say that no two persons have the same ridge characteristics upon their respective thumbs or other fingers.[66]

These suggestive correspondences signal that the question of identity will in fact be relevant, if in an unconventional way, to the search for the Brasher Doubloon. Although the search that Marlowe undertakes in *The High Window* does not focus, as it does in Chandler's other novels, on a missing person, ambiguous identity and suspect mobility will remain central to the novel's plot, and to the progress of Marlowe's investigation.

'Miles apart maybe': Speed, Sound and Distance

In early January 1941, the *Los Angeles Times* celebrated the launch of 'the new motorway era'; an era that had been initiated by the opening of the city's first two freeways the previous year.[67] Freeways were conceived as a solution to traffic congestion that would allow high-speed, near-uninterrupted movement for automobile drivers traversing the city, and these two routes were characterized in the article's optimistic vision as the first steps in 'the development of nonstop, express motorways across the Los Angeles metropolitan area of 43 incorporated cities and more than 1200 square miles'.[68] The Arroyo Seco Parkway, which connected Pasadena with the outskirts of Downtown Los Angeles, and the Cahuenga Pass route between Hollywood

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[66] Fricke, *Criminal Investigation*, p. 100.
[67] 'Motorists by the Million', *Los Angeles Times*, 2 January 1941, p. 10 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/165096797?accountid=14511> [accessed 3 March 2017].
[68] Ibid.

and the San Fernando Valley were both opened to traffic in the second half of 1940.[69] It

was during this time that Chandler was in the early stages of working on *The High*

Window, work that would continue throughout 1941, and end when he submitted his

final manuscript in March 1942.[70]

The Marlowe novels are often vague about the precise time in which they are

set, generally lacking references to events that might incidentally date the action. It is

this lack of obvious chronological specificity that accounts for Reyner Banham's

suggestion that the novels 'represent the city in the twenties and thirties'.[71] *The High*

Window, however, is dated more precisely. Late in the novel, when Marlowe confronts

Elizabeth Murdock with his suspicions, he asks: 'Vannier's been blackmailing you for

about eight years, hasn't he? On account of something that happened on 26 April

1933?' (p. 167). Marlowe's question locates the action of the novel in 1941, or at the

earliest late 1940. *The High Window* was, in other words, the first of Chandler's novels

to be both composed and set in the 'new motorway era' about which the *Times* had

enthused: the early stages of what would become the Los Angeles freeway system.

Strikingly, this development appears to have influenced the spatial configuration of

Chandler's novel (Figure 1). Marlowe's client in *The High Window*, Elizabeth Bright

Murdock, lives 'on Dresden Avenue in the Oak Knoll section of Pasadena' (p. 3); he

repeatedly travels to Pasadena to consult with her, before driving 'back to the Arroyo

Seco and on towards Hollywood' (p. 18). Local gangster Alex Morny runs a club in

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[69] 'Eight-Lane Cahuenga Pass Freeway, Costing $1,500,000, Dedicated at Colorful Exercises', *Los Angeles Times*, 16 June 1940, p. A1 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/165065182?accountid=14511> [accessed 3 March 2017]; 'Six-Million-Dollar Arroyo Seco Parkway Opened', *Los Angeles Times*, 31 December 1940, p. A1 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/165144493?accountid=14511> [accessed 3 March 2017]; 'Thousands View Dedication of Arroyo Seco Parkway, First Freeway of West', *Los Angeles Times*, 31 December 1940, p. B <https://search.proquest.com/docview/165245997?accountid=14511> [accessed 3 March 2017].
[70] Tom Williams, *A Mysterious Something in the Light: Raymond Chandler, A Life* (London: Aurum, 2012), pp. 165–69.
[71] Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 231–32.

FIGURE 1 — SIGNIFICANT LOCATIONS IN *THE HIGH WINDOW*
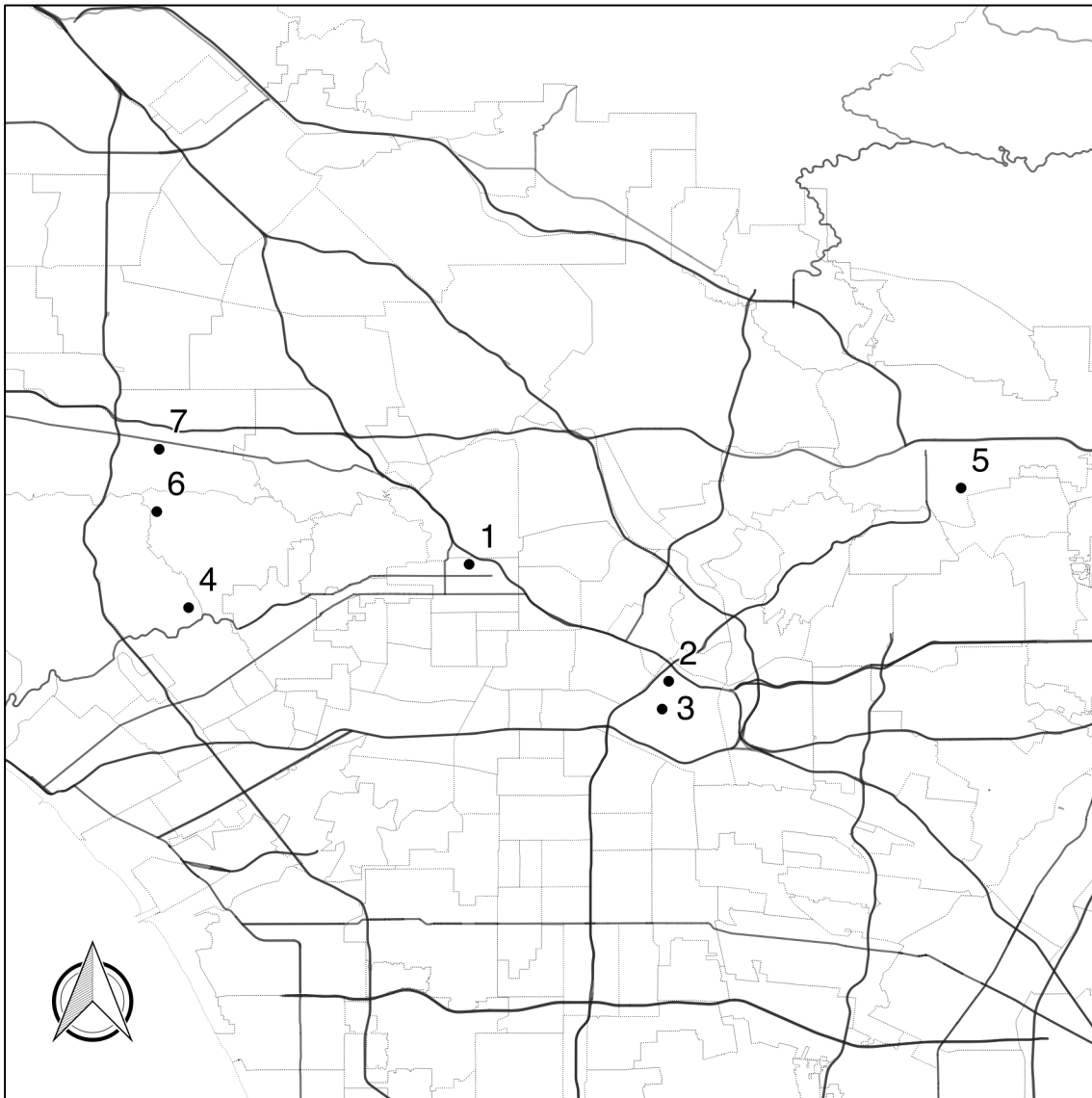
1. The Cahuenga Building – Marlowe's office
2. Florence Apartments, Bunker Hill – George Anson's home
3. Belfont Building – Elisha Morningstar's office
4. Stillwood Crescent Drive – Alex Morny's home
5. Oak Knoll, Pasadena – Elizabeth Murdock's home (reached via Arroyo Seco Parkway)
6. The Idle Valley Club (reached via Cahuenga Pass Freeway)
7. Louis Vannier's home, Sherman Oaks (reached via Cahuenga Pass Freeway)

This and all subsequent maps produced by Alex Pavey using QGis. Neighbourhood and region boundary data from the Los Angeles Times 'Mapping L.A.' project. <http://boundaries.latimes.com/sets/> [accessed 5 June 2017]. Primary and secondary road data from the US Census Bureau <https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/tiger-line-shapefile-2013-state-california-primary-and-secondary-roads-state-based-shapefile> [accessed 20 February 2017].

'Idle Valley', a fictitious private community Chandler places on the north side of the Santa Monica Mountains, whilst Vannier, the blackmailer who is the novel's major antagonist, lives nearby in Sherman Oaks. Both locations host significant scenes in the progress of Marlowe's investigation; he reaches both through the Cahuenga Pass (p. 93, p. 149). Marlowe's use of these new 'nonstop, express motorways', as the *Los Angeles Times* put it, would seem to emphasize his mastery of the dispersed contemporary spaces of Los Angeles. Certainly, a summary of Marlowe's movements demonstrates how far he travels in the course of his investigation; from Pasadena to Brentwood is approximately 20 miles, east to west, and from the San Fernando Valley to Pico Boulevard is at least 25 miles north to south. This gives an operating area of approximately 500 square miles, within which Marlowe travels, at a very conservative estimate, 150 miles.[72] These movements allow him, through direct questioning, observation and eavesdropping, to obtain the knowledge his investigation requires.

The neighbourhoods he visits in the course of the novel are described, primarily in terms of their socio-economic character, in such a way as to establish an overall environmental image that is heterogeneous and highly differentiated. As noted above, Bunker Hill, the run-down and precarious neighbourhood on the edge of Downtown Los Angeles where hapless P.I. George Anson Phillips resides, is vividly described as 'old town, lost town, shabby town, crook town' (p. 50). The contrast with the wealth, exclusivity and indolence of the Bel-Air neighbourhood in which gangster Alex Morny lives is clearly signalled even before Marlowe arrives at Morny's home:

> Stillwood Crescent Drive curved leisurely north from Sunset Boulevard, well beyond the Bel-Air Country Club golf-course. The road was lined with walled and fenced estates. [...] The street had no sidewalk. Nobody walked in that neighbourhood, not even the postman. (p. 28)

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[72] This estimation excludes Marlowe's ten-day round trip out of the city, late in the novel, to return Elizabeth Murdock's traumatized assistant Merle Davis to her parents' home.

Elizabeth Murdock's neighbourhood in Pasadena is no less wealthy, but is distinguished by its comparatively 'old-money' character, a stuffiness that is reflected even in its climate: in Bel-Air 'the afternoon was hot, but not hot like Pasadena' (p. 28).

Marlowe, then, discerns the differences between the locations of *The High Window* with characteristic clarity and decisiveness, and he exhibits a speed and fluidity of movement that is facilitated not just by the automobile, but by the recently opened freeway system. The apparent effectiveness of Marlowe's movement through the city — and the clarity of his environmental image — is suggested early in his investigation. Having noticed that he is being tailed as he follows up his initial leads, he engineers a confrontation with his pursuer in the lobby of the Hotel Metropole in Downtown Los Angeles, at the intersection of Seventh Street and Spring Street (p. 38). This choice of venue highlights Marlowe's knowledge of the city, and is an instance of controlled and purposeful movement through it. A hotel lobby is clearly a shrewd venue to chose for such a confrontation, but the hotel in question is close to the Downtown location he intends to investigate afterwards: Elisha Morningstar's office in the Belfont Building on Ninth Street. He is able to outwit his pursuer — private investigator George Phillips — without being diverted, literally and figuratively, off-course.

The role of mobility in *The High Window*, particularly in relation to technology, is more ambiguous than might be suggested by such a summary. As Los Angeles expanded physically, a series of contractions were simultaneously taking place, through technology that allowed for faster motion and near-instantaneous long-distance communication. These movements — expansion and contraction — are bound up with each other: the dispersed city was only practical, functional, because of the technologies that helped overcome, or at least manage, its increased distances. *The High Window* was written and set during what was ostensibly a moment of civic optimism regarding fast

and fluid automobility. And yet, as discussed in the previous chapter, law enforcement authorities had for decades framed such mobility ambivalently, as an opportunity that would inevitably be exploited by criminals. This contradiction is at the heart of the novel's representation of speed and mobility.

Tom Gunning, writing on the impact of late nineteenth-century technology on criminology and early cinema, proposes that modernity is defined by 'techniques of circulation', such as the railway, mass production and the standardization of currency.[73] Such techniques of circulation have the potential both to transform experience, and to be exploited:

> While circulation relies on an evolving process of rationalization of time and space, the very intricacy and speed of these routes of transfer and exchange create a counterthrust in which stability and predictability can be threatened.[74]

On Gunning's reading, the genre of the detective story centres on the relationship of two archetypal figures within these networks of modernity: the criminal, who 'preys on the very complexity of the system of circulation'; and the detective, 'whose intelligence, knowledge, and perspicacity allow him to discover the dark corners of the circulatory system, and restore order'.[75] Gunning's astute analysis, though grounded in nineteenth-century criminology, is readily applicable to the newer technological forms of the twentieth century — as for example, in the case of the automobile, and criminologists' fears that lawbreakers could exploit its mobility. The position of the detective in Chandler's fiction, however, is more complex. Rather than forming one part of a dialectic, as in Gunning's reading, Philip Marlowe occupies a liminal position between the criminal and the police detective. The means by which he explores the 'dark corners' of 1940s society also risk making him an object of suspicion.

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[73] Gunning, 'Tracing the Individual Body', p. 15.
[74] Ibid., p. 20.
[75] Ibid., p. 20.

The novel's ambivalent attitude towards technology is reflected in its treatment of another new technological form that facilitated life in the dispersed and decentralized metropolis by contracting distances: the telephone. One of the possibilities created by telecommunications is what sound studies theorist John Durham Peters terms 'simultaneity across distance' — the ability to establish remote and instantaneous audio contact with other individuals.[76] On these terms, the telephone supplements and in some cases supersedes the mobility afforded by the automobile — an opportunity clearly of potential value to a private eye operating across the dispersed geography of Los Angeles. The first appearance of the telephone in *The High Window* would seem to reinforce this reading. When Marlowe returns to his office immediately after having been hired by Elizabeth Murdock he telephones Kenny Haste, 'a crime reporter on the Chronicle' (p. 26). Pursuing his first lead, Linda Murdock's association with Alex Morny, he quickly establishes details of Morny's past, his home address, and the location of the nightclub he runs in Idle Valley. Without needing to take the time to travel to the office of the appropriately named Haste, Marlowe is able to develop his understanding and make progress in his investigation.

Eric Rawson is one of the few critics to consider the role played by sound, silence and audition in Chandler's novels, applying concepts from the field of sound studies to provide a survey of the Chandlerian 'soundscape'.[77] As part of his analysis, he considers the significance of the telephone in Chandler's novels, coming to the conclusion that, unlike other forms of audio reproduction (the radio, the loudspeaker), only it 'can transmit meaningful and accurate information. As a plot device and an epistemic instrument, the telephone bridges otherwise unfathomable gaps in Chandler's

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[76] 'Phantasms of the Living, Dialogues with the Dead', p. 362.

[77] For introductions to the key approaches and thinkers within the field of sound studies, or audio culture, see *The Sound Studies Reader*, ed. by Jonathan Sterne (New York: Routledge, 2012), Bull, *Sound Studies*, and *Sound in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, ed. by David Suisman and Susan Strasser (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

narratives'.[78] He goes on to argue that the telephone 'offers Marlowe immediate access over distance and serves to construct a meaningful picture of events that would otherwise remain obscure'.[79] Rawson's analysis, however, underestimates the extent to which the telephone is presented as problematic and challenging to Marlowe's methods, rather than as an epistemic instrument transmitting 'meaningful and accurate information'.

'A situation which I didn't even begin to understand': Disorientation, Incrimination and the Telephone

Sound studies scholar Jonathan Sterne cautions cultural historians against assuming 'that sound-reproduction technologies will have a disorienting effect on the senses that are otherwise oriented or grounded in coherent bodily experience', arguing that such a reading rests on unhistorical or anachronistic assumptions.[80] In *The High Window*, a series of scenes in which telephonic communication plays a central role coincide with the moments that Marlowe is at his most disorientated in relation to the progress of his investigation, and most vulnerable to incrimination. If the telephone does indeed appear to have a disorientating effect on Marlowe's senses, however, it is not because it is represented in the manner Sterne criticizes, as an exceptional object presenting some unique and disruptive epistemological challenge to an otherwise grounded, stable subject. For much of the novel the telephone serves as a functional modern device, without any profound significance ascribed to it. Yet at crucial points in the narrative, Chandler creates circumstances in which the very means by which Marlowe is able to

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[78] Eric Rawson, 'Sound, Silence and the Cipher of Personality in the Novels of Raymond Chandler', *Clues: A Journal of Detection*, 29.2 (2011), 30–39 (p. 36).
[79] Ibid., p. 37.
[80] Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 20–1.

navigate the city's geography are revealed to have the potential to disrupt and undermine his investigation.

At the end of his visit to Elisha Morningstar's office to learn about the provenance of the Brasher Doubloon, Marlowe pretends to leave the office and then hides in the numismatist's anteroom. There, he listens in on a second line as Morningstar makes a telephone call to the Florence Apartments on Court Street — the Bunker Hill rooming house where George Phillips resides. Having learned that Phillips is more deeply involved in the case of the missing coin than he initially appeared to be, Marlowe quickly leaves the Belfont Building and travels to Court Street, where he discovers that Phillips has been murdered. Here, the telephone ostensibly serves as a useful tool for Marlowe's investigation, enabling him to listen in at a distance on a conversation taking place between two discrete points more than a mile apart. There are significant details, however, that make these scenes much more spatially and temporally complex.

During the call, audible from somewhere in the Florence Apartments is 'the blaring sound of a loud radio broadcasting a baseball game. It was not close to the telephone, but it was noisy enough' (p. 50). When Marlowe arrives at the apartment building just over half an hour later, he finds that 'the radio I had heard over the telephone was still blasting the baseball game' (p. 51). This broadcast is continually audible as Marlowe investigates Phillips's apartment, discovers his corpse and then attempts to exit without leaving any trace of having been there: 'Behind my back three Dodgers struck out against a welter of synthetic crowd noise' (p. 51); 'Another batter struck out or flew out behind my back in the recreated ball game' (p. 52). This persistent soundtrack provides a certain continuity between the two spaces, the Belfont Building and the Florence Apartments, that alludes to the telephone's status as what

John Durham Peters calls a 'space-binding' medium, able to 'knit distinct points in

space together over great distances'.[81] This sense of continuity is highlighted by a brief

narrative ellipsis — chapter seven ends with Marlowe waiting to board the elevator as

he leaves the Belfont Building; chapter eight begins with Marlowe arriving at the

Florence Apartments, with the journey between the two locations not described.

The presence of the radio noise will prove to be significant when attempting to

determine whether Phillips' neighbour Hench, who was listening to the radio while

raucously drinking with his partner, is responsible for Phillips' murder. In this sense, the

radio broadcast helps fix the relative positions in time and space of Marlowe, Hench and

the apartment manager. It is also assumed to have provided the occasion for Phillips'

murder, since the piercing volume would have helped to mask the sound of gunshots. In

addition to these points, though, Chandler introduces a further aspect, one that in itself

seems obscure. The radio broadcast is specifically described by Breeze, the

investigating homicide detective, as 'a studio re-broadcast' (p. 62), whilst Marlowe

himself describes it in passing as 'the recreated ball game' (p. 52). Rawson

contextualises this detail, noting 'the only broadcasts of major-league games available

in the West in the 1930s and 1940s were ones re-created from events that had occurred

minutes or even hours earlier', in which broadcasters in radio studios far from the

ballparks hosting the games would receive basic information about the progress of the

game over the telegraph, which would then be embellished with 'elaborate sound effects

and imaginative—in many instances, imaginary—play-by-play hype'.[82] What Marlowe

hears, in other words, is not a live broadcast, transmitted near-simultaneously. It is,

rather, the audio reproduction of a baseball game that is disjointed not just spatially —

by transmitting the details of the event in one location to listeners in another location —

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[81] Peters, 'Phantasms of the Living, Dialogues with the Dead', p. 362.
[82] Rawson, 'Sound, Silence and the Cipher of Personality', p. 36.

but also temporally. The radio broadcast that he hears over the telephone at the Belfont Building and through the walls as he investigates George Anson Phillips' apartment is an asynchronous reproduction of a match already played, won and lost — a significant foreshadowing to which we will return.

Marlowe does nevertheless make tangible progress in his investigation during his visits to the Belfont Building and the Florence Apartments. Shortly afterwards, however, and occurring in quick succession (four chapters, and a few hours from Marlowe's perspective), is a series of further incidents that centre on telephonic communication. Each in its own way unsettles Marlowe and presents a challenge to the progress of his investigation: he receives an anonymous threat whilst alone in his office, is disorientated by an object that for a moment appears to be in two places at once, and is the subject of a surreptitious attempt to implicate him in a murder enquiry. These incidents coincide with what might be considered the peak of confusion or indeterminacy in the plot — the point at which Marlowe seems furthest from solving the mystery at hand, and the point at which the situation is least comprehensible to the reader.

After being questioned by the homicide detectives assigned to Phillips's murder, Marlowe leaves Bunker Hill and returns to his office in Hollywood. There, he takes delivery of a package that unexpectedly appears to contain the missing Brasher Doubloon. He telephones Elisha Morningstar's office, but gets no answer (Morningstar is, unbeknownst to Marlowe, most likely already dead at this point), and then gets up to leave — only to be interrupted by a telephone call, the ringing bell of which 'had a sinister sound, for no reason of itself, but because of the ears to which it rang' (p. 70). The caller immediately hangs up, and then calls back:

> The phone rang again. I made a sound in my throat and put it to my ear again, not saying anything at all.

> So we were there silent, both of us, miles apart maybe, each one holding a telephone and breathing and listening and hearing nothing, not even the breathing.
> (p. 70)

This anonymous and implicitly intimidating phone call will later prove to be from Eddie Prue, Alex Morny's henchman, prompted by Marlowe's apparent interference in Morny's affairs. For now, however, the identity of the caller is unclear. Immediately following the unexpected delivery (from an anonymous sender) of the missing coin, the call unsettles Marlowe, as might be expected. Such calls reveal something about telephonic communication's unsettling capacity for anonymity — they call forth, in John Durham Peters words, 'the primal uncanniness of the medium'.[83] For Marlowe, who relies upon a clear and rationalized image of the city to orientate himself and make progress in his investigations, this brief moment in which identity and spatial position are ambiguous is particularly threatening. After he leaves his office, he is uncharacteristically nervous, and this manifests itself in uncertain movement: 'I drove west on Sunset, fiddled around a few blocks without making up my mind whether anyone was trying to follow me' (p. 71).

Believing himself to be unexpectedly in possession of the missing Brasher Doubloon, Marlowe decides to contact Elizabeth Murdock, parks at a drugstore and uses its phone booth. Without revealing that he has received the coin, he speaks to her rather cryptically and obliquely, whilst acknowledging to himself his own, again uncharacteristic, uncertainty: 'I would probably have gone on like that for a long time, not knowing just what I was trying to say' (p. 73). Instead, he is interrupted with a statement from Murdock that only disorientates him further: 'This is all very unnecessary now, Mr Marlowe. I have decided to drop the matter. The coin has been

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[83] John Durham Peters, 'The Telephonic Uncanny and the Problem of Communication', in *The Sound Studies Reader*, pp. 363–71. (p. 365).

returned to me' (p. 73). Marlowe is left shaken by her insistence that she has already recovered the very coin that he appears to have in his own possession; the peculiar object, unique and yet repeatable, seemingly exists at both ends of the telephone line. Already unsure precisely why the coin has been anonymously put in his care, this mystery is compounded by the question of 'how Mrs Elizabeth Bright Murdock had got her Brasher Doubloon back while I still had it in my pocket' (p. 78).[84]

At the conclusion of the scene, Marlowe attempts to digest the implications of his conversation with Murdock whilst clumsily drawing attention to himself through an awkward exchange with the drugstore counter man:

> I went over and looked at myself in the mirror behind the counter. I looked surprised.
> I sat down on one of the stools and said: 'A double Scotch, straight.'
> The counter man looked surprised. 'Sorry, this isn't a bar, sir. You can buy a bottle at the liquor counter.'
> 'So it is,' I said. 'I mean, so it isn't. I've had a shock. I'm a little dazed. Give me a cup of coffee, weak, and a very thin ham sandwich on stale bread. No, I better not eat yet, either. Good-bye.'
> I got down off the stool and walked to the door in a silence that was as loud as a ton of coal going down a chute. (pp. 73–4)

Despite the comic overtones, Marlowe's clumsy use of language in this exchange is significant. Whether in conversation with other characters, or through his first-person narration, the ready-quipping Marlowe's use of language is consistently employed by Chandler to signal his mastery of a situation, and his critical distance from the world in which he operates.[85] Temporary as it may be, the breaking down of this mastery during his conversations in the drugstore, combined with the uncharacteristically uncertain movements that immediately precede it, emphasizes the disorientated state of Marlowe's mind and of his investigation as a whole. The effect on the reader of his clumsy witticisms and confused observations here is different only in degree from that

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[84] For a discussion of this scene in relation to David Lynch's *Lost Highway* (1997), see Pavey, 'Unstable identities and irregular distances from Raymond Chandler to David Lynch'.
[85] Rawson, 'Sound, Silence and the Cipher of Personality', p. 35.

of the breakdown in syntax that occurs when Marlowe regains consciousness in *Farewell, My Lovely.* Tellingly, when he and Elizabeth Murdock later discuss the conversation, she observes: '[Y]ou sounded a little drunk' (p. 112). Obliged to defend himself from the accusation, Marlowe nevertheless acknowledges his unsettled reaction to the coin's ambiguous position: 'I wasn't drunk. I might have felt a little shock, but I wasn't drunk' (p. 112).

Morningstar had earlier observed that slight variations in manufacture could allow each Brasher Doubloon to be uniquely differentiated when examined under a microscope — a detail that, read as an allusion to dactylography, signals the potential importance of the coin's *identity*. In the pivotal scene in the drugstore, the unsettling implications of which are emphasized by Marlowe's behaviour and language, the missing coin operates in an analogous way to a missing person that has assumed an alias, uncannily frustrating attempts to rationalize its identity and location. This moment of disorientation intimates that the means by which Marlowe attempts to solve his cases are ambiguous, and open to manipulation, and that the knowledge he establishes is fragile — not just because of the false identities that can be assumed in modern urban space, but also by the ability of media such as the telephone to facilitate anonymity and bind together distant, disparate spaces in the same instant. The mystery of the Brasher Doubloon, from this point in the plot onwards, becomes both a quest to re-establish its fixed and unique identity and a prolonged attempt by Marlowe to reorientate himself following a moment in which his perception of distance and proximity has been undermined.

The Brasher Doubloon's apparently fluid identity during the drugstore scene establishes Marlowe's vulnerability to disorientation. It is while he is attempting to recover from this state of 'shock', as he calls it, that his vulnerability to incrimination is

reinforced. Twice in the two immediately succeeding chapters Marlowe risks his location being fixed at the scene of a crime — first through a familiar Chandlerian motif, and then through a more elaborate situation that is unique to *The High Window*. Marlowe first returns to the Belfont Building to speak to Elisha Morningstar, the man best able to help him resolve the mystery of the Brasher Doubloon's identity. He instead, for the second time in the novel, discovers a corpse. Having established that Morningstar has been murdered in his office, Marlowe attempts to obscure his own presence at the crime scene as far as possible: 'I left the lights burning, wiped the doorknobs' (p. 77); 'I called the Receiving Hospital from the corner, giving no name' (p. 78). Despite these precautions, he knows the encounter has left him vulnerable, since his movements have been observed by the elevator attendant in the building, who directs him to Morningstar's office and then wordlessly watches him leave.

In the following chapter, homicide detectives Breeze and Spangler, investigating the murder of George Anson Phillips, call at Marlowe's apartment — suspicious about his presence at the scene of the crime, and ostensibly seeking to question him further. As those discussions are taking place, however, another situation is unfolding that puts Marlowe's position under further threat. Soon after their arrival, Breeze asks to use Marlowe's telephone. Implying that he is calling the station to confirm his own location, the homicide detective is in fact setting up an attempt to implicate Marlowe in the murder of George Phillips. Before his death, a woman living in another of the Court Street apartments had heard Phillips arguing with another man. Listening through the wall from another room, the woman is a 'witness' who only knows what the suspect *sounds like*. So, operating on similar principles to the line-ups used by police to help witnesses visually identify suspects, Breeze signals for the woman to telephone Marlowe, on the spurious pretext of asking for help, to see whether she can identify him

based on his voice. If successful, this ruse would incriminate Marlowe, unwittingly and at a distance — fixing his identity as the person present at the scene of Phillips's murder.

Marlowe recognizes the ruse, and accuses Breeze and Spangler of 'Having stray broads call me up and give me a song and dance so you can say they recognized my voice somewhere, sometime' (p. 82). Clearly angered by the experience, it prompts him to bring up the story of an unrelated murder investigation in which a man he calls 'Cassidy', the son of a wealthy and influential man, shot his secretary and then himself. According to Marlowe, Cassidy's family manipulated the crime scene to make it appear as if the secretary had been the shooter, and it was reported as such:

> 'You read it in the papers,' I said, 'But it wasn't so. What's more, you knew it wasn't so and the D.A. knew it wasn't so and the D.A.'s investigators were pulled off the case within a matter of hours. There was no inquest. But every crime reporter in town and every cop on every homicide detail knew it was Cassidy that did the shooting.' (p. 85)

Marlowe ostensibly invokes the 'Cassidy case' to make a point about the contingency of justice in a city where money buys influence, as a justification for his reticence about sharing details of his client with the police.[86] Its position within the narrative, however, suggests that it needs to be read in relation to Marlowe's own vulnerability. The Cassidy case, as Marlowe describes it, is an example of how incrimination can be manipulated or falsified. The details of the crime scene were rearranged to implicate the secretary, and criminalistic techniques that might undermine the false narrative were foregone: 'And why were there no tests of the hands made for nitrates? Because you didn't want the truth' (p. 85). Following immediately from an attempt to incriminate Marlowe, and at the culmination of a sequence of escalating unease involving telephone calls, it

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[86] Later in the conversation, Marlowe suggests that he has fabricated the Cassidy case in order to make a point to Breeze and Spengler. At the novel's conclusion, however, Breeze acknowledges that Marlowe's account does in fact correspond to the facts of a case that Breeze himself investigated, although the name of the name of the family was not Cassidy.

suggests that Marlowe is highly conscious of his vulnerability, as the police bring the principles of incrimination to bear on him, demonstrating in the process the manpower and resources they possess that he does not.

In *The High Window*, in which Marlowe's attempts to orientate himself within his surroundings are integral to the effectiveness of his method, the disorientating potential of the telephone is, at the very peak of tension and ambiguity, made clearly apparent. Much more than serving as an 'epistemic instrument' used by Marlowe to bridge 'otherwise unfathomable gaps',[87] the telephone is shown to have the potential to complicate Marlowe's pursuit of knowledge and rationalization of space; and, at worst, to implicate him and expose him to danger. The significance ascribed to the telephone in *The High Window* signals the ambivalent status of the modern systems of circulation employed by Marlowe in his investigations. Marlowe can draw on such technologies to speed his own progress. But they are also open to abuse, whether by criminal antagonists or unscrupulous law-enforcement figures, and their ability to contract distances and facilitate anonymity disrupt his attempts to orientate himself. By the end of the novel, the value of his physical mobility across the streets of Los Angeles will prove to be equally uncertain.

'Not chess, properly speaking': Retrospection in Marlowe's Investigations

For all that the telephone shows disruptive and legitimately threatening potential, Marlowe is able to overcome — to reorientate himself against — the challenge it presents. He is alert to Breeze and Spangler's attempt to incriminate him; he successfully obscures his presence at scenes of Morningstar and Vannier's murders; he holds his ground against the intimidating presence of crime boss Alex Morny and his

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[87] Rawson, 'Sound, Silence and the Cipher of Personality', p. 36.

henchman Eddie Prue. Most significantly, he solves 'the mystery of how Mrs Elizabeth Bright Murdock had got her Brasher Doubloon back while I still had it in my pocket' (p. 78). Marlowe discovers that removal of the Brasher Doubloon from Elizabeth Murdock's collection was never intended to be a case of theft, but rather the starting point for a counterfeiting scheme in which they would forge a series of Brasher Doubloons using the Murdock Brasher as a model, before returning the original to its place in the Murdock collection. Uncovering this plot reveals that there are multiple examples of the coin in circulation between the various characters, and accounts for the moment of disorientation he experiences at the drugstore.

The rationalization is taken further, since Marlowe is able to fix the coin's apparently fluid identity more precisely. He establishes that the Murdock family's example of the Brasher Doubloon has a unique identifying mark, a subtle inconsistency that distinguishes it from all the other Brashers: 'The coinmaker's initials, E.B., are on the left wing of the eagle. Usually, I'm told, they are on the right wing' (p. 170). It was this inconsistency, faithfully recreated on the counterfeit copies and recognized by Elisha Morningstar, that threw the counterfeiters' plans into disarray. Indeed, this reaffirmation of fixed, unique identity operates at two levels: just as the Murdock Brasher has a subtly different layout, which distinguishes it from all other Brasher Doubloons, so the real Murdock Brasher is distinguishable from its copies, due to a new mark made on the original by the conspirators. The knowledge Marlowe gathers amounts to the establishment of an index, in relation to which any single Brasher Doubloon can be referred, and its identity fixed.

This success is a qualified one, however. Elizabeth Murdock hired Marlowe to recover the coin rather than reporting its theft to the police, and following the events of the novel, acknowledging her ownership of it would implicate her family in several

crimes. The stolen coin, therefore — though its individual identity has been established amidst a profusion of copies — is left unclaimed. Even Teager, the dental technician involved in the counterfeiting who is arrested in Salt Lake City trying to sell one of the fake coins, is never charged: 'counterfeiting an obsolete New York State coin didn't come under the federal counterfeiting laws' (p. 187). The search for the Brasher Doubloon that occupies Marlowe throughout *The High Window*, which develops into an ostensibly successful quest to establish its identity, is ultimately inconsequential: the coin is never returned to its owners, and no crime is even judged to have taken place. Other, more serious crimes are uncovered in the course of this search. There too, however, the extent to which justice is served and order restored is questionable.

Two particularly guilty parties are identified as a result of Marlowe's investigation: Louis Vannier and Elizabeth Murdock. Vannier proves to be the antagonist responsible for most of the crimes that arise during the narrative itself. With the cooperation of Teager, he blackmailed Leslie Murdock into stealing the Brasher Doubloon, then murdered both George Anson Phillips and Elisha Morningstar to cover up the plot. It also becomes clear that Vannier has been blackmailing Elizabeth Murdock for years over the death of Horace Bright, her first husband. The story, maintained by Elizabeth Murdock and Vannier, and believed by Leslie Murdock, is that Merle Davis, Murdock's secretary, was responsible for murdering Bright. The truth, which Vannier reveals to Leslie Murdock to increase his leverage over him, is that Elizabeth Murdock killed her husband, and has allowed Davis to believe that she is guilty. Vannier's manipulation backfires, and Leslie Murdock shoots him to protect his mother.

If a summary of Marlowe's movements risks giving the impression that they are exclusively active, purposeful and masterful, this reinforces an effect already present in

the novel itself, a consequence of Chandler's linear, first-person narrative. What only becomes clear when the investigation is over, implicit in the solution he constructs, is that Marlowe's most significant movements have involved physically retracing, rather than intellectually reconstructing, the movements of Vannier. When Marlowe travels to George Phillips' apartment in Bunker Hill, Vannier has been there first, and Phillips is dead. Marlowe returns to the Belfont Building to question Elisha Morningstar, but Morningstar too has been murdered by Vannier. Marlowe's repeated visits to the Murdock home in Pasadena have been preceded by Vannier's journeys there to blackmail Elizabeth Murdock. Finally, Marlowe travels to Vannier's own home in Sherman Oaks, where Vannier sits waiting, shot dead in an armchair. It is through ascribing this sequence of movements to Vannier that Marlowe is able to establish incrimination, fixing his identity and presence at the crime scenes of Phillips' and Morningstar's murders, and the blackmail of Elizabeth Murdock.

It is the chronological aspect of this physical retracing of Vannier's movements that complicates the value of Marlowe's mobile investigative technique. Engaged in an ultimately asynchronous pursuit, beneath the apparent forward motion of the narrative, his task is one of retrospection rather than prospection, to use Tzvetan Todorov's terminology.[88] The challenge of reconstructing Vannier's movements arises from the dispersed nature of the city, and from the gap in knowledge that Marlowe needs to close as the investigation progresses. The automobile and the nascent freeway system allows him to confront that challenge, contracting distances in the extended city by letting him

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[88] Tzvetan Todorov, 'The Typology of Detective Fiction' in *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. by Richard Howard (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), pp. 42–52 (p. 47). Interestingly, Todorov's suggestion that the detective novel 'contains not one but two stories: the story of the crime and the story of the investigation' (p. 44), which he views as an expression of the structuralist distinction between *fabula* and *syuzhet*, echoes Chandler's own thinking in his notebooks: 'Yet, in its essence the crime story is simple. It consists of two stories. One is known only to the criminal and to the author himself. […] The other story is the story which is told. It is capable of great elaboration and should, when finished, be complete in itself. It is necessary, however, to connect the two stories throughout the book. This is done by allowing a bit, here and there, of the hidden story to appear.' Quoted in *The Notebooks of Raymond Chandler*, ed. by Frank MacShane (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), p. 42.

move more quickly between certain points to gather information. This retracing allows him to establish Vannier's guilt — and later that of Leslie and Elizabeth Murdock — but it also demonstrates, in the series of bodies he discovers, some of the limits of his powers, his inability to prevent any of the crimes that are revealed to him.

In this sense, Marlowe can never move quickly enough — his mobility, necessary because his antagonist is already in motion, is bound up in retrospection. The value of the new freeways that allow Marlowe to move quickly and fluidly from Los Angeles to Pasadena and the San Fernando Valley is compromised. His use of the Cahuenga Pass Freeway and the Arroyo Seco Parkway allows Marlowe to establish that those same roads have already been used, by Vannier, to commit crimes that Marlowe can only retrospectively identify. It is in this light that the 'recreated' baseball game heard over the radio during the scenes at the Florence Apartments takes on its heightened significance. If Marlowe's investigation ultimately involves retracing the paths of Vannier's movements across the city — not in pursuit, but in repetition — the scene in which we encounter the first of these retracings, in which the first murder victim is discovered, is soundtracked in such a way as to highlight that there are distances in time and space that Marlowe is unable to overcome. The significance of this asynchronous or retrospective aspect of Marlowe's method, and his own understanding of its implications, is signalled by another metaphor — the game of chess.

As a strategic battle of wits in which two opponents seek to outmanoeuvre each other, chess offers a well-trodden metaphor for other conflicts and negotiations, from the violent to the romantic. It can also serve to signify a certain degree of refinement and intellect in the player — and indeed, Chandler certainly uses it to distinguish Marlowe from some of the more vulgar elements of Los Angeles society that he

encounters. Marlowe's interest in chess, however, is described in very precise terms, and ones that suggest a rather different symbolic status. It is firstly important to recognize that the game of chess is fundamentally territorial and mobile: it involves the tactical manoeuvre of individual pieces with rigidly defined roles and circumscribed ranges of movement. Those pieces operate on a field of play that is divided into territories that are clearly and unambiguously differentiated. Chess, in other words, offers a clear analogy for the image of the city that Marlowe uses to orientate himself, in which the differences between districts are clearly perceptible, along with the socio-economic character of their inhabitants.

Marlowe's chess-playing is also, in a clear allusion to the nature of his investigations, fundamentally *retrospective.* In the midst of their first conversation at Marlowe's apartment, Breeze enquires about the chess board Marlowe has just set up:

> 'You play a lot of chess?' [Breeze] asked, looking at the chessmen.
> 'Not a lot. Once in a while I fool around with a game here, thinking things out.'
> 'Don't it take two guys to play chess?'
> 'I play over tournament games that have been recorded and published. There's a whole literature about chess. Once in a while I work out problems. They're not chess, properly speaking.' (p. 80)

Marlowe's references to 'thinking things out' and '[working] out problems' suggest something of 'the detective hero as amateur of genius, who is drawn to the solution of mysterious crimes as to a superior form of ratiocinative play', as Dennis Porter describes the archetypal detective established by Edgar Allan Poe in his Dupin stories.[89] What is more significant here, however, is that Marlowe replays existing, historical games; he figures out the strategy behind moves that have already been made, in matches that have already been won or lost. The movements of the pieces on his own

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[89] Dennis Porter, *The Pursuit of Crime: Art and Ideology in Detective Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 24.

chess board are, therefore, the asynchronous retracing of past movements, rather than one side of an active, tactical duel.

E. M. Beekman notes: 'All of Chandler's books end on a note of dissatisfaction. The purported solution does not tidy things up since there is no end to a waking nightmare. […] A corrupt universe can house no justice or, inversely, justice would be an embarrassing intruder.'[90] More than being gloomily implicated in the corruption of a fallen world, though, which is the tone that concludes the other 'canonical' Marlowe novels, the case in *The High Window* reveals to Marlowe the fundamental failings in his own method. Despite his efforts to rationalize space and identity, it is *time* that presents Marlowe with an insurmountable challenge — the retrospective, asynchronous aspect of his method ensures that he is made all too painfully aware of the crimes and suffering that he is unable to prevent, such as the one that took place years earlier and from which the novel's other crimes all spring: 'Vannier's been blackmailing you for eight years, hasn't he? On account of something that happened on 26 April 1933?' (p. 167).[91] More than Vannier, who has at least met a kind of rough justice, it is Elizabeth Murdock — murderer of her first husband and abusive manipulator of her gentle, loyal secretary Merle Davis — who stands as the embodiment of this inherent, inevitable failure.

Despite Marlowe's inability to prevent Vannier's misdeeds, the plot of *The High Window* does at least conclude with Vannier dead and the murders of Morningstar and Anson Phillips correctly attributed to him by the police. Other crimes, of at least equal significance, are uncovered by Marlowe but continue to be unknown to the police and to

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[90] E.M. Beekman, 'Raymond Chandler and an American Genre', in *The Critical Response to Raymond Chandler*, pp. 89–99 (p. 95).

[91] In 'On Raymond Chandler', Jameson notes 'The final element in Chandler's characteristic form is that the underlying crime is always old, lying half-forgotten in the pasts of the characters before the book begins' (p. 86). The significance of some form past crime is indeed central to Chandler's other plots, as much as it is to *The High Window* — the difference in the case of the latter (and also in *The Long Goodbye*) is in the extent to which it is associated with a failure in Marlowe's method as well as the world in which he operates.

society at large. By choosing not to come forward and claim the recovered Brasher

Doubloon as the unique 'Murdock Brasher', the involvement of the Murdock family in

the affair remains a secret. Leslie Murdock's murder of Vannier, Vannier's long-term

blackmailing of the family, and Elizabeth Murdock's murder of her first husband and

subsequent manipulation of Merle Davis into believing she is guilty of the crime — all

go unpunished, despite the knowledge of them that Marlowe has obtained. Indeed, by

honouring his professional obligation to Elizabeth Murdock as his client, Marlowe is

put in a position of complicity; as he says to Leslie Murdock, 'There's no question of

morality involved. […] I've been working for your mother and whatever right to my

silence that gives her, she can have' (p. 180).

Marlowe undertakes his highly mobile investigation, moving between the spaces

of early 1940s Los Angeles, utilizing the fluid movement of the automobile and the

city's newly established freeways. As he does so, Elizabeth Murdock never moves from

her home in Pasadena; her own moves in the game have already been made, causing

harm that Marlowe can only mitigate by returning the permanently traumatized Merle

Davis to her parents' home. Bound by the professional ethics that compromise him and

by the inherent limitations of his method, Marlowe's only response is to will his own

alcoholic disorientation:

> I drove back to Hollywood, bought a pint of good liquor, checked in at the
> Plaza, and sat on the side of the bed staring at my feet and lapping the whisky
> out of the bottle. Just like any common bedroom drunk.
>   When I had enough of it to make my brain fuzzy enough to stop
> thinking, I undressed and got into bed, and after a while, but not soon enough, I
> went to sleep.
> (p. 181)

In the final chapter, Marlowe meets with Detective Breeze to learn how the

police have concluded their investigation, and discovers that, while they have learned

enough to establish Vannier's guilt for the murders of Morningstar and Phillips, they

have not drawn any link between the counterfeiting plot and the Murdock family.

Returning to his apartment, he replays another historic chess game, one involving

Cuban player José Raúl Capablanca: 'It went fifty-nine moves. Beautiful, cold,

remorseless chess, almost creepy in its silent implacability' (p. 188). The description

echoes the words used by Marlowe a chapter earlier, as he tries to make Merle Davis

understand Elizabeth Murdock's manipulation of her: 'She's cold, bitter, unscrupulous,

and she used you without mercy or pity' (p. 184). The novel ends with Marlowe

reflecting on the game he has just replayed:

> When it was done I listened at the open window for a while and smelled the
> night. Then I carried my glass out to the kitchen and rinsed it and filled it with
> ice water and stood at the sink sipping it and looking at my face in the mirror.
>   'You and Capablanca,' I said. (p. 188)

With this closing image, the significance of chess to the novel is reinforced, and with

his final words, Marlowe acknowledges his own position, relative to a 'cold,

remorseless' and implacable foe who has already made their moves, and cannot be

beaten.

Fredric Jameson asserts that the narrative of *The High Window* is 'distinctly less

satisfying'; whether or not this is so, the events of the novel undoubtedly leave Marlowe

himself intensely dissatisfied.[92] Throughout Chandler's fiction, Marlowe's mobility

relies upon a rationalized image of the city — one that seems to approach Kevin

Lynch's ideal of a 'dense, rigid, and vivid' structure.[93] And yet whilst Lynch suggests

that a good environmental image can provide the individual with emotional security and

satisfaction – establishing 'an harmonious relationship between himself and the outside

world' – Marlowe rarely exhibits such sentiments. His environmental image is prone to

disruption, and can only be maintained with persistent effort; these precarious efforts

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[92] 'The Synoptic Chandler', p. 45.
[93] *The Image of the City*, p. 90.

allow Marlowe to navigate Los Angeles, establish knowledge and incriminate suspects, but they also leave him vulnerable to incrimination in turn. He orientates himself not only in relation to the city's visual form, but also in relation to territorial boundaries that are maintained through the policing of identity and mobility. In *The High Window*, moments of disorientation reveal the fragility of Marlowe's cognitive map of Los Angeles; the knowledge he gains, meanwhile, only serves to emphasize the limits of his influence on the city's corruption.

Chapter Three

'If a white man asks where you're going': *If He Hollers Let Him Go* and South LA in the 1940s

Maya Angelou was living in Los Angeles when the Watts Rebellion took place, and the violence that scarred South Los Angeles in August 1965 forms part of the turbulent back-drop to her memoir of the mid-1960s, *A Song Flung Up to Heaven* (2002). Familiar with the geography of South Los Angeles (Figure 2), having worked briefly as a market researcher in the neighbourhood, Angelou felt compelled to witness the events for herself — an experience she would characterize as nightmarish and 'dislocating':

> Smoke and screams carried in the air. [...] It became hard to discern if the figures brushing past me were male or female, young or old. The farther I walked, the more difficult it was to breathe. [...] Policemen in gas masks emerged out of the smoke, figures from a nightmare. Alarm flooded me, and in a second I was dislocated. It seemed that the sirens were in my nose, and smoke packed my ears like cotton.[1]

This sensory disorientation and looming threat left her distressed and sent her fleeing for the boundaries of Watts.

Responding to television interviews with South LA residents broadcast in the immediate aftermath of the rebellion, Angelou made a subtle observation:

> The journalists were being treated with the old-as-slavery response: 'If a white man asks where you're going, you tell him where you've been.'[2]

The interview subjects, well aware both of the need to cooperate and of the risk that their answers could be misinterpreted or malevolently used against them and their community, gave shrewdly evasive responses. For Angelou, this called to mind the long and fraught history of black life in the US, and the extent to which careful dissembling and the ability to convincingly 'play dumb' when challenged by a white man had long

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[1] Maya Angelou, *A Song Flung Up to Heaven* (Oxford: Isis, 2003), p. 53.
[2] Angelou, p. 59.

FIGURE 2 — SOUTH LOS ANGELES AND SURROUNDING NEIGHBOURHOODS
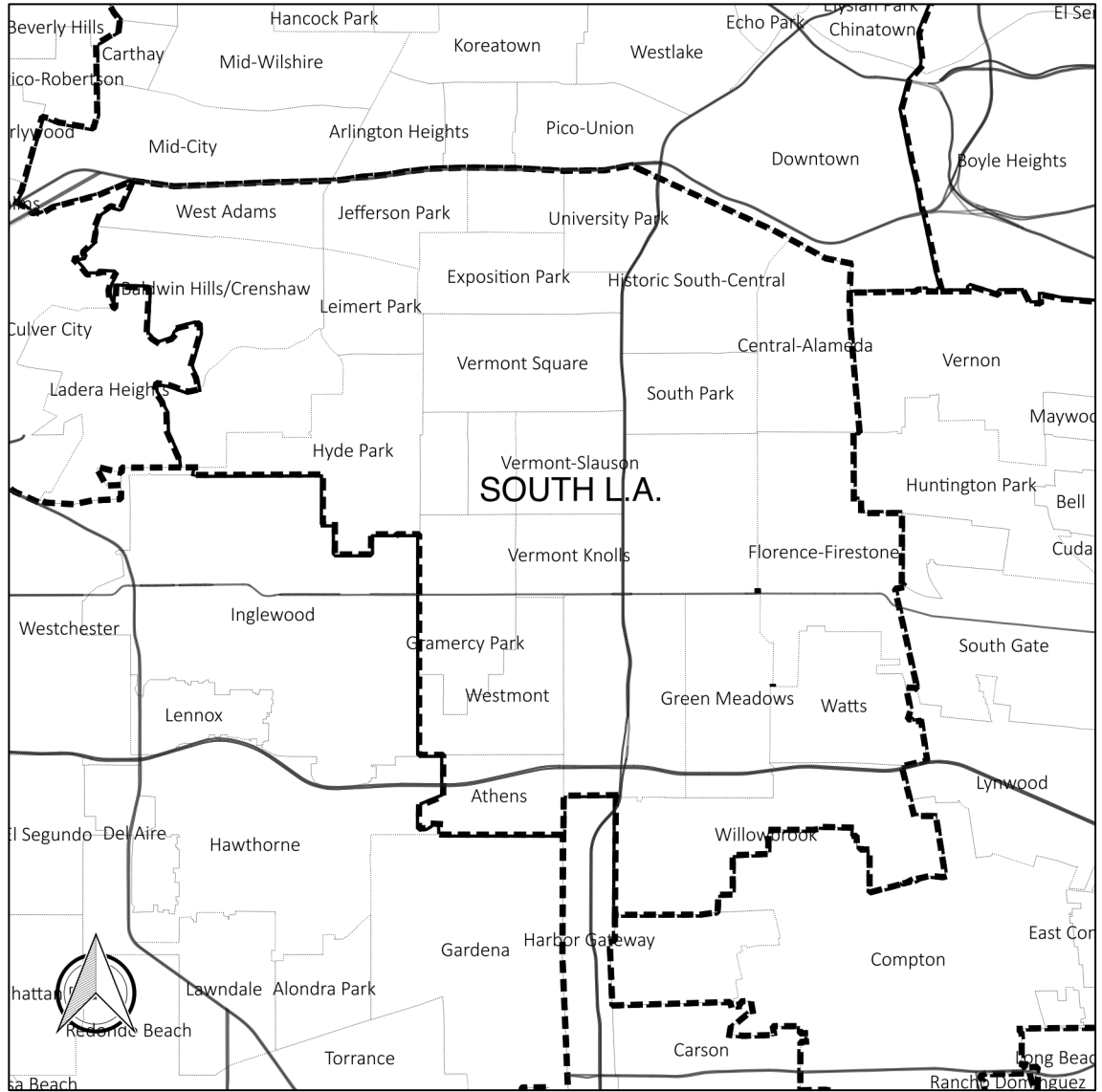
Heavy dashed lines show boundaries of city regions. Light dotted lines show neighbourhood boundaries. Solid lines show freeways and highways. Bisecting South LA from north to south is the I-110 (Harbor) Freeway (constructed during the 1950s and fully completed in 1970), which divides the Eastside of South LA from the Westside.

been necessary survival tactics. Deliberately misunderstanding your interrogator, and repeatedly explaining where you have come from, and why, would eventually lead to you being sent on your way, 'pleased that no secrets were revealed or any lies told'.[3] In the image of a black man being accosted and questioned about his destination, however, the anecdote also speaks to the restrictions placed on black mobility in a system of white supremacy, and the threat of punishment implicit in arrested movement. The six days of violent unrest that scarred South Los Angeles in August 1965 were, after all, precipitated by a traffic stop, when a car driven by Marquette Frye was pulled over by a California Highway Patrol motorcycle officer at the intersection of Avalon Boulevard and 116th Street.[4]

A year later, Thomas Pynchon wrote an article for the *New York Times Magazine* reflecting on life in post-riot Watts and the experiences of African Americans in the wider city:

> So you groove instead down the freeway, maybe wondering when some cop is going to stop you [...]. Catching you mobile widens The Man's horizons; gives him more things he can get you on.[5]

For racialized American subjects, and African Americans in particular, being 'caught mobile' had long entailed risks to life and liberty. If, as argued Chapter One, the fluidity of identity and mobility that urban modernity permits is countered by a juridical imperative to fix the individual in time and space, then racial and ethnic minorities in the United States have experienced some of the most acute expressions of this tendency. This chapter will analyse Chester Himes's 1945 novel *If He Hollers Let Him Go*; the

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[3] Angelou, p. 60.

[4] The Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots, *Violence in the City—An End or a Beginning?: A Report by the Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots, 1965* ([Los Angeles]: n. pub., 2 December 1965), p. 1. Commonly referred to as the 'McCone Report', after the chair of the commission; subsequent citations will use this abbreviated format. For a detailed day-by-day account of the events of the Watts Rebellion, see also Gerald Horne, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s*, Carter G. Woodson Institute Series in Black Studies (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), pp. 53–133.

[5] 'A Journey Into The Mind of Watts'.

following chapter will focus on two films produced during the 1970s: *Killer of Sheep* (dir. by Charles Burnett, 1977) and *Bush Mama* (dir. by Haile Gerima, 1976). Whilst rooted in the specific history and geography of wartime Los Angeles, Himes's novel introduces archetypal themes and experiences that provide a lens through which to interpret the later films. In each work, African-American protagonists struggle to orientate themselves within a twentieth-century Los Angeles in which racism is manifested spatially through geographical borders and boundaries — borders that are aggressively enforced by the white populace as a whole and the LAPD in particular. Subject to arbitrary or malevolent incrimination, conscious of the risks that transgression entails, they find their movements impeded and confront the contingency of their lives within such conditions. The psychological stress experienced by the three central protagonists, Bob Jones (*If He Hollers Let Him Go*), Stan (*Killer of Sheep*), and Dorothy (*Bush Mama*), cannot be separated from the disorientating nature of these circumstances.

Fraught Borders, Fragile Lives: California, Los Angeles, South Central LA

The conditions structuring the experiences of the protagonists in these works form part of a longer history, in California and the wider United States, of attempts to restrict or arrest black mobility. The African-American experience of the United States has, of course, been marked by widespread structural discrimination and the reality of physical violence, both prior to and following the constitutional abolition of slavery in 1865. Restrictions on mobility, whether realized with the threat of violence or through legal and economic impediments, were and would remain central to this experience. As historian Cotten Seiler argues, 'spatial mobility has often been a means to or evidence of the social mobility of racial others' and so 'regimes of white supremacy have sought

to control or curtail those forms and moments of black mobility that they could not instrumentalize for their own purposes'.[6] Such attempts to impede or arrest black mobility took many forms across different parts of the United States, and they were frequently imposed by territorial means — establishing and enforcing geographical borders and boundaries.[7] Restrictions on black mobility within California, for example, were seriously debated even before it was admitted into the United States in 1850, in the aftermath of the Mexican-American War. Although California was to be a free state, it was concerns about the advantages slaveholders would have when prospecting for gold, rather than concerns about the morality of slavery, that were at the forefront of delegates minds during the 1849 state constitutional convention in Sacramento.[8] Consequently, the question of whether free blacks should even be allowed to enter the state after its admission to the union was seriously debated. A bill outlawing the immigration of free blacks into the state was then passed at the first state assembly later that year, although it was ultimately stopped in the state senate.[9]

Californian statehood was ratified as part of a package of bills, known as the Compromise of 1850, which were intended to defuse growing tensions between free states and slave states. To this end, included in the compromise was a 'fugitive slave law' — legislation designed to protect the interests of slave owners by upholding their rights of ownership when an individual held in servitude had fled into a free state. Two years later, influenced by the powerful pro-slavery lobby within the state, Californian

[6] Cotten Seiler, '"So That We as a Race Might Have Something Authentic to Travel By": African American Automobility and Cold-War Liberalism', *American Quarterly*, 58.4 (2006), 1091–1117 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40068407> [accessed 30 September 2016] (p. 1093).

[7] For a comprehensive account of the history of 'southern white efforts to circumscribe black freedom of movement' from Emancipation to the outbreak of the First World War, see William Cohen, *At Freedom's Edge: Black Mobility and the Southern White Quest for Racial Control, 1861–1915* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), p. xiii and *passim*.

[8] Rudolph M. Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 127–8. See also Sucheng Chan, 'A People of Exceptional Character: Ethnic Diversity, Nativism, and Racism in the California Gold Rush', *California History*, 79.2 (2000), 44–85 <https://doi.org/10.2307/25463688> (p. 70).

[9] Lapp, p. 130.

legislators passed an even more stringent fugitive slave law.[10] This state law made former slaves who had escaped into the boundaries of California *prior* to 1850 subject to the same restrictions, and made running away from a master illegal within the boundaries of California.[11] It also prevented the accused from testifying in their own defence: 'In no trial or hearing under this act shall the testimony of such alleged fugitive be admitted in evidence.'[12] The Californian Fugitive Slave Law was unique in US law at the time in applying retrospectively, and enforcing borders that had not technically existed at the moment they were transgressed. [13] As Rudolph Lapp notes, it essentially '[gave] white men arbitrary powers in returning black persons they claimed as slaves in the Southern states'.[14] In practice, the law was indeed cited, in many cases successfully, in attempts re-enslave legitimately freed men who had begun new lives in the state.[15]

Also part of Californian legislation during the same period were testimony restrictions according to which 'No black or mulatto person, or indian, shall be permitted to give evidence in favor of, or against, any white person'.[16] The alibi, as discussed Chapter One, serves as an individual's defence against incrimination — it is the assertion that one was 'elsewhere, when...' an offence occurred. Forbidding African

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[10] 'Act respecting Fugitives from Labor, and Slaves brought to this State prior to her admission into the Union' in F. A. Snyder and S. Garfielde, *Compiled Laws of the State of California: Containing All the Acts of the Legislature of a Public and General Nature, Now in Force, Passed at the Sessions of 1850–51–52–53, to Which Are Prefixed the Declaration of Independence, the Constitutions of the United States and California, the Treaty of Queretaro, and the Naturalization Laws of the United States* (Benicia, CA: S. Garfielde, 1853) <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/010448261> [accessed 5 May 2017] (pp. 231–33).

[11] Lapp, p. 139.

[12] Snyder and Garfielde, p. 232.

[13] Ray R. Albin, 'The Perkins Case: The Ordeal of Three Slaves in Gold Rush California', *California History*, 67.4 (1988), 215–27 <https://doi.org/10.2307/25158492> (p. 217).

[14] Lapp, p. 139.

[15] As, for example, in the 'Perkins Case' of 1852. Carter Perkins, Robert Perkins and Sandy Jones, three former slaves of Charles S. Perkins, had begun to establish a life for themselves in California after being emancipated, with an income derived from gold mining. The instability of that existence, under the terms of California law, was demonstrated when Charles Perkins successfully initiated legal action to reclaim the 'property' he had left in California. The three men were arrested as 'fugitives' under the Fugitive Slave Law, their property was seized, and it was ruled that they remained Perkins's property at a hearing in which they were prohibited from testifying. Albin, *passim*. See also Chan, pp. 70–71, and Lapp, pp. 140–46.

[16] 'Act Concerning Crimes and Punishments (1850)' in Snyder and Garfielde, p. 639.

Americans and other ethnic groups from testifying against white men made it in legal terms impossible, in many cases, for those considered non-white to provide an alibi in their own defence. Both pieces of legislation were repealed before the end of the Civil War — the Fugitive Slave Law in 1855, and the restriction on testimony in 1863.[17] Their existence, however, demonstrates how restrictions on African-American mobility were enforced, in California, at its very inception as an American state. The restriction on black testimony amounted to an inability to defend themselves against incrimination, and it made black Americans' relationship with the legal system and with questions of incrimination central to their experience of early California. A contradiction, then, was established in the early 1850s. California was an ostensibly free state with opportunities for non-white racial and ethnic groups; it was also a space in which African-American life was subject to arbitrary disruption, and to ambiguous boundaries that had to be carefully discerned and negotiated. This contradiction would endure in shifting form over the following century, and beyond.

After Emancipation and into the twentieth century, *de jure* segregation in the Jim-Crow South, along with *de facto* segregation in the North, made African-American travel particularly challenging and dangerous. As historian William Cohen writes of the period, 'the extent of black freedom varied with time and place, but always the right to move without hindrance was one of its most important features'.[18] Segregated public transportation forced black travellers into poorly maintained and overcrowded conditions. Driving across country, they could expect to be refused service at restaurants, hotels, service stations and other businesses, and could find themselves in

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[17] On the campaign to allow African-American testimony during the 1850s, see Chan, p. 70; Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528–1990* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1998), pp. 90–92; Paul Robinson, 'Race, Space, and the Evolution of Black Los Angeles', in *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities*, ed. by Darnell Hunt and Ana-Christina Ramón (New York: NYU Press, 2010), pp. 21–59 (p. 30).

[18] Cohen, *At Freedom's Edge*, p. 3.

'sundown towns' where they risked being physically attacked — a risk that reflected 'a system of racial violence intended to control, or circumscribe, the mobility of black bodies'.[19] One pragmatic response to these conditions was the 'Negro Motorist Green Book', which for three decades served as a guide for African-American travellers.[20] Published between 1936 and 1966, the Green Book listed, state-by-state, facilities that were known to welcome African-American business and leisure travellers. The longevity of the Green Book highlights that challenges to black mobility persisted from the interwar years to the heights of the Civil Rights Movement: African-American travellers continued to confront not just inconveniences but potentially fatal restrictions on their mobility.
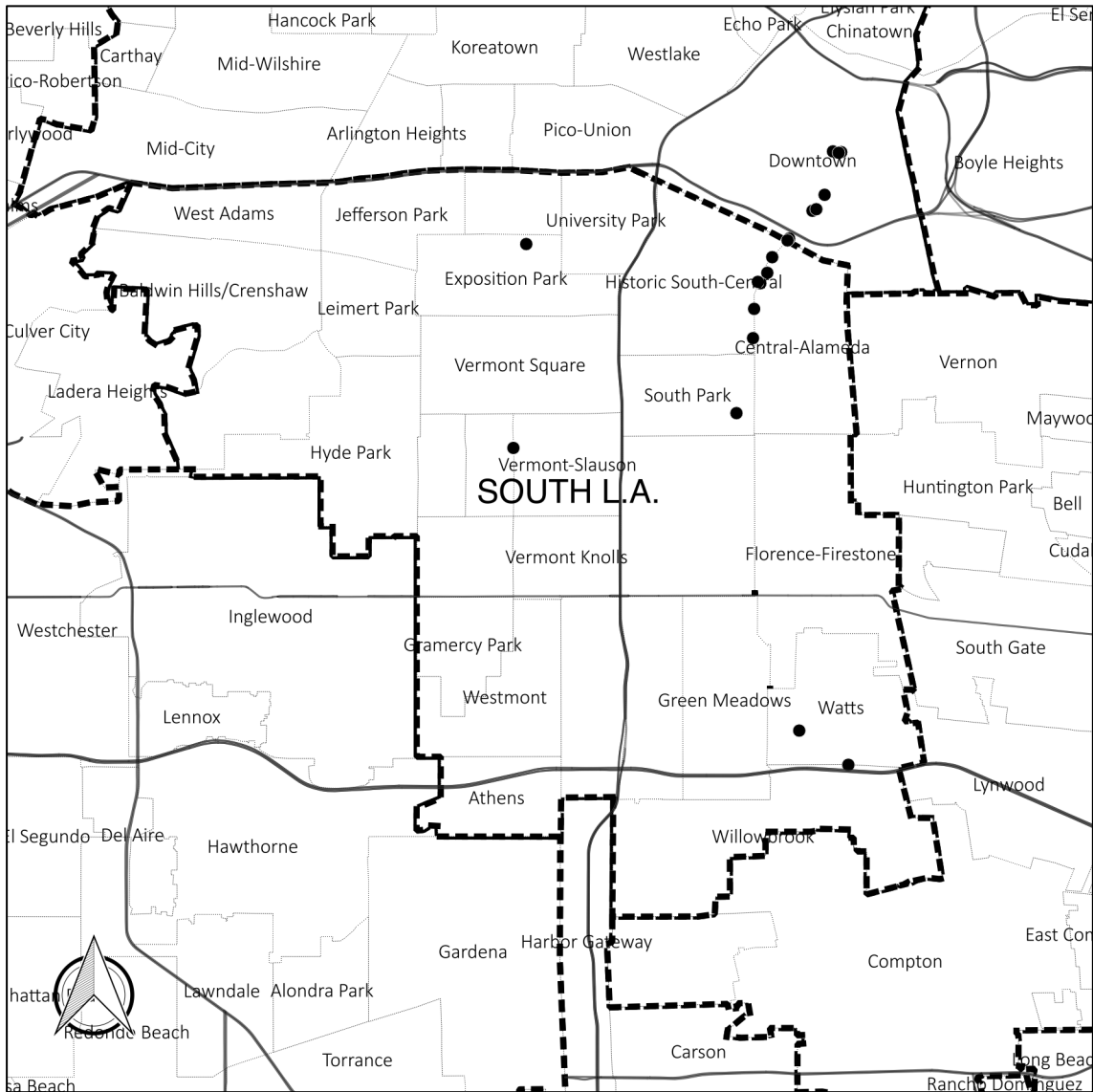
The locations of the Los Angeles businesses listed in the various editions of the Green Book offer one method of mapping the history of black Los Angeles from the last years of the Depression to the Civil Rights period. In the 1941 edition (Figure 3), 14 of the 21 Los Angeles businesses listed are located on a clearly defined north-south axis following the route of Central Avenue, stretching north as far as Sixth Street in Downtown, and south as far as 42nd Street — roughly 2.5 miles. By 1956 (Figure 4), this linear axis is far less clearly defined and the locations are more dispersed, with clusters of businesses at two different points on Central Avenue, and another cluster of businesses further west, in the West Adams and Jefferson Park neighbourhoods. The businesses listed in the 1962 edition are even more widely dispersed (Figure 5), with locations spread across South Los Angeles, including the stretch of Western Avenue

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[19] Michael Ra-Shon Hall, 'The Negro Traveller's Guide to a Jim Crow South: Negotiating Racialized Landscapes During a Dark Period in United States Cultural History, 1936–1967', *Postcolonial Studies*, 17.3 (2014), 307–19 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2014.987898> (p. 311).
[20] The publication was variously titled 'The Negro Motorist Green Book', the 'Negro Travelers' Green Book' and 'The Travelers' Green Book'; for consistency the publication as a whole will be referred to as the 'Green Book'. 22 editions of the Green Book have been digitized and made available by the New York Public Library. See *The Green Book (1936–1967)*, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/the-green-book> [accessed 5 May 2017]. All editions of the Green Book cited are taken from this archive.

FIGURE 3 – LOS ANGELES BUSINESSES LISTED IN THE 1941 'GREEN BOOK'

In 1941, the majority of the Los Angeles businesses listed were situated along a clearly defined axis along Central Avenue between Sixth Street and 42nd Street, with a handful of exceptions located in Watts and on the Eastside.

Locations mapped from *The Negro Motorist Green-Book: 1941*, ed. by Victor H. Green (New York: Victor H. Green, 1941) <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/cc8306a0-83c4-0132-cc93-58d385a7bbd0> [accessed 30 September 2016].

FIGURE 4 – LOS ANGELES BUSINESSES LISTED IN THE 1956 'GREEN BOOK'
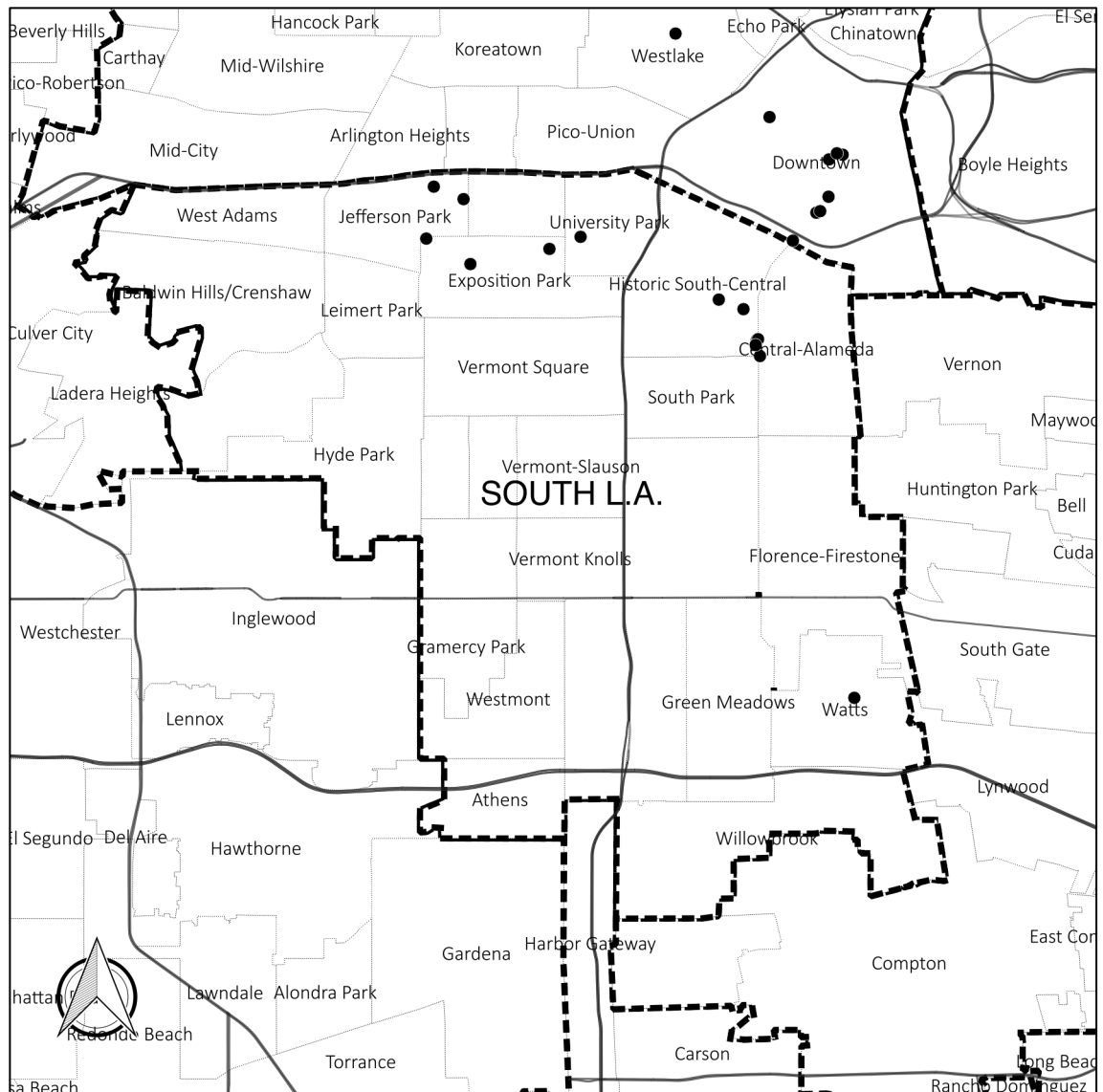
In 1956 the Central Avenue axis was still present, but less clearly defined. A significant new cluster of businesses were located in West Adams and Jefferson Park.

Locations mapped from *The Negro Travelers' Green Book: Fall 1956*, ed. by Victor H. Green (New York: Victor H. Green & Co., 1956) <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/9c454830-83b9-0132-d56a-58d385a7b928> [accessed 30 September 2016].

FIGURE 5 – LOS ANGELES BUSINESSES LISTED IN THE 1962 'GREEN BOOK'
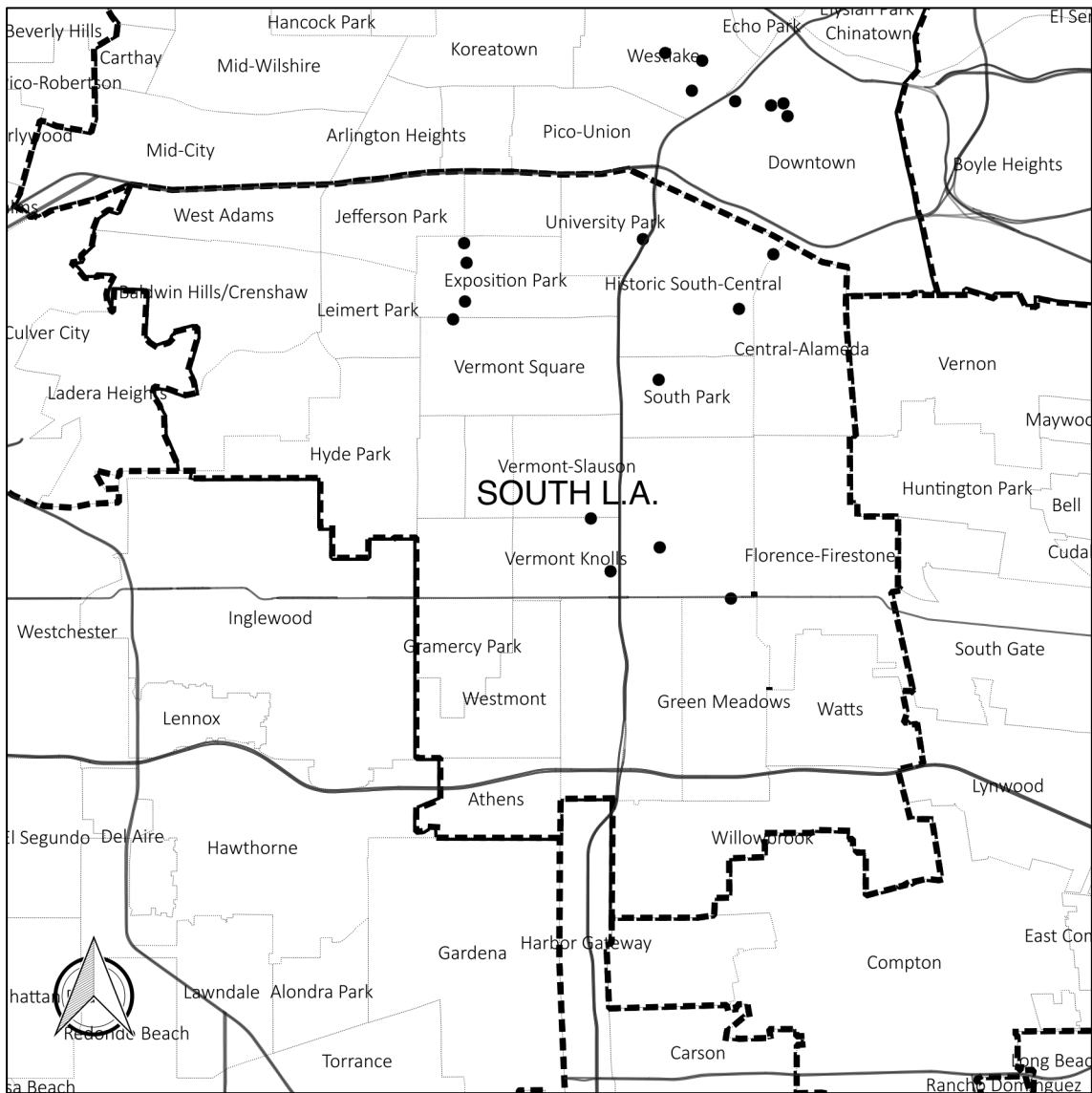
By 1962, the locations were even more widely dispersed across South Los Angeles, with a notable new cluster on the stretch of Western Avenue between Jefferson Park and Leimert Park, and another stretching north-west away from Downtown LA. The Central Avenue axis had largely disappeared.

Locations mapped from *The Travelers' Green Book: 1962*, ed. by Victor H. Green (New York: Victor H. Green and Company, 1962) <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/789a3dc0-942e-0132-cc26-58d385a7bbd0> [accessed 30 September 2016].

between Jefferson Park and Leimert Park, as well as other parts of the city such as Hollywood and Downtown. Any conclusions to be drawn from this mapping should take into account the fact that inclusion in the Green Book was by application: the geographical distribution of the businesses featured will not necessarily correlate with the historic distribution of LA's African-American population across the city. In spite of this caveat, the geographic shifts that can be identified in these Green Book locations do broadly correspond with more orthodox accounts of the history and geography of black Los Angeles.

During 1930s and most of the 1940s, the majority of the city's African-American community was concentrated around South Central Avenue, and further south in Watts. This concentration was produced in large part through widespread use of racially restrictive housing covenants across the city, which prevented non-white citizens from renting or purchasing property in most districts of Los Angeles. High volumes of black migration into the city from other parts of the country, combined with moves to reduce housing discrimination in the late 1940s and the out-migration of South LA's white population to suburban communities, meant that during the 1950s African Americans became the majority across South Los Angeles. One consequence of this growth and geographic dispersal was the decline of Central Avenue as a cultural and residential hub for the African-American community. Throughout the fifties, and into the 1960s, the city's black middle-class increasingly moved west, into West Adams, Leimert Park and Baldwin Hills, whilst the 'Eastside' neighbourhoods around Central Avenue and in Watts suffered from increasing deprivation. Moving beyond the period in which the Green Book was published, the 1970s and 1980s saw this poverty and neglect exacerbated by a drastic loss of manufacturing jobs in the area, poorly funded public services, and an increase in gang violence. Frustration with this situation,

combined with rising property prices in the city of Los Angeles as a whole and the increased availability of credit, led to a new migration — African Americans in South Los Angeles began to leave the city for suburban counties like Riverside and San Bernardino throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium. As a result, what had been a predominantly black region for several decades evolved again, with Latino families moving into areas vacated by African-American residents. At present, South Los Angeles is once again an ethnically and racially heterogeneous space, although it continues to be an area of the city disproportionately marked by high rates of poverty, unemployment and violent crime.[21]

The works discussed in this chapter and the following one are historically and culturally significant attempts to represent aspects of the black American experience, each produced by individuals of African descent. Also common to each work is their engagement with the history and geography of South Los Angeles, and most importantly the connections they establish, implicitly and explicitly, between the experiences of racialized subjects and the city's racialized topography. Establishing a spatial context in which the black community of Los Angeles is geographically circumscribed within a network of borders and boundaries, each work is concerned with individual protagonists' responses to those conditions — with how they orientate themselves when movement and action are constrained and risk incrimination.

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[21] This very brief account of the history of South Los Angeles and the city's African-American community draws on material from the following, much more comprehensive, accounts: Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*; Smith, *The Great Black Way*; *Post-Ghetto: Reimagining South Los Angeles*, ed. by Josh Sides (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), particularly Josh Sides, 'Introduction: A Brief History of the American Ghetto', pp. 1–9.; *Black Los Angeles*, ed. by Hunt and Ramón, particularly Robinson.

'Los Angeles hurt me': *If He Hollers Let Him Go* **(1945)**

Chester Himes moved to Los Angeles in 1941. Then in his early thirties, he had begun

pursuing a literary career while in prison for armed robbery, for which he was convicted

in 1928 and served eight years before being paroled.[22] After a brief, abortive stint as a

writer in the movie industry, Himes worked in LA factories and shipyards, mingled with

the city's Communist Party members — whom he ultimately concluded were taking

advantage of him — and wrote in his free time. He also suffered in the particularly

charged racial atmosphere of 1940s Los Angeles, an experience that he would be

scathing about thirty years later:

> Los Angeles hurt me racially as much as any city I have ever known — much
> more than any city I remember from the South. It was the lying hypocrisy that
> hurt me. Black people were treated much the same as they were in an industrial
> city of the South. They were Jim-Crowed in housing, in employment, in public
> accommodations, such as hotels and restaurants. [...] The difference was that the
> white people of Los Angeles seemed to be saying, 'Nigger, ain't we good to
> you?'[23]

All these experiences would inform both *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945) and *Lonely*

Crusade (1947), his first two published novels. Both are concerned with industrial

relations and the racial and sexual politics of 1940s Los Angeles; both are broadly

realist in form, particularly in comparison with his later works, the 'Harlem Domestic'

cycle of pitch-black criminal tales threaded with absurdity and morbid humour.[24]

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[22] For detailed accounts of Himes's life, see the biographies by Edward Margolies and Michel Fabre and
by James Sallis, as well as Himes's two autobiographies, *The Quality of Hurt* (1972) and *My Life of
Absurdity* (1976).
[23] Chester Himes, *The Quality of Hurt: The Autobiography of Chester Himes, Volume I* (London: Michael
Joseph, 1973), pp. 73–4.
[24] The first of the Harlem novels, *For Love of Imabelle* (later retitled *A Rage in Harlem*), was published in
1957, and Himes's anti-hero NYPD detectives Coffin Ed Johnson and Gravedigger Jones would appear in
eight more works, including *Cotton Comes to Harlem* (1965) and the posthumously published *Plan B*
(1993). For some of the most sustained and comprehensive critical treatments of the Harlem novels, see
Robert E. Skinner, *Two Guns from Harlem: The Detective Fiction of Chester Himes* (Bowling Green:
Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1989); Sean McCann, *Gumshoe America: Hard-Boiled
Crime Fiction and the Rise and Fall of New Deal Liberalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press,
2000), pp. 251–305; Gregory Forter, *Murdering Masculinities: Fantasies of Gender and Violence in the
American Crime Novel* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 171–213.

In writing his later crime fiction, Himes would reflect 'I wanted to break through the barrier that labelled me as a "protest writer"'.[25] There are undeniable shifts in tone and style between the two major phases of his work, and Edward Margolies noted in 1968 that a critical consensus had developed which considered Himes's early work to be derivative of Richard Wright's 'no longer fashionable' naturalism.[26] The contrast can be overstated, however — *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, in particular, is a challenging and ambiguous work with a first-person narration that bears the influence of the hard-boiled novel. Indeed, one early review described its style, though effective, as 'too faithful to that of James M. Cain'.[27] When Marcel Duhamel first encouraged a sceptical Himes to write what would become the Harlem novels for La Série Noire, the influential French crime-fiction imprint, Duhamel apparently insisted: 'Write like you did in [*If He Hollers Let Him Go*]. Short, terse sentences. All action. Perfect style for a detective story'.[28]

In *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, Himes deploys this style in the service of a narrative that condemns the persistent racism of wartime Los Angeles society by focusing on the near-crippling psychological consequences his protagonist experiences. Bob Jones is a black shipyard worker at the fictional Atlas Shipping in Los Angeles harbour, and lives in the South Park neighbourhood of South Los Angeles. From its opening, in which Jones anxiously lies in bed before work on a Monday morning, the novel spans five days; it ends with him being escorted to an army recruitment centre, having been given the option by a judge of enlisting for the armed forces to escape a police charge. In between, he is demoted at Atlas Shipping after he answers back to

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[25] Chester Himes, *My Life of Absurdity: The Autobiography of Chester Himes, Volume II* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), p. 36.

[26] Edward Margolies, *Native Sons: A Critical Study of Twentieth-Century Negro American Authors* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1968), p. 87. Margolies was one of the first literary critics to contest this view of Himes's early fiction.

[27] 'The Check List: If He Hollers Let Him Go', *The American Mercury*, February 1946, p. 249 <http://www.unz.org/Pub/AmMercury-1946feb-00248a02?View=PDF> [accessed 6 January 2017] (p. 249).

[28] Himes, *My Life of Absurdity*, p. 102.

Madge, a southern white female colleague who abusively refuses to work alongside him, and then gets into a fight with a white male shipyard worker, Johnny Stoddart. Finding himself increasingly unable to bear the implicit and explicit discrimination he encounters, he repeatedly contemplates murdering Johnny and seducing, or later raping, Madge, although he does not follow through in either case. Meanwhile, his relationship with Alice, his successful, middle-class African-American girlfriend, fluctuates between affection and frustration, but he eventually realises the value of her love and support, and proposes to her.

The prospect of a happy ending recedes when Bob returns to work, and accidentally walks in on Madge sleeping in a secluded room. He rejects her advances, but before he can leave they are discovered by co-workers, and Madge accuses him of attempting to rape her. Bob is badly beaten, but initially manages to flee. Convinced his word will not be believed over that of a white woman, he resolves to murder Johnny Stoddart. But he is pulled over by an LAPD patrol car before he reaches Stoddart's home and arrested for carrying a concealed weapon. After a night in jail, he is told that management at Atlas Shipping have persuaded Madge not to press charges so as not to risk inflaming racial tensions in the shipyard and thereby undermining the war effort. It is to avoid facing the outstanding charge of carrying a concealed weapon that the judge offers Bob the opportunity to enlist in the armed forces, which he duly accepts.

Disturbing both in the violence inflicted upon Bob and the violent acts that he contemplates committing, *If He Hollers* frustrates attempts to assimilate it to a liberal narrative of mid-century race relations. One reason for offering a detailed summary of the plot is because a précis of *If He Hollers* that frames it (as the back cover blurb of the Serpent's Tail edition cited throughout this chapter does) as the story of an innocent upwardly mobile black man falsely accused of rape does a disservice to the unsettling

complexity of Himes's text. Bob Jones is indeed accused of rape, but only at the end of the twentieth chapter in a novel of twenty-two. During those preceding chapters, he travels to Madge's apartment in the middle of the night with the intention of either seducing or raping her, as well as repeatedly and graphically imagined murdering Johnny Stoddart. The fact that Bob is told in the final pages of the novel that the accusation of rape against him has been withdrawn, for example, and that he enlists in the army to avoid a concealed weapon charge, is a subtle but crucial point that is elided even by perceptive commentators on Himes's novel.[29]

'I went where I wanted and felt good about it': Mobility and Psychology

When Bob Jones is woken by his alarm on Monday morning in the opening chapter of *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, he stays in bed with his eyes shut tightly and feels fear and anxiety 'seeping' through his body, leaving him 'shrivelled, paralysed'.[30] He reflects on how, since moving to Los Angeles in the fall of 1941, he has felt as if he is 'Living every day scared, walled in, locked up' (p. 5). Although Bob's demeanour is superficially tough — defiant, proud and occasionally abrasive — we are first introduced to him through an interior life that is fraught with uncertainty, fear and doubt. Throughout the novel, that fear manifests itself through images of constriction, paralysis and incarceration. He variously feels 'tightness and scare' (p. 10), 'pressed, cornered' (p. 240) and 'trapped' (p. 37). 'The cold scared feeling started clamping down on me' he says at one point, 'it nailed me to my seat, weak and black and powerless' (p. 93). As Frantz Fanon wrote in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), in a passage that

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[29] Lynn M. Itagaki, whose valuable essay on the novel touches on several of themes discussed in this chapter, writes 'In the conclusion of the novel, Bob is coerced into enlisting in the army rather than face a jail sentence for the alleged rape.' See 'Transgressing Race and Community in Chester Himes' *If He Hollers Let Him Go*', *African American Review*, 37.1 (2003), 65–80 <http://search.proquest.com/docview/209818460/abstract> [accessed 5 May 2017] (p. 76).
[30] Chester B. Himes, *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1999), p. 3. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

precedes a brief reference to *If He Hollers Let Him Go:* 'And there was my poor brother—living out his neurosis to the extreme and finding himself paralyzed.'[31]

This chapter will explicate the quality of Bob's fear, and the complex affective fluctuations that he undergoes over the course of the novel, in relation to the impediments placed on African-American mobility in mid-century Los Angeles. Bob Jones is compelled to orientate himself within an urban space structured by racially charged boundaries that are aggressively but inconsistently policed. Many of these boundaries are rooted in the geography of wartime Los Angeles, a consequence of racially discriminatory housing practices, and Bob is often adept at discerning the racial character of these different neighbourhoods. Other borders, however, prove to be more fluid and ambiguous; the complex spatiality of white supremacy ultimately exceeds Bob's ability to navigate it. In these disorientating conditions, he is unable to avoid incriminating himself by transgressing the boundaries of white Los Angeles. In the remainder of this section, I will begin by outlining how mobility functions in Himes's narrative, and particularly how it is related to Bob's psychology.

The imagery through which Bob's anxiety and fear are articulated is specifically that of impeded and arrested *mobility*. This is emphasized by the dichotomy established in Bob's narration, in which positive emotional states are expressed in terms of free, urgent and unhesitating movement. He reflects on happier times in Cleveland, when 'I went where I wanted and felt good about it' (p. 3), and when 'If it had come down to a point where I had to hit a paddy I'd have hit him without any thought' (p. 3). Later, he articulates the relief he feels at having resolved to take revenge on a co-worker: 'it unchained me, made me free. I felt like running and jumping, shouting and laughing' (p.

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[31] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), p. 106.

44). He continues: 'All the tightness that had been in my body, making my motions jerky, keeping my muscles taut, left me and I felt relaxed, confident, strong' (p. 45).

This opposition between constriction and free movement, and its association with individual suffering, is of course introduced in the very title of the novel. And in the dreams that open the first chapter, immediately preceding his anxious reflections on 'living every day scared', first a dog breaks loose from its leash only to be recaptured, then police detectives attempt to identify a murderer with a crippled leg by challenging suspects to run up a flight of stairs. Bob's physical navigation of the city throughout the novel is interpreted in terms of the same dichotomy, directly associating his psychological state with his mobility. His considers his car not just a source of pride but a component of his identity: 'My car was proof of something to me, a symbol. But at the time I didn't analyse the feeling; I just knew I couldn't lose my car even if I lost my job' (p. 37). Just as the 'tightness' leaves his body when he resolves to take revenge on Johnny Stoddart, his car seemingly '[drives] easy all of a sudden [...]. Not a jerk in it, not a squeak; it took the bumps like a box-spring mattress' (p. 45). Unease and anxiety, conversely, results in uncertain movement:

> I got in my car and dug off in a hurry. I was tense, jerky, at loose ends; almost got bumped by a P.E. train turning into the station beyond Sixth. Now I didn't know where to go, what to do. (pp. 94–5)

Perhaps the most vivid example of the association between Bob's mobility and his mental state is the description of his drive into work on the first morning of the novel. He is unable to find satisfaction in 'the scramble in the early morning sun, the tight competition for a twenty-foot lead on a thirty-mile highway' (p. 17) — instead, the behaviour of pedestrians, the aggression of other drivers and the frustration of getting caught by traffic lights leaves him tense and contemplating violence. When a white couple impede his progress by crossing in front of his car when the light at the

intersection is green, he briefly accelerates and considers running them down, before

braking and waiting for them to cross (p. 15). Then he pursues a driver who has cut him

up 'clear out to Compton', and imagines side-swiping him into a truck (p. 16).

At several significant points in the novel, his automobility is arrested entirely

rather than merely being briefly, if frustratingly, impeded. At the climax of the

narrative, on the run from the police and unable to see a way out of his situation, he

literally runs out of gas:

> As long as I'd kept moving my mind had remained concentrated on the action.
> But now a dull hopelessness settled over it, an untempered futility. [...] I
> switched on the ignition, looking at the gas. It was on 'Empty'. (p. 240)

His car will also twice be stopped by the police, on both occasions after it has passed

through the imperceptible boundaries between different neighbourhoods. In the first

case, Alice and Bob are driving out to the coast after an embarrassing dinner at an

upscale restaurant, and an angry Alice is driving Bob's car aggressively fast; they are

stopped for speeding 'just as [they] were coming into Santa Monica' (p. 77). Pulled

over by motorcycle patrol officers, they are treated with racist contempt; escorted to the

SMPD station where Bob puts up their bail, the desk sergeant frames their offence as an

explicitly geographical and implicitly racial transgression: 'Now get back where you

belong and stay there' (p. 78).

Bob's second encounter with the police occurs in the final pages of the novel. It

is a much more decisive and fateful instance of arrested movement, and it is also one in

which geographical and racial transgression is at stake. After being caught alone with

Madge, accused of rape and then beaten, Bob manages to escape custody and goes on

the run. That night, he parks his car in a side street off Central Avenue; certain he will

be arrested before morning, he makes the decision to murder Johnny Stoddart, the co-

worker who earlier racially abused him and knocked him unconscious during a dice

game. He drives off in the direction of Stoddart's house in Huntington Park, but is quickly pulled over by LAPD patrol officers, not because he is wanted on a specific charge but 'because I was a black boy in a big car in a white neighbourhood' (p. 241). After the gun in his glove box is discovered, he is taken into custody; he is then recognized as being wanted on a charge of rape by the San Pedro Police Department.

In between his murderous resolution off Central Avenue and his arrest, Bob traverses just three streets:

> I went ahead to Central, turned south to Slauson, doing a slow twenty-five, observing all the traffic rules, stopping at the boulevard stops, putting out my hand when I turned. At Slauson I turned toward Soto, stopped at Soto for the red light. (p. 241)

This brief journey is all it takes for Bob to move from 'the heart of the ghetto' (p. 239), though an invisible border and into an area in which his mere presence is sufficient pretext for suspicion. The border breached as Bob drives to Johnny Stoddart's home is one that correlates with municipal geography: driving along Slauson Avenue, Bob follows the line of the city limits separating Los Angeles from the separately incorporated and predominantly white suburban city of Huntington Park, eventually passing through those limits shortly before he is stopped by the police at the intersection of Slauson and Soto.[32] Prior to entering Huntington Park proper, he also crosses over Alameda Street, which as Josh Sides notes was the dividing line between black and white working-class South Los Angeles during the 1940s and 1950s.[33] In the spare description of Bob's careful drive along three streets, then, there is an unspoken underlying topography of segregation and restricted movement. Despite his slow speed and conformity to 'all the traffic rules' (p. 241), Bob incriminates himself simply by

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[32] As legal barriers to non-white residential mobility were gradually removed in the two decades following the war, Huntington Park, along with other formerly white working-class suburbs east of Alameda Street such as South Gate, Bell Gardens and Lynwood, would be the setting for often-violent opposition from white residents. See Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, pp. 101–2.

[33] *L.A. City Limits*, p. 23.

driving along a specific mile-long stretch of Slauson Avenue, transgressing

imperceptible boundaries and making his very presence sufficient pretext for the police

to stop and question him.

'A black boy in a big car in a white neighbourhood': Discerning the Borders of Black Los Angeles

If He Hollers establishes a clear analogy between Bob's psychological state, his

physical navigation through the city and his negotiation of the complex spatial and

social boundaries of a society that is ostensibly integrated but in reality deeply

segregated. That this *de facto* segregation is so deeply bound up with the topography of

the city is in large part a consequence of housing policy, and specific legal and spatial

practices that served to restrict black residential mobility in Los Angeles. For the first

half of the twentieth century, racially restrictive housing covenants were an accepted

and effective means to geographically enclose African Americans, and other ethnic and

racial groups, within restricted areas of the city.[34] Prior to the Supreme Court judgement

in 1948 that struck them down as unconstitutional and therefore unenforceable, this

legal device allowed vendors to prevent the sale of a given property or tract of land to

non-white buyers or tenants. The widespread use of restrictive covenants limited

residential mobility for African Americans and other groups, serving as an impediment

against social advancement whilst demonstrating a prevalent desire amongst white

homeowners to maintain *de facto* segregation. These covenants resulted in poor and

increasingly overcrowded conditions in the areas where the black community were

permitted to reside. More than this, they sustained the spatial quality of racism in the

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[34] On the impact of racially restrictive housing covenants in Los Angeles, and the campaign by journalist and civil rights lawyer Loren Miller that led to the 1948 *Shelley v. Kraemer* judgement, see Smith, *The Great Black Way*, pp. 235–53. See also Flamming, pp. 69, 261–2; Sides, 'A Brief History of the American Ghetto', pp. 1–3; Taylor, pp. 235–36.

city and reinforced the significance of the boundaries between different

neighbourhoods.

From the interwar period to the late 1940s, restrictive covenants affected

African-American communities across the United States.[35] Their effects on

overcrowding were particularly deleterious in Los Angeles, however, because of the

rapid growth of the city's black population, which more than doubled between 1940 and

1944 as migrants, primarily from the South, were drawn to the opportunities in the

city's defence industries.[36] Los Angeles in the early 1940s, then, was a city in which the

question of housing was a particularly pressing one for the black community, and this is

reflected throughout *If He Hollers*. As Lynn Itagaki notes, there are images of

overcrowding throughout the novel, from the co-workers crammed into Bob's car on his

drive into work to the physically cramped conditions at the shipyard itself.[37] The

housing question is explicitly introduced during a scene in which Bob takes part in a

discussion with Alice's friends (pp. 102–4). The particular focus of this conversation is

Little Tokyo, the area on the eastern edge of Downtown that was forcibly abandoned

when the city interned its Japanese-American population following the attack on Pearl

Harbor. The vacant residential and commercial spaces were occupied by African

Americans otherwise restricted to the already overcrowded areas further south along

Central Avenue, and the neighbourhood, which became known as Bronzeville, quickly

became similarly overcrowded.[38] Alice and her middle-class friends express their

concern about conditions in Little Tokyo in class-inflected and paternalistic terms,

suggesting that recent arrivals in the city from the rural south need to be assisted in

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[35] Taylor, pp. 235–36.
[36] Horne, p. 31.
[37] Itagaki, p. 73.
[38] On Little Tokyo/Bronzeville see Smith, *The Great Black Way*, pp. 139–53, Itagaki, pp. 67–68 and the detailed account in Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 158–85.

adapting to city life.[39] The scene serves as an opportunity for Bob to scorn their abstraction and snobbery: when they attempt to involve him in the debate, he suggests cannibalism as a solution to overcrowding. This ironic response, however, is also indicative of his own misanthropy and self-disgust — it recalls his thoughts early in the novel when he overhears his housemate Ella Mae's child crying in the next room: 'I thought if they really wanted to give him a break they'd cut his throat and bury him in the back yard before he got old enough to know he was a nigger. Then I was ashamed' (p. 5).

Despite Bob's satirical response to the concerns of Alice and her friends, the attempts to restrict and circumscribe black mobility, of which such overcrowding was a symptom, structure his experiences throughout the novel. One consequence of housing segregation was the creation and enforcement of rigid spatial boundaries between black and white Los Angeles, in which the significance of different neighbourhoods' racial composition was accentuated. Bob's navigation of the city requires him to orientate himself by discerning precisely such differences. Wandering through Downtown Los Angeles, he observes streets 'heavy with pedestrian traffic, mostly white', and begins to feel 'conspicuous, ill at ease, out of place. It was the white folks' world and they resented me just standing in it' (p. 96). The stretch of Central Avenue north of Forty-First Street is described as 'a slick, niggerish block — hustlers and pimps, gangsters and stooges. But it didn't ruffle me' (p. 51).[40] Alice and her family, in contrast, live in the 'clean, quiet, well bred' (p. 58) neighbourhood of West Adams:

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[39] This reflects tensions within the community between recent arrivals (generally from a rural background and seeking blue-collar work) and more established members of the city's black middle class, in which, as Horne writes, 'Year-of-arrival consciousness became a substitute for class consciousness' (p. 14).
[40] In Bob's comfort around Central Avenue, which is reiterated in the temporary safety he feels there when on the run at the climax of the novel, there is a telling inversion of the spatiality of *The Big Nowhere* discussed in Chapter Five below. Whereas for Danny Upshaw 'Darktown' is an exoticised site of threat and otherness, for Bob Jones it is when he steps outside the boundaries of South LA that he feels most at risk.

> This was the West Side. When you asked a Negro where he lived, and he said on the West Side, that was supposed to mean he was better than the Negroes who lived on the South Side; it was like the white folks giving a Beverly Hills address. (p. 58)

Preparing to approach Madge at her hotel in the Bunker Hill district, Bob reflects on a neighbourhood 'spotted with vacant lots and cheap hotels, a stagnant part of town between the downtown section to the east and the residential district to the west' (p. 172). He continues:

> People passed me, glanced at me, then turned to stare with hard hostility when they saw I was a Negro. It was a rebbish neighbourhood, poor white; I'd have felt much better parked in Beverly Hills. (pp. 172–3)

In describing the neighbourhood as 'rebbish', a slang allusion to Confederate rebels during the American Civil War, Bob implies that the racism of the Jim Crow South has been transposed into the heart of Los Angeles.[41]

Central to these descriptions is Bob's perspective on whether he himself belongs there, or whether he feels 'conspicuous, ill at ease, out of place'. Even the middle-class character of the predominantly black neighbourhood in which Alice lives makes him feel 'like an intruder' (p. 59). For the black subject, rigidly defined boundaries between different racially coded spaces entail the risk of transgression and therefore increase the stakes of mobility. This makes it imperative for the individual to recognize the structure of these spatial networks in order to avoid incriminating themselves. The perceptiveness with which Bob interprets the differences between neighbourhoods should be understood in these terms. He functions, in Christopher Breu's terms, 'as a racially marked subject in a white-supremacist culture', and such a protagonist differs from the

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[41] Leyda notes that Bob also applies the term 'rebbish' to Madge herself, and suggests that in marking her as Southern 'white trash', Bob attempts to assert his superiority over her in class terms (*American Mobilities*, pp. 98–99).

white hard-boiled subject in being unable to maintain the 'fantasy of detached

objectivity and dispassionate observation' central to the latter's experience of the city.[42]

Bob's eye for socio-spatial distinctions might recall, as Elizabeth A. Wheeler

suggests, Philip Marlowe's navigation of the various districts of Los Angeles, but

Himes's protagonist is ultimately more vulnerable.[43] He is acutely aware of the real risk

of being marked out by a police department invested in establishing boundaries and

restricting the movements of groups deemed prone to criminality: the 'thin blue line 'of

the LAPD. Sitting in his stationary car in Madge's neighbourhood, he reflects: 'I knew

if I stayed there for any length of time they'd call the police. Any Negro in the

neighbourhood after dark was a "suspicious person"' (p. 173). Both times he is stopped

by uniformed officers it is clear that his skin tone has been noted and that this has

precipitated the traffic stop. This racially discriminatory tactic speaks to what Breu calls

Bob's 'inability to occupy an unmarked position', as a racially marked subject.[44] More

than this, though, in each encounter, Bob is immediately asked to produce identification

— making it clear that the racist quality of the police's interactions with him is a

function of a broader imperative to police mobility by fixing identity in time and space,

incriminating Bob through his movements.

A short but significant passage of the novel draws together these threads of race,

anonymity and mobility. Waking the morning after his confrontation with Madge at her

apartment, Bob reflects on his situation, and tells himself that all he's ever wanted is

'just to be accepted as a man' (p. 190). The emphasis on masculinity in this hung-over

interior monologue is striking — Bob's desire is not to be respected for his humanity

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[42] Christopher Breu, 'Freudian Knot or Gordian Knot? The Contradictions of Racialized Masculinity in Chester Himes' If He Hollers Let Him Go', *Callaloo*, 26.3 (2003), 766–95 <https://doi.org/10.1353/cal.2003.0073> (p. 770).
[43] Elizabeth A. Wheeler, *Uncontained: Urban Fiction in Postwar America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), p. 40.
[44] Breu, p. 770.

but specifically to be recognized as 'a man, defined by Webster as a male human being' (p. 190). His wish to be viewed 'without distinction', in other words, does not extend to his gender.[45] More importantly, though, Bob frames his plea for acceptance as a desire for an urban mobility that is anonymous, unimpeded and not racially marked:

> That's all I'd ever wanted — just to be accepted as a man — without ambition, without distinction, either of race, creed or colour; just a simple Joe walking down an American street, going my simple way, without any other identifying characteristics but weight, height, and gender. (p. 190)

The possibility of such free, anonymous movement is undermined and contested by the LAPD, and by the white citizens who observe his movements — all serving as agents of a territorial imperative to maintain the boundaries in racially coded space. Bob's yearning to be a 'simple Joe walking down an American street' is shown to be futile in the conditions of wartime Los Angeles. This lends greater urgency to his attempts to discern the character of districts and neighbourhoods, as it is only this perceptual sensitivity that allows him a degree of purposeful movement and the prospect of a precarious safety as he navigates the city. Ultimately, however, Himes's narrative will decisively demonstrate the limits of Bob's cognitive map. Forced to negotiate other boundaries, more fluid and ambiguous, that exceed his ability to discern them, he will be unable to avoid incriminating himself.

'Read and run': Contingency, Paradox and Fluid Boundaries

R. J. Smith, in his history of Central Avenue in the 1940s, describes precisely the kind of perceptual sensitivity that Bob Jones is forced to apply to his navigation of LA's urban space: 'Those who were going to make it in the new West interpreted the invisible and discerned where they couldn't go, what they couldn't buy, where the other

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[45] For an insightful reading that draws out the relationship between gender, race and class in the novel more extensively, see Leyda, pp. 85–105.

man lived.'[46] If some boundaries corresponded with municipal topography or residential character, others were constituted in ways that made them even more difficult to discern and negotiate. The hypocritical and ambiguous quality of white supremacy in Los Angeles 'mystified even those who felt it most harshly', as Smith suggests, since the absence of *de jure* segregation obliged black citizens to adhere to unspoken restrictions on which businesses and facilities were open to them: 'There was no law against a restaurant overlooking a black couple; it was just that explicitly refusing service was technically illegal'.[47]

Just such a situation arises early in the novel, when Bob resolves to take Alice out for dinner at 'the best hotel in town' (p. 55). When they enter the lobby of the hotel they are immediately made to feel out of place: 'It seemed that to a person everyone froze. It started at the front where we were first noticed, and ran the length and breadth of the room' (p. 69). They are served food, and then at the end of their meal presented discreetly with a note asking them not to return in future. The scene demonstrates the hypocritical character of racism in early 1940s Los Angeles, and how it operated on different spatial scales — affecting individual buildings and businesses, as well as city neighbourhoods. Bob and Alice are notionally free to cross a racial boundary by entering the hotel, but are then made to feel shameful for choosing to transgress that boundary, thereby reminding others of its existence. The transgression that occurs in this scene is a conscious one: Bob is aware that the hotel is implicitly a segregated space, and makes the decision to reserve a table defiantly, against the wishes of Alice, who would rather 'go slumming down on Central Avenue' (p. 65). It does not therefore constitute a failure to discern boundaries, and the experience serves primarily to expose fault-lines in Bob and Alice's relationship.

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[46] *The Great Black Way*, p. 43.
[47] *The Great Black Way,* p. 42.

The scene is more important when it is considered alongside a later situation in which Himes mirrors its conditions. A hungover and unsettled Bob is drinking in a bar-restaurant called the Rust Room with a black clientele. A young white woman enters the bar with two white servicemen, and tensions rise as she draws attention to herself and flirts with the other customers. The boundaries of a racially coded space are transgressed, in other words, just as they are when Bob and Alice enter the hotel together. The crucial difference is that whilst Bob's transgression of white space puts him at risk, white transgression of this black space jeopardises the black clientele, not the transgressors:

> She could get everybody in the joint into trouble, even me just sitting there buying a drink. She was probably under age anyway; and if she was she could get the hotel closed, the liquor licence revoked, probably get the manager in jail. She could take those two black chumps flirting with her outside and get them thirty years apiece in San Quentin; in Alabama she could get them hung. (p. 93)[48]

As Bob sees it, the disruptive presence of the white woman in the Rust Room threatens not just individual customers but the very existence of the business itself.

The sense of contingency that Himes establishes in this scene is deep and complex, because multiple layers of geographical and historical detail intersect. As Itagaki notes, the possibility of a confrontation between the clientele and the white servicemen escalating into widespread violence reminds Bob of the 1943 'Zoot Suit Riots', in which Mexican-American youths were attacked by white servicemen.[49] Himes also situates the 'Rust Room' in 'Little Tokyo, where the spooks and spills had

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[48] We might also recall the transgression of black space by a more overtly threatening white presence in Chandler's *Farewell, My Lovely*, when Moose Malloy, accompanied by Marlowe, enters Florian's bar on Central Avenue. And, indeed, the violent consequences of Danny Upshaw's canvassing around Central Avenue in *The Big Nowhere*.

[49] Itagaki, p. 69. See also Keith Wilhite, 'Mapping Black and Brown L.A.: Zoot Suit Riots as Spatial Subtext in *If He Hollers Let Him Go*', *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*, 66.2 (2010), 121–48 <https://doi.org/10.1353/arq.0.0064>. Himes wrote a 1943 article on the violence for *Crisis,* 'Zoot Riots Are Race Riots', collected in Chester B. Himes, *Black on Black: 'Baby Sister' and Selected Writings* (London: Joseph, 1975), pp. 220–25.

come in and taken over' (p. 88); in other words, the area of the city, briefly renamed

Bronzeville, that was left vacant after the internment of Japanese Americans and which

was quickly repopulated with African-American residents and businesses escaping the

overcrowding further south along Central Avenue. Life in Bronzeville was

fundamentally precarious, based on uncertain and illicit tenancies: 'Nobody knew what

to do with Bronzeville, or how long it would exist. Were the Japanese Americans going

to be allowed back?'[50] The instability of African-American life in Bronzeville was

bound up with the city's treatment of its Japanese-American population, and this

reinforces an association that is established in the novel's opening pages. Dwelling on

the detention without trial that Japanese Americans were subjected to shortly after the

attack on Pearl Harbor, Bob reflects: 'It was taking a man up by the roots and locking

him up without a chance. Without a trial. Without a charge. Without even giving him a

chance to say one word' (p. 4).[51]

These two scenes in which the boundaries of interior spaces are transgressed,

when read together, emphasize that if black access to white space is often heavily

policed, black spaces are sites of contingency, and of a vulnerability that is entirely out

of Bob's control. He expects some form of sanction for attempting to eat in the upscale

restaurant, and accepts the possibility willingly, even if it also angers him — it is, in

other words, a conscious and active transgression. In the Rust Room, Bob is reminded

of the precarious nature of black space when it is transgressed by a white person

(particularly a young, white woman) — a contingency that speaks to the conditions of

several communities of colour in early 1940s Los Angeles, and that Bob relates

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[50] Smith, *The Great Black Way*, p. 148.
[51] There is an additional, metatextual allusion in the novel's references to the internment of Japanese-American citizens: Himes wrote the novel whilst living in a house that had been vacated by an interned Japanese-American family. Chester Himes, letter to John A. Williams, 31 October 1961 in *Dear Chester, Dear John: Letters Between Chester Himes and John A. Williams*, ed. by John A. Williams and Lori Williams (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), p. 22.

specifically to his own position.[52] When he reflects on Japanese-American internment on the first day depicted in the novel, he is thinking primarily about himself, and the root of his own anxiety: 'It was thinking about if they ever did that to me, Robert Jones, Mrs Jones's dark son, that started me to getting scared' (p. 4). What Bob fears is being locked up 'without a chance', without even 'a chance to say one word' — it is, in other words, the fear of an incrimination in response to which no alibi will be accepted. Rather than provoking anger, the experience at the Rust Room prompts fear: 'The cold scared feeling started clamping down on me; it nailed me to my seat, weak and black and powerless' (p. 93).

There is one further significant association established in the scene at the Rust Room. Watching the young, southern white woman flirt with the black clientele, Bob is suddenly reminded of his co-worker, Madge: 'the two of 'em were just alike' (p. 93). The following morning, waking in bed and recalling Madge dismissing him with a racial slur, Bob will feel a fear that he expresses using a remarkably similar image to the one used in the Rust Room scene: 'something took a heavy hammer and nailed me to the bed' (p. 125). Like the woman in the Rust Room, the anxious response that reflecting on Madge provokes manifests affectively as a feeling of violent restraint and immobility. Bob's interactions with Madge — a white woman who exhibits both a clear sexual attraction and a visceral racial animus towards him — are particularly decisive moments in the narrative. Their early confrontation — in which Madge refuses to work with a 'nigger' and Bob instinctively calls her a 'cracker bitch' in return (p. 33) — has

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[52] Keith Wilhite's astute analysis focuses, in terms that complement my own reading of the novel, on 'the way Jones reads the nebulous borderlands produced by Los Angeles' segregated geography' (p. 132). His treatment of the Rust Room scene characterizes the bar as a 'borderland' space in which 'people of different races and ethnicities co-exist in sustained tension' (p. 135), equivalent to other contained public spaces such as streetcars. This reading allows Wilhite to draw out associations between *If He Hollers* and Himes's 'Zoot Riots Are Race Riots' article. However, in downplaying the extent to which the Rust Room, as situated within Little Tokyo/Bronzeville, is represented as a racialized space that the white soldiers and woman transgress, Wilhite's approach obscures the significant parallels and contrasts Himes establishes with other interior spaces, and the ways their borders function and are constituted.

consequences that unfold throughout the rest of the novel. Their final encounter, which ends with Bob fleeing her accusation of rape, initiates the climactic section that will end with Bob's arrest.

Madge and Bob's interactions are governed by complex and charged interpersonal boundaries. Both of them alternate between performing and resisting stereotypical roles: for Madge, that of the vulnerable white southern woman who needs white male protection; for Bob, that of the predatory, sexually aggressive black male. Bob acknowledges the performative aspect of their encounters as he approaches her at the shipyard for the discussion that will lead to their argument: 'I knew the instant I recognized her that she was going to perform then — we both would perform. As soon as she saw me she went into her frightened act and began shrinking away' (p. 32). The role that Madge performs is for the benefit of white male observers, but this is no less the case for Bob, for all that he resents it. When he lusts after Madge in spite of himself, his desire is framed primarily in terms of his relationship with other men — specifically, with how such a transgressive liaison would serve as some kind of revenge on the white male co-workers and supervisors who have abused and belittled him:

> I was going to have to make her as low as a white whore in a Negro slum — a scummy two-dollar whore… I was going to have to so I could keep looking the white folks in the face. (pp. 152–3)

A telling indication of the bind in which Bob finds himself caught is his reaction when a sympathetic co-worker suggests, seemingly without judgement or hostility, that Bob might be interested in a date with Madge:

> I felt flustered, caught, guilty. It was funny in a way. I couldn't tell him I *didn't* want her because she was a white woman and he was a white man, and something somewhere way back in my mind said that would be an insult. And I couldn't tell him that I *did* want her, because the same thing said that that would be an insult too. (p. 146)

In Bob's mind, the very act of articulating his attitude towards Madge is dangerous, regardless of the actual content of his response. How Bob relates to Madge is bound up in this paradox — a paradox that arises because all of Bob's words and actions concerning Madge are conditioned by the complicating presence of the white man, standing in judgement and with the *de jure* or *de facto* authority to punish Bob for his actions. Hesitation and uncertainty are the understandable responses to such a dilemma, just as Bob's movements through the racially circumscribed spaces of the city are sometimes hesitant and uncertain. Both Madge and Bob are aware that any sexual relationship between them would be considered transgressive by their peers; what is particularly significant is the extent to which the novel explicitly spatializes this transgressiveness, implicating their interactions in the wider context of social and spatial transgression that it has established. Madge is described as 'pure white Texas' (pp. 153–4), embodying her southern heritage and the archetypal role Bob associates with it. Relieved when he believes he has extricated himself from her without suffering any ill consequences, Bob rues that 'I'd always figured myself too smart to let the white folks catch me out there on their own hunting-grounds' (p. 174).

Their fateful final encounter involves a particularly significant overlapping of social, racial and spatial boundaries. Bob and Madge are caught alone inside a cabin at the shipyard; the room has only one exit, and curious members of the crew are attempting to force open the unexpectedly locked door. Madge, vengeful because Bob has just rejected her, but also scared of how she will be viewed by the white men outside when they open the door and discover her alone with a black man, begins to scream for help and feigns a struggle. Bob, in response, experiences the familiar sensation of fearful paralysis that has afflicted him throughout the novel: 'Cold numbing terror swept over me in a paralysing wave. [...] I could see and hear but could

not move' (p. 223). He briefly tries to defend his position verbally, but when the door is opened and he is immediately struck in the face, he feels himself 'moved by a rage, impelled by it, set into motion by it' (p. 225). Desperately and violently trying to flee, Bob struggles through the crowd of men and reaches a ladder, before his movement is arrested in particularly brutal fashion with a hammer blow to the skull that knocks him unconscious.

This tense and violent scene marks the decisive turning point in the plot, when the optimistic conclusion hinted at by Bob's proposal to Alice gives way to pessimism. The scene is revealing not only for what it suggests about the hypocrisy and harmfulness of the racial and gender roles imposed on both Bob and Madge, but for what it demonstrates about the complex spatiality of white supremacy in the novel. When Bob first enters the cabin, investigating it as a potential worksite for his crew, he has no idea that Madge is using it for a surreptitious nap. For all that he is able to discern the character of many of the city's spaces, to identify certain boundaries and even choose to transgress them defiantly, the borders in racialized space are so fluid that they can be both constituted and breached in the very moment that Bob enters a room unexpectedly containing a lone white woman. Read in relation to the earlier scene at the Rust Room, Bob's final encounter with Madge is decisive not only because it results in her wrongfully accusing him of rape, but because it demonstrates that there is no degree of perceptual sensitivity that can protect Bob from inadvertently transgressing the city's racialized borders. Himes foreshadows this fundamental vulnerability, with dramatic irony, during the conversation in which Bob proposes to Alice that occurs immediately before this decisive scene:

> Please don't tell me I can control my destiny, because I know I can't. In any incident that might come up a white person can use his colour on me and turn it into a catastrophe and I won't have any protection, any out, nothing I can do about it but die. (p. 208)

'A trap the white folks had set for me': Violence as Orientation

The instability and fluidity of such borders is critical to explicating Bob's disorientation in the novel. These shifting boundaries that exceed his ability to discern them prevent him from spatially and socially orientating himself. Obliged to move and act within this context, he oscillates between defiant resolve and hesitation: his movements are frequently uncertain and his course of action is left unclear as the result of geographical and social boundaries so complex that transgression appears inevitable, yet threatens severe consequences. He yearns for the possibility of a mobility that is anonymous and non-racialized, of being 'a simple Joe walking down an American street [...] without any other identifying characteristics but weight, height, and gender' (p. 190), but is repeatedly made conscious of the system of white supremacy that seeks to fix his identity and police his movements. The dichotomy of constriction and free, unhesitating movement through which Bob articulates his emotional state, then, does not speak only to the physical and social containment that he, and the wider African-American community, experiences in the city. Bob is disorientated: his uncertainty and hesitation result from an inability to adequately discern the boundaries that structure his experience, and to avoid incriminating himself in transgressing them.

It is in terms of *orientation* that Bob's actions in the novel, and specifically his contemplation of violence, can best be understood. Breu notes the significance of the disjunction between Bob's thoughts and his actions — the fact that 'while Bob's conscious thoughts are much more violent than those of his hard-boiled brethren, his actions are finally much less so'.[53] Breu reads this in relation to the Freudian terminology of symbolization, fantasy and acting-out, in order to contrast the experiences of the white hard-boiled subject and the African-American 'tough'

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[53] Breu, p. 784.

protagonist. The disjunction can also be interpreted, however, in terms of its relation to Bob's attempts to orientate himself within conditions of racially circumscribed movement and ambiguous boundaries. Bob oscillates between resolve and hesitation regarding his contemplation of violent revenge, and this fluctuating state corresponds closely to the dichotomy of constriction and free movement through which Bob articulates his psychological state. It is when he resolves to commit violence or otherwise transgress that he feels exhilarated and purposeful — these are the specific moments when he feels 'unchained [...] free' (p. 44). When he leaves the shipyard and feels suppleness and fluidity in both his bodily movements and those of his car, it is because he has resolved to murder Johnny Stoddart:

> I was going to kill him if they hung me for it, I thought pleasantly. [...] Just the thought of it did something for me; just contemplating it. All the tightness that had been in my body, making my motions jerky, keeping my muscles taut, left me and I felt relaxed, confident, strong. (p. 45)

When this resolution is renewed on the third day of the novel, it again affects the quality of his mobility: 'I walked with a steady hard motion, planting each step like driving piles. I shouldered into guys, split between couples, walked in a straight line' (p. 156).

If what Bob experiences for much of the novel is disorientation, then he feels relief and exhilaration when he resolves to commit violent acts, and associates them with free movement, because to will violence and intentionally transgress at least serves as an *orientation*. He prizes impulsiveness, violence and solipsism, and curses hesitation as weakness, because this presents itself as a narrative according to which he can make sense of his experiences, allowing some sense of purposeful movement and action. Certainly insofar as it is self-destructive this orientation is unsustainable. Talking back, murdering Johnny Stoddart, seducing Madge — all will expose Bob to greater danger at the same time as temporarily alleviating his feelings of anxiety and fear. When Madge

racially abuses him early in the novel and he impulsively calls her a 'cracker bitch' in return, this is one of the few moments Bob acts instinctively, without hesitation or self-analysis. It is not a loss of control that he initially regrets: 'I felt better now I'd cursed somebody out' (p. 33). And yet it is from this single confrontation that Bob's demotion and many other consequences spring.

Writing on the destructive impact of racial stereotyping on black male psychology, bell hooks writes, 'Nonviolent black males daily face a world that sees them as violent. [...] Many black males explain their decision to become the "beast" as a surrender to realities that they cannot change. And if you are going to be seen as a beast you may as well act like one'.[54] It is in such terms that many critics interpret Bob's actions in *If He Hollers*: Itagaki, for example, suggests that 'If a punishment is the foregone conclusion to his life, or any black man's life, Bob would rather be punished for something he *has* done', and that as a result he consciously surrenders to the racist stereotype of the black man lusting after a white woman, thereby attaining some degree of agency.[55] Such a reading seems to resonate with a reading of Bob's relationship to violence and action as a self-destructive orientation. In its final scenes, however, the novel complicates this reading further: Himes takes the opportunity to undermine even the negative orientation that Bob adopts, by re-emphasising the complexity and fluidity of the borders that structure his experiences.

After Bob is accused of rape, Alice urges him not to run, insisting that they can fight the charge together. He scorns her hopes as naïve, certain that he better understands the workings of the racist system in which he is enmeshed, and that Madge's accusation of rape will inevitably lead to his conviction: 'A white woman yelling "Rape," and a Negro caught locked in the room. The whole structure of

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[54] bell hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 49.
[55] Itagaki, p. 75. See also Fanon's reading of Himes's novel in *Black Skin, White Masks*, pp. 106–7.

American thought was against me; American tradition had convicted me a hundred years before' (pp. 231–2). This certainty leads him to reject Alice's help and fatalistically resolve to rationalize the situation: he will 'kill Johnny Stoddart and let them hang me for it. All they could ever do to me then would be to get even' (p. 240). It is a crucial and subtle point of the narrative that Bob's certainty is undermined by the novel's conclusion. The rape accusation is in fact withdrawn, but the charge of carrying a concealed weapon, with which he intended to murder Johnny Stoddart, still hangs over him; it is in relation to that charge that his enforced enlistment serves as a compromise punishment.

Himes's narrative sees Bob punished for a crime he is technically guilty of (the concealed weapon charge), but not for the false accusation he was certain could not be escaped, nor even for the violent crime he intended to commit in retaliation. This crime, as noted above, is bound up with a spatial transgression: driving along Slauson Avenue, Bob crosses the Los Angeles city limits and enters Huntington Park, where he is singled out by a police patrol car on racial grounds before he can even reach the home of Johnny Stoddart. What these circumstances demonstrate is that the racially charged urban space Bob moves through cannot be adequately 'known'. For all Bob's apparently perceptive discernment of certain spaces and borders, it is impossible for him to know them to the extent that he can avoid inadvertent transgression, as his final encounter with Madge at the shipyard demonstrates. Even finding a perverse orientation in willed transgression is unsustainable, not just because it will likely be self-destructive, but because of the arbitrary force with which borders are constituted and policed. This dynamic recalls Michel Foucault's ideas on the law and transgression:

> If punishment could be provoked merely by the arbitrary actions of those who violate the law, then the law would be in their control: they would be able to

> touch it and make it appear at will; they would be masters of its shadow and light.[56]

Bob cannot even be certain when and if his transgressions will be punished: it is, in other words, impossible for individuals to orientate themselves sufficiently to avoid incrimination, or even to orientate themselves through self-incrimination.

In the opening chapter, Bob reflects on his anxious daily struggle to navigate wartime Los Angeles society: 'Every time I stepped outside I saw a challenge I had to accept or ignore' (p. 4). Days later, having fled from Madge's apartment despite her having made her attraction to him clear, he feels relief at having apparently avoided making a dangerous mistake:

> The whole idea of going to bed with her to get even with Kelly and Mac and the other peckerwoods out at the yard seemed silly now [...] I felt relieved and kind of half-way clever, as if I'd gotten out of a trap the white folks had set for me. (p. 174)

What the novel's ending forcefully and pessimistically underlines is that the 'challenge' that Bob accepts, his defiance, his action, will in all likelihood be a trap he has not discerned. Himes foreshadows this fatalistic conclusion, and allows Bob a moment of unconscious clarity, in one of the three dreams that open the novel. There, Bob observes a murder investigation in which the police are searching for the killer of a white man, Frankie Childs, at a war plant. The suspect they are searching for is 'a big tall man with strong arms, big hands, and a crippled leg' (p. 2). Black workers from the plant are called in for questioning one by one, and the lieutenant presents them with a challenge: 'Can you stand the test? [...] Can you go up to the third floor and look the dead body of Frankie Childs in the face?' (p. 2) The first man they question responds to it on those terms, with defiance and without fear, '[starting] up the stairs three at a time' (p. 2). The

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[56] Michel Foucault, 'Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside', in *Foucault/Blanchot*, trans. by Brian Massumi (New York: Zone Books, 1987), pp. 7–58 (p. 35).

suspects do not perceive that they are being lured into potentially incriminating movements through a challenge to their masculinity. There is indeed a test, but it is one that they will have passed or failed before they even reach the top of the stairs and confront the dead body. Bob looks on, perceiving that it is their very mobility that will incriminate them, and he laughs, hysterically.

> I remembered saying in my dream, 'Oh, you gonna keep 'em running upstairs until you find out what one's crippled.' Suddenly it struck me as funny, and I began laughing. But right in the middle of the laugh I felt a crazy impulse to cry. I wanted to just lie there and cry. (pp. 5–6)

The insight proves insufficient for navigating the racialized geography of Bob's waking life. He transgresses one of the many invisible boundaries separating black and white Los Angeles, and in doing so incriminates himself. The novel ends in motion: following a prescribed path, ascending like the men in his dream 'running upstairs', Bob is led 'up the hill towards the [army] induction centre' (p. 252).

Chapter Four

'Being stopped': The LA Rebellion and South LA in the 1970s

The introduction to the 1949 edition of the *Green Book* envisioned the time when

advances in equality would render such a guide obsolete:

> There will be a day sometime in the near future when this guide will not have to
> be published. That is when we as a race will have equal opportunities and
> privileges in the United States. It will be a great day for us to suspend this
> publication for then we can go wherever we please, and without
> embarrassment.[1]

A reading of later editions would certainly suggest that, as the post-war period was left

behind and the 1960s dawned, African-American travellers were increasingly able to

'go wherever they pleased'. The introduction to the 1962 edition, for example, enthuses

about the possibilities of the new 'jet-age', and advises 'you must plan and save toward

a vacation. […] Take with you a genuine interest, an open mind — leave the critical one

at home — and most important take MONEY'.[2] On a more critical reading, the later

editions of the Green Book betray an increasingly aspirational tone that suggests an

editorial desire to appeal to a middle-class demographic. This desire can be seen

reflected in some of the more upscale businesses listed in these later editions: Los

Angeles hotels listed in the 1962 edition, for example, include the Biltmore and the

Statler-Hilton in Downtown and the Hollywood Roosevelt and Hollywood Plaza Hotels

around Hollywood Boulevard.[3] Certainly, by the mid-1960s it was clear that the Civil

Rights Movement was gradually driving improvements in the freedoms afforded to

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[1] *The Negro Motorist Green Book: 1949*, ed. by Victor H. Green (New York: Victor H. Green, 1949) <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/9dc3ff40-8df4-0132-fd57-58d385a7b928> [accessed 30 September 2016], p. 1.
[2] *The Travelers' Green Book: 1962*, ed. by Victor H. Green (New York: Victor H. Green and Company, 1962) <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/789a3dc0-942e-0132-cc26-58d385a7bbd0> [accessed 30 September 2016], p. 4.
[3] *The Travelers' Green Book: 1962*, p. 12. For a critical reading of the Green Book's 'continuing faith in the equalizing mechanisms of American democracy and consumer capitalism', see Seiler, p. 1103 and *passim*.

African Americans, including the freedom to move without hindrance. Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed precisely the kinds of overt discrimination that the *Green Book* had helped African-American travellers to navigate: the segregated hotels, restaurants and gas stations that had made interstate travel complex and dangerous. Rendered potentially obsolete, as the 1949 edition had once envisaged, after 1964 the guide was retitled *Traveler's Green Book: International Edition*; the 1966–67 edition would be the last published.[4]

Chester Himes's *If He Hollers Let Him Go* engages with the specific conditions that Bob Jones, and the wider black community in early 1940s LA, were forced to negotiate: housing restrictions; restrictions on or interruptions to movement; aggressive and seemingly arbitrary law enforcement. Underlying all three of these conditions was a territoriality that, geographically and therefore socio-economically, circumscribed the movements and prospects of the city's African-American population. Despite the *Green Book*'s optimistic vision of unobstructed jet-age travel, racialized restrictions on movement continued to evolve, and would persist in structuring African-American lives in Los Angeles during the 1960s and 1970s. Bob's fate in *If He Hollers Let Him Go* is sealed by a traffic stop: arbitrarily pulled over by LAPD officers 'because I was a black boy in a big car in a white neighbourhood' (p. 241), he is recognized as a wanted man and arrested. Twenty years after the publication of Himes's novel, another traffic stop would spark five days of violence, arson and looting across South Los Angeles, when the arrest of Marquette Frye by a California Highway Patrol officer on 11 August 1965 led to the Watts Rebellion. In his autobiography, Himes would later reflect: 'The only

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[4] Hall, pp. 316–17.

thing that surprised me about the race riots in Watts in 1965 was that they waited so long to happen. We are a very patient people.'[5]

The conditions that led up to the events of August 1965, the traumatic violence of the Watts Rebellion itself, and the further decline and neglect of the Eastside of South Los Angeles in the years that followed would all influence the development of African-American Los Angeles throughout the 1970s. They would also provide an urgent local context for those based in the city seeking to represent and critique the social and political conditions structuring black life during the period. During the 1970s the most significant artistic encounters with South Los Angeles occurred onscreen, as black independent filmmakers in the city contested the representation of African Americans in mainstream culture by focusing on the material conditions and political concerns of the black community. They did so whilst operating outside and often in overt opposition to the machinery of Hollywood, working independently in different contexts to maintain artistic and commercial control over their productions.

Melvin Van Peebles was one of first and most influential of these filmmakers; at the start of the decade he independently produced, wrote, directed and starred in *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971). The film resonates with many of the themes of *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, centring as it does on a male African-American protagonist provoked into violent retaliation by racist policing tactics, and going on the run in South Los Angeles. One of the striking differences, however, lies in the potentially revolutionary political force with which Sweetback's violence is associated in the film. Bob Jones's perspective is essentially solipsistic, and in the novel he is presented with no satisfactory political outlet for his anger. Produced three decades later, *Sweetback* demonstrates Van Peebles's own engagement with the Black Power politics of the

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[5] Himes, *The Quality of Hurt*, p. 74.

1960s: the film's plot turns on Sweetback's decision to defend Mu-Mu, a black

nationalist activist, from police violence, whilst the conclusion implies that Sweetback

will take on the mantle of the black revolutionary and return to 'collect dues' from

white society.[6] *Sweetback* unexpectedly grossed more than $10 million during its first

run alone. Although this extraordinary commercial success seemingly vindicated Van

Peebles's *auteurist* approach, however, its cultural influence would not be consistent

with its radical political orientation: as David James notes, '*Sweetback* initiated, not a

revolutionary black cinema, but Blaxploitation—a genre that reverted to the almost

complete control of white studio personnel'.[7]

It was within the context of the brief commercial dominance of Blaxploitation,

and its emphasis on particular caricatured aspects of African-American life, that a group

of independent black filmmakers gathered at UCLA in the early 1970s.[8] This group

would come to be known as the 'LA Rebellion' or 'the Los Angeles School of Black

Filmmakers', and the works of its members — including Charles Burnett, Haile Gerima,

Julie Dash and Billy Woodberry, amongst many others — have been described by film

scholar Clyde Taylor as 'the most vital and accomplished screen representations of

Black Americans ever'.[9] *Killer of Sheep* and *Bush Mama* were shot in the decade

following the Watts Rebellion by 'the two outstanding figures of the first wave of the

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[6] On the tensions between *Sweetback*'s ostensible politics, the conditions its of production and its cultural influence, see David E. James, *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 191–194.
[7] David E. James, *The Most Typical Avant-Garde: History and Geography of Minor Cinemas in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 323.
[8] For an analysis of the ways in which the LA Rebellion filmmakers engaged with, critiqued and in some cases drew from the tropes of Blaxploitation, see Jan-Christopher Horak, 'Tough Enough: Blaxploitation and the L.A. Rebellion', in *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema*, ed. by Allyson Nadia Field, Jan-Christopher Horak, and Jacqueline Najuma Stewart (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), pp. 119–55.
[9] Clyde Taylor, 'Once Upon a Time in the West... L.A. Rebellion', in *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema*, pp. ix–xxiv (p. xiv).

Los Angeles school of Black filmmakers' — Haile Gerima and Charles Burnett.[10] Both

films utilize location shooting in the streets and interior spaces of South Los Angeles in

order to represent aspects of the experiences of working-class African Americans in the

city during the 1970s. They were produced a generation after *If He Hollers Let Him Go*,

during a different period in the city's history, and in a different medium. Any

satisfactory comparative analysis here must therefore take into account not just the

conditions of South LA in the 1970s, but also their specifically cinematic formal

properties. Nevertheless, these two films can fruitfully be placed in dialogue with

Himes's novel, and with the other texts considered in this thesis, in terms of their

representations of African-American subjectivity and the spatial politics of Los

Angeles.

Killer of Sheep, written and directed by Burnett, was shot in South Los Angeles

in the early 1970s and completed in 1977. Commercially unavailable for decades due to

the use of unlicensed music on its soundtrack, it was inducted into the National Film

Registry for preservation by the US Library of Congress in 1990, and remastered and

released on DVD for the first time in 2007.[11] *Killer of Sheep* is a deceptively gentle

depiction of African-American family life in early-1970s South LA. Stan (Henry Gayle

Saunders), the slaughterhouse worker and eponymous *Killer of Sheep* whose job

supports his wife and two children, is an apparently depressed insomniac who is

emotionally and sexually distant from his partner. The film's episodic structure depicts

a series of small defeats experienced by Stan's family and their acquaintances: an

abortive attempt to purchase a second-hand car engine; a trip to a racetrack outside the

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[10] Ntongela Masilela, 'The Los Angeles School of Black Filmmakers', in *Black American Cinema*, ed. by Manthia Diawara (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 107–17 (p. 111).

[11] 'Complete National Film Registry Listing - National Film Preservation Board', *Library of Congress* <https://www.loc.gov/programs/national-film-preservation-board/film-registry/complete-national-film-registry-listing/> [accessed 12 December 2016].

city ended by a flat tire; an anxious Stan spurning the affection of his wife (Kaycee Moore) as they dance to a Dinah Washington record.[12]

The hard-boiled urgency that drives the narrative of *If He Hollers* is entirely absent from *Killer of Sheep*; indeed, its deliberate pacing led one of the more critical reviews of the film's rerelease to suggest that 'even at a relatively brisk 87 minutes, the movie feels like it's unspooling at half speed'.[13] The film also largely lacks any strongly defined plot, consisting of a series of interlinked vignettes depicting day-to-day life for the black working class of South LA during the 1970s. The result is a dreamlike cinematic naturalism that bears the influence of some of the filmmakers and cinematic movements that Burnett was exposed to at UCLA, including Italian neo-realism and the British documentary films of the 1930s.[14] One consequence of *Killer of Sheep*'s naturalism is an ambiguous tone that has prompted contrasting critical readings. For Ntongela Masilela, it constitutes an unsentimental but hopeful depiction of 'victory over hostile conditions'; for Thom Andersen it is 'an epic of black endurance and heroism'.[15] Other critics have been more measured regarding both the film's significance and its dramatic stakes, judging it 'a small, quiet gem of a movie' that centres on 'finding small, simple things to appreciate'.[16]

Burnett collaborated with many of his peers in the UCLA programme, including Haile Gerima, for whose *Bush Mama* Burnett served as cinematographer. *Bush Mama,*

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[12] Kaycee Moore's character is never named in the film, and is listed only as 'Stan's wife' in the concluding credits, so she will by necessity be referred to as such here. Six actors are given character credits at the end of the film: Stan, his wife and two children, and their friends Eugene and Bracy. All four of the male characters are named, including Stan's son, Stan Jr, whilst the two female characters are listed only as 'Stan's wife' and 'Stan's daughter'.

[13] Jim Keogh, '"Killer of Sheep" May Be Overhyped', *Telegram & Gazette* (Worcester, MA, 25 October 2007), p. E2 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/268994442?accountid=14511> [accessed 5 May 2017].

[14] For an insightful analysis of Burnett's influences see Paula J. Massood, 'An Aesthetic Appropriate to Conditions: Killer of Sheep, (Neo)Realism, and the Documentary Impulse', *Wide Angle*, 21.4 (1999), 20–41 <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/170731/pdf> [accessed 11 May 2016].

[15] Masilela, p. 112; Andersen, *Los Angeles Plays Itself*.

[16] Cliff Thompson, 'The Devil Beats His Wife: Small Moments and Big Statements in the Films of Charles Burnett', *Cinéaste*, 23.2 (1997), 24–27 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41689017> [accessed 13 April 2015] (p. 24).

unlike *Killer of Sheep* and *If He Hollers*, is rooted in a female point of view. The film

focuses on the developing political consciousness and increasingly fragmented

subjectivity of Dorothy (Barbara O. Jones), a young black woman in South Los

Angeles, in response to the incarceration of her husband and the pressures of life in a

South Los Angeles depicted as 'an internal colony shaped by police violence,

bureaucratic hostility, and racist contempt'.[17] Diffident, at times near-catatonic, Dorothy

struggles to navigate the demands of social workers and welfare officers, and to cope

with her own vulnerability and that of her family. At the climax of the film, she arrives

home to discover a white LAPD officer attempting to rape her young daughter Luann

(Susan Williams), and kills him. The film ends with Dorothy in prison, with her final

voice-over framing the killing as the crystallization of a revolutionary consciousness.

Bush Mama, though it is set in broadly the same milieu as *Killer of Sheep*,

contrasts dramatically in tone and in style with Burnett's film. In depicting the

experiences of Dorothy and her family, Gerima deploys many more impressionistic and

obtrusive cinematic techniques, including audio montage, jarring temporal and spatial

shifts, and sequences representing dreams or fantasies. One early and broadly

sympathetic review nevertheless noted its combination of 'rough edges, occasional

incoherence and polemical urgency', and described it as having 'a visual style as

jumbled as its soundtrack'.[18] Subsequent criticism has sought to affirm the effectiveness

of these cinematic strategies (many enforced by the low-budget conditions of the

production), and unpacked how they serve the film's narrative and political ends.[19] *Bush

Mama* is overtly political in a way that *Killer of Sheep* is not, and this may in part

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[17] Widener, p. 263.

[18] Janet Maslin, '"Bush Mama" Tells Story of a Coast Ghetto', *New York Times*, 25 September 1979 <http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9F07E2DA1638E732A25756C2A96F9C946890D6CF> [accessed 13 January 2017].

[19] Frank B. Wilderson III, *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 125; Masilela, p. 114.

account for the fact that film has received less subsequent critical recognition and acclaim.[20]

Arrested Movement: Mobility in *Killer of Sheep* and *Bush Mama*

If He Hollers establishes analogies between Bob Jones's psychological state, his navigation of the city, and his negotiation of the social and racial boundaries of wartime Los Angeles. Bob's mobility is directly threatened through violent confrontations and rigidly policed borders, and he is disorientated by fluid boundaries and the contingency of black space; it ultimately proves impossible for him to orientate himself adequately within the city's racialized topography. In both *Killer of Sheep* and *Bush Mama*, mobility is no less problematic; there are, however, significant differences in their treatment of the trope, compared with Bob Jones's fraught and transgressive movements.

Killer of Sheep is most preoccupied with *failures* of mobility; images of immobility, stasis and interrupted movement proliferate, and are the focal point of the film's most vivid and memorable scenes. The first scene following the opening titles shows a large group of young boys, including Stan Jr., playing roughly on a vacant lot. After throwing rocks and debris at each other, they run alongside a freight train as it passes; when they are unable to keep up with it any longer, they stop and throw rocks at the carriages as it continues to pass through their neighbourhood without stopping. The shot composition emphasizes the binary of mobility and stasis at stake in the sequence. *Killer of Sheep* is built on static shots — the camera rarely pans or zooms, and the scarcity of the few tracking shots in the film makes them particularly noticeable,

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[20] For readings of the film in relation to radical political movements of the 1960s and 1970s, see Wilderson, pp. 117–145 and Greg Thomas, 'Dragons!: George Jackson in the Cinema with Haile Gerima—from the Watts Films to Teza', *Black Camera: An International Film Journal*, 4.2 (2013), 55–83 <https://doi.org/10.2979/blackcamera.4.2.55>.

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drawing attention to both the static and the kinetic elements within the scene in question.[21] Here, the film cuts from a static shot of the boys playing to the tracking shot in which they begin to run, struggling to keep inside the moving frame. It is only when we cut again to a static reverse shot that we see the freight carriages for the first time, and realize that the previous shot was from the perspective of the train itself. For several seconds, Burnett places the viewer in the position of the railway passenger, passing through and disinterestedly observing the landscape, with the train, in Michel de Certeau's phrase, functioning as 'a bubble of panoptic and classifying power'.[22] The cut back to the static perspective of the boys, in this early scene, is a visual cue that *Killer of Sheep* will remain, for its duration, within the geographic boundaries of a community starved of sustained cultural representation.

In a short later scene, a lone boy on a bicycle finds his path down an alleyway blocked by a group of girls, and he swears at them in an imitation of aggressive masculine defiance. The girls respond by pushing and kicking him off his bike, and he walks away crying, leaving the bicycle behind. A third scene follows three boys as they cycle whilst balanced precariously on a single bike. Pursued by a barking dog, they swerve and crash — on the road, and not far from an approaching car — and run away laughing, leaving the bicycle in the street. One further moment that does not explicitly focus on physical movement nevertheless resonates allegorically with these images of arrested progress, and particularly its association with violent masculine retaliation. A group of boys linger on the porch of Stan's house, with one standing on his head and another counting upwards aloud. The latter falters, unable to continue past 456, and

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[21] Other tracking shots in the film include one in the scene immediately following this one, as Stan Jr. walks home through an alleyway and encounters two men who have stolen a television. As they run away down the alley towards the camera, the camera initially tracks their movement, before they overtake it and move out of frame. The scene in which Stan and Eugene attempt to purchase a car engine, discussed below, also ends with a tracking shot from the rear of their truck.

[22] Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 111.

repeats the same sequence of numbers as if stuck. The other boys mock him, and he instinctively responds by shouting an insult at two young girls walking past the house. This undercurrent of aggression in the children's play, highlighted by several critics, has significant parallels with the adults' experiences, and we will return to the importance of violence and masculinity in *Killer of Sheep* below.[23]

Amongst the film's adult characters, mobility is most often a question of *auto-mobility*; 'everyone has a car or a truck, although they're often more trouble than they're worth', as Thom Andersen says of the film.[24] Two of the film's most striking extended scenes centre on failures of mobility involving cars. In both cases, Stan is present — partly involved, but not the instigator — as another character, Eugene (Eugene Cherry), fails in his attempts to maintain or improve his mobility. In the first, Eugene enlists Stan's help to transport a second-hand engine he wants to buy. The sequence combines pathos with flashes of slapstick that recall the comedies of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy. After Eugene makes the purchase, he and Stan have to awkwardly carry the heavy engine downstairs from the first-floor apartment where the dealer operates. They then struggle to lift it to shoulder height and onto the back of their flat bed truck, before at last managing to place it precariously on the very edge. Stan suggests that they push it further back, but Eugene insists it will be fine; instead, the engine is dislodged and drops onto the street the moment the truck begins to pull away from the curb.[25] The second scene, near the end of the film, depicts an abortive journey to a racetrack outside the city. Stan and his wife, Eugene and his partner, and their friend Bracy (Charles Bracy) are all excited about the trip, although Stan is also characteristically tired and subdued. Somewhere outside the city, however, Eugene's car

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[23] Massood, 'An Aesthetic Appropriate to Conditions', pp. 36–7; Stewart, pp. 42–3.
[24] *Los Angeles Plays Itself.*
[25] For Burnett's description of events from his own life that inspired this scene, see the interview between Burnett and filmmaker Alex Cox in Armond White, 'Slaughterhouse Blues', *Sight and Sound*, July 2002, 28–29 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1815319?accountid=14511> [accessed 5 May 2017].

gets a puncture. Since he has no spare tyre, which Bracy repeatedly upbraids him for, they have to turn around and return home. Moreover, since they he is forced to drive back 'on the rim', the journey will end up doing further damage to Gene's car.

There are many more moments, prominent or subtle, where mobility is problematic or fails outright.[26] Where critics have noted the trope of immobility or arrested movement in *Killer of Sheep*, they have treated it as an allegory for socio-economic mobility: failed transit as a symbol of 'a lack of community mobility or forward progress'.[27] David E. James, for example, argues that in the film 'lack of geographic mobility is a figure above all for the lack of social mobility'.[28] There is certainly support for such a reading in Burnett's script — as for, example, in the dialogue that sets up Stan and Eugene's abortive attempt to purchase the second-hand engine:

Brady: What do you want another raggedy-ass car for, huh?
Eugene: Trying to get ahead, man.
Brady: You niggers are sick. Now you think you're middle class.

Stan responds to this exchange indignantly — with a flash of anger that recalls Bob Jones's sensitive pride in *If He Hollers* — and insists that he and his family are not 'poor', because they donate items to the Salvation Army: 'You can't give nothing away if you're poor'. By this point we have already seen Stan's pride in relation to his class status undermined by two sharply dressed men who attempt to involve him in a criminal scheme. Rejected by Stan and then chastised by his wife, they claim pityingly that they are only trying to help him, since he has been working 'all his life' and does not even have 'a decent frying pan'.

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[26] The first scene between Stan and his wife, for example, is interrupted by the sound of a car struggling to start on the street outside. In the penultimate scene, in which a group of women gather at Stan's home to celebrate the fact that one of them is pregnant, the woman in question approaches and enters the house slowly and awkwardly because she needs crutches to walk.

[27] Widener, p. 268. See also Massood, 'An Aesthetic Appropriate to Conditions', pp. 35–38.

[28] James, 'Toward a Geo-Cinematic Hermeneutics, p. 34.

A comparison with the living conditions of Dorothy and her family in *Bush Mama* contextualizes and reinforces the precisely differentiated sense of economic class that Stan articulates in *Killer of Sheep*. Stan's life is clearly financially precarious: despite his job at the slaughterhouse, he works odd jobs when he can, at one point saying he has earned five dollars cleaning out behind someone's garage. He and his family, however, live together in their own bungalow-style home in a residential neighourhood. To some extent this speaks to the fact that even much of the most ghettoized parts of Los Angeles have historically offered African-American residents more superficially appealing living conditions than other American cities, in part owing to the city's spacious, horizontally dispersed character. As early as 1913, W.E.B. DuBois observed that the black population of Los Angeles was 'without doubt the most beautifully housed group of colored people in the United States'.[29] In Walter Mosley's *Little Scarlet* (2004), set in 1965, Easy Rawlins observes this contradiction:

> Los Angeles ghettos were different from any other poor black neighborhood I had ever seen. The avenues and boulevards were wide and well paved. Even the poorest streets had houses with lawns and running water to keep the grass green.[30]

Bush Mama, however, emphasizes that such conditions were not universal, even in Los Angeles. Dorothy and her partner T.C. (Johnny Weathers) live in a cramped single bedroom apartment overlooking a busy street. They share their bedroom with their daughter Luann, who is sleeping only a few feet away when T.C. wakes screaming from a nightmare about his military service in Vietnam. Staring down at the street, Dorothy watches alcoholics passing by and sees a black man shot after a brief struggle with two LAPD officers.

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[29] W.E.B. Du Bois, 'Colored California', *The Crisis*, 1913, 192–96 <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=WloEAAAAMBAJ> [accessed 23 January 2017] (p. 193).
[30] Walter Mosley, *Little Scarlet* (London: Phoenix, 2006), p. 218.

Several critics have noted that the tight visual framing of domestic scenes in *Killer of Sheep* suggest tightly packed, claustrophobic conditions.[31] Similar scenes in Gerima's film however, convey an even more severe sense of constriction. When Dorothy, T.C. and their daughter are eating at their table, the scene is shot in an awkward close-up of T.C. and Luann, with Dorothy out of the frame, as if the apartment is so spatially confined that the whole family cannot be captured in the same shot. As Dorothy and T.C. converse, this angle is held unsettlingly, with Dorothy's voice acousmatically separated from her visual representation. The two of them discuss moving away from the city, with T.C. insisting he is going to take the family 'someplace nice', potentially out of the United States entirely, and Dorothy asking if he is serious and murmuring, unconvinced, when he suggests South America. The contrast between T.C.'s words and the image of their constricted living conditions challenges his optimistic vision of free movement — a vision that will be undermined entirely a few scenes later by his arrest and incarceration.[32]

Where Stan's family is sustained by his slaughterhouse job, even if the experience demoralizes him, Dorothy survives on welfare payments — a situation made even more precarious by the capricious bureaucracy she is forced to negotiate in order to receive any support at all. This socio-economic contrast is reflected in the two films' treatment of mobility. In *Killer of Sheep*, the adult characters maintain a precarious automobility: Stan has a truck that he presumably relies upon to commute to his job; Eugene has a car even if it is unreliable and lacks a spare tire. Dorothy and her family, in contrast, have no access to a car. When T.C. leaves for his job interview, he catches the bus from the street below their apartment, with Dorothy looking down with hope

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[31] Massood, 'An Aesthetic Appropriate to Conditions', pp. 29–30; Widener, p. 261.

[32] Wilderson notes that Gerima's editing reinforces this implicit association between T.C.'s cell and their domestic space: when a later sequence showing T.C. in prison cuts back to Dorothy's face as she looks out of the window of their apartment, 'the image is cut so tightly that the window frame looks to us like prison bars' (p. 127).

and anxiety from the window above. Later, Dorothy is shown waiting for a bus, during a sequence in which she and a group of other passengers are obliged to listen to the rambling monologue of a middle-aged man who insists he is a visiting 'prince' who only eats 'prince food'. The scene only establishes that they are waiting for a bus in its final seconds, when it cuts to a reverse shot showing the road they are waiting beside and the bus finally pulling up. In this belated revelation, the scene emphasizes both that travelling by bus involves both long periods of static waiting, and that doing so entails the negotiation of a communal space involving social interactions that may be at the very least irritating, at worst unsettling or potentially threatening.

Though both T.C. and Dorothy make use of the city's bus system, it is another mode of transportation that *Bush Mama* focuses on most heavily. Dorothy is repeatedly shown walking, in long single-take shots, along the streets of South Los Angeles. These sequences are particularly striking because they do not serve, as they might in a more mainstream Hollywood production, as transitions between scenes in a linear narrative chronology. Rather than knitting together discrete spaces and reinforcing narrative continuity, the shots of Dorothy walking function as discrete sequences in themselves — a role that Gerima emphasizes by beginning each sequence with the film's colour values reversed, and then quickly transitioning from this negative image to standard colour values. They draw attention to Dorothy's immediate environment: the stretch of Central Avenue between 23rd Street and Adams Boulevard, lined with storefronts and busy with daytime traffic, which provides a much more centripetal urban space compared to the dispersed, largely single-storey residential areas shown in *Killer of Sheep*. And the length of each shot communicates the monotony and discomfort involved in travelling through such areas of the city as a pedestrian — a physical strain that is emphasized when Dorothy stops to rub her feet and remove her shoes.

Common to all of the modes of movement open to Dorothy and her family in the film is the vulnerability they entail. Walking leaves Dorothy exposed to danger: her first scene shows her walking down the street when a young adolescent boy snatches her bag. After a struggle, he outruns her and escapes with the bag, leaving Dorothy distressed and alone on the street corner. This scene, introducing the vulnerability that women experience when walking, is reiterated in a more extreme form at the end of the film. When Dorothy's daughter Luann is stopped and questioned by the police officer who will take her back to her apartment and attempt to rape her, he demands 'How come you've been walking back and forth out here for 25 minutes?' Her walking — an apparently aimless wandering that imitates Dorothy's own movements throughout the film — leaves her exposed to a particularly brutal form of arrested movement, enacted by a law-enforcement officer prepared to manipulate and abuse his authority. T.C. too is rendered vulnerable: in a crucial sequence analysed in greater detail below, he catches the bus to attend a job interview, and is then shown, without explanation, being led to a prison cell. The circumstances leading to his incarceration will be gradually revealed as the film progresses; what Gerima's spatial and temporal shift achieves is an association between T.C.'s attempt to exercise spatial and socio-economic mobility and his vulnerability to the abuse of the criminal justice system.

Images of faltering and interrupted movement, then, proliferate throughout *Killer of Sheep*: broken down cars and flat tires; children falling from bicycles or finding their paths through alleyways blocked. In *Bush Mama*, meanwhile, car ownership appears out of reach, and both public transportation and walking leave Dorothy and her family vulnerable to harassment and violence. Such imagery, at first sight offering a clear analogy for thwarted economic and social aspirations amongst the city's black working

class, is more powerful when considered in the wider context of problematic racialized mobility outlined in the earlier parts of this chapter. *If He Hollers* depicts a society in which there are racial boundaries, difficult to discern, the transgression of which leads to heavy punishment; in this context, movement is anxious, uncertain and potentially perilous. Despite the importance of mobility in both films, neither *Killer of Sheep* nor *Bush Mama* depict the kinds of social and spatial transgression that are central to Bob's experiences in Himes's novel: intentional or accidental crossing of the boundaries demarcating racially coded spaces. This needs to be accounted for in order to properly explicate how Stan and Dorothy's psychological state relates to their ability to orientate themselves in the topography of South Los Angeles.

'My problem is the place I was born into': South Los Angeles in the 60s and 70s
The thirty years between the publication of Himes's novel and the production of *Killer of Sheep* and *Bush Mama* had certainly involved some significant alleviation of the oppression that structured African-American life in the early 1940s, from the gradual reduction in housing discrimination that resulted from *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948) and subsequent housing legislation to the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Although conditions had shifted, however, it remained the case that, in Smith's words, 'in Los Angeles, racism was manifest not through laws but through *geography*'.[33] The South Los Angeles in which the LA Rebellion filmmakers worked during the 1970s was an area with a class and racial composition shaped by the consequences of both housing policy reform and urban revolt. African Americans in Los Angeles — particularly those of the working class — continued to negotiate the borders and boundaries of a racialized

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[33] *The Great Black Way*, p. 237.

topography, and to experience real impediments to their spatial as well as social mobility.

Greater residential mobility among sections of the city's African-American community during the 1950s and 1960s had shaped the demographics and conditions of the Eastside South LA neighbourhoods depicted in *Killer of Sheep* and *Bush Mama*. After 1948, when the Supreme Court ruling in *Shelley v. Kraemer* began the process of eroding racially restrictive real estate practices, the black community in South Los Angeles undertook what historian Paul Robinson calls a 'constant westward expansion', first into West Adams then into Leimert Park and Baldwin Hills in the Crenshaw district.[34] As the black middle class pushed further west within South LA — a movement that the Watts Rebellion and its aftermath only encouraged — the communities in and around Central Avenue and Watts suffered further neglect and became more spatially isolated. To the extent that the Westside was considered more desirable, those living on the Eastside and without the capital to move westward suffered from continuing residential immobility despite the removal of some impediments to that mobility.

It is these neglected Eastside communities that provided the locations for both *Bush Mama* and *Killer of Sheep*. Much of the latter film was shot in the immediate vicinity of Burnett's home at the time, on 99th Street and Towne Avenue, in the Green Meadows neighbourhood that borders Watts to the west.[35] 99th and Towne is just over a mile away from the intersection at 116th and Avalon where the arrests that sparked the violence of August 1965 took place; during the Rebellion, twenty-two buildings were damaged, looted, burned or destroyed within a five-block radius of Burnett's block.[36]

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[34] Robinson, p. 44. See also Reginald Chapple, 'From Central Avenue to Leimert Park: The Shifting Center of Black Los Angeles', in *Black Los Angeles,* ed. by Hunt and Ramón, pp. 60–80 (p. 71).
[35] Charles Burnett, Director's Commentary on *Killer of Sheep* (BFI DVD, 2007)
[36] Map insert in McCone Report.

The streets that Dorothy walks in *Bush Mama*, meanwhile, allude more directly to socio-economic shifts and cultural decline. The stretch of Central Avenue that Dorothy navigates was the commercial and cultural hub of black Los Angeles during the Jim Crow era.[37] The specific block that she is repeatedly shown walking along was the site of the Lincoln Theater, a movie palace catering to African-American audiences that was built in 1926. The construction of the Lincoln was one of the material developments that reflected 'rising expectations and deepening resources' amongst sections of the city's black population during the cultural heyday of Central Avenue.[38] By the 1970s, however, with the migration of the black middle class west into the Crenshaw district, Leimert Park Village rather than Central Avenue became the 'social, cultural and political heart' of black Los Angeles.[39] When *Bush Mama*'s scenes around 23rd and Central were shot, the Lincoln Theater, once considered the 'West Coast Apollo' for the calibre of the African-American performers to which it played host, had been shut down for more than a decade.[40]

The locations of Dorothy's walks along Central Avenue are diagetically signalled through the street signs visible in-shot, and the Santa Monica Freeway that can be discerned in the distance. But the extent to which Dorothy's movements range across South Los Angeles is elided in many otherwise perceptive readings of the film, in which *Bush Mama* is described as a 'Watts film' or Dorothy is described as 'part of Watts' permanently submerged class'.[41] Massood notes the distinctive quality of the urban

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[37] Chapple, pp. 61–65.
[38] Flamming, p. 264.
[39] Chapple, pp. 71.
[40] 'Los Angeles Conservancy — Historic Places: Lincoln Theatre', *Laconservancy.org* <https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/lincoln-theatre> [accessed 7 February 2017].
[41] Thomas takes the term 'Watts films' from Toni Cade Bambara to refer to Gerima's early work, including *Bush Mama*, though this shorthand could be considered a reference to the politics of the Watts Rebellion rather than a specifically geographical label (p. 62 and *passim*). The second quotation is from Murashige, who locates the film in Watts specifically, in 'Haile Gerima and the Political Economy of Cinematic Resistance', in *Representing Blackness: Issues in Film and Video*, ed. by Valerie Smith (London: Athlone Press, 1997), pp. 183–204 (p. 187).

spaces depicted in *Bush Mama*, which does not consist of 'blatantly run-down houses or vacant lots' (images common to *Killer of Sheep*, for example), but nevertheless refers to Dorothy '[walking] through Watts' streets on her way to the welfare office, the employment office, the clinic, or, sometimes, to nowhere in particular'.[42] The streets shown in the long takes of Dorothy walking are around the 2400 block of Central Avenue, more than four and a half miles north of Watts (Figure 6).[43] This tendency to reduce a much wider area of South Los Angeles to 'Watts', or perhaps to treat Watts as a synecdoche for black Los Angeles as a whole, is not unique to discussions of the LA Rebellion films; indeed, it applies to the naming of the 'Watts' riots themselves. Much violence, damage and looting did indeed take place within Watts in August 1965, including the greatest single concentration of arson and destruction on 103rd Street. The unrest was far from confined to Watts, however, a district of approximately two square miles within the 46.5 square miles of South Los Angeles that made up the curfew area that was enforced by the LAPD and the National Guard; and by far the majority of the property damage occurred outside the borders of Watts.[44]

An argument could be made for treating *Bush Mama* as a 'Watts film' — although none of the critics cited above make such an argument explicitly — based on an association between the film's radical politics and its relative chronological proximity to the Watts Rebellion, or by consciously engaging with the fact that, post-rebellion, the name 'Watts' came to stand in popular discourse for the most deprived, predominantly black, sections of Los Angeles. Such a reading risks, however, obscuring moments where the content of the film visually invokes the specific history and spatiality of other parts of South Los Angeles. Reconstructing specific filming locations

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[42] Paula J. Massood, *Black City Cinema: African American Urban Experiences In Film* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003)*,* p. 110.

[43] Street signs are visible in several shots, 23rd Street 1300 E and 25th Street 1000 E, that place the scenes in this location on Central Avenue, and the Santa Monica Freeway to the north is also visible.

[44] McCone Report, p. 1 and map insert in McCone Report.

FIGURE 6 — LOCATIONS OF DOROTHY'S WALKS ALONG CENTRAL AVENUE (*BUSH MAMA*)
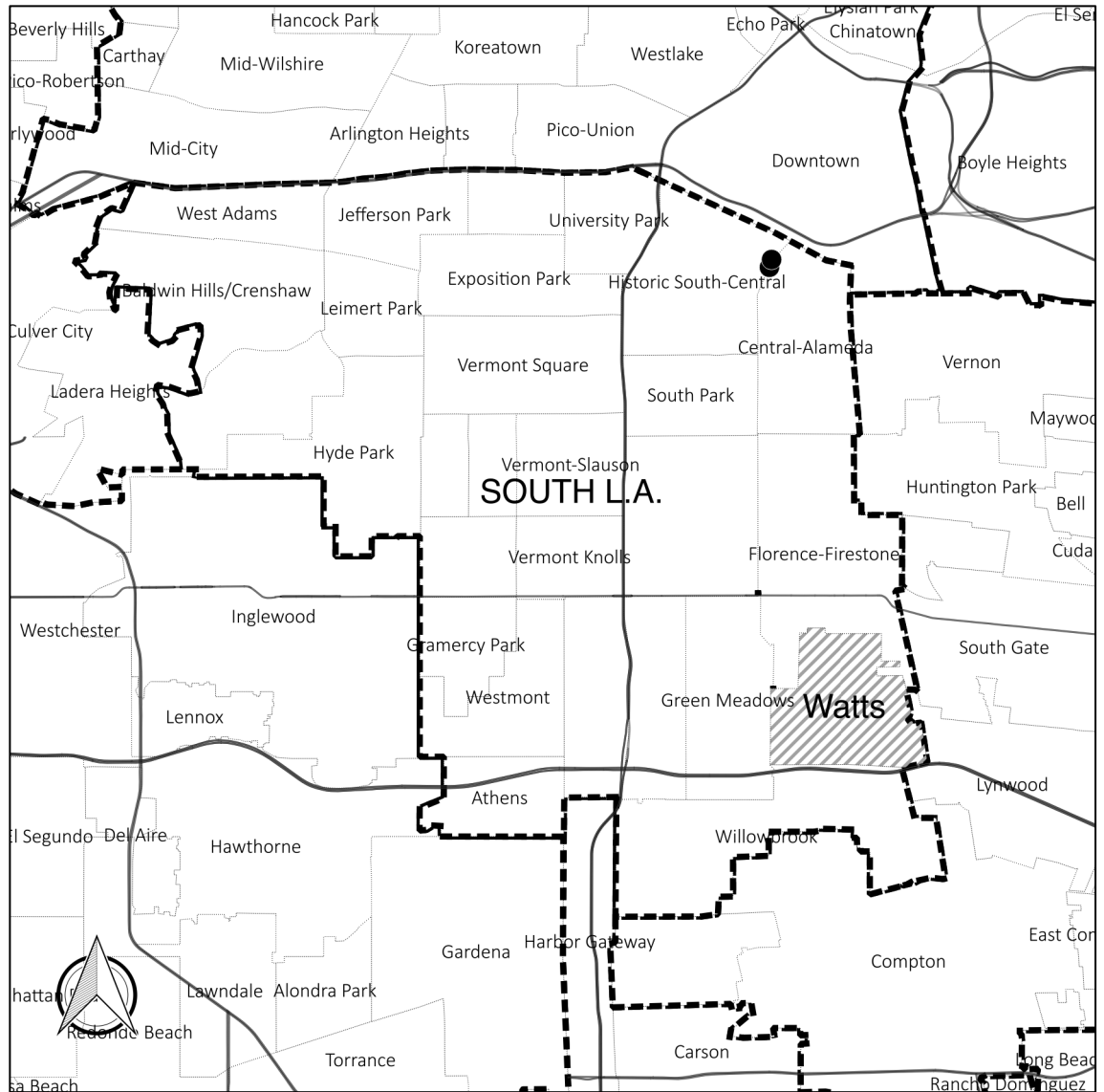
Black circles indicate locations along Central Avenue depicted during extended scenes showing Dorothy walking, based on street signs and other landmarks visible in-shot.

is not a critical end in itself, of course, nor should it obscure the fictional and composed nature of any cinematic text. In this case in particular, there are valid reasons to contest rather than reaffirm the conflation of 'Watts', the geographical neighbourhood, with the 'Watts Riots' and with deprived black Los Angeles as a whole. Spatial analysis conducted in the late 1990s revealed that when a sample of Los Angeles residents were asked to sketch mental maps of the areas of the city they most feared, 'Watts was the most intensely feared Los Angeles neighborhood'.[45] Researchers noted that this fear did not correlate with contemporary crime figures, and appeared to relate instead to the violence of 1965 — specifically, to an image of the neighbourhood 'fostered by mass media portrayals of Watts as the problematic zone of Los Angeles', despite the fact that Watts constituted a small zone within the much wider area affected by the 1965 rebellion.[46] They concluded that this enduring impression of Watts needed to be corrected, suggesting that the 'identification of Watts as the fear area of Los Angeles has a series of immediate effects, one of the most important being economic and social avoidance of the area'.[47] Any geographical shorthand will entail some degree of simplification. In both the history of South LA and the specific spatial content of the films in question, there are compelling reasons to interpret *Killer of Sheep* and *Bush Mama* as 'Eastside' films rather than 'Watts' films.

The increased residential mobility that resulted from *Shelley v. Kraemer* and the later Rumford Fair Housing Act of 1963 was of most immediate benefit to the upwardly mobile black middle-class residents who left the Eastside of South LA when they could. In the ongoing struggle against oppression, however, the removal of such impediments to racial integration had a powerful symbolic value for black Los Angeles as a whole.

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[45] Sorin Adam Matei and Sandra Ball-Rokeach, 'Watts, the 1965 Los Angeles Riots, and the Communicative Construction of the Fear Epicenter of Los Angeles', *Communication Monographs*, 72.3 (2005), 301–23 <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637750500206557> (p. 302).
[46] Ibid., p. 319.
[47] Ibid., p. 321.

This struggle, though, was one in which apparent victories would continue to be contested by wider society. In 1964, Californians voted on Proposition 14, an initiative sponsored by the California Real Estate Association that would repeal the Rumford Fair Housing Act and give property owners absolute discretion over who they sold or leased their properties to.[48] The measure, which essentially sought to re-legalize housing discrimination, passed convincingly, with more than 4.3m votes in favour and just under 2.4m votes against.[49] The measure would be judged unconstitutional by the California Supreme Court in 1966, but its initial approval amongst the electorate, by such a wide margin, emphasized to black Los Angeles that their gains were potentially unstable — that a hard-won opportunity to move more freely could be revoked by those invested in maintaining a more strictly defined racialized topography.

When Himes's Bob Jones is demoted at the shipyard, and he realises he has also lost his deferment from military service, he experiences a 'crazy, scared feeling' of contingency and instability: 'It had happened in a second; my job was gone and I was facing the draft; like the Japanese getting pulled up by the roots' (p. 36). The demoralizing and frustrating impact of Proposition 14 on black Los Angeles, two decades after Himes's novel was published, was considered severe enough that it was

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[48] For coverage in the African-American press of Proposition 14 and protests against it, see for example: 'Realtors' Initiative Denied Quickie Vote', *California Eagle*, 23 April 1964, p. 1, Archive.org <https://ia601408.us.archive.org/zipview.php?zip=/24/items/la_caleagle_reel53/la_caleagle_reel53_pdf.zip&file=la_caleagle_reel53_pdf/la_caleagle_reel53_0396.pdf> [accessed 1 July 2017]; 'All White Realty Board Picketed', *California Eagle*, 23 May 1964, p. 1, Archive.org <https://ia801408.us.archive.org/zipview.php?zip=/24/items/la_caleagle_reel53/la_caleagle_reel53_pdf.zip&file=la_caleagle_reel53_pdf/la_caleagle_reel53_0476.pdf> [accessed 1 July 2017]. See also coverage of the voter registration campaign against Proposition 14 in the *Los Angeles Free Press*: Jim Blanchfield, 'Ghetto Vote Drive', *Los Angeles Free Press* (20 August 1964), pp. 1, 6; 'NO on 14 Battle Booms', *Los Angeles Free Press* (10 September 1964), p. 1; Deena P. Metzger, 'Glendale CAP 14 HQ Harassed by Racists', *Los Angeles Free Press* (17 September 1964), p. 3. These and all subsequent references to the *Los Angeles Free Press* taken from the archive at *Independent Voices: An Open Access Collection of an Alternative Press* <https://voices.revealdigital.com/cgi-bin/independentvoices?a=cl&cl=CL1&sp=BGJFHJH&ai=1&e=-------en-20--1--txt-txIN--------------1> [accessed 15 January 2018].
[49] 'Jordan Releases Final Figures on Prop. 14', *Los Angeles Times*, 4 December 1964, p. 12 <http://search.proquest.com/docview/155092875/abstract/36DCCE849AF454BPQ/1> [accessed 8 February 2017].

identified as a potential cause of the Watts Rebellion in contemporary news reports.[50]

The Los Angeles Times interviewed C. T. M. Hadwen, a USC sociologist who

witnessed the unrest first-hand; Hadwen described the conditions for African Americans

in South LA as being like living 'in a country occupied by an enemy'.

> Hadwen said that the feeling of being isolated is bad enough, but to be isolated
> by a hostile power is worse. That the whites are actively hostile has been proved
> to Negroes by such actions as the passage of Proposition 14.[51]

It was not only in retrospect that the vote was identified as a source of frustration:

nearly a year earlier, at a Los Angeles City Council meeting discussing measures to

'promote inter-racial and group harmony', a Lutheran minister predicted that 'tensions

will increase because of the passage of Proposition 14'.[52]

The McCone Report did note the passage of Proposition 14 as one of three

'aggravating events' that occurred in the 12 months before the uprising, suggesting

'many Negroes here felt and were encouraged to feel that they had been affronted by the

passage of Proposition 14'.[53] This non-committal acknowledgement was the subject of

contemporary criticism by those who felt it understated the significance of the measure

— as Horne notes, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 'found the panel's inattention

to Proposition 14 shocking'.[54] Civil rights leader Bayard Rustin similarly condemned its

'[refusal] to discuss, much less criticize, the effect of Proposition 14 or to recommend a

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[50] Paul Weeks, 'Prop. 14 Passage Called Major Cause of Riot', *Los Angeles Times*, 24 November 1965, section Part II, p. a1
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/155330485/abstract/59DBF8E658044BDFPQ/1> [accessed 5 May 2017]; Gene Blake, 'Proposition 14 Approaches Massive Legal Showdown', *Los Angeles Times*, 3 October 1965, p. K1
<http://search.proquest.com/docview/155326895/abstract/F383BBF5D8A14E3DPQ/1> [accessed 5 May 2017].
[51] George Getze, 'Riot Expressed Exhilaration as Well as Hate', *Los Angeles Times*, 2 September 1965, p. a1 <http://search.proquest.com/docview/155291384/abstract/15E20F49F1E24328PQ/1> [accessed 5 May 2017].
[52] 'Human Relations Vote Postponed by Council', *Los Angeles Free Press* (26 November 1964), pp. 1, 3 (p. 1).
[53] McCone Report, p. 4.
[54] Horne, p. 345.

new fair-housing code'.[55] This was only one of many criticisms levelled at the McCone Report following its publication in December 1965.[56] Robert Fogelson charged the committee with '[obscuring] the legitimate grievances of Los Angeles' Negroes', particularly in relation to the question of police brutality, on which subject the report 'largely endorsed the police department's position' that such allegations were unfounded.[57] Many of the report's conclusions regarding potential causes and solutions — in relation to the high rate of unemployment in South Los Angeles, or the levels of educational attainment within the African-American community, for example — were undermined by its failure to situate these issues within the wider context of racial discrimination and de facto segregation.[58]

What is striking looking at subsequent reflections on the causes of the 1965 rebellion is the extent to which issues of spatial instability, isolation and restricted mobility were highlighted.[59] For all its weaknesses, and despite its inattention to the effects of Proposition 14, the McCone Report did recognize at least some of these factors in its discussion of public transit.[60] The report identified a number of 'fundamental problems' that precipitated the events of August 1965, including police-community relations, a precarious labour market, and unsatisfactory educational opportunities within the city's African-American community. All of these factors,

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[55] Bayard Rustin, 'The Watts "Manifesto" and the McCone Report' [1966], in *The Los Angeles Riots*, ed. by Robert M. Fogelson, Mass Violence in America (Salem: Ayer Company, 1988), pp. 147–64 (p. 161). Rustin also describes a meeting he and Martin Luther King, Jr. had with Chief Parker and Los Angeles Mayor Samuel Yorty, in which the latter 'denied [...] that there was any prejudice in Los Angeles'. In response, King and Rustin 'pointed to the very heavy vote in the city for Proposition 14' (pp. 155-56).
[56] In addition to Rustin, see Robert M. Fogelson, 'White on Black: A Critique of the McCone Commission Report on the Los Angeles Riots', in *The Los Angeles Riots*, pp. 111–43 (originally published in *Political Science Quarterly*, 82.3 (1967), 337–67 <https://doi.org/10.2307/2146769>); Robert Blauner, 'Whitewash Over Watts: The Failure of the McCone Commission Report', in *The Los Angeles Riots*, pp. 167–88 (originally published in *Trans*-action *Magazine*, 1966). See also Horne, pp. 343–47.
[57] 'White on Black', p. 123, p. 125.
[58] Rustin, p. 149.
[59] Rustin, p. 152; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, pp. 113–14; Horne, p. 51.
[60] The sociologist Robert Blauner, who served as a consultant to the McCone Commission, was sharply critical of the report, but nevertheless praised its 'excellent discussion of the woefully inadequate transportation system'. 'Whitewash Over Watts', p. 173.

however, were 'the same here as in the cities which were racked by the 1964 riots', such as New York City, Chicago and Philadelphia.[61] It was issues of transit and mobility that were identified as the specific factor that exacerbated these problems in Los Angeles: they were 'intensified by what may well be the least adequate network of public transportation in any major city in America'.[62]

The McCone Commission report spends several pages outlining the ways in which the city's 'inadequate and costly public transportation [...] had a major influence in creating a sense of isolation, with its resultant frustrations, among the residents of south central Los Angeles, particularly the Watts area'.[63] This inadequacy is specifically linked with the way the geography of South Los Angeles was subdivided into different areas: four separate bus companies operated in the vicinity of Watts, each 'by law given exclusive rights to serve within their respective franchised area'.[64] These different companies did not allow free transfers between systems, or coordinate their timetables, a frustration that also occurred on a wider scale: transfers from local services to the Rapid Transit District, which covered Los Angeles as a whole, were similarly uncoordinated. As a result, public transportation into, out of and within South Los Angeles was costly and inefficient, and particularly disadvantaging to residents on low incomes. The local transportation network, then, created its own boundaries around and within South Los Angeles, and these served to impede the mobility of South LA residents, making it more difficult for them to seek out, and to retain, employment outside of their immediate vicinity, and contributing to feelings of frustration and neglect within the community. 'Whatever else has ailed Watts', Reyner Banham observed in 1971, 'its isolation from transportation contributes to every one of its

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[61] McCone Report, p. 4.
[62] Ibid., p. 4.
[63] Ibid., p. 65.
[64] Ibid., p. 66.

misfortunes.'[65] This was a problem that, far from being adequately addressed in the aftermath of 1965, persisted during the following decade, and indeed to this day.[66]

A poor public transportation system of this kind did not only affect the many residents of South Los Angeles who, like Dorothy and T.C. in *Bush Mama*, directly relied upon it. For those that did have cars, such as Stan's family and Eugene in *Killer of Sheep*, the knowledge that alternative transportation was so onerous and inefficient placed even greater emphasis on the importance of maintaining their automobility, and made the potential consequences of being deprived of it (perennially distressing in Los Angeles culture as a whole) all the more stressful. The arrested movement central to *Bush Mama* and *Killer of Sheep*, then, should not be treated as an analogy for socio-economic mobility at the expense of an appreciation of the real impediments placed on African-American spatial mobility in the period. These factors form part of a longer history of fraught boundaries, restricted mobility and spatial contingency that continued to circumscribe African-American life within Los Angeles, and beyond.

It is in these terms that the apparent lack of spatial transgression in both films — so central to *If He Hollers* — can best be understood. The wartime Los Angeles in which Himes's novel is set is a city where there are some hopes and opportunities for black mobility. The labour requirements of a country at war have enabled Bob to secure a skilled industrial job, and a car desirable enough to be coveted by white observers, and much of the friction in the novel is a consequence of Bob's employment status and

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[65] *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, p. 155. See also the contrast Eric Avila identifies between the mobility enjoyed by Watts residents during the 1920s and '30s due to the interurban streetcar system, and the isolation engendered by the post-war decline of public transportation system (*Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, pp. 188–89).

[66] Edna Bonachich and Jake Alimahomed-Wilson, 'Headway for African American Workers in South Los Angeles', in *Post-Ghetto*, ed. by Sides, pp. 109–130 (p. 109). Walter Mosley made these circumstances central to his Socrates Fortlow novel *Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned* (1997), set in South LA during the early 1990s. Ex-convict Fortlow, residing in Watts and without a car, struggles to traverse miles of the city simply to apply for a job in a supermarket. After a journey to Venice Boulevard requiring transfers between three different buses, Fortlow is given an application form on which he is expected to confirm he has access to a car or a regular ride into work. Walter Mosley, *Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1998), p. 65.

potential for mobility. He is proud of his position, he feels he deserves respect and equal treatment, and this is met by the retaliation of a threatened white society. The most memorable and significant examples of arrested movement in *If He Hollers* are all moments when Bob is confronted, and obstructed, by white antagonists as he navigates different neighbourhoods and different racially coded spaces. In both *Killer of Sheep* and *Bush Mama* these types of encounters are absent, because the films depict a far more ghettoized South Los Angeles; one in which, despite some improvements in social and residential mobility amongst the black middle class, the 'Eastside' working-class areas remain starved of support, poorly maintained, and 'contained'. A consideration of the historical and spatial context of both films demonstrates that black Los Angeles continued to experience conditions of restricted movement, spatial containment and contingency during the 1960s and 1970s, despite the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

It should be noted that one significant difference between the social contexts of Himes's novel and the LA Rebellion films is the evolution of black radical politics post-1964. Los Angeles was in this period, in the words of historian Ashley D. Farmer, 'an epicenter of black thought and activism'.[67] Local chapters of civil rights organizations such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were joined — and amongst some sections of the community superseded — by increasingly active Black Power groups such as the Black Panther Party (BPP) and the Us Organization.[68] The Black Power Movement that developed across the United States in the second half of the 1960s was made up of a

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[67] Ashley D. Farmer, *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), p. 95.
[68] For a summary of the history of the Southern California chapter of the Black Panthers see Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left*, pp. 68-74. Ashley Farmer outlines the development of the cultural nationalist Us Organization, and the wider context of black activism in Los Angeles during the 1960s, in *Remaking Black Power*, pp. 95-104.

heterogeneous array of organizations and ideologies, but their common thread was the particular emphasis they placed on the need for African-American political and cultural self-determination.[69] As the BPP's 1966 ten-point program asserted: 'We believe that black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.'[70] This focus on self-determination was manifested in the organization of local social welfare programs and discussion groups, a defiant attitude towards police brutality, and local political activism.

If *Bush Mama* and *Killer of Sheep* demonstrate a relatively self-contained spatiality centred on the predominantly black areas of South Los Angeles, then this radical political context of black self-determination and self-reliance needs to be recognized as an influential factor. Robert Self, in his analysis of the spatial politics of the BPP in relation to their original base in Oakland, highlights the contrast between the 'spatial rhetoric' of the Panthers and the earlier civil rights-based strategies of other organizations. Where the latter had 'believed that if the barriers to mobility out of the ghetto were lifted, pernicious racial spaces would break down', the BPP

> rejected the confidence of the civil rights generation in deracialized spaces. According to their own raw anticolonial analysis, the power of African Americans lay precisely in their spatial confinement, their concentration in urban centers, where poverty and hopelessness had created a 'lumpen proletariat,' ignorant but teachable, the core of a revolutionary movement.[71]

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[69] For a historiographical survey of scholarship focusing on the Black Power era, see Peniel E. Joseph, 'Black Liberation Without Apology: Reconceptualizing the Black Power Movement', *The Black Scholar*, 31.3–4 (2001), 2–19 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.2001.11431152>. Joseph is also the editor of a collection that gathers valuable recent historical perspectives on the Black Power Movement: *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights–Black Power Era*, ed. by Peniel E. Joseph (New York and London: Routledge, 2006).

[70] 'Black Panther Party Platform and Program', 1966, Social Protest Collection, 1943-1982, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/28722/bk001532b1j/?order=3&brand=oac4> [accessed 26 February 2018].

[71] Robert Self, '"To Plan Our Liberation": Black Power and the Politics of Place in Oakland, California, 1965-1977', *Journal of Urban History*, 26.6 (2000), 759–92 <https://doi.org/10.1177/009614420002600603> (p. 769).

Such an ideology clearly resonates with the plot of *Bush Mama* in particular, with its depiction of a highly ghettoized South Los Angeles in which poverty, police brutality and discrimination leads first T.C. and then Dorothy to develop a radical political consciousness. From the perspective of cultural history, Daniel Widener makes a persuasive case for considering the LA Rebellion filmmakers as part of the Black Arts Movement — the creative offshoot of Black Power focused on the development of a self-determining African-American cultural identity — arguing that they produced films 'whose content, circumstances of production, and formal choices revealed the dynamic triptych of aesthetic experimentalism, communalist politics, and artistic self-organization around which the Black Arts Movement coalesced'.[72]

The historical shift between *If He Hollers* and the LA Rebellion films, then, is one of decreased mobility within working-class black Los Angeles, and a political context placing greater emphasis on community self-reliance and self-determination. This is reflected in the more homogeneous spaces depicted in the films, in which their protagonists do not demonstrate the same opportunities for movement and therefore transgression. The types of borders and boundaries that Bob Jones struggles to discern and navigate are not wholly absent in *Killer of Sheep* and *Bush Mama* — they are, rather, more distant, from the perspective of the protagonists. An appreciation of these conditions will allow us, in the remaining sections, to explicate how the psychology of Stan and Dorothy relates to the specific topography of South Los Angeles, and how orientation functions in each film.

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[72] *Black Arts West*, p. 256.

'Not going where you want to go': Disorientation and Violence in *Bush Mama*

Bush Mama is formally disorientating to a far greater degree than either *If He Hollers* or *Killer of Sheep*. Voices from the past and apparently from the future, in terms of the central narrative thread, intrude into Dorothy's consciousness and into the auditory space of the film. Frequent smash cuts complicate the spatial and temporal structure of the narrative, whilst changes in camera perspective — from a static, voyeuristic views of pedestrians walking busy streets, to mobile shots seemingly from the perspective of individual characters — challenge the viewer to discern the film's overarching point of view. Other sequences represent dreams or fantasies: Dorothy is shown prostrating herself in a church before a crucified black man in one scene, whilst in another she smashes a bottle on a social worker's head. The latter moment is particularly striking, as it is initially presented as the continuation and culmination of a 'real' scene in which Dorothy is interrogated in her home. It is only when the moment of violence stutters into freeze-frame images, followed by a jump-cut back to Dorothy sitting, apparently docile, on the sofa, that it is revealed as a moment of fantasy. Despite the complex shifts in perspective, *Bush Mama*'s impressionistic audio-visual composition ultimately communicate a subjective viewpoint — that of Dorothy. It is Dorothy's mounting distress and disorientation that is reflected in the film's increasingly frenetic audio and visual strategies, and this distress is rooted in the arbitrary and capricious ways in which her life, and the lives of her family members, are policed.

In *If He Hollers*, Bob Jones encounters the police when he transgresses the borders between racially coded spaces — when he and Alice drive into Santa Monica, when he drives into Huntington Park intending to murder Johnny Stoddart, and when he attempts to flee after having been caught alone with Madge at the shipyard. *Bush Mama*, focusing on a protagonist with far less spatial and social mobility, instead

depicts the police as exerting territorial control *within* black space. We are twice shown police officers shooting black citizens at near point-black range. In the first case, the suspect is armed with an axe and acting threateningly outside the welfare office, but is shot without warning at the moment he turns towards the LAPD officer who has been approaching him from behind. Later in the film, Dorothy witnesses a second shooting from her apartment window; here, the suspect struggles and attempts to escape custody, apparently unarmed, and is shot in the back as he begins to run away. As Paula Massood suggests, 'Dorothy's oppression is directly related to her surroundings, especially the role of the police in limiting movement'.[73]

Bush Mama is a powerful indictment of the way black working-class lives were policed in 1970s Los Angeles, and the force of its critique comes not only from its depiction of individual instances of brutality but the way it formally and narratively represents the psychological consequences of such conditions on an individual protagonist. Police officers in *Bush Mama* are the most aggressive agents — alongside others, such as welfare officers and social workers — of a system that maintains power by demanding that black working-class subjects account for their movements and actions, sometimes according to impossible criteria. It is the apprehension of such conditions of contingency and threat that is the direct cause of the disorientation that Dorothy experiences.

The opening of the film includes footage of LAPD patrol officers questioning a group of African-American men on a busy Los Angeles street. This footage, which has drawn much comment, was shot surreptitiously from a distance as Gerima and his film

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[73] Massood, *Black City Cinema*, p. 114. Whilst acknowledging that Dorothy's movements are 'constrained', Massood's reading of *Bush Mama* ultimately associates the film with other films of the 1970s (*Cotton Comes to Harlem, Superfly* and *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*) which depict black mobility operating successfully within urban space, rather than serving as a means to escape urban space, and in which the trope of movement is therefore 'optimistic'. This reading, which I do not do not find convincing, depends on an interpretation of Dorothy's burgeoning political consciousness as a form of potential mobility, the beginning of her '[escaping] her own internal colonialism' (p. 115).

crew were unexpectedly accosted by the police — considered suspicious, presumably, simply because the sight of black men with filming equipment was unexpected. It is a moment in which, as Wilderson eloquently frames it, 'the fictional diegesis of state violence [...] is forced to encounter the extradiegetic violence of the state'.[74] Taylor cites the scene as an example of the fact that the very enterprise of shooting, producing and distributing a black independent film during the 1970s was a precarious one, entailing 'social paranoia, volatility, and contingency', and suggests that the 'intensities' of such dilemmas are 'interwoven' into the texts themselves.[75] The vérité footage of Gerima and his crew being questioned by the police serves as a prologue; one that associates the police's power to arbitrarily arrest black movement with the contingency of black life in South Los Angeles. It also resonates powerfully when considered in relation to the 'semi-documentary' style of police procedurals such as *He Walked By Night*. Where such narratives tend, in their avowed realism, to normalize or mythologize the power of the police, *Bush Mama*'s prologue signals that the film will be concerned with failures and abuses of that power.[76]

The conditions introduced in the film's prologue are reiterated more forcefully in what is perhaps the most subtly effective section of the film: T.C.'s (off-screen) arrest and incarceration. It is here that *Bush Mama*'s underlying concerns — mobility, formal and subjective disorientation, and the arbitrary exertion of police power over black lives — intersect, in what is also the turning-point in the narrative. This section of the film begins in Dorothy and T.C.'s apartment, with the latter dressed smartly and preparing to leave to start a new job. Dorothy hurries him, concerned that he is going to miss his bus,

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[74] p. 123.
[75] Clyde Taylor, 'New U.S. Black Cinema', *eJumpCut.org*
<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC28folder/NewBlackCinema.html> [accessed 8 February 2017]. Original print publication: *Jump Cut*, 28 (1983), 46–48, 41.
[76] Murashige, in his insightful reading of *Bush Mama*'s narrative structure, correctly challenges the tendency of critics to focus their analysis of *Bush Mama* on this single sequence at the expense of the rest of the film (pp. 186–87).

but despite this anxious urgency the scene shows the family at its most optimistic

(indeed, it contains one of the few moments in which Dorothy smiles, just as Stan's

smiles in *Killer of Sheep* are rare enough to be striking when they do occur). T.C.

leaves, and the camera stays within the apartment as Dorothy and Luann look out of the

window, eventually smiling with relief at what we can infer is T.C. succeeding in

catching the bus on the street below. The shot dissolves to one showing T.C. being led

down a corridor, accompanied by a corrections officer — a long tracking shot that

follows him as he passes through several barred doorways, before he is shown into a

prison cell.

No exposition for the dramatic temporal and spatial jump between the two

scenes is provided — only in the film's final scene is it made explicit that in between,

T.C. has been arrested, wrongfully convicted and imprisoned. Based on Gerima's own

account in subsequent interviews, he did shoot scenes that would have occurred within

this ellipsis, accounting for the transition between the two situations, but chose to

exclude them — a decision he justified when challenged by his UCLA teachers by

pointing to the 'symbolic reality' that the abrupt transition communicated about black

life, and black mobility in particular.

> In *Bush Mama*, I cut from a man leaving for a job interview to a scene with him
> in prison. Now, one of the experiences of being Black in America is not going
> where you want to go, being stopped. When I used to edit my films at night at
> UCLA, I was always stopped by police as I passed through Beverly Hills. It is a
> truthful representation to cut from him leaving for the job interview to a prison
> scene without justifying how he got in jail.[77]

One thing this disorientating spatio-temporal jump achieves is to associate T.C.'s

incarceration with arrested movement. When the film formally links the two in

dissolving from Dorothy watching T.C. board the bus to him being escorted down the

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[77] Quoted in Tony Safford and William Triplett, 'Haile Gerima: Radical Departures to a New Black
Cinema', *Journal of the University Film and Video Association*, 35.2 (1983), 59–65
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20686943> [accessed 13 January 2017] (p. 62).

prison corridor to his cell, it implies that the unjustified incrimination he suffers is

contingent on his attempts to exert both social and physical mobility.

The disorientating character of these events is further reinforced by what we

eventually hear of the circumstances of T.C.'s arrest and conviction. The film concludes

with a freeze-frame of Dorothy's face, whilst in voice-over we hear her voice reading a

letter aloud:

> Dear T.C., I was just thinking about the night that they said that you did the
> crime. You remember it was the same night that you had your real bad
> nightmare. Why didn't they believe you was here with me? Old riffraff me. You
> don't even look like the man they say did it. But you still doing the time.

Dorothy's words make clear what had been implicit throughout the preceding scenes:

that T.C. has been convicted for a crime he did not commit, and for which he had an

alibi.[78] The editing of the crucial scenes that bracket T.C.'s off-screen arrest and

conviction, combined with the initially withheld details of the case against him, serve to

frame his actions as a *de facto* social and spatial transgression in the eyes of the criminal

justice system. His movement is arrested, and he is wrongfully incriminated; despite his

innocence, there is no alibi that the system might judge sufficient to exonerate him.

This logic is reiterated, with brutal consequences, in the film's final act, which

begins with an even more dramatic spatio-temporal jump and in which linear

chronology breaks down entirely. Without any justifying exposition, Dorothy is shown

in what appears to be a police cell, with a man insisting she sign a 'statement'. This

scene is followed by a long montage, from which several asynchronous sequences can

be reconstructed. In the first, Luann is stopped and questioned on the street by a police

officer; the officer demands that she shows him to her apartment, and then sexually

assaults her. Dorothy, arriving home and discovering the scene, attacks and kills the

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[78] Gerima makes it clear that T.C.'s alibi is a legitimate one: two scenes before the one in which T.C.
leaves for work is a scene that corresponds to the night Dorothy describes, in which T.C. wakes from a
nightmare about his experiences in the Vietnam War.

police officer. In the second, evidently later sequence, an imprisoned Dorothy has been beaten so severely that she miscarries. In the third, chronologically later still, and communicated only in voiceover, a presumably convicted Dorothy reads the letter to T.C. in which she reflects on the circumstances of his arrest, the violent treatment she has endured, and the political awakening she has undergone. There is also an additional voiceover interspersed throughout these scenes, in which a police detective or prosecutor accuses Dorothy of murdering the police officer and staging the sexual assault on Luann. Dorothy, like T.C., finds herself incriminated, her legitimate alibi challenged or disregarded. Where T.C.'s incrimination is associated with his own movement through and implied transgression of boundaries in the city's topography, Dorothy's occurs in a different spatial context that resonates with one of Bob's experiences in *If He Hollers*. During the 'Rust Room' scene, he anxiously apprehends that when a white transgressor crosses the borders of an interior space coded as black, they jeopardize the black inhabitants of that space. Similarly in *Bush Mama*, when the white police officer invades the domestic space of Dorothy's apartment, it reveals the contingency of that space.[79]

Throughout the film, Dorothy bears witness to the contingency and precariousness central to life in black Los Angeles: from everyday experiences of capricious welfare policies, to the two police shootings she observes first-hand. She experiences the consequences of her partner's unjustified conviction, and the invasion of her domestic space that leads to the brutalization of her daughter and her own incarceration. Disorientated, her ability to move and act purposefully is threatened by the risk of arbitrary incrimination within a social context that seeks to arrest black mobility. The voiceover of Dorothy's letter to T.C. that concludes the film implies a

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[79] Wilderson describes this as the 'absolute vulnerability of Black domesticity' (p. 127), although I would suggest that a similar vulnerability applies to non-domestic spaces, as the scene in Himes's novel suggests.

new, potentially emancipatory perspective: Gerima seemingly suggests that discerning these conditions with sufficient clarity, rather than just seeing what is 'on top, the glitter', might lead to a new, radical orientation. Her letter also contains a simple but resonant observation: 'I can see now that my problem is the place I was born into.'

'Hey boy, you better move before you get hit': Violent Masculinity and Orientation in *Killer of Sheep*

Stan's first words in *Killer of Sheep* are a conversation with a friend, Oscar, as he crouches on the floor of his kitchen fixing a pipe:

> Stan: I'm working myself into my own hell. When I close my eyes, I can't get no sleep at night. No peace of mind.
> Oscar: Why don't you kill yourself? You'd be a lot happier.
> Stan: No, I'm not going to kill myself. I got a feeling I might do somebody else some harm though.

This exchange, stark when transcribed, is softened by Henry G. Sanders's performance: the lines are delivered wearily, and there is a wry affection in his reaction to Oscar's flippant response. The language used nevertheless serves establishes Stan's unhappiness whilst alluding to the possibility of violence. Later in the same scene, talking with another friend at his kitchen table, Stan seems hurt when Bracy mentions they passed Stan's home whilst wandering the streets, but didn't call on him:

> Stan: How y'all been doing, man?
> Bracy: Walking the streets all night. We passed here about three o'clock last night, and saw the lights on. We decided to keep on stepping.
> Stan: Why didn't you stop? I'm always awake.

Stan is suspended in place whilst his friends 'keep on stepping', suggesting that he is a victim of the immobility we will see exhibited repeatedly throughout the rest of the film. Taken together, the two conversations in this early scene establish a series of associations familiar from *If He Hollers*: arrested movement, the contemplation of violence, and psychological distress.

Insofar as they relate to Stan specifically, however, Burnett's film complicates these associations. Immobility and violence — violent masculinity in particular — are the two dominant tropes of the film, and together they structure Stan's environment in crucial ways. It is Stan's *resistance* to both that is his defining characteristic. Both *If He Hollers* and *Bush Mama* centre on unhappy protagonists whose psychological states can be read as a response to the disorientating conditions within which they are obliged to move and act; in each work, wilfully trangressive violence suggests itself as a potential orientation within such conditions. Like Bob Jones and Dorothy, Stan is certainly unhappy. He finds his job exhausting and yet struggles with insomnia, finds it difficult to be intimate with his wife, and is melancholy and passive. The treatment of mobility and violence in *Killer of Sheep*, and specifically how Stan is situated in relation to them, determines how his psychological malaise should framed in relation to orientation.

The first-person narration of *If He Hollers Let Him Go* allows access to Bob Jones's tortured consciousness but excludes other perspectives on his situation; *Bush Mama*'s visual and auditory strategies communicate Dorothy's subjective disorientation and distress. The form and content of *Killer of Sheep* differs from both in this respect. The film depicts a small grouping of family and friends, and the community that surrounds them, notably the groups of neighbourhood children with whom Stan Jr. plays. It is composed of a series of naturalistic vignettes from many of which Stan is absent. Indeed, the only instance of non-diagetic voiceover gives the perspective of Stan's wife, rather than access to Stan's own thoughts. As Massood frames it, '*Killer of Sheep* expands what first appears as a sole focus on a singular hero and suggests that Stan's existential dilemma is undeniably linked to a larger community crisis'.[80] The experiences and actions of this community establish an immediate context within which

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[80] Massood, 'An Aesthetic Appropriate to Conditions', pp. 36–7.

to interpret both the actions and the psychological conflicts of Stan, the eponymous 'killer of sheep'.

The film's treatment of mobility should be read in these terms, because throughout *Killer of Sheep* it is characters other than Stan who struggle most directly with failed movement. Many of the examples of immobility noted above, for example, occur in the scenes focusing on the neighbourhood children; scenes in which Stan does not appear. When Stan is present in several crucial scenes — the attempt to purchase the motor, the trip out of the city to the racetrack — it is Eugene rather than Stan whose actions are most significant. Having proposed the plan to purchase the second-hand motor and install it in his car, it is Eugene who insists it will be fine balanced precariously on the back of the truck; it is Eugene who immediately dismisses it as broken when it tumbles onto the road, and who rues 'all that work for nothing'. The group outing takes place in Eugene's car, and when one of the tyres is punctured it is Eugene's failure to carry a spare that means the trip has to be abandoned. What these scenes show is that whilst the film does establish that stasis and failed movement are prevalent within Stan's surroundings, and often affect him indirectly, they are not necessarily tendencies to which he himself has succumbed.

The immobility in *Killer of Sheep* should be read in the context of structural impediments to black mobility, both spatial and socio-economic, that persisted in Los Angeles during the 1970s. What is absent from the film is the representation of direct attempts to arrest movement, of the kind that occur in both *If He Hollers* and *Bush Mama* and are usually the consequence of policing. Indeed, visually at least 'the police are absent in *Killer of Sheep*', as Thom Andersen puts it in *Los Angeles Plays Itself*: no detectives investigate crimes, no patrol cars pass through the streets of Stan's neighbourhood, no uniformed LAPD officers question pedestrians or pull over

motorists. For Masilela, however, the film depicts Stan's triumph over 'the adverse and demoralizing conditions of working in a slaughterhouse and living in a ghetto, a territory occupied by the police'.[81] Toni Cade Bambara asserts even more unambiguously 'the omnipresence of sirens, cruisers, and cops define the neighborhood(s) [of *Killer of Sheep*] as occupied territory'.[82] There is not necessarily a contradiction in these descriptions, insofar as aggressive policing was an undeniably significant factor in the extradiagetic conditions of South LA in which Burnett's film was shot. What the absence of the police in *Killer of Sheep* speaks to, I would suggest, is an aspect of the way that South Los Angeles has historically been policed that is less commonly discussed than racism and brutality. Jill Leovy has argued that it is the criminal justice system's failure to 'respond vigorously to violent injury and death' within African-American communities that has made murder so prevalent within those communities.[83] On these terms, the 'absence' of the police — their failure to pursue charges in relation to quotidian intra-community violence of the kind depicted in *Killer of Sheep* — may be the source of at least as much harm as the aggressive tactics of patrol-car officers. Leovy quotes a former South LA gang member, who recalled that during the 1970s, the LAPD 'didn't care what black people did to each other. A nigger killing another nigger was no big deal'.[84]

I would further argue that the very absence of the police, when considered in relation to *Killer of Sheep*'s images of immobility, serves to emphasize the extent to which the urban space represented in the film has been territorialized: a community that is spatially isolated, its inhabitants contained within its borders. The role of law enforcement officials as 'agents' of territoriality within the predominantly African-

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[81] p. 112.
[82] Toni Cade Bambara, 'Reading the Signs, Empowering the Eye: Daughters of the Dust and the Black Independent Cinema Movement', in *Black American Cinema*, ed. by Diawara, pp. 118–44. (p. 120).
[83] Jill Leovy, *Ghettoside: A True Story of Murder in America* (London: Vintage, 2015), p. 8.
[84] Leovy, p. 7.

American areas of LA is undeniable. Territoriality, however, operates at the level of structures and institutions as well as individuals: as Robert Sack notes, 'territory can be used to contain or restrain as well as to exclude, and the individuals who are exercising control need not be inside the territory. Indeed, they need not be anywhere near it'.[85] What we are shown in *Killer of Sheep* is social life shaped by territoriality: a community enclosed within circumscribed territorial boundaries, conditions that frustrate social progress and that also have individual psychological consequences. This territorialization is reflected in the film's cinematography — as David E. James notes, the neighbourhood in which Stan, his family and friends live appears cut off from the wider city, and this isolation that is reinforced by Burnett's locations, composition and shot selection:

> There are no signs of connections with other parts of the city except, briefly, the Southern Pacific railroad that appears to share the area's defunct lethargy; its tracks are children's playgrounds and its engines mostly immobile. No trace of any other Los Angeles may be seen [...]. Most remarkable of all, there are no freeways.[86]

The film's characters live in a milieu in which the containment of African-American working-class citizens of Los Angeles is deeply entrenched, and one that is consistent with the historical and spatial context of the film — the decline and ghettoization that Eastside South LA experienced during the 1970s. In these conditions, immobility has been internalised as a principle, resulting in the kind of self-defeating behaviour exhibited by Gene.

During one of the film's many detached, documentary-style sequences showing children playing unsupervised in the vacant lots of South LA, one boy calls out 'Hey boy, you better move before you get hit!' as a group of boys throw rocks at each other around a derelict building. In the context of this seemingly vérité sequence of

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[85] Sack, *Human Territoriality*, p. 20. See also Wolch and Dear, p. 6.
[86] James, 'Toward a Geo-Cinematic Hermeneutics, p. 34.

improvised play, the line can be overlooked — but its intersection of movement and violence speaks to how closely the two tropes interlink in the film's narrative. The threat of violence is, like immobility, shown to be a condition of life within Stan's community. In the early scene that precedes our introduction to Stan, his son encounters two young men in a back alley struggling with a stolen television. An elderly neighbour gives the impression he may be about to call the police, and one of the young men begins to chase after him aggressively, kicking at his fence until the other convinces him to flee. Later, when the owner of a liquor store asks Stan why he does not quit his job and work for her instead, he cites the risk of getting shot, since he imagines that liquor stores are frequently robbed. During their attempt to purchase the second-hand motor at Sybil's, Eugene and Stan are distracted by a male relative lying on the floor with a bandaged head, apparently the victim of an unprovoked beating:

Gene:	Ado from the boulevard did kicked his ass
Stan:	Who kicked him in the face?
Man:	Ado
Stan:	What did he do that for?
Man:	He had nothing else to do with his hands and feet!

After their visit to Sybil's, Stan and Eugene arrive at an apartment complex, where Stan confronts a man who owes him money. A group of children look on as another man, in a dishevelled military dress uniform, hides at the foot of a stairwell and yells at a woman that he will kill her when he catches up with her: 'The only thing that looks good dying is a rose!' In all of these examples, the threat and reality of violence are quotidian details of life in South LA. The specific circumstances provoke the curiosity of observers, including Stan, but the violence itself is represented as unexceptional rather than shocking, destabilizing or transformative.

Just as the immobility of the adults is reflected in aspects of the children's play, both physical and verbal violence are central to the younger generation's interactions

throughout *Killer of Sheep*. The boys repeatedly curse and harass their female peers;

they wrestle and throw rocks at each other in the vacant and derelict lots that mark their

neighbourhood. It is the frequency of these scenes of play, and their compelling

naturalism, that prompts Masilela to describe *Killer of Sheep* as 'a paean to childhood',

but they have also been described as having 'a palpably tragic dimension'.[87] Indeed, the

question of whether Burnett's vision of black family life in South LA is ultimately

optimistic or despairing frequently centres on a reading of these scenes.[88] Simone Drake

attempts to resist the framing of black family life, and black masculinity, as perpetually

in crisis — for her, much of *Killer of Sheep*'s significance lies in how Burnett captures

aspects of black family life that were elided in Blaxploitation cinema or pathologized in

contemporary sociology. To this end, she argues for an essentially optimistic reading of

the scenes of childhood play — that they demonstrate 'the incredible and fascinating

ability that children have to imagine even when they have been racialized and are

impoverished' and that 'their rock fighting, roof jumping, and combative, but never

harmful, play might be read more productively as signs of life and freedom that are

available in childhood'.[89]

Drake's reading of *Killer of Sheep* is an important one — in seeking to

'complicate the notion of an inherent link between blackness, maleness, and crisis in the

twenty-first century', it rightly contests the idea that the film depicts Stan as a

fundamentally emasculated figure.[90] The suggestion that the children's play 'can be

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[87] Masilela, p. 112; Jacqueline Stewart, 'Defending Black Imagination: The "L.A. Rebellion" School of Black Filmmakers', in *Now Dig This! Art & Black Los Angeles 1960–1980*, ed. by Kellie Jones (Munich, London, New York: Prestel, 2011), pp. 41–49 (p. 43).

[88] Nathan Grant for example, who reads Burnett's films in terms of their 'representations of innocence' and 'figurations of ambiguity', observes that 'In just these few scenes of adolescent play, Burnett manages to cohere sex, violence, and death'. 'Innocence and Ambiguity in the Films of Charles Burnett', in *Representing Blackness: Issues in Film and Video*, ed. by Smith, pp. 135–56 (p. 139).

[89] Simone C. Drake, 'More than Nationalism in Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep* and Kasi Lemmons's *Talk to Me*', *Spectrum: A Journal on Black Men*, 1.2 (2013), 29–54 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/spectrum/v001/1.2.drake.html> [accessed 5 May 2017] (p. 35).

[90] Ibid., p. 30.

read as a celebration of life that stands in stark contrast to Stan's social death', however, elides the parallels that the film establishes between the children's aggression and the context of potential violence in which the adults exist.[91] The scene in which the lone boy curses a group of teenage girls blocking his path through an alleyway, and then walks away crying and clutching his head after the girls respond by knocking him from his bike, is mirrored in a moment during the scene at Sybil's. The man with the bandaged head flirts with a woman in the apartment; when she rejects him, he switches to insulting her, and she reacts by kicking him in the head. Throughout the film, both childhood and adult violence frequently intersect, as in this example, with *masculinity* — the negative expectations and stereotypes associated with manliness. This association is established in the opening scene, a discrete pre-credit sequence that is never explicitly related to the characters in the body of the narrative.[92] Here, a father chastises his young son, insisting that he needs to be ready to violently defend his brother:

> I don't care who started what. Or whether he was winning or losing. You get a stick or… or… a goddamn brick, get anything, and you knock the shit out of whoever is fighting your brother. [...] You are not a child anymore. You soon will be a goddamn man.

The scene is all at once a passionate insistence on family unity and self-reliance, an aggressive exhortation to violence, and a demonstration of how young boys are socialized to be violent.

The subsequent incident that complements this early framing of masculinity is also the moment that is most instructive in understanding Stan's relationship to the violent conditions surrounding him. Two sharply dressed men arrive at Stan's home —

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[91] Ibid., p. 35.

[92] Drake reads the scene as a flashback to Stan's own childhood (p. 36), which is a valid inference despite the lack of any explicit indication that this is the case. It should be noted, though, that Burnett has elsewhere used structurally unrelated opening scenes to serve as an overture or prologue, establishing the theme and tone of the subsequent film. *My Brother's Wedding* (1983) opens with an elderly man singing 'Amazing Grace' surrounded by darkness who does not appear in the rest of the film.

introducing themselves with the ironically childlike 'Hey Stan, can you come out and play, man?' — and attempt to recruit him into a violent criminal scheme, saying they need someone who 'won't blush to murder'. Stan immediately rejects the opportunity, and his wife then steps onto the porch and castigates them for their willingness to hurt people, to which one of the men responds: 'That's the way nature is. An animal has its teeth and a man has his fists. That's the way I was brought up, damn me.' As he leaves, the same man dismissively jokes, 'You be a man if you can, Stan'. The construction of masculinity as inherently violent, introduced in the film's opening scene, is reiterated here. This violence, presented as an opportunity that will benefit Stan financially, is one that Stan explicitly rejects. Not only that, he actively choses cooperation over violent competition: he helps Eugene purchase and move the engine; after he does an odd job in the neighbourhood he gives Eugene some of the money has earned, and then offers to help him fix his car.

Violence and immobility, then, form the context within which Stan moves and acts, and which he resists. For all his disaffection, the fact that Stan *keeps moving* — going to work, fixing the house, supporting his friends — is the most significant element of his character. This persistent mobility is thrown into greater relief by the context in which it takes place — both the events of the narrative and the spatial and historic context of South Los Angeles in the 1970s. Stan has succeeded in orientating himself: within constrained conditions that limit his mobility and that of his peers, he nevertheless persists in sustaining purposeful movement and action. He is able to keep moving, unlike Gene; avoid being hit (or being the one who does the hitting), unlike many of the other men in his neighbourhood. When his wife suggests he get some sleep, he instead kneels down and begins cutting new lino for their kitchen floor, just as in his first scene he is introduced crouching under the sink fixing a pipe. Stan's suggestion in

that early scene that he 'might do somebody else some harm' proves to be deceptive, not only because of his gentle and passive demeanour throughout the rest of the film, but because we will see him consciously rejecting the quotidian violence that is prevalent in his neighbourhood. The immobility or stasis that is seemingly signaled when Stan complains to Bracy 'Why didn't you stop? I'm always awake' is similarly deceptive. The scene establishes Stan's anxious sleeplessness. Read in light of the narrative as a whole, and Stan's persistent movement within constrained conditions, we might understand his insomnia not as a symptom of his paralysis, but as an inability to accept the stasis of sleep — a consequence of his orientation. What afflicts Stan is not disorientation but the strain of compulsively keeping moving.

At one point in *If He Hollers*, frustrated with Bob's stubbornness, Alice insists 'We have to walk together' (p. 122). Later, when they decide to get married, he envisions selling his car, the source of so much of his pride, so that they can buy a home together, and she imagines driving him to work each morning. When Bob resolves to kill Johnny Stoddart rather than fight, with Alice's help, the rape charge, he rejects this vision of mutual cooperation and support in favour of the assertion of a violent and solipsistic masculinity. Stan has accepted what Bob rejects; he is part of a family unit, with all the cooperation and sacrifice this entails, and his life involves partnership, cooperation and the rejection of violence. The same forces — arrested movement, violence — are at play. Underlying this, and motivating his persistent movements, there is the implicit contingency of their lives: the risk of unemployment, and the consequences it would have for him and his family.[93] *Killer of Sheep* emphasizes that Stan and his wife's commitment to 'walk together' is a process of ongoing movement,

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[93] The later *Bless Their Little Hearts* (dir. by Billy Woodberry, 1984), from a script by Burnett, deals explicitly with this contingency, only implicit in *Killer of Sheep* — widespread unemployment within the city's black working class, stemming from the de-industrialization of the 1970s and 1980s, and the extreme strain this placed on family life and the broader community.

not a fixed destination, and so the mutual support of their relationship is complicated by the psychological toll that their surroundings take on them — the cost of keeping moving in Seventies South LA.

Chapter Five

'Confused about your jurisdiction, Deputy?': Territory, Identity and Los Angeles Law Enforcement

Prior to the late 1960s, American police fiction was generally treated by both authors and critics as a sub-genre of the detective novel. The 'procedural' aspect had been a feature of film and television depictions of law enforcement since the 1940s. In the police novel, however, whilst law enforcement institutions and practices provided the setting and 'ancillary furniture', narratives tended to adhere to the conventions of the standard mystery story.[94] In her 1960 mystery *Case Pending*, the first in a series featuring LAPD Homicide detective Lieutenant Luis Mendoza, Dell Shannon asserts the novel's procedural realism when she has Mendoza sceptically observe: 'the world would grow a great deal older before police detectives in everyday routine met with such bizarre and glamorous situations as those in fiction'.[95] As a character and as an investigator, however, Mendoza is not dissimilar to the detectives of the 'Golden Age' whodunit, who were concerned with precisely such 'bizarre and glamorous situations'. Despite occupying a defined position in the hierarchy of the police department, Mendoza prefers to work alone, and actively investigates cases that should by rights be delegated to his subordinates: '[He] never felt a job well done unless he saw to it himself—which of course was simply egotism, he acknowledged it' (p. 12). He dresses ostentatiously, and is driven not by ambition or desire for wealth but by 'the contemplation of the solved puzzle: the beautiful completeness of the last answer found' (p. 19). Most importantly, we leave Mendoza as we found him: he does not change, nor is he ever confronted with genuine physical danger or psychological trauma. As Tzvetan

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[94] Leroy L. Panek, 'Post-War American Police Fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, ed. by Martin Priestman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 155–72 (p. 156).
[95] Dell Shannon, *Case Pending* (London: Gollancz Crime, 1980), p. 18. 'Dell Shannon' was a pseudonym of Elizabeth Linington. Further references cited parenthetically in the text.

Todorov writes in defining the characteristics of the 'whodunit', detectives in such narratives 'do not act, they learn. Nothing can happen to them: a rule of the genre postulates the detective's immunity'.[96]

Perhaps the most extreme example of the trajectory the post-1960s American police novel has followed is the fiction of James Ellroy, and his 'LA Quartet' (1987–1992) sequence in particular. Ellroy was born in Los Angeles in 1948 — 'hatched', as he puts it, 'in the film-noir epicenter, at the height of the film-noir era'.[97] Both prior to and following his critical and commercial breakthrough with *The Black Dahlia* (1987), Ellroy's novels have married extensive procedural detail, historical fact and conspiracy-infused fiction with brutal violence — a violence to which his law-enforcement protagonists frequently prove vulnerable. Three-quarters of the way through *The Big Nowhere* (1988), Los Angeles County Sheriff's Deputy Danny Upshaw returns home after being questioned over the murder of an LAPD detective — a murder Upshaw is innocent of, but unable to defend himself against. In unsettling free, indirect prose, Ellroy conveys Upshaw's fractured mental state as he resolves to take his own life, cutting his throat 'down to the windpipe in one clean stroke'.[98]

The Big Nowhere is the second novel in the 'LA Quartet' sequence, and set against the later two novels in the Quartet in particular, it has been characterized as a comparatively orthodox historical police procedural novel (Clay), and as 'a lesser novel' (Marling).[99] Certainly it did not have the same cultural impact as either *The*

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[96] Todorov, p. 44.

[97] Quoted in Nathaniel Rich, 'James Ellroy, The Art of Fiction No. 201', *The Paris Review*, 2009 <http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/5948/the-art-of-fiction-no-201-james-ellroy> [accessed 5 May 2017] (no page references indicated).

[98] James Ellroy, *The Big Nowhere* (London: Arrow, 2005), p. 373. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

[99] Jon Clay, '"Be a White Man": Majoritarian Perspectives and Their Subversion in James Ellroy's Dudley Smith Trilogy', *Clues: A Journal of Detection*, 28.1 (2010), 90–101 <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:rec:abell:R04300804&rft.accountid=14511> [accessed 5 May 2017] (p. 95); William Marling, 'City of Sleuths', in *The Cambridge Companion to the*

Black Dahlia or *L.A. Confidential* (1990), which in 1997 was adapted by Curtis Hanson

into an Academy Award-winning film. Its complex treatment of the jurisdictional

topography of Los Angeles, however, *The Big Nowhere* constructs an image of mid-

century Los Angeles in which protagonists are threatened and undermined by the very

boundaries they police. Danny Upshaw's suicide does not merely serve to demonstrate

how far Ellroy's fiction has moved beyond the historic conventions of the police novel

form; it constitutes the climax of a narrative thread in which Upshaw's transgression of

jurisdictional borders leaves him increasingly vulnerable and disorientated.

The author whose work should be considered central to any analysis of this

aspect of Ellroy's fiction is former LAPD officer Joseph Wambaugh. Wambaugh's first

three novels, *The New Centurions* (1971), *The Blue Knight* (1972) and *The Choirboys*

(1975), which were written whilst he was still employed as an LAPD detective, were all

commercially successful, and by 1976 his work was described as 'the real mainstream

of recent police fiction'.[100] These novels marked a decisive shift towards greater

emotional sophistication and psychological realism in police fiction; for Panek, *The*

Choirboys signalled the end of the American police novel's post-war 'apprenticeship',

and J. Madison Davis similarly notes an increased focus on the psychological and

emotional consequences of police work in the genre following the publication of

Wambaugh's early novels.[101] Wambaugh himself appears to affirm this reading of his

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Literature of Los Angeles, ed. by. McNamara, pp. 111–22 (p. 119). Such readings risk downplaying *The Big Nowhere*'s formal significance in the development of Ellroy's approach: in being divided into chapters that alternately follow the progress of three protagonists with shifting, and often competing, motivations and loyalties, *The Big Nowhere* instituted a structure that Ellroy followed in the majority of his subsequent novels. *L.A. Confidential*, all of the 'Underworld USA' trilogy (1995–2009), and *Perfidia* (2014), the first novel in the 'Second LA Quartet', are all structured in this way; only *White Jazz* (1992) returned to a single narrative voice.

[100] Kanti C. Kotecha and James L. Walker, 'Police Vigilantes', *Society*, 13.3 (1976), 48–52 <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02693881>.

[101] Panek, 'Post-War American Police Fiction', p. 156. J. Madison Davis, 'He Do the Police in Different Voices: The Rise of the Police Procedural', *World Literature Today*, 86.1 (2012), 9–11 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/916337977?accountid=14511> [accessed 5 May 2017] (p. 11).

own work, with his assertion that 'The best crime stories are not about how cops work on cases but about how cases work on cops.'[102]

Ellroy has acknowledged Wambaugh's 'immensely important' influence on his own writing.[103] Certainly, both authors are preoccupied with the physical and psychological vulnerability of their law-enforcement protagonists. Ellroy has taken more from Wambaugh's novels, however, than merely the generalized sense that police officers are 'touched by what they see, set apart by it — and sometimes damaged by it'.[104] Wambaugh's early novels engage revealingly with the spatial strategies of the contemporary LAPD: the ways in which the department sought to assert control over the spaces and borders of the city, and of the African-American neighbourhoods of South LA in particular. In *The New Centurions*, this is combined with a focus on the relationship between the geographical divisions of law enforcement and the subjectivity of individual officers. For Wambaugh's LAPD patrolmen, such geographical divisions and boundaries come to constitute integral parts of their identities, and regulate their movements through the city. This 'territorial orientation' provides a vital lens through which to interpret the spatial subtext of *The Big Nowhere*, and specifically the circumstances leading up to Danny Upshaw's starkly described and affecting suicide.

Territorial Imperative: *The Choirboys* (1975) and the Spatial Strategies of the LAPD

Joseph Wambaugh joined the LAPD in 1960, and had risen to the rank of detective sergeant by the time of his 1974 retirement — an early one by department standards,

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[102] Quoted in Elina Shatkin, 'Cop on Crime Writing: Joseph Wambaugh', *LA Times Blogs - Jacket Copy*, 2008 <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/jacketcopy/2008/04/how-do-you-like.html> [accessed 5 May 2017].

[103] Quoted in Rich (n.p.)

[104] Tod Hoffman, 'Joseph Wambaugh: A Cop's Eye View', *Queen's Quarterly*, 107.2 (2000), 286 <http://gateway.proquest.com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:abell:R04238096:0&rft.accountid=14511> [accessed 5 May 2017] (p. 286).

since twenty years of service are generally required before a full pension can be

claimed. Wambaugh left the LAPD not to forge a new literary career but rather to

pursue a career that was already established. *The New Centurions* (1971), *The Blue*

Knight (1972) and *The Onion Field* (1973) were all written and published while he was

serving on the department, and were successful enough that a continued police career

was made untenable, as he noted in a 1975 interview:

> Ironically, it was my love for police work that forced the decision. I finally had
> to come to grips with the facts. So many people knew who I was, so many came
> to the station trying to see me. I'd become a celebrity.[105]

Later in his career, he would suggest that another factor influenced his retirement — an

awareness that he would never be entirely free to write honestly and critically about

police conduct and the LAPD as an institution whilst he was still part of it. According to

a contemporary review of *The New Centurions*, the LAPD had requested 'deletions and

changes' to the content of the novel, and reprimanded Wambaugh for not seeking their

prior approval.[106] The first book he expected to publish after his resignation was *The*

Choirboys (1975), far more explicit than his previous novels in its depictions of police

violence and mockery of LAPD command officers, about which he would later say: 'I

know I'd have been fired for writing that one.'[107]

Most of *The Choirboys* focuses on the various patrol officers that make up the

LAPD Wilshire Division night watch, depicting the extremes of their experiences with a

cynical, darkly humourous tone that suggests the influence of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*

(1961). Its opening chapters, however, satirize the hypocrisy of the more senior

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[105] Quoted in Lewis Chester, 'The Identity Crisis of a Literary Los Angeles Cop', *The Times* (London, England, 22 August 1975), p. 5, The Times Digital Archive <http://find.galegroup.com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=ucl_ttda&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS85425430&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0> [accessed 5 May 2017].
[106] A. C. Germann, 'Review: The New Centurions by Joseph Wambaugh', *The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science*, 63.1 (1972), 149 <https://doi.org/10.2307/1142290>.
[107] Quoted in Hoffman, p. 286.

elements of the LAPD hierarchy, presenting command officers as vain, ambitious and

liable to impose policies and tactics that interfere with, rather than support, the work of

street-level cops. Many of the LAPD policies that are mocked in these opening chapters

are spatial in nature, relating both to the control of public space to maintain order, and

to how the movements of rank-and-file patrol officers themselves are regulated and

constrained. The petty and vindictive Deputy Chief Lynch is described ironically as

being 'a man to reckon with' in the eyes of senior officers, because he had coined the

phrase 'Territorial Imperative':

> It was the slogan for a simple plan to spread out the staff officers geographically, giving them line control over everything in a given area. But if the plan were to be newsworthy, it needed a word or words to make it sound sophisticated, military and *dramatic*.[108]

Also derided is the 'Basic Car Plan Meeting', in which patrol car officers, each having

been given direct responsibility for a small geographic segment of their district, are then

forced to attend regular public meetings with citizens living in that area. Described as

'resented by everybody', the supposed benefits of the policy are cynically summarized:

'Police administrators could swear that crime had dropped because two dozen lonely

old ladies had coffee and doughnuts with two charming, well groomed, young

uniformed policemen'.[109]

These passages are inspired by actual LAPD community engagement strategies

of the early 1970s. Policies such as 'Team Policing' and the 'Basic Car Plan', all of

which involved sub-dividing the jurisdictions of each patrol division, and assigning

additional responsibilities to the officers within those areas, were lauded by Chief of

Police Ed Davis in the 1973 annual report for the department:

> We divided the City into more than a hundred individual neighborhoods and turned each of those neighborhoods over to a team of nine uniformed officers. In

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[108] Joseph Wambaugh, *The Choirboys* (London: Orion, 2007), p. 8.
[109] Ibid., p. 9.

effect, we told these officers: 'This territory no longer belongs to some administrator sitting behind a headquarters desk. From now on it belongs to you, and you belong to the people who live here.'[110]

In the report, Davis expressed his hope that through such policies officers would 'rapidly acquire a pride of ownership in their reduced piece of geography'.[111] This strategy was a refinement of earlier LAPD reforms — specifically those of William H. Parker, Chief of Police from 1950 to 1966. Parker's approach to policing, which has come to be known as the Professional-Reform Model, prized departmental autonomy, hierarchical discipline, and a stern, detached demeanour from officers. As Lasley writes, the 'operational philosophy' upon which Parker's reforms were based was that 'police corruption was a product of cops that got too physically, emotionally, and politically close to the community. He believed that distance between police and the public was the key to stemming the tide of corruption that plagued LAPD in the past.'[112]

One of the ways this operational philosophy had been implemented was by replacing the traditional patrol model — individual beat cops patrolling small, familiar areas on-foot — with a centralized and motorized, quasi-paramilitary approach that prized rapid-response whilst maintaining physical and emotional distance between officers and the public. Chief Davis's policy innovations, mocked by Wambaugh's sceptical patrol officers, were in fact a concession to the notion that police-community relations in early-1970s Los Angeles might benefit from a reduction in that physical and emotional distance — 'LAPD's first attempt at reaching out to the community, especially in riot-torn Watts'.[113] Despite these gestures towards community relations, however, Chief Davis was in other respects an adherent of Parker's Professional-

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[110] *Los Angeles Police Department Annual Report 1973*, 1974, National Criminal Justice Reference Service, NCJ 019077 <https://www.ncjrs.gov/app/publications/abstract.aspx?id=19077> [accessed 5 May 2017] (p.21).
[111] *Los Angeles Police Department Annual Report 1973*, p. 22.
[112] p. 4.
[113] Lasley, p. 10.

Reform Model of policing, as was his successor, Daryl Gates (LAPD Chief of Police 1978–1992).[114]

The tenures of both Ed Davis and Daryl Gates were also marked by repeated controversies concerning police violence and racism. In 1977 an anonymous and masked Los Angeles policeman, interviewed on television station KABC, alleged that the majority of his fellow LAPD officers were racially prejudiced, and suggested that a citizens' review board be established to investigate police shootings — notions that Chief Davis angrily denounced, describing the latter proposal as 'the classic, old, many-times rejected Communist police review board'.[115] The creation of such a review board was a key element of the platform of the Coalition Against Police Abuse (CAPA), formed in Los Angeles during the mid-1970s by Michael Zinzun, a former member of the Black Panther Party.[116] CAPA, working alongside other organizations including the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the American Civil Liberties Union, worked actively to document and protest police brutality in Los Angeles throughout the 1970s and 1980s.[117] Prior to this, in the late 1960s, a collective of local civil rights and black

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[114] Mike Davis has extensively documented the extent to which quasi-military tactics for establishing and maintaining control over space continued to be a fundamental aspect of policing during the Gates era. See for example *City of Quartz,* p. 277 and *passim.*

[115] Narda Zacchino, 'Davis Flays Channel 7's Masked-Officer Interview', *Los Angeles Times*, 12 May 1977, Part II, p. d1 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/158305564/abstract/55EE518E6E246C1PQ/9> [accessed 5 January 2018].

[116] Jocelyn Y. Stewart, 'Michael Zinzun, 57; Ex-Black Panther Challenged Southland Police Agencies', *Los Angeles Times*, 12 July 2006 <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/jul/12/local/me-zinzun12> [accessed 5 January 2018]. See also Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left*, p. 105. The Black Panthers had themselves vociferously protested against police violence: their 1966 10-Point Program demanded 'an immediate end to police brutality and murder of black people' ('Black Panther Party Platform and Program').

[117] See for example: Doug Shuit, 'Black Leaders Voice Anger With LAPD', *Los Angeles Times*, 10 August 1978, p. b3 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/158590280/abstract/21D0D4B9BB2444CDPQ/47> [accessed 5 January 2018]; '400 Marchers Protest Alleged Police Violence', *Los Angeles Times*, 27 August 1978, p. a3 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/158665621/abstract/D2DF98B17BF64F09PQ/43>; Doug Shuit, 'Angry Black Ministers Confront Chief Gates: Accuse Police of Racism, Brutality in South-Central Los Angeles', *Los Angeles Times*, 30 March 1979, part II, p. c1 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/158845481/abstract/21D0D4B9BB2444CDPQ/40> [all accessed 5 January 2018]. See also Max Felker-Kantor, 'The Coalition against Police Abuse: CAPA's Resistance

radical organizations known as the Temporary Alliance of Local Organizations (TALO) had formed a police-monitoring program in a bid to counter police violence in South Los Angeles.[118]

Despite the work of such organizations, the department's approach continued to be both nationally lauded and popular with the majority of the Los Angeles middle class and political establishment — the result being that, as law-enforcement historian Paul Chevigny notes, 'although there was more than a generation of agitation against the police street tactics [...] there was little substantial change before 1991.'[119] With the beating of Rodney King in 1991, and the riots in South Los Angeles that followed the acquittal of the officers involved in 1992, national scrutiny of departmental tactics suddenly appeared more urgent; the consistent criticism of and mobilization against police brutality by local campaigners could, at least temporarily, no longer be glossed over.[120]

This was the context in which Steve Herbert conducted the fieldwork that would form the basis of his *Policing Space: Territoriality and the Los Angeles Police Department* (1997). Herbert's research involved accompanying various patrol car officers during their shifts over the course of eight months; this fieldwork allowed him to establish a picture of LAPD tactics, with a particular focus on what he terms the capacity of the police 'to mark and enact meaningful boundaries, to restrict people's

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Struggle in 1970s Los Angeles', *Journal of Civil and Human Rights*, 2.1 (2016), 52–88 <https://doi.org/10.5406/jcivihumarigh.2.1.52>.

[118] Paul Weeks and Ray Rogers, 'Fears Grow That Aid May Alter Alert Patrol', *Los Angeles Times*, 18 June 1967, section E, p. B, 16 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/155733894?accountid=14511> [accessed 23 February 2018]. See also Farmer, *Remaking Black Power*, p. 97.

[119] Paul Chevigny, *Edge of the Knife: Police Violence in the Americas* (New York: The New Press, 1995), p. 41.

[120] Chief Gates's leadership was heavily criticized in the commentary that followed the 1992 riots, including official reports such as that of the Webster Commission; see Richard A. Serrano, 'Redeploy Police, Riot Response Study Urges LAPD', *Los Angeles Times*, 21 October 1992 <http://articles.latimes.com/1992-10-21/news/mn-605_1_police-response> [accessed 5 May 2017]. On the contrasts between Parker's philosophy of the LAPD as moral exemplars and Gates's 'vision of a bitter and victimized LAPD' (p. 91) see Schmidt, pp. 89–99. On police violence in Los Angeles prior to 1991 see Chevigny, pp. 35-57.

capacity to act by regulating their movements in space'.[121] Herbert's analysis of LAPD

practices is informed by theoretical examinations of the concepts of territory and

jurisdiction, notably Robert Sack's work on territoriality. One of the key contentions of

Herbert's study is that such an ethnographic analysis is necessary because theorizations

of territory and jurisdiction tend to elide the role of individual subjects. Whilst on a

formal level Sack is right, Herbert suggests, to emphasize that 'social order is predicated

upon territorial action', this abstract legal and bureaucratic control of space is ultimately

enacted by individual officers motivated by competing, and sometimes conflicting,

impulses.[122] This might be manifested, for example, in disagreements over the chain of

command in the midst of an incident, as officers 'struggle with other officers in their

attempt to "own the scene" so that they can determine how the tactical control of the

area proceeds'.[123] Herbert demonstrates that, as much as the control of space is an

instrument of power for maintenance of social order that impacts upon the general

populace, the process of policing boundaries and movement in this way is not an

abstract one for the individual officers involved.

The strategies caricatured in Wambaugh's *The Choirboys*, then, form part of the

history of law enforcement's engagement with questions of territory and jurisdiction,

and signal the need for an analysis of the Los Angeles police novel that is attentive to

both the topography of law enforcement and the agency of individual police officers.

Such an analysis will be concerned with Los Angeles as a territory, or rather as a

network of territorial boundaries, not always officially recognized, over which different

authorities exercise jurisdiction; these territorial boundaries are the expression of

institutional power over space. 'Police power rests upon a political geography', as

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[121] Steve Herbert, *Policing Space: Territoriality and the Los Angeles Police Department* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 13.
[122] Herbert, p. 168.
[123] Herbert, p. 169.

Herbert phrases it; in *The New Centurions* and *The Big Nowhere*, the complex political

geography of Los Angeles serves both to empower individual protagonists, and to

circumscribe their movements.[124]

How Spaces Work on Cops: *The New Centurions* (1971)

Joseph Wambaugh's early novels vary in tone and structure — whilst *The Choirboys* is

darkly humorous, ironic and at times bawdy, *The New Centurions* is a straight-faced,

realist chronicle of the 1960s LAPD. It follows three new recruits' progress within the

department over five years, beginning in 1960 and concluding with the Watts Rebellion.

The narrative is episodic, with each chapter focusing on one of the protagonists, and the

reader returns to each protagonist after a gap of a year.[125] Wambaugh uses this structure

to show the development of each character over time; by the end of the novel all three

are capable, proficient police officers, but their attitudes and expectations have been

altered, sometimes dramatically, by their experiences. Such an approach is rare in the

police novel form, where the focus is usually on the investigation of a single case, over

a much narrower chronological span.[126] Where some police novels, such as works by

Dell Shannon and Michael Connelly, form parts of extended series featuring consistent

characters, Wambaugh's distinctiveness in *The New Centurions* comes from his use of a

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[124] Herbert, p. 11. See also Nicholas R. Fyfe, 'The Police, Space and Society: The Geography of Policing', *Progress in Human Geography*, 15.3 (1991), 249–67 <https://doi.org/10.1177/030913259101500301>.

[125] Peter Wolfe suggests that it was Wambaugh's *The Onion Field* that 'taught Ellroy the value of switching points of view between culprit and cop in successive chapters of a novel', with reference to the earlier 'L.A. Noir' trilogy, which alternates perspective between Sergeant Lloyd Hopkins and his criminal antagonists. With its triad of perspectives, however, it is *The New Centurions* that appears to be the most significant influence on Ellroy's later fiction, particularly those works with a longer chronological span such as *L.A. Confidential* and the 'Underworld USA' novels. See Peter Wolfe, *Like Hot Knives to the Brain: James Ellroy's Search for Himself* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005), p. 39.

[126] See, for example, Leslie T. White, *Harness Bull* (1938), Dell Shannon, *Case Pending* (1960), Dallas Barnes, *See the Woman* (1973), Michael Connelly, *The Black Echo* (1992), and indeed James Ellroy's *The Big Nowhere*.

multi-year chronology within a single novel, combined with rejection of the single case as a structuring trope.

The focus of *The New Centurions* is the developing expertise of rookie patrol officers, rather than the investigative prowess of experienced police detectives, and the investigation of a single case would be incompatible with such an approach. Instead, Wambaugh depicts a steady accretion of individual experiences that gradually attain significance as the character arcs of each protagonist unfold over half a decade. Gus Plebesly's earnest, understated demeanour masks intense self-doubt, and it will take five years on the force for him to develop true confidence in his own abilities. Roy Fehler's gauche intellectual confidence masks an insecurity that gives way all too easily to resentment and spite; only after recovering from a traumatic injury and alcoholism will he come to consider those around him as equals. Serge Duran's casual pragmatism masks an aimlessness that is rooted in a rejection of his Latino heritage; policing a predominantly Latino community will eventually reconcile him to this aspect of his identity.

'Contests over space', as Herbert terms them, occur throughout Fehler, Duran and Plebesly's day-to-day experiences as police officers. During Plebesly's first assignment, his more experienced partner Kilvinsky volunteers to show him how to work the 'whore wagon', a task that consists of disrupting the work of street prostitutes without actually charging them with an offence: 'We pick them up and ride them around for an hour or so and take them to the station and run a make to see if they have any traffic warrants and let them go from the station'.[127] Kilvinsky is depicted pursuing this task without malice or aggression — his attitude is contrasted with another officer they meet during their patrol, Bethel, who is verbally abusive and physically aggressive

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[127] Joseph Wambaugh, *The New Centurions* (London: Quercus, 2008), p. 89. Further references cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

towards the woman he has detained, and whose behaviour Kilvinsky subtly challenges. Nevertheless, it is made clear that this tactic is technically unlawful: that suppressing prostitution is outside of their official remit as patrol officers, and that the use of the wagon itself is 'illegal as hell. We'll be stopped from doing it one of these days, but right now it works' (p. 89). The narrative positions Kilvinsky as an authoritative and wise character — later, Plebesly will describe him affectionately as 'a great philosopher' (p. 181) and as 'the best policeman I ever knew' (p. 399). Even the most sympathetic of Wambaugh's characters, then, are shown to exert spatial control over citizens beyond what is officially sanctioned, with tactics that are justified by their supposed effectiveness.

Other tactics involve a similar desire to control movement and contest space, and with a degree of effectiveness that is more ambiguous. Assigned to Central Vice during 1962, Fehler is involved in an operation to 'take The Cave' (p. 204) — raiding a nightclub that is rumoured to be screening pornographic films after hours, with a view to getting its liquor licence suspended. The Cave club scene is a more overt 'contest', in the sense that the targets of the vice operation attempt to establish and contest their own boundaries, resisting those imposed on them by the police. During the initial briefing, Fehler is warned that the club will be locking its doors shortly before the screening begins at 1am. This enforcement of boundaries, illegitimate in the eyes of the establishment, is represented as an existential threat to Fehler, who finds himself trapped inside, struggling to escape and under attack: 'Roy then, at that moment, for the first time in his life knew real fear, hopeless fear, which debilitated, overwhelmed, flashed and froze him' (p. 224).

Two years later, Fehler is involved in an operation to round up loiterers on the streets of Watts in which his own actions are more counterproductive. At this stage in

the novel Fehler has developed a serious drinking problem, partially in response to

having suffered a particularly traumatic injury on duty, a shotgun wound to the stomach,

a year earlier. Assigned to 77th Street Division, the station responsible for policing the

Watts district, in the year before the 1965 riots, Fehler is ordered to participate in a

'clean up' — moving on 'drunken loafers on the streets of Watts' (p. 335). The use of

these kinds of tactics by 77th Street officers would be popularly cited as a precipitating

factor in the 1965 riots.[128] The McCone Report was criticized for its weak and equivocal

acknowledgement of 'a deep and longstanding schism between a substantial portion of

the Negro community and the Police Department. "Police brutality" has been the

recurring charge'.[129] The later, and more wide-ranging Kerner Commission Report,

however, went further in its recognition of how such demeaning and aggressive policing

tactics affected African-American citizens:

> In nearly every city surveyed, the Commission heard complaints of harassment
> of interracial couples, dispersal of social street gatherings, and the stopping of
> Negroes on foot or in cars without obvious basis. These, together with
> contemptuous and degrading verbal abuse, have great impact in the ghetto.[130]

In *The New Centurions* it is Fehler's own behaviour during the 'clean up'

operation that contributes to its aggressive character, incorporating as it does precisely

the kind of 'contemptuous and degrading verbal abuse' cited by the Kerner

Commission. Heavily inebriated towards the end of his shift, he is struck by the

similarity between the 'drunk wagon' his partner is driving, and the memory of the

truck of 'an Italian huckster that used to peddle vegetables on our street when I was a

kid' (p. 340). With drunken logic, he forces his partner to drive through a parking lot

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[128] See, for example, Blauner's discussion of police harassment – the 'attack on personal dignity that manifests itself in unexplainable questionings and searches, in hostile and insolent attitudes towards groups of young Negroes on the street, or in cars, and in the use of disrespectful and sometimes racist language' ('Whitewash Over Watts', p. 177). See also Robert Fogelson's discussion of 'preventative patrol' tactics in *Big-City Police* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 259-60.
[129] McCone Report, p. 27.
[130] National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), p. 303. Hereafter cited as 'Kerner Report'.

filled with African-American loiterers whilst Fehler parodies the vegetable seller's cry of 'Ap-ple, ra-dish, coo-cumbers for sale', instead shouting 'Nig-gers, nig-gers, niggers for sale!' (p. 340).

As a sociologist wrote in the period between the Watts riots and the publication of *The New Centurions*, the recurrent charge of 'police brutality' from the African-American community only briefly noted in the McCone Report had to be understood as involving more than the acts of excessive physical force usually associated with the term brutality:

> It means arrests, questionings and searches of Negroes by police without apparent provocation, the use of abusive and derogatory language in addressing Negroes, such as the word 'nigger,' and a general attitude toward the minority groups which represents an affront to their sense of dignity.[131]

On these terms Fehler's actions would certainly be experienced as police brutality by the 'worried throngs of loiterers' (p. 340) forced to avoid the truck driving through their midst — an entirely unnecessary and demeaning 'affront to their sense of dignity' to be placed alongside the innumerable other instances of discrimination, overt and subtle, experienced by African-American residents of the city.

This scene, the novel's sole overt example of police brutality, immediately precedes the novel's treatment of the Watts riots in the following chapters. In depicting this incident as the result of inebriation and individual trauma, Wambaugh elides the presence of malicious, overtly aggressive police mistreatment as potential contributing factors to the Watts Rebellion; there is no equivalent in *The New Centurions* to the zealous, violent and spiteful Officer 'Roscoe' Rules in *The Choirboys*, for example. This incident is a significant moment in Fehler's character arc: beginning the novel as conceited and precocious, he becomes increasingly disillusioned; the 'clean up' in

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[131] Anthony Oberschall, 'The Los Angeles Riot of August 1965', *Social Problems*, 15.3 (1968), 322–41 <https://doi.org/10.2307/799788> (pp. 331–32).

Watts is his nadir, and in subsequent chapters he is gradually rehabilitated. The manner in which this example of racially demeaning treatment primarily serves to develop one of the characters is symptomatic of the novel's broader approach. Wambaugh's protagonists consistently view the city and its inhabitants in relation to their own status and position, particularly with regards to the city's African-American population. This solipsistic perspective is closely related to the environmental image with which each of them orientates themselves: the network of borders through which the police department rationalizes space.

'He could learn things here': Territorial Identities and South LA as Rite of Passage

On his first day on patrol, Duran observes that the squad-room walls of his assigned station, Hollenbeck, are 'lined with identical street maps', each bearing coloured pins recording incidences of different crimes (p. 35). Wambaugh emphasizes this point by having Plebesly make the same observation, a chapter later, about his own squad-room in University Division: 'Gus gazed around the room at the several maps of University Division which were covered with multicolored pins that he thought must signify certain crimes and arrests' (p. 59). This repeated image recalls the opening title card of *He Walked by Night*, with its map of the 'City of Los Angeles: Metropolitan Area' that precedes establishing shots of the 'real' Los Angeles. As in *He Walked by Night*, the cartographic representation of a territory signals the importance of rationalized space in law enforcement practice. Wambaugh's novel, however, is preoccupied with the implications of this rationalization for its LAPD protagonists, rather than in relation to the hunt for a specific criminal. Legal scholar Richard T. Ford writes: 'Territorial jurisdiction produces political and social identities. Jurisdictions define the identity of

the people that occupy them'[132] The ambiguity of 'occupy' is crucial here, since it speaks not only to the residents of such territories, but also, in this context, to a law-enforcement institution that has at times been characterized as (and even considered itself) an 'occupying force'. The identities of rookie patrol officers Duran, Plebesly and Fehler are all constructed in relation to the geographical divisions to which they are assigned.

Within the boundaries of the City of Los Angeles, LAPD jurisdiction has historically been divided into geographic 'patrol divisions'. The total number of divisions has fluctuated over time, as the municipality has grown and as changes in population density have led to further sub-division of certain areas. In 1925, there were 14 patrol divisions, from Valley Division in the north, covering the whole 189 square miles of the San Fernando Valley, to San Pedro at the southernmost tip of the city.[133] At present, there are 21 geographic divisions, now officially termed 'areas'.[134] Changes to the composition of these boundaries were often made for strategic planning purposes, in order to more efficiently rationalize and police the spaces of the city. The plans that August Vollmer proposed in 1924 included a full reorganization of the department's patrol divisions to reduce the geographical distance between citizens and their nearest stations.[135] In his 1953 departmental 'progress report', Chief Parker explained that LAPD patrol districts had been redrawn to follow the boundaries of government census tracts, to allow for 'future studies of crime conditions in specific communities with exact knowledge of population, economic, and social conditions'.[136]

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[132] Richard T. Ford, 'Law's Territory (A History of Jurisdiction)', in *The Legal Geographies Reader: Law, Power, and Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 200–217 (pp. 200–1).
[133] *Annual Report of the Police Department, 1925–6,* p. 13.
[134] 'Los Angeles Police Department Bureaus and Areas' (Los Angeles Police Department Official Website) <http://www.lapdonline.org/home/pdf_view/40022> [accessed 5 May 2017].
[135] Woods, *The Police in Los Angeles*, p. 78.
[136] W. H. Parker, *Parker on Police*, ed. by O. W. Wilson (Springfield: Charles C Thomas, 1957), p. 207.

These patrol divisions define the jurisdiction of the uniformed patrol officers within the department, such as Wambaugh's protagonists in *The New Centurions*. For all that they are inherently mobile, navigating the city's streets in patrol cars and responding quickly to radio calls, such officers also have their movements formally circumscribed by the boundaries of their assigned divisions. They enforce boundaries to regulate people's movements in space, as Herbert frames it; their ability to enforce the law has the weight of municipal authority behind it, and they have access to a supporting network of colleagues and technology. Their own movements, however, are also regulated, because they operate within a defined hierarchy, and are agents of a municipal power structure that they do not define, and which structures their own experience of the city.

The mobility of Wambaugh's protagonists is far more restricted than that of Philip Marlowe, who operates across the sprawl of the city's diverse districts. But they experience the city in a similar manner — orientating themselves in relation to the different borders and boundaries of the city of Los Angeles. The specific topography that structures this experience is a bureaucratic and territorial one: the geographic divisions of the LAPD. Part of their early education as rookie patrol officers involves learning to discern the dominant characteristics of each division; which is to say, beginning to perceive the city's geography from the perspective of the police force, rather than as regular citizens. The racial (and to a much lesser extent class) makeup of these divisions, it will become clear, is integral to how they are perceived by Wambaugh's officers.

Various divisions receive their own thumbnail characterizations over the course of the novel. Wilshire Division is 'a good division to work because of the variety. He could leave this Negro section and drive to the northwest boundaries of the division and

be on the Miracle Mile and Restaurant Row' (p. 247). For an officer who 'likes police work', 'the Harbor will be too dull' (p. 320), whilst working in West Valley and Van Nuys Division is considered 'the next thing to being retired' (p. 178). Hollywood Division is perceived to be glamorous and desirable from the outside, but the transitory, superficial character of its population proves to make it an unfulfilling assignment. Hollenbeck Division, once the hub of the city's Jewish community, has, in the early 1960s, become a largely Mexican-American district — one strained by gang violence, but also rich with Latino culture.

The areas that are characterized the most clearly and vividly, however, are the three divisions that cover the predominantly African-American areas of South Los Angeles: Newton Street, University, and 77th Street. Roy Fehler, dismayed to discover that his first assignment is to Newton Street, reflects on its particularly low status:

> Newton Street he had not counted on. It was the poorest of the Negro divisions and the drabness of the area was depressing. This was the 'east side' and he already had learned that as soon as the newly emigrated Negroes could afford it, they moved to the 'west side', somewhere west of Figueroa Street. (p. 99)

Gus Plebesly makes a complementary observation about his first assignment, the neighbouring University Division, which has a predominantly African-American population, but includes comparatively upscale neighbourhoods in the Crenshaw area: 'the "silk stocking" part of University Division, where large numbers of whites still resided' (p. 142). Three years later, the increasingly jaded Fehler is 'demoralized' to have been transferred to 77th Street, the third of the 'Negro divisions': 'It was Newton Street magnified ten times, it was violence and crime' (p. 268).

Fehler, Duran and Plebesly do not make these observations as disinterested spectators. Frequently, their assessment of a district's character is introduced in emotive terms, with the suggestion that their own perceived status is inextricable from the

geographic area to which they have been assigned. Serge Duran initially expresses

resentment towards his first assignment, Hollenbeck Division, because he objects to

being assigned seemingly by default to a Mexican-American district on account of his

own heritage: 'nobody had even bothered to see if he could speak Spanish. It was just

"Duran to Hollenbeck", another victim of a system.' (p. 32) Duran's reaction ultimately

demonstrates his pragmatism and optimism, however:

> Well here he was working in another Chicano barrio, he thought with a crooked
> smile. But he'd be out of here as soon as he finished his year's probationary
> period. Hollywood Division appealed to him, or perhaps West Los Angeles. (pp.
> 46–7)

Roy Fehler's attitude to his assignments is particularly revealing in this respect. He

frames his assignments as bureaucratic injustices perpetrated by 'them' — the

department administrators and command officers:

> How they could have sent him to Newton Street Station, Roy could not
> understand. What was the sense of giving them three choices of divisions if they
> were then ignored and sent arbitrarily from the academy to a station twenty
> miles from home. […] They could have sent him to one of the valley divisions
> or Highland Park or even Central which was his third choice. (p. 99)

Fehler's frustration reflects his resentment at having his mobility circumscribed by his

superiors. [137] It also betrays a clear association between working so-called 'black

divisions' and a lack of departmental prestige that is later reinforced when his second

reassignment sends him to 77th Street Division:

> The transfer to Seventy-seventh Street station had been a demoralizing blow.
> Now, after his fourth week in the division Roy could still not believe they would
> do this to him. […] After all, he was well liked in Central Division and he had
> already worked Newton Street and didn't dream they would make him work
> another black division. (p. 268)

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[137] This hinted-at disdain for superior officers in administrative positions is made explicit in the later *The Choirboys*, the opening chapters of which are taken up with deeply unflattering portraits of the LAPD managerial class.

Duran, Plebesly and Fehler are rookies who are marked out by the crispness of their uniforms and the lack of long-service stripes that leaves them 'slick-sleeved' (p. 58) in the eyes of veterans. They are therefore situated at the very bottom of a hierarchy (giving Christopher Wilson reason to talk of the 'grunt-level mystique' of policing in Wambaugh's fiction).[138] As such, they perceive their divisional assignments in terms of how they may bear on their career prospects. Such assignments, in other words, are depicted as circumscribing both their horizontal mobility across the dispersed geography of Los Angeles, and their vertical mobility within the institutional hierarchy of the LAPD. Constrained by the boundaries of their own jurisdiction, the character of the area over which they have jurisdiction influences their own identities. It is the 'black divisions' that are most vivid in the environmental image established in the novel. All three characters orientate themselves in relation to these divisions particularly actively, and for the majority of the novel they do so in terms of how these divisions undermine their perceived institutional prestige.

If *The New Centurions* depicts rookie police officers whose identities are bound up with, and complicated by, the geographic borders over which they enforce territorial control, it also suggests that such psychological conflicts can ultimately be resolved. Earning the status of veteran involves acquiring an identity that is more stable, because it no longer as deeply implicated in the nuances of different geographic divisions; instead, the veteran identity is rooted in fraternalism and a distinction between cop and civilian that transcends all other boundaries. The novel's ultimate position on race is that the distinctions between different races are less important than the distinction between cop and citizen, and the final stage of the recruits' education involves moving beyond the perceived differences between geographic divisions to a 'higher' plane of

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[138] Wilson, p. 100.

understanding: 'An asshole is an asshole, they're just a little darker here' (p. 165), as

Officer Light insists to Fehler. Later, indicating the development of his own thinking,

Fehler will repeat Light's phrase to a rookie partner who still preoccupied with the

differences between 'white' and 'black' divisions:

> 'You ever work in a white division?'
> 'Central,' Roy nodded.
> 'Is it the same as a black division?'
> 'It's slower. Not as much crime so it's slower. Time passes slower. But it's the same. People are all murderous bastards, they're just a little darker down here.' (p. 323)

This attitude echoes the public statements of Chief Parker during the period.

Discussing the training of new LAPD recruits, Parker stated that one aim was 'to correct

stereotyped impressions that the city is divided into clearly defined groups and areas,

and that law enforcement differs accordingly'; the department's policy, he asserted, was

of 'one class of citizenship, one standard of police technique'.[139] Whether this aspect of

Parker's publicly stated philosophy was actually reflected in LAPD practices was

deeply contested. In the same year that Wambaugh set Fehler's conversation with his

new partner, Los Angeles City Council hearings on 'Hostility between Police and

Public' were picketed by the Ad Hoc Committee to End Police Malpractice, whilst the

committee itself heard the testimony of multiple citizens 'who had been subjected to

serious abuses and humiliations by members of the L.A.P.D.'.[140] Bayard Rustin, in his

critical analysis of the McCone Commission Report, quoted a young resident of Watts:

'The riots will continue because I, as a Negro, am immediately considered to be a

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[139] *Parker on Police*, p. 155. The same speech also appears to provide the inspiration for Officer Light's insistence that Fehler's paternalism is 'worse than the Klan', with its suggestion that heavy police deployment in 'minority' areas is justified by crime statistics, and that to ignore such statistics would be a concession to 'social inoffensiveness' that would itself 'be discrimination indeed!' (p. 161).

[140] Zenger, 'Council Hearing on Hostility between Police and Public', *Los Angeles Free Press* (17 September 1964), p. 4; Ridgely Cummings, 'City Hall Report: Police Practices & Strip Tease Laws', *Los Angeles Free Press* (1 October 1964), p. 3.

criminal by the police and, if I have a pretty woman with me, she is a tramp even if she is my wife or mother.'[141]

The development of cop wisdom, as depicted in *The New Centurions* with allusions to Parker's public philosophy, involves a homogenising impulse that claims to no longer be influenced by racial stereotyping or unconscious bias, and treats all with equal suspicion. Experienced police develop an esoteric knowledge that marks them out from the rest of the population: Plebesly summarizes his more experienced perspective late in the novel, 'I guess I think I know something that most people don't' (p. 400). As Wilson writes of Wambaugh's early novels,

> the street is a gauntlet that tests religious belief, or physical endurance, or liberal empathy. Over time, however, it is the cop fraternity that becomes the true guild. […] Policing is itself credited with creating a pluralistic fraternity far superior to the neighborhoods one polices.[142]

Once Wambaugh's protagonists reach this stage in their development, in the final chapters of the novel, their earlier experiences policing the city's African-American neighbourhoods are retrospectively affirmed. Plebesly is told early in the novel that being assigned to a division with a predominantly African-American population will be a valuable experience that will accelerate the development of the wisdom he requires:

> 'You're going to learn things down here, Gus,' said Kilvinsky. 'Every day down here is like ten days in a white division. It's the intensity down here, not just the high crime rate. You'll be a veteran after a year. It's the thousands of little things.' (p. 95)

This perspective is gradually confirmed when Plebesly and his colleagues begin to attain veteran status: 'They can teach me, thought Gus. There is no other people like

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[141] 'The Watts "Manifesto" and the McCone Report', p. 155. See also Rand, writing in 1967, who cites contemporary assertions that 'L.A. had a worse record in police brutality than such other cities as San Francisco and New York', and that '[LAPD] behavior in white sections differed radically from that in Mexican and Negro ones' (p. 131).
[142] Wilson, p. 114.

them. There was fear, but he could learn things here' (p. 150). South Los Angeles is reconfigured as a rite of passage, and its citizens attain value not in themselves, but for what can be learned from them. Even Fehler's once-resented assignment to Newton Street comes to be valued on these terms: 'This street was a vivid part of his learning. He had been educated in southeast Los Angeles and Central Avenue had been a valuable schoolroom' (p. 382).

The New Centurions concludes with the Watts Rebellion. In keeping with the structure of the novel, the events of August 1965 are framed entirely from the 'on-the-ground' perspective of its three protagonists. In these scenes, Duran, Fehler and Plebesly are at their most vulnerable, and the knowledge they have accumulated over the preceding five years initially appears insufficient for the circumstances they encounter. Appalled by the chaos that transforms the familiar streets, they are spatially disorientated by the disjunction between their memories of South Los Angeles and the reality that confronts them:

> It was not Central Avenue, Roy thought. It was not even possible that the signpost which pointed Forty-sixth Street east and west and Central Avenue north and south could be right.[...] This hissing inferno was not Central Avenue. (p. 382)

The Watts Rebellion represents a dramatic breakdown in the spatial control that they are by now accustomed to enforcing. By the final day of the uprising, however, all three protagonists succeed in individually reasserting control over their situation — in reorientating themselves, and acting decisively within the most challenging circumstances they have encountered. Wambaugh represents the events of August 1965 as the apotheosis of his characters' education: an experience that reinforces their new understanding of the city in terms of the fundamental distinction between cop and citizen. It is significant that the LAPD response to violence in South Los Angeles

involved drafting in officers assigned to other districts across the city. In Wambaugh's

novel, this serves to reinforce that the perceived distinctions between different

geographic assignments, once so central to Fehler, Duran and Plebesly's understanding

of their status, have for them been decisively undermined.

The rebellion serves as a final rite of passage in *The New Centurions*, and the

culmination of each character's arc.[143] It is the 'cop fraternity' that allows them to

navigate the chaos — tellingly, it is only at this point in the novel that Wambaugh has

his three protagonists meet again for the first time since the opening chapters. With its

bildungsroman-like focus on the development of its protagonists' cop knowledge, *The

New Centurions* inherently reduces South LA to a proving ground for the police who

contest its spaces. Those who police black Los Angeles, Wambaugh's novel suggests,

must first orientate themselves in relation to the boundaries that divide its geography,

and then transcend that perspective. But the boundaries themselves would, of course,

persist — continuing to contain and circumscribe the citizens of South Los Angeles.

'Riddled with enclaves': Los Angeles as Territory in *The Big Nowhere* (1988)

The most significant territorial boundaries in Los Angeles, in terms of the size of area

covered, are between the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County. The city grew

throughout the twentieth century as the result of the annexation of what were once

independent communities, spread across the Los Angeles Basin and beyond. Some

areas, however, elected to maintain their status as independent cities, such as Beverly

Hills and Santa Monica, whilst others resisted annexation to the city and continued as

unincorporated parts of the surrounding Los Angeles County, notably West Hollywood

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[143] The Watts Rebellion serves a similar function in James Ellroy's *Blood on the Moon* (1984), the first in his 'L.A. Noir' trilogy. In flashbacks, Sergeant Lloyd Hopkins's traumatic experiences as a National Guardsman during the unrest are revealed to have been decisive in shaping his character. For a fictional treatment of the Watts Rebellion from the perspective of the area's African- and Japanese-American residents, see Nina Revoyr's *Southland* (New York: Akashic Books, 2003).

(which eventually incorporated as an independent city in 1984).[144] This resulted in the irregular topology that Edward Soja describes as 'the most extraordinary crazy quilt of opportunism to be found in any metropolitan area'.[145] Christopher Rand's summary of Los Angeles's ambiguous form, written two decades before Soja's *Postmodern Geographies*, still holds true today:

> The physical Los Angeles is hard to define because the concept is a flexible one, depending on who is talking and what about. Strictly or politically speaking, there are both a City and County of Los Angeles. The City is grotesque in shape; it stretches about forty miles from north to south, but is riddled with enclaves along the way.[146]

The complexity of Los Angeles's political geography is reflected in the complex history of its law enforcement institutions. The City of Los Angeles is the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles Police Department, whilst the County of Los Angeles is policed by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Greater convolution arises where some of the independently incorporated 'enclaves' (such as Beverly Hills) maintain their own police departments, whilst in others the Sheriff's Department provides law-enforcement services on a contract basis. Relations between the LAPD and the Sheriff's Department soured, at certain points in their histories, into outright conflict, notably following the 1949 county grand jury investigation into corruption and vice in the LAPD.[147] In *My Dark Places*, his 1996 memoir, James Ellroy offers his own characterization of the historic contrast between the LAPD and the LASD:

> The Sheriff's resented the LAPD's celebrity. The LAPD considered the Sheriff's a bush-league outfit and hogged the credit for their joint operations. Ideology divided the two agencies. Topography divided them more.[148]

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[144] Ellroy offers his own pithy summary of the city's development: 'The place was built from land grabs and racial grief'. James Ellroy, *My Dark Places: An L.A. Crime Memoir* (London: Windmill, 2010), p. 65.
[145] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 244.
[146] Rand, p. 4.
[147] Woods, *The Police in Los Angeles*, pp. 208–9; J John Buntin, *L.A. Noir: The Struggle for the Soul of America's Most Seductive City* (New York: Harmony Books, 2009), pp. 142, 165.
[148] *My Dark Places*, pp. 67–8.

Ellroy invokes precisely these divisions and resentments as a determining force in the plot of *The Big Nowhere*: 'interagency grief' (p. 6) that obstructs investigations and spawns further conflict.

The plot of *The Big Nowhere* follows the course of two very different law enforcement investigations in Los Angeles in the weeks following New Year's Day 1950. The first concerns a series of brutal murders, the victims of which are all men from what are considered the city's seamier subcultures — 'hopheads, ex-cons [and] queers' rather than 'squarejohns' (p. 155), and as such, prompting little press attention or public interest.[149] Sheriff's Deputy Danny Upshaw becomes preoccupied with the murders, and pursues an investigation despite resistance from his superiors and conflicts between the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and the Los Angeles Police Department that frustrate the progress of the case. The second strand involves a grand jury investigation into Communist sympathies in Hollywood. Lieutenant Mal Considine accepts a place on the investigation, despite being openly sceptical of its motives, out of a desire for the promotion and public acclaim that will help him gain custody of his adopted son, whilst Buzz Meeks, former LAPD officer turned 'fixer, errand boy, hatchet man' for Howard Hughes and crime boss Mickey Cohen, is motivated by the money that will help him pay off gambling debts (p. 22).

The geography of the novel's opening chapters establishes an underlying tension — one which will decisively influence subsequent events — between the Los Angeles establishment and the ambiguous territory outside the city proper. Lieutenant Mal Considine of the District Attorney's Criminal Investigation Bureau meets with Deputy D.A. Ellis Loew and LAPD Homicide Lieutenant Dudley Smith at the Pacific Dining

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[149] There is an inversion here of the events of *The Black Dahlia*, in which Elizabeth Short's murder becomes a public sensation and great pressure is put on the police department to find the killer; at one point in *The Big Nowhere*, the lack of attention paid to the victims is described as 'Reverse Black Dahlia Syndrome' (p. 154).

Car restaurant, and the grand jury probe into alleged communist influence in Hollywood in initiated. The Pacific Dining Car — a long-established restaurant in Westlake, approximately one kilometre west of Downtown Los Angeles — is used as an informal meeting place by senior law-enforcement figures throughout the Quartet, and as such it serves as a metonym for the established forces of power in Los Angeles.[150] Meanwhile, further west in Los Angeles County land at the southern foot of the Santa Monica Mountains, Danny Upshaw responds to the discovery of a murder victim in a vacant lot. Upshaw is a Deputy Sheriff stationed at West Hollywood Substation; an employee of Los Angeles County rather than the city of Los Angeles, with jurisdiction over an area notable for its liminal character. Despite its geographic proximity, Upshaw's jurisdiction is outside the established zones of influence evoked by the meeting at the Pacific Dining Car, and he is instead a representative of the more dispersed and centrifugal authority of Los Angeles County.

West Hollywood is a small area contiguous with Los Angeles on its northern, eastern and southern edges, and with the independent city of Beverly Hills to the west; officially an area of just 1.981 square miles.[151] The district resisted annexation by Los Angeles in 1924 and remained an unincorporated part of Los Angeles County in the face of the city's voracious mid-century growth, eventually incorporating as an independent city in 1984.[152] Adam Moos writes of the defeat of the 1924 West

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[150] The ascent of the highly ambitious Ed Exley in *L.A. Confidential* is marked by his changing relationship to the Pacific Dining Car. In early 1952, Sergeant Exley is invited to meet LAPD Chief William H. Parker at the dining car, where Exley will propose an approach to the 'Bloody Christmas' police brutality scandal that will mitigate public outcry and political repercussions for the department (p. 46). This shrewd proposal in leads to a promotion and facilitates his rise within the department; by 1958 Exley, about to be promoted to Captain, is convening his own meetings at the Pacific Dining Car, where he has a 'favorite booth' (p. 271). For a brief history of the restaurant itself, see 'Our History', *Pacific Dining Car* <http://www.pacificdiningcar.com/since_1921_p3.html> [accessed 5 May 2017].

[151] Ruth Benell, 'Notice of Completion: City Incorporation, West Hollywood' (Local Agency Formation Commission, Los Angeles County, 1984) <http://dpw.lacounty.gov/sur/nas/SMPM_AnnexationCity/WD0001.pdf> [accessed 5 May 2017] (p. 3).

[152] Adam Moos, 'The Grassroots in Action: Gay and Seniors Capture the Local State in West Hollywood, California', in *The Power of Geography,* ed. by Wolch and Dear, pp. 351–69 (p. 352). See also Benjamin

Hollywood annexation proposal that 'The net effect of choosing to remain

unincorporated was that West Hollywood would escape the stricter laws of Los Angeles

and be under the more benevolent and uncritical eye of the County government'.[153] As

it was subject to county jurisdiction — notably concerning gambling, which was

tolerated in the county but not the city — it maintained a permissive quality, a licentious

zone at the border of Los Angeles proper. Law-enforcement historian Gerald Woods

characterizes the situation in Los Angeles County in the late 1940s (the period

immediately preceding the events of *The Big Nowhere*) in these terms:

> The sheriff and the district attorney shared law enforcement duties in the county.
> Both were elected officials and needed campaign funds, for which they turned to
> the vice operators. Restricting vice to specific small areas limited voter
> retaliation. Residents of outlying areas cared little for conditions on the Sunset
> Strip.[154]

In 1950, then, West Hollywood was outside of LAPD territory in a fundamental sense:

outside of the area over which the city police had authority to influence behaviour by

controlling access and punishing transgressions. And because those who actually

exerted control over West Hollywood elected to do so according to principles and

regulations that conflicted with those enforced by the city of Los Angeles, the status of

the border between the two territories — the border that defines the limits of Danny

Upshaw's jurisdiction — was prone to instability and conflict.

The events of *The Big Nowhere* are shaped by an actual 1949 grand jury

investigation into vice in the city of Los Angeles and corruption in the LAPD, and a

series of related criminal trials and press revelations — all of which did indeed prompt

instability and conflict between the city and the county authorities. Ellroy's characters

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Forest, 'West Hollywood as Symbol: The Significance of Place in the Construction of a Gay Identity',
Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 13.2 (1995), 133–57
<https://doi.org/10.1068/d130133> (p. 138).
[153] Moos, p. 352.
[154] Woods, *The Police in Los Angeles*, p. 208.

often refer to these events with the shorthand 'the Brenda Allen mess', or simply

'Brenda Allen'.[155] Danny Upshaw summarizes the novel's representation of the

controversy:

> A killer-hoodlum who longed to be a nightclub comic and got weepy over lost
> dogs and crippled kids brought a big-city police department to its knees with a
> wire recording: Vice cops taking bribes and chauffeuring prostitutes; the
> Hollywood Division nightwatch screwing Brenda Allen's whores on mattresses
> in the Hollywood Station felony tank. Mickey C. putting out his entire smear
> arsenal because the City high brass upped his loan shark and bookmaking
> kickbacks 10 percent. (p. 44)

'Mickey C' refers to Meyer 'Mickey' Cohen, ostensibly a businessman and colourful

Los Angeles personality of the 1940s and 1950s, who was reputed to be a senior

organized crime figure. 'Brenda Allen' ran a prostitution ring that was alleged to

survive due to her payoffs to LAPD vice squads. During the 1949 trial of Cohen

associate Harold Meltzer, his defence attorney announced that Cohen was being

extorted by members of the LAPD Administrative Vice squad, including Sergeant

Elmer Jackson, and moreover, that he had proof of this extortion. This proof, a wire

recording, would also 'tie Sergeant Jackson to the notorious Hollywood prostitute

Brenda Allen'.[156] These allegations, though deemed inadmissible during the trial, would

prompt a grand jury investigation that led to the indictment of senior LAPD figures, and

forced the retirement of Chief of Police Clemence Horrall.[157]

Different historical accounts emphasize certain aspects of this complex sequence

of events. Gerald Woods focuses on the implications for senior law-enforcement and

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[155] See p. 128, p. 135, for example.
[156] Buntin, p. 133.
[157] For recent historical discussions of this complex controversy, see Buntin, pp. 131–35; Woods, *The Police in Los Angeles*, pp. 210–12. For more contemporary accounts, see Jack Webb, *The Badge* (London: Arrow, 2006 [1958]), pp. 154–5; Gene Sherman, 'Thumbnail Review of Vice Scandal', *Los Angeles Times*, 30 June 1949, p. A4 <https://search.proquest.com/docview/165955205?accountid=14511> [accessed 5 May 2017], and Charles Stoker, *Thicker'n Thieves*, Kindle ebook (Los Angeles: Thoughtprint Press, 2011 [1951]). Stoker was a former Vice detective who testified in the 1949 grand jury hearings, and *Thicker'N Thieves*, his account of the events, was originally published in 1951 by a small local publisher.

political figures, including Chief Horrall and Mayor Fletcher Bowron. John Buntin

focuses on Mickey Cohen's involvement, and the implications for the career of future

LAPD Chief of Police William H. Parker. Jack Webb's account in *The Badge* (1958),

published less than a decade later after the controversy, focuses on Brenda Allen,

showing a salacious interest in the workings of her call girl agency, and is dismissive of

the implications events might have had for the credibility of the LAPD: 'though nothing

much was proved, the vice enforcers of Los Angeles were thoroughly smeared'.[158]

The Big Nowhere is set the year after the Meltzer trial and grand jury

investigation, and the novel is concerned with the consequences of the 1949

controversies rather than their mechanics. The consequences that Ellroy explores are

jurisdictional: bad blood between the LAPD and the LASD, resulting in an aggressive

lack of co-operation between the two departments. Ellroy's emphasis on City-County

conflict is distinctive — it is certainly not the focus of Webb's account, which Ellroy

drew upon in writing *The Big Nowhere*.[159] It is, rather, *The New Centurions* that can be

seen to have influenced Ellroy's treatment Los Angeles at mid-century: as in

Wambaugh's novel, Ellroy's police protagonists navigate the city with reference to its

jurisdictional topography. The LAPD patrol officers in *The New Centurions* both

orientate themselves in relation to and have their movements circumscribed by the

divisions to which they are assigned. Although they often resent these assignments for

what they imply about their institutional prestige, Wambaugh's protagonists

nevertheless respect jurisdictional boundaries and operate within them. In *The Big

Nowhere*, however, Danny Upshaw refuses to conform to the boundaries that restrict his

own movements. By situating an impetuous investigator within the political geography

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[158] Webb, p. 155.

[159] In his introduction to the 2006 reissue of *The Badge*, Ellroy notes that Webb's discussion of Mickey Cohen, Brenda Allen and the 1949 grand jury investigation 'ended up in my novel *The Big Nowhere*'. 'Introduction', in *The Badge*, pp. ix–xi, (p. x).

of Los Angeles in 1950, Ellroy creates the narrative potential for transgressions that relate the corruption of the LAPD to the malleability of incrimination.

'You are out of your bailiwick': Transgression and Disorientation in South Central

Throughout *The Big Nowhere* the conflict between the LAPD and the LASD structures the experiences of the city's inhabitants in general, and Danny Upshaw in particular. Its implications are encapsulated in the first chapter, with an example of bureaucratic conflict that manifests spatially. The LA City and County morgues operate out of the same building in Downtown Los Angeles. As a result of the Brenda Allen revelations, the two departments have been banned from co-operating, despite the obvious benefits such centralization might offer:

> A wooden partition separated the two operations: examination slabs, refrigerators and dissecting tables for bodies found within City confines, a different set of facilities for stiffs from the unincorporated area patrolled by the Sheriff's Department. Before Mickey Cohen sent the LAPD and Mayor's Office topsy-turvy with his Brenda Allen revelations […] there had been solid City/County cooperation […]. Now, with the County cops giving Cohen shelter on the Strip, there was nothing but interagency grief. (pp. 5–6)

An enthusiastic student of scientific policing methods, Upshaw has a good relationship with Dr. Norton Layman, a pathologist and Assistant Chief Medical Examiner for the City of Los Angeles, but he arrives at the morgue on New Year's Day with the corpse of an as-yet-unidentified murder victim knowing that 'his chance of getting his favorite City pathologist to do the autopsy was close to nil' (p. 6).

The Sheriff's Department is considered to be 'giving Cohen shelter on the Strip' (p. 6), the Strip being the part of Sunset Boulevard that falls within the boundaries of West Hollywood. Upshaw, based at the LASD West Hollywood sub-station, is therefore spatially situated at the centre of the conflict between the two departments. Despite the fact that he himself has no involvement in the sanctioning of Cohen's illegal activities,

the progress of his murder investigation is repeatedly impeded by the conflict between the LASD and the LAPD. Phoning to request information about local drug dealers from LAPD 77th Street Station whilst canvassing Central Avenue, Danny is rebuffed and left with no illusions as to why: 'The watch boss said, "How's Mickey these days?," added, "Submit request through official channels," and hung up' (p. 53). When subsequent murder victims are discovered within the LAPD's jurisdiction, Upshaw is not officially permitted to investigate them despite the clear links with his case, and the bad blood between the two departments initially prevents any cooperation between Upshaw and the LAPD investigating officer, Gene Niles.

The socio-political boundaries that divide and circumscribe the spaces of Los Angeles, then, frustrate rather than facilitate the investigation of a brutal crime. The rationalization of space implicit in such territorial strategies is undermined by municipal corruption, and the unknown killer enjoys a freedom of movement that is, for Upshaw, officially prohibited. Although Upshaw is introduced as a serious-minded detective, one who aspires to a rational, forensic approach and studies criminological textbooks on duty, Ellroy complicates this aspect of his personality with other qualities: recklessness, ambition, emotional instability. Though his commanding officer, Captain Dietrich, defends him as 'methodical, hard-working and ambitious' (p. 381), he also concedes with some understatement that Upshaw is 'a bit of a hothead' (p. 176) and repeatedly reprimands him for procedural transgressions. It is the combination of qualities that leads Upshaw to reject the constraints on his movement, and to pursue leads on the case even if they take him into LAPD territory without authorization (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7 — DANNY UPSHAW'S JURISDICTIONAL TRANSGRESSIONS (*THE BIG NOWHERE*)
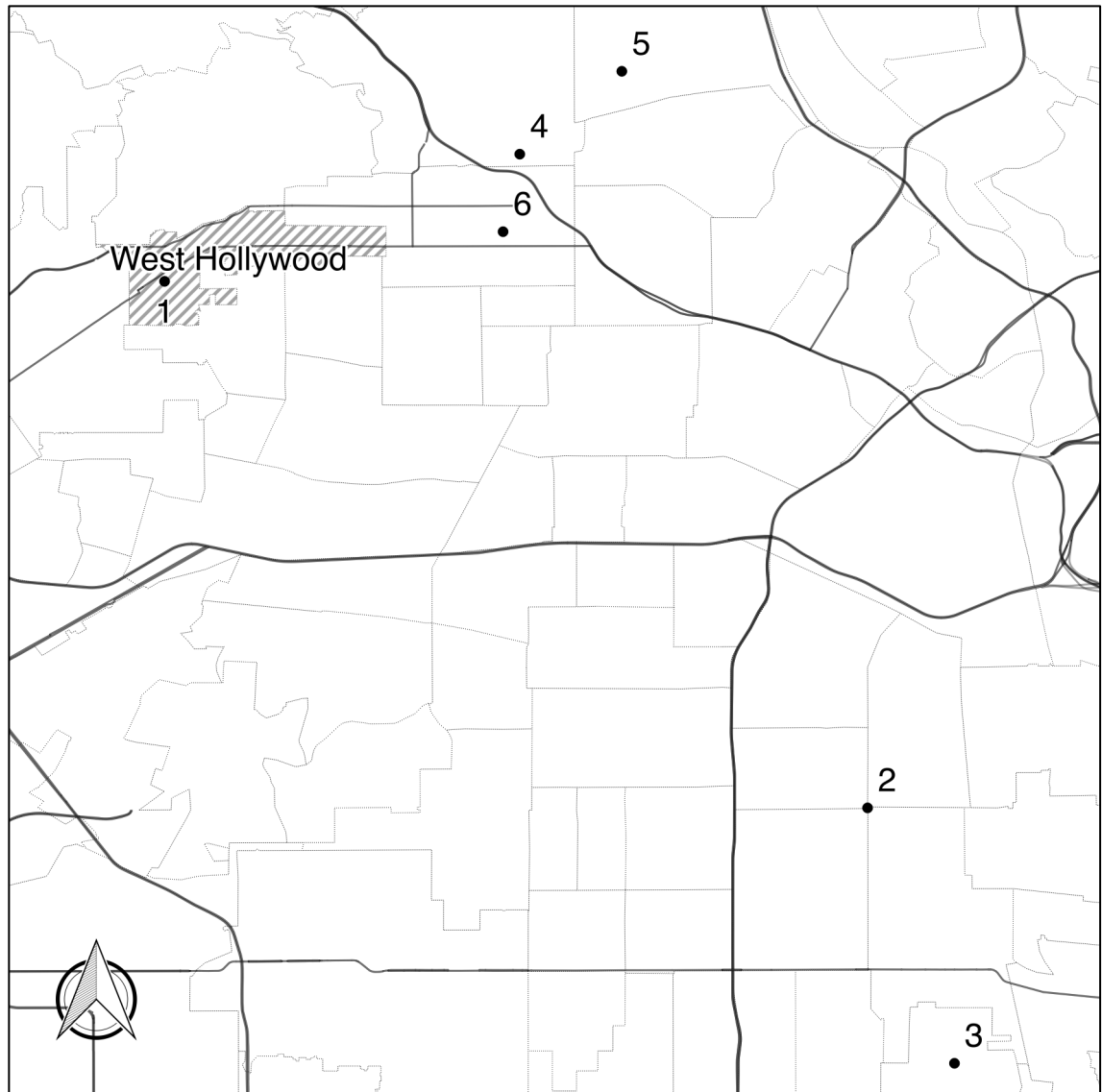
1. LASD West Hollywood Sub-Station
2. 'Jazzland' – Nightclub canvassing around Central and Slauson
3. Questioning of Otis Jackson, LAPD-sanctioned drug dealer
4. Tamarind Avenue, home of Mitchell Goines – unauthorized crime scene analysis
5. Discovery of murder victims in Griffith Park and confrontation with Gene Niles
6. Canvassing at Variety International Pictures on Gower Street

Shaded area indicates the boundaries of Upshaw's jurisdiction.

If he is willing to transgress the boundaries of LAPD jurisdiction, Upshaw is nevertheless unable to ignore the potential significance of those boundaries, and he orientates himself in relation to them. In the environmental image of Los Angeles he maintains, it is the borders between territories that are particularly vivid. The routes of his navigation through the city and the addresses he identifies as potential leads are frequently framed in terms of their relationship to LAPD and LASD jurisdiction. When Upshaw learns that the car used to transport the body of his victim had been reported stolen from South Central Los Angeles, he considers notifying the LAPD of his plans to canvas in their territory, but rejects the idea, reflecting that the conflict between the two departments means his request would likely be denied (p. 44). Later, he discovers that the murder victim had been living at 2307 North Tamarind Avenue, an address located within LAPD Hollywood Division jurisdiction. Electrified by this 'scalding hot lead', he is nevertheless forced to pursue it cautiously and discreetly, and this determines the speed with which he is able to approach the scene: 'Danny was trying hard to stay under the speed limit, hauling into Hollywood — City jurisdiction — with the speedometer needle straddling forty' (p. 133).

Upshaw orientates himself with reference to a jurisdictional topography, and yet is prepared to transgress the boundaries that circumscribe his movements. The moments when he does so, however, are not depicted as instances of maverick defiance, but as transgressions in which his physical safety and psychological stability are compromised. His experiences as he canvasses for witnesses around Central Avenue in South Los Angeles — LAPD 77th Street Division jurisdiction — reflect this. Upshaw perceives Central Avenue as hallucinatory and threatening: 'loony swank amidst squalor' (p. 44), along which buildings are painted in jarring colours, 'bright pink, more purple and puke green' (p. 45), and topped by inhuman effigies. The music performed inside the jazz

clubs is 'dissonant screeching' (p. 50) with rhythms and structures that Upshaw

struggles to follow, and the interiors are lit in unnatural shades or unnervingly dark:

> Walking in, he thought he was entering a hallucination. The walls were pastel satin bathed by colored baby spotlights that hued the fabric garish beyond garish; the bandstand backing was a re-creation of the Pyramids, done in sparkly cardboard. (p. 45)

Upshaw experiences the bright lights and up-tempo music of Central Avenue as a

sensory offensive that threatens him personally: 'pulsating neon assaulted his eyes.

Little bursts of music melded together like one big noise and the nigger sleepwalker

atop the Club Zombie looked like doomsday' (p. 50).

The disjunction between historic accounts of Central Avenue and the

characterization of 'jazzland' in chapter four of *The Big Nowhere* is dramatic. As

historian of South Los Angeles Steven Isoardi notes, Central Avenue was the social and

cultural hub of black Los Angeles throughout the 1930s and 1940s.

> By day it served the community's shopping and business needs. At night it became a social and cultural mecca, attracting thousands of people from throughout southern California to its eateries, theaters, nightclubs and music venues.[160]

First-hand accounts of those who lived and worked there, particularly jazz musicians

who performed there, describe the area as a near-idyllic centre of creativity and

integration in a city that was otherwise profoundly segregated. Saxophonist Art Pepper

describes the early 1940s around Central Avenue as 'a beautiful time […] a festive

time', in which 'everybody was happy', and where, as a white teenager, he never felt

threatened or unwelcome.[161] Buddy Collette, an African-American tenor saxophonist,

similarly recalls that 'there wasn't much trouble between black and white', although he

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[160] Steven Isoardi, 'Foreword', in *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles*, ed. by Clora Bryant and others (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. xv–xvi (p. xv–xvi).
[161] Art Pepper and Laurie Pepper, *Straight Life: The Story of Art Pepper* (Edinburgh: Mojo Books, 2000), pp. 41–2.

adds a significant caveat: 'I think the only trouble was that the cops, the law

enforcement people, didn't like seeing too much mingling, especially with a lot of the

white women who would come down.'[162]

Walter Mosley's treatment of the same milieu in his series of novels written

from the perspective of African-American private investigator Ezekiel 'Easy' Rawlins,

beginning with *The Devil in a Blue Dress* (1990), similarly diverges from the way it is

represented in *The Big Nowhere*. The Central Avenue of Mosley's novels is not an alien

landscape of exotic music and grotesque caricatures, but a neighbourhood in which

people live and work, and a vital centre for the city's black community that, as Charles

Scruggs notes, provides 'refuge from the seeming spatial disorder of postwar Los

Angeles'.[163] In a revealing contrast between Upshaw's attitude to black South Los

Angeles and that of Easy Rawlins, when Upshaw approaches Central Avenue he

observes 'Negro slums: ramshackle houses encircled by chicken wire, pool halls, liquor

stores and storefront churches on every street' (p. 44); Rawlins, driving down Central

Avenue, views the frequency of such churches as evidence of the neighbourhood's

vibrancy: 'That was before the general decline of the neighbourhood. The streets were

clean and the drunks were few. I counted fifteen churches between 110th Street and

Florence Boulevard.'[164]

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[162] *Central Avenue Sounds Oral History Transcript: Buddy Collette*, Volume I, Tape Number VI, Side One: September 28, 1989, UCLA Library Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/hb6g5010zj/?brand=oac4> [accessed 4 June 2017] (p. 337). The policing cross-racial interactions on Central Avenue was pursued particularly aggressively during the investigation into the murder of Elizabeth Short, the 'Black Dahlia', when assistant police chief Joseph Reed described African-American nightclubs as 'breeding places where crimes are planned and carried out. We are going to purify the city of Los Angeles. It is the women who frequent these places that are cast along the Black Dahlia lines and all too frequently end up in the same way.' (Quoted in Smith, *The Great Black Way*, p. 245)

[163] Charles Scruggs, 'Los Angeles and the African-American Literary Imagination', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of Los Angeles*, ed. by McNamara, pp. 75–86 (p. 77).

[164] Walter Mosley, *White Butterfly* (New York: Pocket Books, 1992), p. 7. For comparative discussions of Ellroy and Mosley's novels see Murphet, *Literature and Race in Los Angeles*, pp. 37–73 and William Freiburger, 'James Ellroy, Walter Mosley, and the Politics of the Los Angeles Crime Novel', *Clues: A Journal of Detection*, 17.2 (1996), 87–104.

Upshaw's perspective on Central Avenue in *The Big Nowhere* is much closer to the opening chapters of Chandler's *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940), in which African Americans, despite being the victims of a white ex-convict's aggression, are derisively represented as sub-human.[165] As Megan Abbott notes, that novel's 'racist, dehumanizing' treatment of these unnamed black characters is encapsulated in the description of the 'brown youth' thrown onto the sidewalk who is 'referred to, seven times in a single paragraph, as "it"'.[166] The language used to represent Upshaw's experience of Central Avenue is undeniably consistent with a consciousness steeped in the prejudices of white, mid-century Los Angeles that perceives African-American culture as threateningly *other*. For Jon Clay, Ellroy's depiction of such 'majoritarian' perspectives can be read in Deleuzian terms as inherently subversive. Ellroy undermines the casual racism, misogyny and homophobia of his protagonists, Clay suggests, by 'infecting' his protagonists' majoritarian language with the slang terms of oppressed ethnic groups.[167] Tim Ryan is similarly prepared to ascribe a certain subversive quality to Ellroy's treatment of race, accepting him on his own terms as a writer seeking to 'graphically [depict] the oppression and violence that undergird white masculine power'.[168] Ryan's rather more measured and critical reading, however, also notes that 'by asking the reader to become involved with the oppressors, their prejudices, their savagery, and their crises, and by largely reducing the oppressed to the status of passive ciphers', Ellroy risks reinforcing the white male power he is to some extent

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[165] 'Farewell, My Lovely', pp. 167–75.

[166] Megan Abbott*, The Street Was Mine: White Masculinity in Hardboiled Fiction and Film Noir* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 108.

[167] Clay's conclusion, that Ellroy's novels suggest 'the ultimate potential of the minoritarian […] to resist domination and oppression' (p. 100), depends to a large extent on our accepting a Deleuzian theoretical framework.

[168] Tim Ryan, '"One Shiny Bleach Job": The Power of Whiteness in James Ellroy's American Tabloid', *The Journal of American Culture*, 27.3 (2004), 271–79 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1537-4726.2004.00135.x> (p. 277).

deconstructing.[169] Ryan's reading, which focuses on the later *American Tabloid*, can

certainly be fruitfully read in relation to *The Big Nowhere* and the rest of the LA

Quartet. Neither Ryan's approach nor Clay's reading sufficiently accounts, however, for

the specific qualities of Danny Upshaw's attitude towards South Los Angeles.

Upshaw's experience of the racialized geography of 1950s Los Angeles is

complicated by his own position in relation to the city's jurisdictional topography.

When the manager of one of the jazz clubs recognizes that he is a police detective,

Upshaw is initially treated with superficial cordiality. It is only when he identifies

himself as a Sheriff's Deputy, rather than an officer from the LAPD 77th Street

Division, that the manager's initial cooperativeness dissolves:

> A fat mulatto in a double-breasted suit walked over to the bar, wearing a suck-up-to-authority smile. He said, 'Thought I knew all the boys on the Squad.'
> Danny said, 'I'm with the Sheriff's.'
> The mulatto's smile evaporated. 'I usually deal with the Seven-Seven, Mr. Sheriff.'
> 'This is County business.'
> 'This ain't County territory.' (p. 46)

When pressed further, the irritated manager returns to this point: 'Man, you are out of

your bailiwick and way out of line' (p. 48). At the climax of the chapter, Upshaw

attempts to question a drug dealer who operates with the sanction of the LAPD.

Perceiving Upshaw's lack of authority and confident of his own allegiance, the dealer

responds defiantly: 'The fucking Sheriff's ain't fucking shit around here' (p. 59). The

implicit divisions of power and territory are made explicit in their aggressive exchange:

> 'I'm with Jack D. and the Seven-Seven, mother –'
> Danny held his gun at eye level. 'I'm with Mickey and the County, so what? I asked you a question.' (p. 59)

Even the established racial power structures in which he is deeply implicated as a white

law-enforcement officer are complicated by his territorial transgression. When LAPD

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[169] Ryan, p. 279.

officers from 77th Street arrive to break up the confrontation, they too are scornful of Upshaw's presence, and express the brutal contradictions of the situation: 'Get the fuck back to the County and beat up your own niggers' (p. 66). In stepping out of his own territory, Upshaw is confronted with one aspect of his own *otherness*: that he represents the County rather than the City.

Upshaw strives to maintain a rational, forensic investigative approach. In South Los Angeles, operating within a spatial context in which his very presence is transgressive and his authority more tenuous, this identity is increasingly shown to be unstable, and at least in part an attempt to repress his own drives. This is signalled during his interrogation of a witness who introduces himself as 'Coleman Healy', and will later be revealed as the killer Upshaw is pursuing. Healy suggests that Marty Goines, the murder victim, was homosexual, and Upshaw's response reveals his difficulty in maintaining his objective principles: 'Danny tingled, thinking of the tags he eschewed because they were too coarse and antithetical to Vollmer and Maslick: PANSY SLASH. QUEEN BASH. FRUIT SNUFF. HOMO PASSION JOB' (p. 52). Upshaw's instability becomes more apparent over the course of his canvassing in South Central. He increasingly experiences moments of disorientation in which past memories and recent images intrude on his consciousness. One of these memories is his teenage friendship with 'Tim', which is gradually revealed to have homoerotic undertones; as he reflects on the case, he finds himself thinking of him and Tim 'Down to their skivvies, horseplay, jokes about substitutes for girls' (p. 56). Tellingly, Upshaw responds to this thought by attempting to '[kill] the memories with police work — eyeball prowls for Health and Safety Code violations, liquor infractions, *wrongness*' (p. 56). During his fraught attempt to interrogate the drug dealer at the climax of the chapter, more recent

images intrude on his consciousness: 'The jazz noise was coming back, soundtracking

images: Coleman Healy fondling his sax, the reefer guy about to beg' (p. 59).

The narrative significance of these moments of temporal disorientation become

gradually clearer over the course of the novel: they are memories of past relationships

that he is attempting to repress, and aspects of his identity that he is seeking to deny.

Upshaw is particularly vulnerable to having his own identity 'fixed', as a mid-century

American male in violent denial about his own sexuality.[170] Ellroy intertwines this

aspect of Upshaw's personality with other internal conflicts and transgressions —

Upshaw's attempt to maintain a stable identity founded in forensic rationality falter

within the context of a move outside of his official jurisdiction, during which the

authority he would otherwise hold as a white male law-enforcement officer is

undermined. The underlying narrative irony resulting from the situation Ellroy

constructs is that Upshaw's vulnerability and disorientation in South LA amounts to an

inversion of the experiences of black citizens in mid-century Los Angeles. The

jurisdictional topography of the city establishes spaces where Upshaw's presence is

prohibited, and like Bob Jones in *If He Hollers*, Upshaw wilfully transgresses those

boundaries.[171] Such transgressions introduce the possibility of incrimination, whilst the

disorientation Upshaw experiences foreshadows the vulnerability he will increasingly

be subject to in subsequent movements outside his jurisdiction.

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[170] For a discussion of Upshaw's sexuality and suicide in relation to Ellroy's treatment of 'the semiotics of sexual typology', see Joshua Meyer, 'Haunted Subjects: Fragments of the "Sexual Mosaic" in James Ellroy's Los Angeles', *Philament*, 13 (2008), 57–79 (pp. 58–64).

[171] This reading builds upon Julian Murphet's suggestion, in the context of his discussion of *If He Hollers Let Him Go*, that 'the whole white structure of feeling (dread, anxiety, placelessness, flight) generated by the *noir* film cycle can be seen as an expropriation of what is in fact the precise matrix of affects on which black subjectivity in the period was actually built' (*Literature and Race in Los Angeles*, p. 60).

'A Vollmer maxim': Criminalistics and Incrimination

The Big Nowhere is not a straightforward police procedural in which the focus of the plot is a single criminal investigation. Several sub-plots interrelate across its multiple perspectives, and indeed, one of the 'investigations' at stake — into alleged Communist influence in Hollywood — is explicitly framed as cynically motivated and politically expedient: 'Do well at the job and within five years you'll be fending off police chief offers with a stick. And *I'll* be District Attorney' (p. 16). It is, nevertheless, a novel concerned with detectives rather than the patrol officers of *The New Centurions*. As a result, incrimination is central to many sections of the narrative, particularly as it pertains to Danny Upshaw. Throughout his investigation into the murder of Marty Goines, Upshaw avails himself of the full breadth of resources available to a criminal investigator in 1950. The abandoned car in which Goines's body had been transported is dusted for fingerprints by a specialist, whilst the site at which Goines's corpse is found is similarly analysed by crime-lab technicians. Goines is identified with reference to local arrest reports, which provide Upshaw with mugshots he makes use of in canvassing. In beginning to reconstruct the movements of the killer, he is able to request log entries from local taxi cab firms. For all the novel's procedural realism, it is most striking in its complex treatment of incrimination — not merely as a process underlying Upshaw's investigation, but as a dynamic in which his own vulnerability is at stake.

Ellroy emphasizes that Upshaw is exceptional in the extent to which he aspires to a rational approach grounded in criminological theory and police science. He is introduced, in the first chapter, with his feet on a desk at the West Hollywood Sub-Station, immersed in 'his criminology textbooks: Vollmer, Thorwald, Maslick' and reading about 'grid-searching crime scenes, blood spatter marks explained, how to toss an 18-foot-by-24-foot room for hard evidence in an hour flat' (p. 2). 'Vollmer' and

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'Hans Maslick' are both referred to several more times, with Upshaw quoting them

directly, alluding to their principles or fantasizing about gaining their approval.[172]

Arguing that his investigation into Marty Goines' murder should be taken seriously by

the Sheriff's Department, he '[shoots] his CO a Vollmer maxim. "Uniform codes of

investigation are the moral foundation of criminology"' (p. 85). Reacting to the

evidence of a particularly grotesque murder by vomiting, he pulls himself together by

reminding himself that he must not forensically taint a crime scene 'that Vollmer or

Maslick would have killed for' (p. 133). At a particularly triumphant and hubristic

moment he leaves an interrogation 'thinking he'd finally made detective in the eyes of

Maslick and Vollmer' (p. 364). The three criminologists are explicitly framed as

paternal figures for Upshaw, who '[pictures] himself as Maslick's assistant, working

side by side with the great criminologist, who would give him a fatherly embrace every

time he made a brilliant logical jump' (p. 2).

Ellroy appears to have invented 'Hans Maslick'; certainly there are no notable

works of criminology attributed to anyone of that name. According to the limited

information provided in the novel, Maslick was an author of several works on

criminalistics who also developed some of his techniques 'while undergoing analysis

with Sigmund Freud' (p. 94). He may to some extent be an amalgamation of the

Austrian magistrate and criminologist Hans Gross (1847–1915) and his son, maverick

Freudian psychoanalyst Otto Gross (1877–1920). Hans Gross was the author of

Handbuch für Untersuchungsrichter als System der Kriminalistik (*Handbook for

Examining Magistrates as a System of Criminalistics*, 1891), a man described by

Thorwald as 'a pioneer of criminology who was destined to acquire extraordinary

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[172] 'Thorwald', mentioned only once, is potentially an allusion to Jürgen Thorwald (1915–2006), a German writer of medical, military and criminological history. If so, however, the reference is anachronistic, as Thorwald's *Das Jahrhundert der Detektive* was not published in German until 1964, and was translated into English as *The Marks of Cain* (1965) and *Proof of Poison* (1969).

influence'.[173] If Hans Gross embodied late nineteenth-century juridical rationalism and authority, his son was his opposite: a proponent of free love and female emancipation who was an avowed anarchist and supplied cocaine to his psychiatric patients.[174]

Given the limited information Ellroy provides about 'Hans Maslick', any allusion to Hans and Otto Gross is admittedly speculative; the correspondence between the novel's themes and the relationship between the Grosses is, nevertheless, striking. Perverse and corrupt paternal relationships are central to the plot of *The Big Nowhere*. The killer hunted by Upshaw, Coleman Masskie, is eventually revealed to be the estranged illegitimate son of Reynolds Loftis, a Hollywood actor. Reintroduced to his adult son, Loftis had begun an incestuous relationship with Coleman that involved having him undergo plastic surgery to more closely resemble his father. The murders perpetrated by Coleman are staged specifically to implicate Loftis in revenge for this abuse. Although there is no suggestion of such perversity and exploitation in Hans Gross's relationship with Otto, the two did endure an intensely oppositional relationship. In 1913 Hans, appalled by Otto's controversial behavior, had him abducted from Berlin and transported back to Austria to be committed to a psychiatric institution.[175] During his examination there, Otto stated: 'My experience as a psychoanalyst suggest to me that the existing family model is all wrong. [...] My parents' sexuality disgusted me awfully. [...] My only thought was not to become like them [...]. My whole life was focused on overthrowing authorities, for example that of the fathers'.[176] One of Otto's published writings in collaboration with Carl Jung,

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[173] *Marks of Cain*, p. 75. See also Roland Grassberger, 'Pioneers in Criminology. XIII. Hans Gross (1847–1915)', *The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science*, 47.4 (1956), 397–405 <https://doi.org/10.2307/1140418>.
[174] Gerhard M. Dienes, 'Gross v. Gross', in *Sexual Revolutions: Psychoanalysis, History and the Father*, ed. by Gottfried Heuer (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 77–88 (p. 79).
[175] Dienes, p. 80.
[176] Quoted in Dienes, p. 82.

meanwhile, had a title that could serve as an appropriate subtitle for *The Big Nowhere*:

'The Significance of the Father in the Fate of the Individual'.[177]

Although he is never precisely identified as such, the 'Vollmer' whose works

Danny Upshaw reads can with more confidence be treated as a reference to the first

'scientific policeman' and LAPD Chief August Vollmer. As noted above, Ellroy drew

on Jack Webb's *The Badge*, the 1958 exposé of Los Angeles crime that is also an

institutional hagiography of the LAPD, for the historical background to *The Big

Nowhere*. Ellroy has acknowledged the broad extent of Webb's influence on his own

worldview and writing:

> Books rarely shape a writer's curiosity *whole*. Books rarely give him a sustained
> subject matter and a time and a place to re-create anew. I'm anomalous that way.
> I got lucky at the get-go. It was one-stop imaginative shopping. I found all my
> stuff in one book.[178]

In the context of his discussion of the LAPD's Scientific Investigation Division, 'the

finest police laboratory in the nation', Webb notes the influence of 'the great August

Vollmer', 'the giant from Berkeley' who hired the department's first research chemist

during his year as Chief of Police.[179] Julian Murphet suggests that Chief William H.

Parker is the 'quintessential instance' of the 'absent or failed father figure' in Ellroy's

fiction.[180] In *The Big Nowhere*, however, it is another LAPD Chief, August Vollmer,

who is positioned in such a role.

The subtle allusion to August Vollmer underlies Ellroy's treatment of the

malleability of incrimination. Just as Upshaw's attempt to psychologically ground his

identity in the rational objectivity of the criminologist is prone to disruption, the

[177] Martin Green, *Otto Gross: Freudian Psychoanalyst, 1877–1920* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), p. 87.
[178] Ellroy, 'Introduction', p. ix. Cases and events discussed in *The Badge* that Ellroy has incorporated into his novels include the 'Bloody Christmas' police brutality scandal, which is depicted in *L.A. Confidential*, and the unsolved murder of Elizabeth Short, the Black Dahlia.
[179] p. 111. This section proceeds (pp. 113–4) to celebrate the successes of Ray Pinker, the forensic specialist hired by the department in 1929 who appears repeatedly in *L.A. Confidential* and *White Jazz*.
[180] *Literature and Race in Los Angeles*, p. 45.

presumed objectivity of the LAPD's 'scientific policing' is vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. A dynamic is established in which Upshaw, preoccupied with rationalizing time, space and identity in his investigation, is also increasingly subject to incrimination. This dynamic is made clear during Upshaw's second significant spatial transgression: his unauthorized investigation of what proves to be the scene of a brutal murder at Tamarind Avenue, 'LAPD turf — Hollywood Division, where the Brenda Allen mess was the worst' (p. 135).

Breaking into the apartment, he encounters 'a one-room dive turned slaughterhouse' (p. 134). There are no bodies inside, but the walls and floors are saturated with what will prove to be the blood of Marty Goines and two other soon-to-be-discovered victims. This discovery presents the opportunity for Upshaw to apply the forensic techniques he has absorbed from his criminology textbooks. It is also, however, a macabre reinscription of the trope discussed in Chapter Two above: just as Philip Marlowe frequently encounters murder scenes, and is forced to obscure his presence there or risk incrimination, Upshaw investigates the scene knowing he will be reprimanded if he leaves traces of his own presence. And just as Marlowe wipes doorknobs with his handkerchief to avoid leaving incriminating fingerprints that will signal his presence at the scene, so Upshaw '[jams] his hands in his pockets so as not to leave prints' (p. 134) as he explores the Tamarind Avenue apartment.

The spatial and jurisdictional transgressions that Upshaw commits make his movements increasingly suspect in the eyes of other characters, and he is repeatedly compelled to construct alibis to account for those movements. His presence at 2307 Tamarind Avenue allows him to respond quickly when the LAPD dispatcher announces the discovery of another murder scene nearby in Griffith Park, but he is forced to dissemble regarding the promptness of his arrival at the scene. The LAPD patrol

officers present when Upshaw arrives at the scene show little interest in the situation, and are not inclined to question his explanation: 'West Hollywood Substation was a half hour away, but the dummies didn't blink at the time glitch' (p. 143). LAPD Detective Gene Niles, who arrives at the scene shortly after Upshaw, is more rigorous: 'How'd you get up here twenty-two minutes after we logged the squeal at the station?' (p. 145). Niles asserts territorial control over the scene, and challenges Upshaw's presence there: 'You a little bit confused about your jurisdiction, Deputy?' (p. 145). Upshaw later investigates Variety International Pictures, a fictional movie studio located on Gower Street, once again within LAPD Hollywood Division jurisdiction. When he attempts to question staff members on the lot, he is quickly noticed by studio boss Herman Gerstein, and escorted off the site. The alibi Upshaw has to construct in relation to this transgression is more complex, and it ultimately proves more decisive in determining his fate. When he is approached to join the Hollywood grand jury investigation, and assigned to operate undercover as 'Ted Krugman' to infiltrate the UAES, he knows that his canvassing at Variety International risks undermining his cover and jeopardizing the assignment. Upshaw uses his talent for dissembling to confidently reassure the other grand jury investigators on precisely this point, convincing them that he will not be recognized if he returns there, and it appears that he has successfully evaded the consequences of his transgression.

We learn later, however, that he was seen by three members of the UAES during his initial investigation, and they relay this information back to the rest of the organization. An unforeseen consequence of his jurisdictional breach undermines his undercover work from the very start. More than this, the attempts by the UAES to manipulate Upshaw, including goading his about his repressed sexuality, lead directly into the situation from which the only escape he can identify is suicide. That Danny

Upshaw is seen, in that location on that day, fundamentally compromises his later

assumption of the identity of Ted Krugman, no matter how effective an actor he proves

to be. In other words, it is the consequences of a past action, even if only a very recent

one, that he cannot overcome, and an incriminatory fixing of his identity. When Danny

realizes all of this, he responds as if it is an existential threat: 'WHICH MEANT THAT

THEY KNEW WHO HE WAS' (p. 347, emphasis in original).

As Upshaw's position becomes progressively more precarious, he is

increasingly disorientated. Throughout the novel he utilizes a technique supposedly

developed by Hans Maslick, which crystallizes Upshaw's drive to maintain an objective

perspective on his investigation:

> It was called Man Camera, and involved screening details from the perpetrator's
> viewpoint. Actual camera angles and tricks were employed; the investigator's
> eyes became a lens capable of zooming in and out, freezing close-ups, selecting
> background motifs to interpret crime-scene evidence in an aesthetic light.
> (p. 94)

As Jonathan Walker observes, the objectification that this altered perspective entails is

closely related to Upshaw's repression of his sexual identity: 'an attempt to keep his

homosexuality (which he cannot admit to himself) separate and under control'.[181] When

the effectiveness of this technique falters he experiences 'Man Camera malfunctions'

(p. 168) in which his objective perspective is interrupted by other images: repressed

memories and fantasies in which the identities of other protagonists become fluid.

Initially occurring when he is operating outside his jurisdiction, as Upshaw's

investigation develops and his vulnerability to incrimination increases these

'malfunctions' begin to occur even when he is inside his sanctioned territory around the

Sunset Strip: 'Then, hitting the Strip, he got terrified like the half second at the beach

house — this time around Man Camera short takes' (p. 289). Eventually even his own

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[181] Jonathan Walker, 'James Ellroy as Historical Novelist', *History Workshop Journal*, 2002, 181–204
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4289779> [accessed 5 June 2017] (p. 191).

home begin to take on the hallucinatory unreality he first perceived on Central Avenue: 'Danny opened the door and blinked at unexpected light in his living room; he saw the bottle on the coffee table and thought he was entering a hallucination' (p. 289).

The incrimination from which Upshaw ultimately finds no escape is the threatened fixing of his sexual identity engineered by a corrupt superior officer, LAPD Lieutenant Dudley Smith. Danny appears to have bluffed his way out of the transgression he makes by searching 2307 Tamarind, strengthened by the extra political 'juice' he gains by being invited onto the grand jury investigation. But instead, two strands of incrimination come together. Upshaw's previous encounters with Gene Niles implicate him in Niles's murder, even though he is actually innocent of it, which provides the official, institutional justification for Danny to be questioned with a lie detector under sodium pentothal. This accusation is shrewdly manipulated by Dudley Smith, whose past crimes are at risk of being revealed, and who promises to expose Upshaw's conflicted sexuality. The 'machines that know, drugs that won't let you lie' (p. 372) threaten to force Upshaw into self-incrimination concerning what he is most desperate to conceal; finding himself trapped, he is unable to see a way out other than suicide.

There is a deeply embedded narrative irony in the circumstances surrounding Upshaw's suicide. August Vollmer, one of Upshaw's three criminologist father-figures, was instrumental in encouraging the widespread adoption of the lie detector test within the LAPD.[182] In a novel in which dysfunctional paternal relationships are so prevalent, and in which sons frequently suffer the consequences of their father's actions, the ultimate guarantee of Upshaw's vulnerability is a technology first introduced to the

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[182] Having been the first police chief to make use of the lie detector whilst in charge of the Berkeley police department, Vollmer instituted its use in the LAPD during his brief tenure as chief. See Woods, *The Police in Los Angeles,* p. 76. In Vollmer's criminological writing, he repeatedly expresses enthusiasm for the polygraph — chapter six of *Crime, Crooks and Cops* (1937, with Alfred E. Parker) is titled 'You Can't Fool the Lie Detector'.

LAPD by one of the paternal surrogates who inspired his rational, forensic approach to investigation.

Law-enforcement officers are by definition agents of territoriality: they enforce the boundaries that structure the experiences of citizens of the city, asserting control over space and seeking to establish incrimination. In *The New Centurions*, Wambaugh depicts police officers who orientate themselves with reference to a jurisdictional topography, and as they navigate the city they are exposed to violence. The vulnerability of the police in Wambaugh, however, is in the service of a representation of the police as exceptional and separate — as more vulnerable than the citizens they police.[183] If this is consistent with a realist perspective grounded in the experiences of those who police the city, it is also a position prone to reinforcing a reactionary political agenda.[184]

This is consistent with the trajectory of Wambaugh's own career after leaving the LAPD prior to the publication of *The Choirboys*. Despite that novel's satirical edge, his later works novels gradually became less critical and ambiguous: 'more straightforward mystery stories than psychological examinations of policing'.[185] In recent years, Wambaugh has assumed the role of advocate for the department, particularly on behalf of rank-and-file field officers. When the department was beset by corruption scandals at the turn of the millennium, he criticized the media for

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[183] This emphasis on the vulnerability of police officers is a common trope in police fictions. It is Roy Morgan's shooting of an off-duty patrol officer that sparks the manhunt in *He Walked By Night*, for example. *End of Watch* (dir. by David Ayer, 2012) provides a more recent example, in which a modern variation on the pseudo-documentary format of *He Walked By Night* is used to depict the experiences of two LAPD patrol officers, one of whom is eventually killed in the line of duty.

[184] In recent US history, this dynamic can been recognized in the 'Blue Lives Matter' movement, founded in 2014 as a direct counter to the 'Black Lives Matter' movement protesting against police brutality.

[185] Hoffman, p. 286.

erroneously portraying the LAPD as 'awash in corruption and out of control'.[186] He

returned to fiction in 2006 after a ten-year break specifically to explore 'what the LAPD

is enduring today regarding the civil rights federal consent decree and micro

management by the government and everybody else'; concluding 'I suspect that when

the gangsters and other crooks no longer fear or even respect the cops, street crime will

rise and keep rising'.[187]

The jurisdictional orientation through which Wambaugh's protagonists navigate

the city is reiterated in *The Big Nowhere*. Ellroy, however, deploys it in a more

sophisticated and potentially critical manner. Writing Danny Upshaw as an LASD

officer in the midst of the Brenda Allen scandal, Ellroy creates a character whose

vulnerability is rooted not in his exceptional status as a policeman, but in the contested

borders of the city — borders that are so contested because of municipal and law-

enforcement corruption. Ellroy has repeatedly and provocatively dismissed the

significance of Raymond Chandler's fiction, describing him as 'egregiously

overrated'.[188] In *The Big Nowhere*, however — a title that alludes, of course, to

Chandler's *The Big Sleep* — the situation he places his protagonist in has a striking

underlying similarity to the liminal status of Chandler's private eye. If Marlowe and

Upshaw are both, within the confines of their roles, empowered to establish

incrimination, in the moments of disorientation they experience they are also shown to

be vulnerable to the very dynamic that they enforce.

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[186] Joseph Wambaugh, 'L.A. Cops Get a Bum Rap', Wall Street Journal, 1 March 2000, p. A26, ProQuest <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/docview/398738633> [accessed 5 May 2017].
[187] Quoted in Patrick Millikin, 'Political Correctness and the LAPD', Publishers Weekly, 253.40 (2006), 35 <http://search.ebscohost.com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=bth&AN=22812124&site=ehost-live&scope=site> [accessed 5 May 2017].
[188] Quoted in Deborah Solomon, 'The Mother Load', *The New York Times Magazine*, 5 November 2006 <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/05/magazine/05wwln_q4.html> [accessed 26 July 2017]. See also Rich, 'James Ellroy, The Art of Fiction No. 201'.

Conclusion: Getting Lost

> Distances were deceptive and maps untrustworthy. My parents were constantly getting lost and were frightened of asking the police or fireman for assistance, those same authorities White teachers said were friendly and there to protect and serve us. […] Nothing was what it seemed. We were free citizens, yet there were places in the city that we could not visit after sundown.
> Wanda Coleman, 'Jabberwocky Baby' (2005)[1]

When Kevin Lynch concluded *The Image of the City* with an optimistic vision of urban disorientation giving way to 'delight in the richness and power of the scene', his hope was for the development of a more enlightened form of urban planning grounded in the experiences of city-dwellers — 'a highly developed art of urban design'.[2] Dolores Hayden and Fredric Jameson, amongst others, have since demonstrated that Lynch's theorization of urban experience has the potential to be usefully employed beyond the terms of his original investigation, provided that such research is grounded in an acknowledgement of the limits of Lynch's original work. 'Political divisions of territory split the urban world into many enclaves experienced from many different perspectives', as Hayden notes, and without a recognition of the different conditions experienced by these 'enclaves' of class, ethnicity and gender, any consideration of the environmental image held by urban subjects will be incomplete.[3] As Watts-born poet Wanda Coleman's memories of her childhood in 1950s Los Angeles make clear, disorientation is implicated with social, political and economic relations, and navigating the city entails negotiating territorial boundaries that are often ambiguous. Moments of disorientation can, as Lynch implied, have revelatory potential — my analysis of certain diverse literary and cinematic texts in this thesis demonstrates the potential for historically and geographically grounded readings of disorientating experiences to offer

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[1] Wanda Coleman, *The Riot Inside Me: More Trials & Tremors* (Boston: Black Sparrow, 2005), p. 8.
[2] *The Image of the City*, pp. 119-20.
[3] *The Power of Place*, p. 27.

a starting point for a critical consideration of spatial conditions that are otherwise elided in everyday experience.

From Chandler and Himes in the 1940s to Ellroy at the end of the century, these works represent the experiences of individual citizens of Los Angeles for whom mobility is necessary, but also a source of vulnerability. All of these texts can be profitably examined in relation to developments in criminalistics and other policing practices in the United States from the early twentieth century onwards discussed in Chapter One. 'Scientific policing' developed as a response to urbanization, seeking to rationalize time, space and identity in response to the anonymity and mobility the modern city afforded to individuals. Concerns about this mobility — particularly the opportunity it presented criminals to easily transgress municipal and jurisdictional borders — are apparent in the criminological writings of the interwar period. This is demonstrated most clearly in the work of one of the most influential figures in US law enforcement, August Vollmer, who repeatedly expressed disquiet over the shrewd, mobile modern lawbreaker who 'respects no boundary lines'.[4] As Vollmer's tenure as Chief of Police demonstrated, the horizontally dispersed, heavily auto-mobilized urban space of Los Angeles provided both an imperative for and challenge to the implementation of new law-enforcement methods. The policing tactics instituted in the city during and following Vollmer's administration reflected a broader emphasis, in contemporary law-enforcement theory and practice, on incrimination — the implementation of technology and systems of knowledge to fix the identities and reconstruct or arrest the movements of individuals, to the end of charging them with a specific transgression.

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[4] *The Police and Modern Society*, p. 4.

In the 1940s, films such as *He Walked By Night* served to normalize this expansion of police powers. Not only did they emphasize the mobility and technological expertise of criminals in a manner consistent with Vollmer's characterization of the modern lawbreaker; they also constructed an image of incrimination, supported by police science, as a rational, objective and accurate process. Other Hollywood narratives from the same period, however, depicted the anxiety experienced by citizens subject to those same powers. *Whirlpool*, *The Blue Gardenia* and *In a Lonely Place* each centre on the threat of wrongful incrimination, and although all conclude with an acknowledgement of their central protagonists' innocence, the image that endures is the precariousness of their situation, and the ease with which incrimination can err or be manipulated. All three films emphasize both the disorientating effect of these conditions, and the fact that these states of disorientation further undermine the protagonists' ability to defend themselves.

As the second part of Chapter One demonstrates, this relationship between incrimination and disorientation can be framed more precisely through a consideration of the conceptual and psychiatric history of the latter term. When disorientation began to be pathologized at the turn of the twentieth century, it was also reconceptualized to encompass disruptions to chronology and personal identity as well as spatial confusion. Individual orientation, then — involving a subjective rationalization of time, space and identity — occurs within the context of a super-individual tendency to maintain order through an equivalent process of rationalization: a process that is ostensibly disinterested and objective, but is in fact susceptible to error and misuse. Disorientation, understood as a moment of subjective spatio-temporal disruption that undermines the capacity for movement, action and the construction of a coherent narrative, can signal the moments when these individual and super-individual rationalizations come into

conflict. Disorientated individuals under the threat of incrimination struggle to provide an alibi accounting for their movements; unjust applications of the process of incrimination and spatial politics structurally discriminatory towards certain groups can prompt or exacerbate states of disorientation, leaving such individuals even more vulnerable.

Philip Marlowe is a private eye whose investigations rely upon establishing incrimination using the technological means available to him — the automobile in particular — and Chandler's narratives engage with both the geography of 1940s Los Angeles and contemporary anxieties concerning suspect mobility. As Chapter Two demonstrates, however, Chandler's treatment of these issues is more sophisticated than is generally recognized. Marlowe's emblematic ability to navigate the city by car, orientating himself by discerning the socio-economic character of different neighbourhoods, is complicated by his potentially precarious status. As a private eye, he repeatedly finds himself under suspicion due to the frequency with which he encounters crime scenes, thereby transgressing territorial boundaries and finding himself at risk of incrimination. Not only is Marlowe's awareness of this liminal position repeatedly signalled in the texts, it is also closely associated with moments of disorientation that heighten his vulnerability. Despite his precise cognitive map of Los Angeles, the disorientation Marlowe experiences emphasizes the difficulty of maintaining a satisfactory alibi against the ever-present threat of incrimination. *The High Window* subtly modifies some of the major tropes of Chandler's fiction, such as the quest for the missing person, and in so doing, it demonstrates these conditions all the more clearly.

In that novel, Marlowe's chess playing serves both as an analogy for the rigid, highly differentiated environmental image that allows him to navigate Los Angeles, and to intimate that his retrospective method restricts his influence over events. The later

The Long Goodbye depicts Marlowe at his most passive and ineffectual; he is, as one contemporary review put it, 'less a detective than a disturbed man of 42 on a quest for some evidence of truth and humanity'.[5] *The Long Goodbye* is also the only Chandler novel in which Marlowe's chess playing is as prominent as it is in *The High Window*.[6] In one of Chandler's most vivid passages, Marlowe's ambivalence towards the game he plays is voiced unambiguously:

> She hung up and I set out the chess board. I filled a pipe, paraded the chessmen, and inspected them for French shaves and loose buttons, and played a championship tournament game between Gortchakoff and Meninkin, seventy-two moves to a draw, a prize specimen of the irresistible force meeting the immovable object, a battle without armour, a war without blood, and as elaborate a waste of human intelligence as you could find anywhere outside an advertising agency. (pp. 511–12)[7]

What is bleakly intimated in *The High Window*, and given full voice in *The Long Goodbye*, is that Marlowe's fluid navigation of Los Angeles may be little more than a contrived and ultimately futile ritual — movements in a game that Marlowe might be able to understand, in part, but can never influence. This maudlin conclusion is affecting on its own terms, but it needs to be qualified by the recognition that white masculinity is unquestionably the central perspective throughout Chandler's fiction. It is in these terms that the weariness and disaffection voiced at the conclusion of *The High Window* should ultimately be read, and placing it alongside Bob Jones's experience of the same milieu in *If He Hollers Let Him Go* emphasizes that Marlowe's *ennui* is a privilege of his status as a white man in 1940s Los Angeles. The vulnerability to incrimination that Marlowe

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[5] Anthony Boucher, 'Review of The Long Good-Bye', *The New York Times*, 25 April 1954 <http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/06/22/reviews/chandler-goodbye.html> [accessed 5 May 2017].

[6] Marlowe's habit of replaying of tournament chess games, such a significant theme in *The High Window*, is introduced with a single passing reference in *The Big Sleep* (p. 111). Neither *Farewell, My Lovely*, *The Lady in the Lake* or *The Little Sister* make reference to Marlowe's chess-playing, but in *The Long Goodbye* Chandler returns to the theme as early as the second chapter, which sees Marlowe lose in forty-four moves against Steinitz, who 'had been dead for fifty years' (p. 379).

[7] The reappearance of chess is not the only textual signal that suggests a thematic link between *The Long Goodbye* and *The High Window*. Idle Valley, the fictional private community in the San Fernando Valley that in the earlier novel is the site of Alex Morny's gambling club, is in *The Long Goodbye* home to alcoholic novelist Roger Wade, the client Marlowe is hired to protect.

experiences as a private investigator is revealing, but it is vastly less acute than that which Bob Jones endures. Bob's careful discernment of the city's racialized topography is no less precise than Marlowe's highly differentiated environmental image. Yet as Chapter Three makes clear, *If He Hollers Let Him Go* presents 1940s Los Angeles as a space in which racial borders are established so arbitrarily, and enforced so violently, that it is impossible for African Americans to orientate themselves sufficiently to avoid transgression.

If He Hollers Let Him Go, *Killer of Sheep* and *Bush Mama* are formally very different in many respects, and the experiences of Bob Jones, Stan and Dorothy are not homogenous, nor are the spatial and historical conditions that structure those experiences. Despite these differences, protagonists in each work are forced to confront the challenge of navigating an urban space in which their own mobility exposes them to risks — in which purposeful movement and action is complicated by external attempts to restrict their mobility, and by territorial borders that are ambiguously demarcated but dangerous to transgress. They are repeatedly made conscious of the precariousness of their existence — the ease with which their everyday lives can be disrupted by a single misstep, false accusation or moment of bureaucratic capriciousness. In a poem inspired by the contingency of black lives in mid-1960s South LA, Maya Angelou writes of 'Screeching nerves, exploding minds / lives tied to / a policeman's whistle / a welfare worker's doorbell / finger'.[8] Orientating themselves successfully is shown to be both imperative and potentially futile; even when characters are able to account for their movements and provide an alibi asserting their innocence, as in the case of Dorothy's partner in *Bush Mama*, they can still find themselves punished by a racist power structure for which no black alibi is deemed sufficient. All three protagonists struggle

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[8] *A Song Flung Up to Heaven*, p. 56.

with the psychological consequences of these disorientating conditions, in which their movements and actions are uncertain and potentially perilous.

Frequently impeded and forced to account for their movements, knowing that they might find themselves struggling under a weight of incrimination with no alibi considered sufficient, Bob Jones, Stan and Dorothy all negotiate conditions that are depressingly consistent with the experiences of many African Americans in contemporary Los Angeles and the wider United States. *Killer of Sheep* and *Bush Mama* offer two different responses to these conditions, responses that can be placed in dialogue with Chester Himes's novel of a generation earlier. *Killer of Sheep* explores the consequences of the 'walking together' that Bob rejects, with Stan persevering within a family unit strained by instability, fatigue and uncertainty. *Bush Mama* invokes the possibility of a radical political response to conditions of restricted black mobility, one built on community cooperation and understanding, that is absent from the solipsistic vision of *If He Hollers Let Him Go*. The pessimistic vision of Chester Himes's first novel, now more than 70 years old and rooted in the specific spatiality of wartime Los Angeles, retains a bleak and enduring force in our contemporary moment, in which people of colour continue to experience conditions of restricted and brutally arrested movement. Moreover, Himes's depiction of Los Angeles as site of absurd and inevitable disorientation — an urban space to which no cognitive map can be adequate — continues to resonate powerfully against other visions of Los Angeles, challenging their elision of the city's racial history.

The same neighbourhoods provide a setting for *The New Centurions*, and the novel is concerned with the perspectives of those who enforced the borders of South Los Angeles. Wambaugh's novel does not present the LAPD as a flawless and wholly efficient institution, operating according to the disinterested principles of scientific

policing: departmental policies are inconsistently applied, individual officers are shown

to have widely varying attitudes to their social responsibilities, and there is a partial

recognition that public protests about police brutality might sometimes be justified. In

qualifying its moments of police misconduct and racism by situating them within the

context one protagonist's redemptive and ultimately tragic character arc, however, it

undermines much of its critical force. *The New Centurions* is most striking for the

territorial orientation that structures its protagonists' navigation of the city.

Wambaugh's patrol officers are agents of territoriality who, even as they exert spatial

control over the citizens of Los Angeles, orientate themselves in relation to the

boundaries they enforce and find their own movements circumscribed.

This territorial orientation provides a spatial subtext for *The Big Nowhere*, where

it is combined with the more overt vulnerability to incrimination that is at stake in

Chandler's fiction. Ellroy draws upon the history of Los Angeles at the end of the 1940s

to establish, in Danny Upshaw, a law-enforcement protagonist who operates in a

similarly liminal context to the Philip Marlowe. The disorientation experienced by

Upshaw is grounded in the spatial and jurisdictional politics of the city: as he navigates

Los Angeles, he transgresses boundaries implicated with police corruption and conflict

between the LAPD and LASD, exposing himself to increasing and ultimately fatal

danger. Upshaw is distinguished from Marlowe, however, not only in his bullish

willingness to transgress jurisdictional boundaries, but also in his naïve enthusiasm for

criminalistic techniques. Ellroy's plot serves to undermine Upshaw's attempts to

maintain a stable identity grounded in forensic rationality, whilst also demonstrating the

ease with which such 'scientific' policing methods can be manipulated.

Ellroy's engagement with the racial politics of Los Angeles, both in *The Big

Nowhere* and across the LA Quartet as a whole, merits further discussion. The other

works analysed in this thesis implicitly and explicitly engage with the history and geography of Los Angeles, but among them only Ellroy's Los Angeles novels are works of historical fiction. He reconstructs Los Angeles in the 1940s and 1950s from the perspective of the late twentieth century — an approach that has been one of the dominant tendencies in fictions of Los Angeles since the 1970s. In such works, David Fine suggests, the ambience of 'hardboiled' 1940s Los Angeles is fused with 'the more serious purpose of cultural history: history that posits crime not as individual events but as acts implicated in the larger context of power and hegemony in the city's development.'[9] Ellroy's representation of the systemic corruption of mid-century LA is undoubtedly forceful. Across the LA Quartet, extensive networks of exploitation and collusion are revealed; real and fictitious authority figures are shown to be actively or passively complicit in conspiracies that damage and exploit the citizens of Los Angeles.

Like Philip Marlowe in *The High Window*, Danny Upshaw ultimately confronts an antagonist who outmanoeuvres him and evades punishment. Whereas Elizabeth Murdock's crimes are personal, however, LAPD Lieutenant Dudley Smith's actions harm whole communities, and are deeply intertwined with actual events from the city's past. By the end of *The Big Nowhere*, Smith's malign influence on mid-century Los Angeles life has been well established. Smith's deeply racist attitudes towards Mexican-Americans, Upshaw discovers before his death, have previously manifested themselves in the murder of José Diaz — the 'Sleepy Lagoon' killing of 1942, for which a group of Mexican-American youths were instead convicted (and later released on appeal).[10]

In the subsequent LA Quartet novels *L.A. Confidential* and *White Jazz*, other

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[9] Fine, *Imagining Los Angeles*, p. 209.

[10] For an account of the Sleepy Lagoon Case within the larger historical context of LAPD treatment of Mexican Americans in the first half of the twentieth century, see Edward J. Escobar, *Race, Police, and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 200–84. See also Eduardo Obregón Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

elements of Smith's corruption are revealed — and, crucially, shown to be entwined

with acknowledged and 'legitimate' aspects of LAPD tactics during the Parker era. In

L.A. Confidential, Smith leads the Surveillance Detail, which as part of Parker's

proactive law-enforcement strategy met known organized crime figures as they

attempted to enter Los Angeles, and forcefully discouraged them from doing so.[11] Smith

describes the assignment as 'a containment measure', and his use of 'containment'

evokes both Cold War-era anti-Communist politics, and the ideology of the Parker-era

LAPD.[12] William H. Parker envisioned the police force as a 'containing element'

against the forces of crime and disorder:

> The fundamental role of the police service is not crime prevention per se.
> Rather, policemen consider themselves as a 'containing element,'—a thin line of
> blue which stands between the law-abiding members of society and the
> criminals who prey upon them.[13]

 'Containment' is invoked as the justification for another of Smith's strategies: keeping

certain crimes and vices 'south of Jefferson' (p. 71); in other words, permitting drug

dealing and gambling only in the predominantly African-American districts of South

Los Angeles. *White Jazz* reveals the full extent of Smith's plot to personally profit from

this 'containment', distributing his own heroin within the black community and

eliminating potential competitors.

Where Danny Upshaw is undone in his attempts to negotiate the geographic

puzzle of jurisdictions of which Los Angeles is comprised, Dudley Smith is able to turn

the LAPD's territoriality to his own advantage. He is instrumental in policing and

reinforcing the boundaries of the kind of racialized topography that Bob Jones

negotiates in *If He Hollers*, and that would continue to circumscribe African-American

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[11] Buntin, pp. 201–2.

[12] James Ellroy, *L.A. Confidential* (London: Arrow, 2005), p. 72. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

[13] Parker, 'Surveillance by Wiretap or Dictograph: Threat or Protection?', p. 729.

mobility in South Los Angeles throughout the twentieth century. At the climax of *White Jazz*, set in 1958, Smith is savagely attacked by another victim of his exploitation and corruption, and suffers serious injuries: 'He lost an eye, he's paralyzed, he's sustained brain damage, he'll probably never walk again' (p. 387). In an epilogue, ex-LAPD officer Dave Klein recounts the fates of the novel's protagonists from the vantage point of three decades later. Whilst many are dead, Smith is 'still half-lucid, still a charmer [...] rakish in his eye patch' (p. 403). The fictional Smith, then, outlives the confines of Ellroy's novels; the enduring image is of Dudley Smith surviving even the most brutal attack and continuing to offer 'snappy quotes on "containment"' for the media (p. 403).[14] Smith's persistent survival speaks to the enduring influence of the municipal corruption that he embodies.

Read in relation to the LA Quartet as a whole, Danny Upshaw's fate suggests itself as a microcosm for the consequences of Dudley Smith's brutal influence over the citizens of Los Angeles. The fact that it is Upshaw whose perspective is privileged, however — rather than José Diaz, victim in the Sleepy Lagoon murder, or one of the residents of South LA who suffer as a result of Smith's narcotic 'sedation' of the black population — merits criticism. Even the most fully realized victim of white masculine oppression in the LA Quartet is another white male figure of authority, despite the fact that this authority is somewhat complicated by his County affiliation and his ambiguous sexuality. It indicates Ellroy's tendency to 'recentre' the power of white masculinity even as he exposes its violence and corruption, as Ryan suggests with reference to the later *American Tabloid*.[15]

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[14] Although Klein resolves in the last lines of the epilogue to return to Los Angeles and 'kill him in the name of our victims' (p. 403), this vengeance is deferred — there is no textual indication as to whether the aged Klein is successful in his attempt.

[15] Ryan, p. 279.

Acknowledging this persistent risk of recentring white masculinity prompts a consideration of the implications of this research project, taken as a whole. One thing that my analysis implies is that the protagonists of Chandler, Wambaugh and Ellroy are shown to be subject to what is qualitatively, if not quantitively, the same essential vulnerability as the protagonists of Himes, Burnett and Gerima. That is to say: these predominantly white, male figures, all operating with some degree of authority to enforce the law, are in crucial moments vulnerable — although to a vastly less acute extent — to the very dynamic that they are empowered to enforce: a dynamic that serves to victimize African-American residents of the city. This is an implication that demands reflection and careful qualification, since it risks being taken to imply some equivalence in the experiences of very different social groups, and at worst, could be taken as an implicit attempt to undermine the necessary task of acknowledging and reckoning with the history of racism in the United States. It should be clear that I do not endorse such an interpretation, and by drawing on the invaluable work undertaken by historians of black Los Angeles I have sought to consistently emphasize the real conditions of white supremacy, spatial segregation and police brutality that underlie the fictional narratives of Chester Himes, Haile Gerima and Charles Burnett.

One possible response would be to follow Julian Murphet when he suggests that the affective structures of film noir expropriated 'the precise matrix of affects on which black subjectivity in the period was actually built' — with the implication that such appropriation is not grounded in any attempt at a broader social criticism, but rather as a way of developing tropes that are narratively compelling when stripped of their racial context.[16] Going further, one could argue that white authors actively orientated their focus towards the vulnerability of white, male, comparatively powerful protagonists in

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[16] *Literature and Race in Los Angeles*, p. 60.

order to obscure the actual vulnerability of African-American citizens during the period in question. In these terms, my analysis would suggest a continuing trajectory — from Chandler in the 1940s, through Wambaugh in the 1970s, to Ellroy towards the end of the century — in which white, male writers of crime fiction attempted to reassert and privilege white subjectivity. Regardless of authorial intentions, I think it is inarguable that this is one consequence of their narrative structures, and this emphasizes in turn the importance of analysing these texts in relation to others that privilege African-American subjectivity.

I would reject, then, any suggestion of an absolute equivalence between the experiences of white law-enforcement figures and the vulnerability of African Americans to incrimination in mid-century Los Angeles. Nevertheless, I would maintain that there is value in recognizing that there is an at least partially consistent politics of space underlying all of the works considered in this thesis. They establish a common image of the city as a territorialized space with borders that require careful navigation, in which mobility is both essential and potentially suspect. And they all depict states of disorientation that reveal the operation of these spatial conditions, even if for some protagonists the consequences of disorientation are more severe. All citizens are potentially subject to the methods of the 'scientific policeman', and it is precisely the amoral force of incrimination that allows it to be deployed in the most immoral of situations, as a tool to enforce society's most indefensible prejudices.

If the threat of incrimination, asserting a scientifically grounded certainty despite being prone to error or abuse, can leave the individual disorientated and unable to provide a sufficient alibi, then that threat only became more profound in the second half of the twentieth century. In his 1953 textbook on criminal investigation procedures,

forensic scientist Paul Kirk speculated about the techniques that might one day be available to 'the criminalist of the future':

> [He] may well be able to identify [the criminal] directly through the hair he dropped, the blood he shed, or the semen he deposited. All of these things are probably unique to the individual, just as his fingerprint is unique to him. This must wait for much further research, because the means for positive identification are lacking at this writing, though much progress has been made.[17]

The following decades would indeed see a vast array of new technologies deployed to support the juridical rationalization of time, space and identity. The increasing prevalence of CCTV systems in urban areas; the ability to retrospectively trace individuals' movements using cellular phone records, and later the potential for real-time monitoring of smart phone data; increasingly sophisticated analysis of DNA trace evidence — all of these provide opportunities unavailable to the criminal investigator of the early twentieth century.

These advances in forensic science have provided increasingly sophisticated means through which to fix identity, reconstruct movement and enforce borders. Like the criminalistic techniques and policing strategies of the first half of the twentieth century, they are frequently justified with reference to the shrewd and highly mobile lawbreakers that are their ostensible target, but are deployed for more broadly.[18] The accuracy and objectivity that is ascribed to them is also open to question. In 2009, a congressionally commissioned report on the forensic sciences in the US was published that was, as the *Washington Post* wrote, 'highly critical of a wide range of forensic specialties, from fingerprints to hair and fiber analysis to blood spatter analysis'.[19] That

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[17] *Crime Investigation*, p. 13.

[18] In his compelling 2011 monograph *Cities Under Siege: The New Military Urbanism*, geographer Stephen Graham frames these developments as a militarization of urban space, in which techniques of surveillance and tracking developed by the military-industrial complex have been applied by governments to their own populations.

[19] Radley Balko, 'How the Flawed "science" of Bite Mark Analysis Has Sent Innocent People to Prison', *The Washington Post*, 13 February 2015 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-

report, *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*, identified

numerous concerns and conflicts of interests in terms of the scientific validity and

objectivity of forensic analysis:

> With the exception of nuclear DNA analysis, however, no forensic method has
> been rigorously shown to have the capacity to consistently, and with a high
> degree of certainty, demonstrate a connection between evidence and a specific
> individual or source.[20]

Even dactyloscopy, for more than a century emblematic of the potential for

criminalistics to fix human identity at the scene of the crime, found its scientific validity

questioned.[21]

Six years later, the FBI published an extraordinary press release concerning its

ongoing 'Microscopic Hair Comparison Analysis Review'. That review, as the press

release noted, was initiated 'after the exoneration of three men convicted at least in part

because of testimony by three different FBI hair examiners whose testimony was

scientifically flawed'.[22] Microscopic hair comparison analysis is one of the many

forensic techniques for establishing the presence of a suspect at a crime scene utilized

by the US legal system in the second half of the twentieth century that Paul Kirk had, at

mid-century, envisioned as a tool of 'the criminalist of the future'. The FBI

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watch/wp/2015/02/13/how-the-flawed-science-of-bite-mark-analysis-has-sent-innocent-people-to-jail/>
[accessed 6 May 2017].

[20] Committee on Identifying the Needs of the Forensic Science Community, Committee on Science,
Technology, and Law Policy and Global Affairs, and Committee on Applied and Theoretical Statistics,
Division on Engineering and Physical Sciences, *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A
Path Forward* (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2009)
<http://www.nap.edu/catalog/12589> [accessed 15 January 2016]. p. 7. Hereafter cited as *A Path
Forward*.

[21] *A Path Forward*, p. 43. On the subjective aspect of fingerprint analysis, see Bruce Budowle, JoAnn
Buscaglia, and Rebecca Schwartz Perlman, 'Review of the Scientific Basis for Friction Ridge
Comparisons as a Means of Identification: Committee Findings and Recommendations', *Forensic Science
Communications*, 8.1 (2006), N.P.
<https://www2.fbi.gov/hq/lab/fsc/backissu/jan2006/research/2006_01_research02.htm> [accessed 5
February 2016]; Roger Koppl and Meghan Sacks, 'The Criminal Justice System Creates Incentives for
False Convictions', *Criminal Justice Ethics*, 32.2 (2013), 126–62
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0731129X.2013.817070>.

[22] 'FBI Testimony on Microscopic Hair Analysis Contained Errors in at Least 90 Percent of Cases in
Ongoing Review', *FBI.gov*, 2015 <https://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/fbi-testimony-on-
microscopic-hair-analysis-contained-errors-in-at-least-90-percent-of-cases-in-ongoing-review> [accessed
15 January 2016].

acknowledged that after reviewing 268 cases in which FBI analysts had provided

testimony regarding microscopic hair analysis, it had found that 'erroneous statements

were made in 257 (96 percent) of the cases'. It continued:

> Defendants in at least 35 of these cases received the death penalty and errors
> were identified in 33 (94 percent) of those cases. Nine of these defendants have
> already been executed and five died of other causes while on death row.[23]

Within the context of this persistent, and potentially fatal, faith in the objectivity and

reliability of the 'scientific policeman', I would maintain, fictional narratives that

implicitly or explicitly undermine that faith will continue to retain an essential critical

force.

More specifically, African Americans in the twenty-first century continue to

experience what Damien M. Sojoyner has recently described as 'this current moment of

mass incarceration, intense racialized policing, and a full-on assault upon public

education'.[24] Sojoyner's account of education policy and practices affecting black Los

Angeles introduces the term 'enclosure' to describe the diverse processes through which

the material or social boundaries structuring black experience in contemporary Los

Angeles continue to be established and maintained. Another recent monograph on the

city, by Gaye Theresa Johnson, focuses on how 'the militarization of urban space, anti-

immigration policies, loss of assets, and disenfranchisement all contribute to [...]

"spatial immobilization" among the black and Latino urban poor'.[25] Imagery of

containment and arrested movement, tropes central to the works discussed in this thesis,

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[23] 'FBI Testimony on Microscopic Hair Analysis'.

[24] Damien M. Sojoyner, *First Strike: Educational Enclosures in Black Los Angeles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), p. xii. Charles Burnett's 1994 film *The Glass Shield* brought many of these themes into a then-contemporary setting, focusing on corruption and racism within an LASD sub-station. J.J. (Michael Boatman), is the only African-American officer assigned to his division; on his first shift, his white partner criticizes him for being insufficiently aggressive when they warn an African-American female driver for speeding. J.J. later establishes that detectives within the division have manipulated circumstantial evidence to incriminate Teddy Woods (Ice Cube) for murder.

[25] Gaye Theresa Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity: Music, Race, and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), p. xxi.

continues to be a relevant lens through which to interpret the experiences of African Americans in contemporary Los Angeles.

In this thesis I have elected to focus on the representation of two groups: those who policed Los Angeles, and one of the communities who experienced the most acute consequences of those policing strategies — the African-American citizens of South Los Angeles. The value of such an approach is borne out, I believe, by the consistency and contrasts that are apparent when texts that are otherwise frequently considered within discrete boundaries — of genre, historical period, or discipline — are placed alongside each other. This expanded perspective demonstrates some of the complex and uneven ways in which power was manifested spatially in twentieth-century Los Angeles, and the manner in which certain filmmakers and authors represented the subjective experience of these conditions.

Such a perspective is, nevertheless, only slightly less partial rather than anything close to complete. As noted in the Introduction, this thesis lacks a sustained consideration of what Dolores Hayden terms 'a territorial history based on limitations of gender in the public spaces of the city'.[26] Such an investigation would serve as a valuable and necessary complement to the work undertaken here. Another regrettable consequence of my chosen structure is the absence of any thorough consideration of the experiences of other communities of colour. In particular, Mexican Americans and other Latinx communities have been integral to the development of Los Angeles, and their experiences merit a sustained discussion that I have been unable to accommodate within the confines of this project. Such an analysis could consider, amongst many works, *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* (Oscar Zeta Acosta, 1973), *Zoot-Suit Murders* (Thomas Sanchez, 1978), *Zoot Suit* (dir by. Luis Valdez, 1981), *Famous All Over Town* (Danny

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[26] *The Power of Place*, p. 24.

Santiago, 1983), *American Me* (dir. by Edward James Olmos, 1992), and *All Involved* (Ryan Gattis, 2015).[27] Many of these texts emphasize the significance of the 1943 'Zoot Suit Riots', during which white servicemen attacked Mexican-Americans in Downtown Los Angeles with the apparent collusion of the LAPD. This event, alluded to in Chester Himes's *If He Hollers Let Him Go* and directly represented in the opening chapters of James Ellroy's *The Black Dahlia* (1987), would offer one potentially productive starting point for any discussion of Mexican-American and Latinx experiences of vulnerable movement and disorientation situated in the spaces of twentieth-century Los Angeles.[28]

Despite the inevitably partial nature of this research, it is my hope that identifying an underlying coherence in how certain diverse works represent urban experience is, nevertheless, valuable. These novels and films explore the situation of the individual subject in relation to the networks of territorial borders and boundaries that structured Los Angeles throughout the twentieth century, in which law-enforcement authorities sought to police and circumscribe individual mobility. There have been profound technological advances in the practices used to regulate movement in subsequent decades, but the principles underlying those practices have remained consistent. Mobility is no less essential in the twenty-first century metropolis, and successful orientation no less vital; the word 'lost' still, as Kevin Lynch wrote nearly sixty years ago, 'means much more than simple geographical uncertainty'.[29]

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[27] There are perceptive analyses of many of these texts in Ignacio López-Calvo, *Latino Los Angeles in Film and Fiction: The Cultural Production of Social Anxiety* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2011).

[28] Julian Murphet provides an valuable synthesis of the ways in which various expressions of urban unrest in Los Angeles have been represented, from the 1943 'Zoot Suit Riots' to the 1965 Watts Rebellion and the 1992 'Justice Riots', in 'The Literature of Urban Rebellion', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of Los Angeles*, ed. by McNamara, pp. 101–10.

[29] *The Image of the City*, p. 4.

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