

PhD Thesis – V. E. Sage McMaster University – Dept. of Anthropology

VISIONS OF JAMES STREET NORTH

ARTS IN THE CITY: VISIONS OF JAMES STREET NORTH, 2005-2011

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A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Abstract

I argue in this dissertation that aestheticizing urban landscapes represents an effort to create humane public environments in disenfranchised inner-city spaces, and turns these environments into culturally valued sites of pilgrimage. Specifically, I focus on James Street North, a neighbourhood undergoing artistic renewal in the post-industrial city of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Based on two years of ethnographic fieldwork in the arts scene on James Street North, my thesis claims that artistic activities serve as an ordinary, everyday material response to the perceived and real challenges of poverty, crime and decay in downtown Hamilton. Aesthetic elaboration is a generative and tangible expression by arts stakeholders of their intangible hopes, desires, and dreams for the city. People's hope, desires and dreams, however, are not all the same. Debates about the space use on James Street North generally take the form of pro-city revitalization versus anti-gentrification. These responses, I argue, are ultimately tied to, and concerned with, larger questions about the authenticity of place. Further, the authenticity of place is tied to a nostalgic yearning for a past that is symbolically associated with 'country' ideals of a close-knit community and a place of respite and renewal away from the 'city.' The aestheticization of this particular urban landscape, that was repeatedly imagined, reinforced, and performed during my fieldwork, is an attempt to humanize and democratize the street and the city rather than dehumanize and colonize it. Further, the street itself, in becoming tied to the hopes and desires of people, has taken on an almost sacred quality. As such, James Street North, as a destination to which people journey, and as a place in which both personal and social transformation occurs, is likened to a site of secular pilgrimage.

*To the girl who sat on a rock by a shore of the Atlantic Ocean in Glace Bay, Nova Scotia
and believed in herself enough to dream.*

And to James Street North, another space for dreaming...

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“A finished dissertation is a good dissertation.”

“To begin is half the work.”

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~

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Table of Contents

Title Page	i
Descriptive Note	ii
Abstract	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vii
List of Illustrations	x
1. Entrances	1
Preface.....	3
Introduction: Arts in the Gritty City	7
Pilgrimage to Here	10
“This is not a street (Ceci n’est pas une rue).....	10
Pilgrimage to Here	13
Pilgrimage and Turner’s Influence on Pilgrimage Studies	16
Pilgrimage on James Street North.....	19
Ethnographic Standpoints: Methodology.....	24
Community Involvement	25
Interviews and Ethics	26
Dialogic Reflexivity: Ethnography as a Process and a Product.....	30
Ordinary Generative Moments, Materiality and The City	38
Affect and Sensual Objects	38
Material Culture and Materiality.....	41
The City.....	45
Found Collage.....	51
2. Hamilton, (Post) Industrial City & “The Street that Built the City”	56
Location: Hamilton	57
James Street North: “Small Town Atmosphere in a Major City”	75
James Street North: Creativity Materialized.....	89
3. James Street North, Contradictory Imaginations	98
Sidewalk Ballets: Sustainable Collective Civic Pride.....	99

Contradictory Imaginations: Gentrification	102
The Far Future Pushing Closer	105
SOS: Fear and all Eyes on the Street	110
New Frontiers.....	114
“Contemplating the Gritty Core”	119
Living Culture: Hope for the Creative	120
Revitalization, Growth, Hope and Loss	123
4. Gendered and Sexualized Spaces: The Hood, the Bad and the Ugly	127
Not A Pretty Site: A Generating Force	128
Review: The Hood, the Bad and the Ugly	128
Not A Pretty Site: Quiet Realization.....	133
Not a Pretty Site: Perpetual Victimization.....	135
Not A Pretty Site: “The Truth Has a Face”.....	138
Not A Pretty Site: Responses and Reactions	141
Not a Pretty Site: Sex Work.....	146
Discussion	152
5. Creative Spaces: Where Business and Bohemians Meet in the City	154
Community Debate 1: Can the Arts Save Hamilton?	155
“If a place gets boring	155
Community Debate 2: “What is James Street North?”	167
Community Debate 3: “To the Footsoldiers of Gentrification”.....	173
Discussion: Creative Cities or Gentrified Spaces	181
6. Exits: Visioning James Street North	189
Industrially Quaint	191
Pastoral Ideals	191
Tourism and Authenticity	195
Nostalgic Travel.....	196
Authenticity Wars	197
The Past Accelerated or a “History of the Future”	201
Dreams of a Better Life.....	201
Present Hopes.....	201
If James Street North Could be Anything?.....	203

Concluding Thoughts	208
Epilogue	209
Works Cited	211
Secondary Sources	211
Primary Sources	224
Appendices.....	228
Interview Guide.....	228
Consent Form.....	229
Visions of James Street North in Hamilton, Ontario	229
Deconstructed Abstract.....	231

List of Illustrations

<i>Found Collage</i>	2
<i>Inside the Tate Modern</i>	11
<i>Looking to the River Thames</i>	11
<i>Art Installation by Grace Loney</i>	11
<i>King Street West</i>	11
<i>Pumpkins, Squash and Cabbage for Sale</i>	38
<i>Hamilton Skyline 1</i>	57
<i>Hamilton Skyline 2</i>	57
<i>Webster's Falls</i>	60
<i>Hiking Trail</i>	60
<i>Bayfront Park 1</i>	60
<i>Bayfront Park 2</i>	60
<i>CNR Tracks</i>	63
<i>The Old CNR Railway Station, Now LIUNA Station</i>	63
<i>"Courage, Hope and Dreams" Statue in Immigration Square</i>	63
<i>Signs of Decay Still Felt in the Downtown Core</i>	67
<i>James Street and King Street</i>	67
<i>James Street North just past King Street</i>	67
<i>North End on James Street North</i>	69
<i>North End Homes</i>	69
<i>Fisher's, North End Bar</i>	69
<i>King Street just past James Street, South and West</i>	70
<i>Irving's, James Street North</i>	75
<i>Morgenstern's, James Street North</i>	75
<i>The Old Row Houses in 2010.</i>	77
<i>Pride Parade</i>	78
<i>Mardi Gras 1</i>	78
<i>Mardi Gras 2</i>	78
<i>Two Views of the Hamilton City Centre at York and Wilson</i>	79
<i>72 James Street North</i>	80
<i>Old Federal Building</i>	80

<i>Lister Block</i>	80
“Arcade,” <i>Lister Block</i>	80
<i>Scaffolding on the Lister Block</i>	81
<i>Tivoli Yard</i>	82
<i>The John Weir Foote VC Armouries</i>	83
<i>Christ’s Church Cathedral</i>	83
<i>Vasco Da Gamma Futebal Clube</i>	84
<i>Lighthouse Fish Market</i>	85
<i>World Cup Fans</i>	85
<i>Ventura’s Portuguese Restaurant</i>	85
<i>Wild Orchid Portuguese Restaurant</i>	85
<i>St. Mary’s Church</i> ,	86
<i>Money Wreath</i> ,	86
<i>Marching Bands</i> ,	86
<i>Virgin Mary Float</i> ,	86
<i>Cedar and Flowers on Church Steps</i> ,	87
<i>Ola Bakery</i>	88
<i>Hamilton Artist’s Inc.</i>	90
<i>HISStory + HERitage</i>	90
<i>The Print Studio</i>	90
<i>James North Art Collective</i>	91
<i>This Ain’t Hollywood</i>	91
<i>Holiday Maker’s Market</i> ,	91
<i>White Elephant</i>	91
<i>Bike Hounds</i>	92
<i>Mixed Media</i>	92
“ <i>Tin Men</i> ,” <i>August 2009 Art Crawl</i>	92
<i>Busker Crawl on James Street North</i>	92
<i>Person with TV on Head</i>	93
<i>Film Projected on the Leon Furs Building</i>	94
<i>Art By David Hind on the Leon Furs Building</i>	94
<i>Changing Moon Projected on the Dominion Building, Supercrawl</i>	94

<i>David Hind Art on the Tivoli Building, Supercrawl</i>	95
<i>Sidewalk Painting 1, Supercrawl</i>	95
<i>Sidewalk Painting 2, Supercrawl</i>	96
<i>Sidewalk Painting 2, Close Up, Supercrawl</i>	96
<i>Making Art on the Street, Supercrawl.....</i>	97
<i>Chalk Art on the Street, Supercrawl</i>	97
<i>Hotel Hamilton before Renovations 1& 2.....</i>	105
<i>Hotel Hamilton During Renovations</i>	105
<i>Chandelier Inside the Mulberry Street Coffeehouse.....</i>	106
<i>Hotel Hamilton After Renovations 2.....</i>	108
<i>Hotel Hamilton After Renovations 2.....</i>	109
<i>Bricked in Window in Hotel Hamilton.....</i>	109
<i>Second Floor of Hotel Hamilton</i>	109
<i>Hotel Hamilton, Old Bills Framed for Art Crawl</i>	109
<i>Collapsed Building, Next to the Lister Block</i>	116
<i>Downtown Building,.....</i>	116
<i>Alleyway on James Street North,</i>	116
<i>Gore Park Fountain, 1860</i>	117
<i>Painting of Gore Park Fountain.</i>	117
<i>“Wasted Words. Lasting Legacy.”</i>	117
<i>Century Exhibit at Mixed Media</i>	117
<i>Renovating the Old Dominion Building.....</i>	118
<i>Old Signage on James Street North</i>	118
<i>Gutted Apartment 1 & 2</i>	118
<i>“Sex Workers Are Members of Our Communities”</i>	151
<i>Art Gallery of Hamilton Window</i>	155

1. Entrances

Gallery: Arts in the City: Visions of James Street North, 2005-2011.

Exhibit Description: Art on James Street North is an ordinary everyday material response to the perceived challenges of poverty, crime and decay in downtown Hamilton, Ontario; it is a generative and tangible expression by arts stakeholders of the intangible hopes, desires and dreams for the city.

XV

All the hope gone hard. That is a city.
The blind houses, the cramped dirt, the broken
air, the sweet ugliness, the blissful and tortured
flowers, the misguided clothing, the bricked lies
the steel lies, all the lies seeping from flesh
falling in rain and snow, the weeping buses,
the plastic throats, the perfumed garbage, the
needled sky, the smogged oxygen, the deathly clerical
gentlemen cleaning their fingernails at the stock
exchange, the dingy hearts in the newsrooms, that is
a city, the feral amnesia of us all.

--Dionne Brand, poem from *Thirsty* (2002:24)



Found Collage.
James Street North, Hamilton, Ontario (April 26, 2008)

Preface

James Street North in Hamilton Ontario is a street I have been fascinated by since I first stepped onto it in 2005 for an autumn Art Crawl with new friends in the department of Anthropology at McMaster University. A group of us went religiously that year to these monthly evening events when the galleries and shops opened their doors on the second Friday of every month. We looked at all the art, ate the free food the galleries put out, bought little things at *Mixed Media* (the local art supply store), and danced to the bands that sometimes performed in conjunction with the art shows. It was a place I felt free to wear my fedora and where I bonded with my new friends. I remember about eight to ten galleries (but I wasn't counting back then) and a few shops that opened for Art Crawl. There were huge sections of the street where there were no galleries but we had a little map on a flyer that told us that if we kept walking north we'd find places like *You Me Gallery* at the edge of Barton and James Streets.

In the following years, James Street North became a place I went to get my hair cut, a place I got my first tattoo, a place I walked to and walked down in Pride parades, and a place where I bought almost every journal I wrote in for years. I didn't move to the street until my fieldwork was 'officially' over but the move extended the fieldwork by a year. I've gone through a lot of personal changes since that first time stepping onto the street to now, the summer of 2013, and so has the Street. When I think of James Street North now, after years of studying it, living on the edge of it, and in the midst of it, I think of: uneasy hopes, change, debate over change, and clashing communities struggling to find voice amidst the competing noises of the street. I would hazard a guess that if you

were to ask most Hamiltonians who don't live on, or around it, what they think of James Street North, they would say something about art, or voice concern about their safety, or would mention a memory from their youth when the downtown was booming.

Or they might not care. Hamilton is a geographically and socially divided city. The downtown core (of which James Street North is an extension) has become the focus of debate over the future of the city, and it is often metaphorically likened to its heart. However, this metaphor does not speak to all of Hamiltonians' experiences or concerns for their city. Metaphors are a luxury, and the 'heart' of Hamilton is not necessarily experientially located at the intersection of King Street and James Street for those living anywhere outside of the downtown core. Still, the story of Hamilton gets told and retold throughout time, and recently a big story about the future health and wealth of the city has been focused on James Street North and the arts that seem to be booming there.

I've been torn for a long time about not just *how* to tell a story about a few city blocks in Hamilton, Ontario but *why* it needs to be told. Why does it matter and how can it serve others both within and outside the academic and Hamilton communities? This thesis is an academic work within the discipline of anthropology so it must contribute to, and speak within, certain disciplinary concerns. It discusses the lives of Hamiltonians so it also must speak to the diverse needs of that community. But it also touches upon matters beyond both of these boundaries. This thesis is about a certain facet of one part of one street in a Canadian city, and yet what took place within these limits speaks to interdisciplinary and wider community audiences. *It is a story of place making and of visioning a narrative out of place.* Therefore, I write an ethnography, a story, of visions.

As I will show in this ethnography, some have told a story of James Street North that focuses on gentrification by highlighting social and economic inequalities so that others might be galvanized to be aware of, and care more about, the lives of *everyone* living and working on the street, not just the arts and business stakeholders. Others have told a story that focuses on the creative class as a way to attract new businesses, new artists, and new citizens to Hamilton in the hopes of making it bigger and better. What is contained within these pages is an uneasy story that lives in contradiction. It will, without doubt, not be what you expect.

Further, this ethnography has grown and changed as my understanding of the arts on James Street has changed. Like Tsing tells her readers in the introduction to *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (2005), there are certain stories that I will not tell. I will not write a dressed up, cleaned up version of James Street North with the main aim of promoting it or Hamilton, nor will I tear down individuals or their efforts on James Street North in the name of social activism. Already, I dangerously position myself outside of these two very different points of view on the Street and stand on the verge of alienating both, yet I do not do this to say that either way of seeing James Street North is wrong or misguided. In fact, the very idea that there are two ways of visioning James Street North, or that these views are mutually exclusive, is misguided.

In fact, the best possible outcome of this work would be that people might understand each other, and the worlds they are a part of, a little better by reading my ethnography. I believe that my social position as a kind of insider/outsider is absolutely necessary for these potential new understandings to take place. Therefore, my hope is to

offer a multi-sensual, multiple-voiced narrative so that James Street North, in all its contradictions, can come to life within these pages. Truthfully, I want Hamilton to succeed. I want it to do so in the most ethical and responsible ways it can, and I deeply hope for a James Street North where diversity can continue to live and thrive and where everyone can gain from open and respectful dialogue.

This is a story of hope and despair, authenticity and tourism, memory and nostalgia, and loss, change and growth. It is a story of a different kind of aesthetic (where the beautiful and the ugly, the gorgeous and the grotesque meet). And it is a story of struggle and art. Of celebration and art. This story is not unique and yet it is uniquely placed in Hamilton. It matters because this story is not new. It matters because people everywhere struggle to find their places, to imagine and make their place in the world. They struggle against each other when there might be other options. The story of James Street North matters because what we make of the places that matter to us gets translated and transported across time and space in ways unimaginable.

Introduction: Arts in the Gritty City

Hamilton, Ontario has a reputation: gritty, tough, dirty, steel-town, smog-filled, Toronto's lesser neighbour, and "the arm-pit of Ontario." It is a city that is frequently dismissed by residents and non-residents alike. Yet, as a major port and stop along the historic Great Western Railway line, it has been a regional, national and transnational hub since its founding in 1816, and is currently the ninth largest city in Canada, and the third largest city in Ontario, with a population of just over half a million. Hamilton has endured several periods of growth and decline (both financial and industrial), maintaining a long-standing rivalry with Toronto for resources, status, and prestige.

Hamilton is known as a "steel town" because of the role steel and other heavy manufacturing industries played in its development. The steel mills, along with the working-class image that they evoke, continue to loom large not only in Hamilton's reputation but also in the social imaginations of what Hamilton is and might become. However, a new discourse is forming around Hamilton as a post-industrial city and creativity is, for some, a source of hope for the city.

James Street North, a major downtown street in Hamilton, is a place that, at first glance, seems to exemplify the very grittiness for which the city is currently known. Hamilton's growth and decline is reflected in the development of James Street North. The street was once a financial hub and main transportation route in the city yet poverty and crime there can be severe. Abandoned buildings and boarded up shops are part of the social landscape. The street has real and visible signs of decay that both affect people who live in the neighbourhood and influence social imaginations of Hamilton itself. In recent

years, however, James Street North has also become home to a growing arts community, and the arts have come to embody hope for a revitalized street, neighbourhood and city. Galleries, a monthly art crawl, a summer art market, as well as several artists' studios, projects and centres have all recently been established.

I ask how the burgeoning arts scene on James Street North emerges out of, makes use of, and reacts to the materiality of the street itself. Why has James Street North become the centre of this new arts scene? Does the very grittiness and decay of the street inform the decisions of artists and galleries to locate there? Do the arts actually inject new creativity into the street, the city and the lives of its people? Finally, how do efforts at revitalization, concerns over displacement and feelings of loss that are part of the social fabric of the street connect to people's hopes, fears and dreams?

In critical social and cultural theory, cities have become key sites in which to understand how people are affected by social forces such as: modernity, deindustrialization, globalization and transnationalism (Benjamin and Tiedemann 1999, de Certeau 1984, Harvey 2003, Lefebvre 1996, Marcuse and van Kempen 2000, Sassen 2002). In contemporary anthropological theory these forces have productively been studied through an emphasis on open, mobile, contested, and varied forms of everyday practices within urban centres (Amin and Thrift 2002, Appadurai 1996, Low 1999, Haraway 1991, Latour 1993, and Massey, Allen and Pile 1999).

James Street North is an optimal place to explore these themes because of its place in Hamilton's rich history and Hamilton's status as a major Canadian city where such mobilities, flows, and circulations between and among people and things appear. They

appear not only in Hamilton’s historical shifts but also through the myriad embodiments of these shifts in the city’s everyday materiality. I approach the arts on James Street North as one such embodiment in the everyday life of a street.

Therefore, this ethnography examines the textured and layered materiality of James Street North, and the arts scene that currently calls this particular street home, in order to illuminate how people embody and imbue places with meaning. For Tuan (1977), an influential social geographer, place “is an object in which one can dwell” (12), and it is in these places of dwelling where people “try to embody their feelings, images, and thoughts in tangible material” (17).

As such, *I argue in this ethnography that art on James Street North is an ordinary everyday material response to the perceived challenges of poverty, crime and decay in downtown Hamilton, Ontario; it is a generative and tangible expression by arts stakeholders of the intangible hopes, desires and dreams for the city.* Further, I argue that *this response is ultimately tied to, and concerned with, larger questions about the authenticity of place.*

Pilgrimage to Here

“This is not a street (Ceci n’est pas une rue)

When you face the sun, close your eyes, and watch the coloured lines dance. Follow them, follow the heat and you’ll get there like I did (Taussig 2004:ix).

Shadows on concrete. Steps. The river Thames and St. Paul’s Cathedral just in sight but out of focus. A streetlight pole looms above: growing out of the sidewalk, floating in the air. Sewers are eyes for feet.

The street materializes before me as impressions of rooms upon rooms, and of artist upon artist, hang in my head. The sculptures, paintings, and media installations all confront me with a different vision of the world. Memories of Frida Kahlo’s tortured images, her smallness next to Diego Rivera,¹ her striking eyes, and the quiet penetration of her face move me.

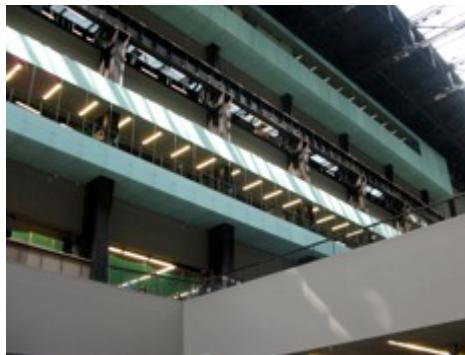
In August of 2005 I stepped out of the Tate Modern in London, England and found that the way I saw the world had changed. My engagements with environments, particularly urban ones, have never been the same since.

Without being aware of it, the hours spent scratching my head and staring in awe at the art performed a kind of spell. Kahlo’s collected work was what brought me to the

¹ The painting I am referring to here is: “Frida and Diego Rivera” or “Frieda Kahlo and Diego Rivera,” 1931. Oil on canvas, 100 x 79 cm. San Francisco (CA), San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Albert M. Bender Collection, Gift of Albert M. Bender.

old power station the Tate Modern is housed in but I left with so much more than the experience of viewing her art.²

There is a “sweet ugliness” in cities that I found that day; a sense of marvel that remains when I pass the crushed coffee cups, the cigarette buts and the vomit that tend to litter the streets where I live in downtown Hamilton, Ontario.



Inside the Tate Modern.
From the Turbine Hall looking up at the seven floors and over eighty galleries.
(August 15, 2005).



Looking to the River Thames.
From Southbank near the Tate Modern St. Paul's Cathedral is in the frame on the left.
(August 15, 2005).



Art Installation by Grace Loney.
Looking onto James Street North. Near James Street North. (July 22, 2010)



King Street West.
(April 22, 2008).

² Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron began converting the closed down Bankside Power Station in 1995. Tate Modern opened its doors to 120 000 visitors on May 12, 2000. The project cost £134 million and its size is 371 520 square feet. The Tate Modern is located in Southwark on the south bank of the River Thames (Nixon et al.:2001:3).

The ways in which my life has intersected with my work are varied and deeply personal. My life and intellectual trajectories have led to an interest in how people relate to, make and are made by the places in which they live or find meaning in.

I began my academic career by studying topics within the sub-discipline of anthropology of religion. I studied: Buddhist youth within the Western social landscape, pilgrimage in Glastonbury, England, and the crop circle³ movement as a new religious movement based upon crop circle enthusiasts' interpretations of the English countryside as a space for the sacred. Through these projects, I developed an interest in questions relating to space and the ways in which people make sense of and use symbolic and sacred landscapes as a basis for, among other things, social critique. I also became very interested in how memory operates in spaces, and how presents, futures and pasts meet in the materiality of people's surroundings.

Further, this work also spurred an interest in the relationship between the country and the city. Influenced by Leo Marx (2000 [1964]) and Raymond Williams (1982 [1973]), I looked into how people devised and made sense of concepts like “nature” and was especially intrigued by how nature exists in urban and built environments as well as in the country (Cronon 1995). David Harvey's (2003) work on historical Paris introduced me to the way lives are structured by the way things are built and by those who have the

³ In the 1980s, crop circles in English fields attracted international media attention, and researchers struggled to discover their origins. Despite the fact that their appearance has been dismissed as a hoax, crop circles have continued to provoke lively interest.

Currently, crop circle enthusiasm is a significant social phenomenon, evidenced in the hundreds of books, video productions, websites, tours, and conferences dedicated to the subject.

economic and social power to build things. These scholars were the first to shape my ideas about the city.

Through my previous studies of seemingly extraordinary places, I became increasingly interested in how the ordinary and the extraordinary meet, and where meaning lies in the seemingly very ordinary and urban environments that so many people inhabit in the contemporary world.

This led me to Hamilton. To the ordinary city in which I lived.

Pilgrimage to Here

Loss, mourning, the longing of memory, the desire to enter into the world around you and having no idea how to do it, the fear of observing too coldly or too distractedly or too raggedly, the rage of cowardice, the insight that is always arriving late, as defiant hindsight, a sense of utter uselessness of writing anything and yet the burning desire to write something, are the stopping places along the way (Behar 1996:3).

Hamilton is not my home but I chose to live there at three very different times in my life. It has served as a temporary home that I kept coming back to. I have struggled with what to write about my process and experience during this research. To say the least, I have gone through a difficult personal, creative and intellectual transformation since entering the PhD program at McMaster University in Hamilton a month after visiting the Tate Modern in 2005. Despite times of difficulties and ambivalence I have been invested and active in the city. I have changed and changed again in this city: making connections and losing them, finding space and re-inventing it, hurting and loving again and again.

Life in this city at once found me whole and fragmented. There are stories I can tell that hold together and then there are those that I can't and don't—no cohesion, only passing moments that I can't describe or hold onto. At times I was immobilized and

frustrated by Hamilton. It was not an easy city for me. I must admit sometimes *all the hope went hard.*

This personal process has informed larger questions that come to bear on this work: what happens if you lose faith in the place that you live? How do you tell a story of a place when all you see is grey? What spaces can be created for those who feel conflicted, silenced or alienated? How might a work of this kind show the “feral amnesia of us all,” which is alluded to in the Dionne Brand poem (2002) that begins this work? How do you show contradiction?

I did not go away for fieldwork. I did not find myself in a place I did not know struggling to communicate in a foreign language as many anthropologists stereotypically do. Instead, I stayed “home” at a time in my life when I was actually restless to leave. This decision also meant that I had to learn how to balance my work and home life in a way I might not have had I gone somewhere completely different for fieldwork. I stayed home at a time I felt lost. My journey was one of staying, of living where I lived, and of finding what I was once looking for in the extraordinary places I used to study right here in the everyday life of the place where I lived. Writing this ethnography has been a kind of pilgrimage for me: a pilgrimage of staying, a pilgrimage to here.

This project is an ethnography of urban change on James Street North as it relates to a burgeoning arts scene, and I was often asked why I was doing this project during the research. When a gallery owner and artist, who worked on James Street North, asked me this question in September 2009, I replied that the arts have always been at the forefront of my life. I write and come from an artistic (and academic) family: one of my uncles

makes his living as the sole Federal Government Sculptor in Canada, my other uncle is an accomplished classical guitarist, their mother, my grandmother, spent much of her life painting and singing, and my mother, as a young woman, danced and did theatre (a place I also spent a very good portion of my life). It was interesting to reflect on the fact that the arts have been part of my life for as long as I can remember and it was significant because I realized that, even as a scholar, the arts are always present for me in ways I don't always understand or am conscious of.

We talked about the important role art can play in our society, how neither of us separate our work from our lives, and we further discussed the value of art and the way in which art and scholarship can bring awareness to the general public about a variety of social issues. I told him I felt like I was at the beginning of a very interesting journey and I had no idea where it would lead! He said: "That's very exciting!" and I left excited.

Another acquaintance asked me the same question about the rationale behind my project around the same time. On that occasion I couldn't articulate the reasons but I knew it was important that I do the project. I told her of my love of pilgrimage and about my conflicting feelings about Hamilton as my new found home.

She said: "you're on a pilgrimage to here!"

On an external level I study the arts on James Street North but this does not say enough. Ethnography is a journey in which you enter into something new and are transformed by it. This is what Behar is referring to when she begins her chapter "The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart" by saying that: "Loss,

mourning, the longing of memory, the desire to enter into the world around you and having no idea how to do it... are the stopping places along the way (Behar 1996:3).

Pilgrimage and ethnography are both processes in which the individual and the larger social world are transformed by the pilgrim's (or the ethnographer's) relationship to the time and space they move through. Voyé (2002), for example, describes pilgrimage as the “materialization of the efforts the individual has to make to give himself or herself meaning” (124).

My ethnographic pilgrimage to and through Hamilton connects to the social time and space of James Street North in a very particular way. However, the voyage itself (i.e. the movement in and through place) is, I believe, shared with the research participants. For at its heart this project is really about the potentials that particular locations, and activities in those locations, hold for people.

Pilgrimage and Turner's Influence on Pilgrimage Studies

Pilgrimage is born of desire and belief. The desire for solutions to problems of all kinds that arise within the human situation. The belief is that somewhere beyond the known world there exists a power that can make right the difficulties that appear so insoluble and intractable here and now. All one must do is journey (Morinis 1992:1).

Why am I writing about pilgrimage in relation to James Street North? What I felt as an ethnographer on *a pilgrimage to here* is a powerful clue, to a deeper pattern and experience felt by others on the street. Furthermore, in doing this research, I realized there are significant commonalities found in all of my field sites to date: in each case, I have found a deep sense of meaning and connection within the material spaces in which people travel to and through. It is easy to see these connections when looking at a site such as

Glastonbury, England, which is literally in the pilgrimage-making business, or in a crop circle, where people travel great distances to hunt, tour, and simply *be* within the crop circles.

This section will explore the anthropological scholarship on pilgrimage and then go on to discuss pilgrimage in relation to secular travel as well as the importance of place for James Street North.

...

In his introduction to the collection *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, Alan Morinis (1992) provides a succinct definition of pilgrimage, stating that: “pilgrimage is a journey undertaken by a person in a quest of a place or a state that he or she believes to embody a valued ideal” (1992:4). In this simple, yet rich, definition of pilgrimage we find two key components that relate to James Street North: the journey to a place (or a state) and the embodiment of valued ideals. Before returning to Morinis’ definition, however, I begin by discussing the influence of Victor Turner on pilgrimage studies.

In anthropology, Victor and Edith Turner’s (1978) work is still highly influential, even if controversial. Turner, generally considered a symbolic anthropologist, was trained in the British structural-functionalism school. His work on rites of passage divides these rituals into three stages: separation, margin or liminality, and aggregation.

Moreover, Durkheim’s assertion in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1995, originally published 1915), that we imagine our world as being split between the “sacred” and the “profane” is also echoed in the work of Turner. In fact, Durkheim’s

work on religious festival, which he saw as a “social unifier and moral regenerator,” has been very influential in pilgrimages studies (Eade and Sallnow 1992:3). Other approaches to pilgrimage, influenced by Marx, have explored “the generation and maintenance of ideologies which legitimize domination and oppression” within these pilgrimage “cults” (Eade and Sallnow 1992:4).

Still focusing on the structural elements of pilgrimage, Turner viewed pilgrimage, like rites of passage, as anti-structural (Morinis 1992:8; Eade and Sallnow 1992:4). This anti-structural narrative follows a basic pattern: pilgrims, in “separating” themselves from the ordinary social structure in which they live by going on a pilgrimage, enter into a period of *liminality* where they are essentially structurally invisible (i.e. they lose their ordinary statuses and are anonymous). In so doing they enter into collective liminality, or *communitas*, which involves a sense of equality and connection or togetherness. The pilgrimage ritual then is the means by which a religious community experiences a sense of unity and harmony that overshadows the existing hierarchical and other distinctions (Turner and Turner 1978). Eade and Sallnow, commenting on Turner, add:

Pilgrimage, in other words, to the degree that it strips actors of their social personae and restores their essential individuality, is the ritual context *par excellence* in which a world religion strives to realize its defining transcultural universalism; for to reach the individual is to reach the universal (1992:4).

Turner’s focus on liminality gives us important clues about the dynamics of the ordinary cultural world, especially within specific religious traditions. However, his model has also been criticized. According to Eade and Sallnow, Turner’s theory “prejudges the complex character of the phenomenon but also imposes a spurious homogeneity on the practice of pilgrimage...” (1992:5). Morinis adds: “pilgrimage was

found to be a highly individualistic practice in which a person sought to establish direct contact with his deity, in contrast to the group event emphasized in Turner” (1992:8).

The focus instead, in the work of other scholars, is on heterogeneity, process and experience. Within this context there is also a focus on “competing religious and secular discourses” (Morinis 1992:9).

Pilgrimage on James Street North

In every major religion there are important sites of pilgrimage and routes along which faithful pilgrims journey. These can include: important birthplaces of religious figures, sites of revelation (as in Bodh Gaya, the place of the Buddha’s enlightenment), or places with a rich historic significance, such as the Holy Land. While pilgrimage studies have traditionally been concerned with religious pilgrimage and religious pilgrims, more recently, anthropologists and religious studies scholars have been extending the concept of pilgrimage to apparently “secular” destinations. Doss (2008) and King (1993) have analysed journeys to Graceland, for example, as pilgrimage. Peter Jan Margry’s edited volume, *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World: New Itineraries into the Sacred* (2008) sets an important precedent for looking at alternative, non-religious sites as pilgrimage destinations. The authors in the volume write about political, musical, sports, and cemetery pilgrimage sites from all over the world. Sites such as Jim Morrison’s grave (Margry 2008) and an annual motorcycle pilgrimage for Vietnam veterans (Dubisch 2008) are explored. While Margry is uneasy with the idea of secular pilgrimage and, instead, defines religion more broadly in order to look at the “religious dimensions of the

sites where a secular person is remembered” (36) the volume still deals seriously with secular sites as places where pilgrimages take place.

It is important to understand religion to encompass the social collectivity, following Durkheim, and the quest for meaning, following Geertz (1973). Adopting this approach, as Badone and Roseman do (2004), we can understand pilgrimages to sites such as Graceland or the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial, as well as the monthly journey to an Art Crawl on James Street North as being:

... travel in search of authenticity or self-renewal [which] falls under the rubric of the sacred, collapsing the distinction between secular voyaging and pilgrimage (2004:2).

One example of a secular pilgrimage that works very well is Jennifer Porter’s article, “Pilgrimage and the IDIC Ethic: Exploring *Star Trek* Convention Attendance as Pilgrimage” (2004). Porter begins with Morinis’ view of pilgrimage as a journey to a place or state that embodies a valued ideal in order to show how for *Star Trek* fans, a shared, cultural commitment to Gene Rodenberry’s ethic of Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combination makes attending *Star Trek* conventions a sacred journey. She concludes that:

The boundaries of pilgrimage can readily encompass such secular journeys and that such journeys need not have a spatial centre in order to represent for participants the meaningful pursuit and active embodiment of cultural ideals (2004:173).

Porter’s argument about pilgrimage occurring in “de-centred” space is an important one, especially when looking at alternative and secular sites. However, for James Street North it is the place itself that draws people to it. In this way, James Street

North fits well within Turner's theories about the role of place in pilgrimage. Badone and Roseman state:

Through the journey to a distinct holy place, the pilgrim is separated from the rule-governed structures of mundane social life, becoming both geographically and socially marginal. Turner (1974) argues that pilgrimage centres are frequently found in peripheral locations distinct from centres of political and economic influence. Thus the pilgrimage shrine is spatially liminal..." (2004: 3-4).

We see this statement hold true for James Street North. Historically, the street was geographically central, while currently it is socially marginal. It is a place where Turnerian *communitas* as well as "divisiveness and discord" (Eade and Sallnow 1991:5) are both performed. James Street North can be seen as located,

in the interstices of social structure: among the poor, outcasts, and those like artists and religious virtuosos who consciously remove themselves from some of the constraints of society (Badone and Roseman 2004:3).

Visits to James Street North are like doing fieldwork at home, like a mini-pilgrimage, or mini-vacation – they don't take you far away or for a long time, but they take you into a liminal space. If tourism is a kind of search for authenticity, renewal, the exotic, and redemption, then James Street North also provides these qualities. The search for authenticity that occurs on James Street North also occurs in travel to the 'Other,' in the form of the 'exotic,' or the 'untouched' natural world where one of the hoped for outcomes is a sense of "redemption." The perceived redemptive quality of travel to the "Other" still holds great symbolic power for individual travellers.

In my view, people on James Street North express a definite sense of, and value in, the removal of "some of the constraints of society" for people. This removal of constraints is not only apparent in arts stakeholders' personal decisions and choices of

alternative lifestyles but also in the ways in which people travel to the street. James Street North has become a location in which:

Modern individuals respond to their routinized work lives by regularly seeking out the inverse in leisure activities...these individuals embark on journeys that are primarily quests for an ‘authenticity’ that is missing in their everyday lives (Badone and Roseman 2004:6, discussing Graburn 1977, 1989 and MacCannell 1976).

I argue that, even within an urban setting, it is possible to find alternative locations that provide the “inverse” to a deep sense of urban alienation. On a busy modern downtown street, such as James Street North, people seek out and find what would typically be sought and found in historic and rural settings. Like Simon Coleman’s “heritage pilgrims” in Walsingham, England (2004), visitors to James Street North also “invoke the ideal of a past that can be imagined and to take on material and spatial form” (2004:52). According to Nelson Graburn,

As urban alienation leads to the “search for more ‘authentic’ experiences for people seeking connectedness and community, imagining it is found in ‘simpler, gentler’ lifestyles...in rural cultures” (Badone 2004:183 citing Graburn 1995:197).

James Street North may not be a “gentler” setting but it is a place in which people seek out authentic experiences and respite from a climate of post-industrial urban alienation.

The work of Martha Radice, an anthropologist who studied four multiethnic neighbourhoods in Montreal, is also relevant here because, in her discussion concerning cosmopolitanism, authenticity and Othering are central themes. Here, she writes about commodified cosmopolitanism, a kind of “place-marketing” strategy, in her field sites:

...commodified cosmopolitanism in my street study might involve the sale of exotic food, music, clothes, and the like, where the transaction is seen as inauthentic, either because the seller or the goods are not ‘really’ of that

culture or because the buyer buys in order to show off his or her knowledge of those goods (2009:151-152).

And:

This gradual construction and dissemination of the myth of cool, cosmopolitan Mile End doubtless contributes to the continuing residential and commercial gentrification of the neighbourhood (2009:152).

On James Street North, I argue that the search for authenticity does involve what Radice identifies as a kind of constructed “coolness,” but that there is also subtle, but nonetheless tangible, connection to the streetscape that develops among visitors and residents over time. In fact, Radice concludes her discussion of cosmopolitanism by stating that even in what appears to be a ‘superficial inter-ethnic exchange in the sphere of consumption’ there are also more “personal” or “consequential spheres of action” taking place (2009:153-154).

If “place equals space plus meaning; individuals and groups make places relevant and meaningful through their actions and ideas” (Radice, 2011:13) then James Street North is a place where meaning-making is on overdrive. It is a space of place-marketing, travel to the Other, respite, redemption, celebration and conflict. And while, pilgrimage is not a word that comes up often, nor do people on the street define themselves as pilgrims, James Street North has become a major site in Hamilton in which people experience almost sacred meaning. So, just as a pilgrimage may be ‘made’ in major pilgrimage sites and not necessarily ‘felt’, I argue, a pilgrimage can be felt without being ‘made.’

People for whom the street holds importance place within it the values of a new sense of community and economy for Hamilton. It holds hope and nostalgia in equal measure in the very bricks, graffiti, and concrete of the street. It is a place to which people

relocate and travel from both within the city and without. For those who are committed to the arts scene on James Street North, the street embodies an almost sacred sense of the possibility of personal and social transformation.

Ethnographic Standpoints: Methodology

My ethnographic research began in February 2009, and continued for approximately twenty-two months. I moved onto James Street North nine months before the end of fieldwork but lived a fifteen-minute walk away from the street before that. To understand, and bring to life, people's experiences on James Street North, and how those experiences inform other aspects of their lives, I conducted over a hundred open-ended interviews and approximately thirty semi-structured interviews with arts scene stakeholders between May 2009 and April 2010.

In addition to interviews and “hanging-out” on the street listening to how people talk about Hamilton and James Street North, I attended events, walking-tours, dinners and public discussions that related directly to either James Street North or the arts in Hamilton.

Throughout this entire process I supplemented the analysis of interviews and field data by working with and analyzing materials such as: photographs, visual art, video, websites, blogs, online photo sharing, maps, posterizing and graffiti related to the arts on James Street North.

When I talk about the arts scene on James Street North I am generally referring to a loose and shifting group of people who use the street for creating, displaying, and

consuming the visual arts. However, other creative outlets, such as film and music, as well as businesses that cater to this group, are also an important part of the “scene.”

Community Involvement

I volunteered at *Hamilton Artist’s Inc.* once a week from August 2009 to February 2010, and helped with their annual *Sin Circus* event in 2009 and with a panel discussion on sex work that Hamilton Artist’s Inc. and the *Worker’s Art and Heritage Centre* collaboratively organized in February 2010. I also wrote articles for *H Magazine* (a local monthly arts and culture paper) from August 2009 until March 2010.

I joined *H.A.N.D.* (Hamiltonians Against Neighbourhood Displacement) in its initial phases, and before it was named *H.A.N.D.*, from October 2009 until December 2009. I left for several reasons, the most important being that privacy at meetings was very important to its members and I could not, in good conscience, attend as an anthropologist given the stress they put on privacy. Further, I could not agree with their manifesto in its entirety (a requirement for membership) and learned that questioning basic assumptions was not possible. The group’s purpose was political action and mine was intellectual exploration. While the two do not necessarily work at odds, and they do not for many people, in my case, and in this situation, I felt they did. When I write about this phase in the research it will be about the group’s public actions and not their private meetings. I have taken great pains to use only data about *H.A.N.D.* that I discovered in public interactions where any member of the public could have gained the same information by paying attention. Further, while the meetings at *H.A.N.D.* were private the fact that this group existed was not.

In addition, I joined *The Cossart Exchange*, a creative business incubator in downtown Hamilton, from August 2010 until August 2011 and worked with them to help make connections with the McMaster University community by co-organizing a career event for graduate students. My decision to join *The Cossart Exchange*, while connected to the research, was a personal choice; I was no longer interviewing at the time, and everyone involved was aware of my project.

Although I do write about *Hamilton Artist's Inc.*, *H Magazine*, *H.A.N.D.*, and *The Cossart Exchange* in later chapters I do not feel that my involvement with any of these organizations or groups compromised my academic freedom or honesty and I ask that the reader not assume particular allegiances or intellectual stances as my thoughts on the issues that have arisen during the research are complex, changing and open to further development.

Throughout the writing phase I continued to live on James Street North, attend events and informally talk to people. The street continued to be a major source of inspiration for the writing process. The descriptions I have included in this thesis are inspired by field notes and living on the street while writing the ethnography.

Interviews and Ethics

While in the early planning stages of the research I had hoped to also explore how the arts scene was experienced and understood by people not directly in the arts scene. The majority of my interviews, however, were with people linked to the arts. This was due to three factors. One, there are a lot of people who have a connection to the arts on James Street North and I wanted a good cross section of that population. Two, I found it

difficult to break into the other groups (such as the Portuguese community) on the street early on, and this influenced the direction I took. Three, I needed to make the data manageable. I realized while doing the research that in order to do justice to those not identifiably involved in the arts I would have to do another study to fully explore and understand the arts' impact on the neighbourhood. The impact the arts are having on those populations will need to be explored further in future projects.

I interviewed people with whom I came into contact while conducting participant observation in public places on the street, people who were recommended to me (i.e. snowball sampling), public figures and business owners who I contacted through an email introduction, and, on rare occasions, those who contacted me wishing to be interviewed. I worked to reduce a sense of obligation or pressure for an interview by not approaching friends. Although some of those I interviewed slowly became friends, I made a choice during fieldwork to avoid making the arts scene my main social network.

Participants were given a letter of consent (see appendix) that discussed the harms, risks and benefits of participating in the study. Given the nature of qualitative research, it is possible that a research participant may disclose information in which they feel vulnerable, exposed, or at psychological or social risk. I believe, however, that this research did not expose participants to more than minimal risk because I did not ask them about personal issues beyond what they might have been asked and/or talked about in their everyday public lives.

For my interviewees, the benefits of participating, however, included the reflexive opportunity to talk about their involvement in the arts, the place in which they live, and

what the city and the street mean to them. This opportunity to reflect is valuable for people as they make sense of their experiences. Additionally, participation in the study allowed for the furthering of intellectual and social knowledge about Hamilton, Ontario, and helped expand understanding of Canadian city life, in general, and Hamilton's place in larger global contexts, in particular.

I have voluntarily been interviewed for four social science projects, and as such, have first-hand knowledge about what the interview experience can bring up for a research participant. This knowledge has made me sensitive to how participants may feel vulnerable during and after an interview. Participants were informed that they could withdraw at any point in the research process (none chose to withdraw) and no compensation was given.

In order to protect privacy I took care to make participants aware that they would be given pseudonyms and that identifying information that they shared with me would be removed from the ethnography and any additional publications that may come out of the research. However, in order to respect human dignity, I also gave participants the choice as to whether they wanted to have pseudonyms and identifying information removed or if they wanted to be identified. The reason for this is that for some, participation may mean they want to receive recognition.⁴ Therefore, I felt it was important to give them this choice. The majority of participants chose to be identified.

Given the very interrelated and public nature of the arts in Hamilton and on James Street North it is possible that participants could be identified by readers of this work. I

⁴ The AAA ethics document discusses this issue. See Part III, Section A, clause 3 of "The Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association" (American Anthropological Association 1998).

have chosen a combination of ways to deal with privacy. First, public documents, art shows, events, websites, articles and public Facebook pages (i.e. public groups accessible to everyone on the Internet) are treated as public and therefore individuals are identified. However, in the cases of public events that many community members attended, only presenters or panellists are identified, not audience members because the presenters and panellists more willingly and consciously put themselves in a public position with the chance of being quoted. Second, I have respected the participant's request to be identified or not identified as best I can. However, while participants may have chosen to be identified, they may not have been aware of how their comments could influence others or indirectly reveal others' identities, so I have also been careful not to identify people in those cases. Third, in the case when parts of interviews are clearly private or very sensitive, I have taken care to disguise the speaker or write in more general terms.

Of those I interviewed: twelve were financially invested (that is they either own businesses or make a living on James Street North), three were spokespeople for organizations located on James Street North, eight were artists, two were city officials, two grew up on James Street North as children, and five others were either interested in James Street North or part of the arts scene. Some people fell into more than one category. For example, a financially invested participant might also be an artist. Further, eighteen were men and fourteen were women, three were openly gay or lesbian, all were of European descent and employed, and their ages ranged from the mid-twenties to the mid-sixties.

Generally, interviews took place either in the participants' workplaces or at downtown coffee shops or restaurants. All but five of the interviews were digitally recorded, and when recording was not permissible or possible due to noise or location I took careful notes. Each interview was between forty minutes to two hours with an average of just over an hour.

While I had an interview guide (see appendix), each interview was unique to the person with whom I talked. My aim was to give participants free range to discuss matters that were relevant to them. The basic structure of the interviews, however, involved talking about Hamilton, then James Street North, then the arts in Hamilton, and finally about the interviewee's involvement in the arts on James Street North. I wanted to understand James Street North in the context of its place within Hamilton and was primarily interested in social and spatial dynamics. I have no doubt that someone with a different background would produce a very different study than this one.

Dialogic Reflexivity: Ethnography as a Process and a Product

I am not an objective observer and this ethnography has significant elements of reflexivity. When I first fell in love with anthropology I was primarily concerned with how people experienced their worlds. I wanted to find a way to evoke a sense of the world as it is and, in doing that, discover ways to meet diverse experiences with a sense of understanding rather than judgement. This approach does not lend itself well to explanatory frameworks nor to ideological political action. This kind of ethnography is still, however, a choice with consequences.

I take as a starting point cultural anthropologist William Rodman's first line of “When Questions are Answers”:

This is what I think happened....What follows is a fiction, but it's as true a fiction as I can write based on my own experience on the island and the information available to me (1991:421).

I write a fiction as true as a fiction can be, but I write it based upon the encounters I have had with the people, places and things that were part of my field site. However, those encounters have been coloured by my positions within Hamilton and elsewhere. My choice to include myself in the narrative (in this fiction) is a feminist and a personal choice. As Behar (1996:21) observed of herself in the academy as a Chicana woman on the borders, I have found that as a lesbian, also on the margins, my “anthropological mask” has been “peeling off” for some time. I cannot look at the world in any other way.

Revelations of self are risky for an academic (Behar 1996:11) but the journey an anthropologist takes is one that is filtered through the self for good or ill. However, as Behar poignantly argues, we also need to have a:

keen understanding of what aspects of the self are the most important filters through which one perceives the world, and more particularly, the topic (1996:13).

As a small example, every time I dropped my partner's hand while we walked past the groups of Italian and Portuguese men that hang around outside on James Street every day, or when I looked away or politely smiled at the daily calls of “*Hi Bella*” or whistles I received, my position in the world impacted how I engaged, was excluded, or chose not to engage, with the Street, and in effect this project. Further, a decision I made

several years ago to leave the queer community I was once engaged in also impacted this work and my relationship to Hamilton itself.

However, it is important to note these reflections about my engagements do not travel only one way. I note immediately what Rodman calls an “Other side to reflexivity.”

The people we study study us, even in the moments we do not study them. We are not just observers observed; we are interpreters interpreted....This is an Other side to reflexivity, one crucial to understanding the dialogics of encounters in field research, and one that anthropologists have only begun to explore (1991:432).

Ethnography is both a process and a product; a dialogic doing and a describing. “It is an awful prospect, giving up one’s cloak of academic objectivity” (Behar 1996:11) but we ask our respondents to open themselves up to us. They are vulnerable in this process as well (Behar 1996:21). This ethnographic work we do is, I dare to coin the term, a process of *dialogic reflexivity*.

As an ethnographer, I already stood in a particular location in relation to those I studied. This was not collaborative research where those for whom the research is about and impacts determined research goals, questions and results. It was ethnographic research where during fieldwork I made decisions about how I would get involved (or not) in political and other actions that were taking place in the field site.

My position as an ethnographer provided me with the ability to talk to people who weren’t necessarily talking to each other, and I actively valued and protected this stance. I did not want to form opinions and allegiances that would be sources of alienation. However, other people can, and possibly did, interpret my choices as a source of alienation.

While it may seem like there is a great deal of control, autonomy and distance in these methodological choices, I do believe that ultimately the research participants directed this research in many ways. Their concerns, and how and what they did and talked about, to a large extent, became what I became concerned about. No amount of reading or planning, for example, could have prepared me for stepping into fieldwork on the arts scene to find myself spending six months on the issue of sex work.

My next point of entry into this discussion is a theoretical consideration of the construction of narratives, and how ways of knowing, being, and acting in the world are constituted. I find especially useful archaeologist Rosemary Joyce's Bakhtinian exploration of how archaeology (both the doing and the writing) is a multi-voiced project involving a dialogue between the site or text, the individual actor or author, and the "weight of what has traditionally been thought and 'known'" (2002:6-7). Within this framework the stories that we tell matter because they are dialogic; they have ethical effects in the world (2002:14). We must accept responsibility for them.

Joyce further argues that Bakhtin's notion of "total context" is necessary because it accounts for "the total speech context" and situates differing voices in a dialogue instead of reducing them and evaluating them as separate acts (2002:31). Yet the dialogue matters: "it shapes ongoing social reality" (Joyce quoting Bakhtin 2002:31). This argument helps in that it does not "other" arts stakeholder's claims nor does it necessarily privilege specialist knowledge over non-specialist knowledge. I include several passages of community dialogue in the ethnography in order to look at the dialogue without giving one voice more weight than others.

Ethnography has the double meaning of writing and doing. Also, neither is ethnography a “simple process of transcription of what is on the ground” (Joyce 2002:5,7). Even more so than archaeology, ethnography is dialogic. I entered the field with both conscious and unconscious assumptions and understandings about what I was doing. Furthermore, the “field” was not a simple site. Not only was it not a bounded or homogenous cultural field, it was part of “politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions” (Rodman 2003:205). Again, those I encountered were in dialogue with me, and the discipline with which I am associated.

In entering the field as both an insider (a creative person studying the arts) and an outsider (an academic), and as a subject and an object informed the way in which I work, how people related to me, and how I analyzed what appeared to be (and of course never was) neutral data. “What follows is a fiction” (Rodman 1991:421, cf Clifford 1986).

Neutrality is not an option. Like Harding, who worked on American Baptists, I found “there is no such thing as a neutral, ‘participant-observer’ position, no place for an ethnographer who seeks ‘information’ (1987:171).

Distance is also not an option. In fact, some feminists have suggested that it is not desirable to do “value-free” research; that not only is it impossible to “uncover ‘facts’ and the ‘truth’,” it is not moral or practical either. There is always the danger of being exploitative and working against the interests of the people whom you study (Wolf 1996:4). However, as I have found, the interests of the people are not homogenous and working for or against them is not a straightforward task. Nor does one group or individual have a single voice.

In projects that attempt to show “how many voices clamour for expression” (Clifford 1986:15) there is still a sense that the voices are whole, and that, for example, the record of an interview (or personal narrative) can still represent a voice (even if only partially). What happens when these voices inhabit spaces of irony (absurd gaps between action and expectation), paradox (seeming falsities), and contradiction (inconsistencies and ill-logic)? People, in many ways, do not live their lives according to logic, and what one thinks, says or does at one moment may not be true for that same person at another moment.

Anthropologists are increasingly concerned with polyvocality, heterogeneous dialogues, contestations, frictions, and cultures as diffused and borderless (see for example, Bakhtin 1981, Clifford and Marcus 1986, Marcus 1995, Tsing 2005). This kind of work involves not only how anthropologists theorize communities and cultures but also the very ground on which they work, the places in which they stand, and their willingness to be mutually vulnerable.

Feminist ethnographers have also suggested ways of imagining and doing fieldwork in line with these trends. Some have recommended that you do work that you are passionate about (Wolf 1996:5), that you experiment with writing in order to be accountable to your subjects and to “accord greater voice and recover their agency” (Brettell 2006:75), and, finally, to think about disidentification, multiple positioning, intersubjectivity, and partiality rather than universality “as a basis for knowledge claims” (Visweswaran 1997:593, 613; Wolf 1996:5,14). Visweswaran asks that, in the case of gender, that it:

not be the endpoint of analysis but rather [the] entry point into complex systems of meaning and power....Gender is perhaps best understood as a heuristic device and cannot be understood a priori, apart from particular systems of representation (1997:616).

While this ethnography is about a city contradictorily imagined through the lens of arts stakeholders, gender has also impacted this work significantly: in the dialogic processes that helped create the product.

During an interview with a James Street North gallery owner I was asked if I ever challenged people. I said that I generally didn't directly challenge people but that I did try to ask challenging questions. I told him that what mattered to me in the research process was what mattered to the people I spoke with and all of their divergent, connected and disconnected viewpoints.

I always knew, however, that I would have to go away and produce an ethnography that would form conclusions and that I would be, for the most part, doing that alone. I have struggled in the writing with trying not to represent people or groups as singular, as objects, or as bits of data. I do not want to simply do lip service to contradictions while my methods and theories work to smooth everything out.

This engagement is partly inspired by Haraway's explorations of irony and cyborg in her "Cyborg Manifesto," where the cyborg is, among other things, "a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centres structuring any possibility of historical transformations" (1991:150). It is also influenced by the work of Edith Turner and other anthropologists who have attempted to come to terms with an anthropology of experience, where anthropologists actively engage with extraordinary experiences, and are, perhaps non-apologetically, changed by them.

In Edith Turner's (2006) review of "the study of spirit experience" within anthropology, she shows how anthropologists have been struggling for over half a century to find a way to validate, within the larger discipline, such an anthropology of experience. Goulet and Young (1994) also point out that even though the emic, that intimate insider's perspective, has been an important foundation of anthropology, "emic views are not considered as serious alternatives to Western scientific conceptions of reality" (10). Rationalist approaches have generally dominated (Goulet and Young 1994:300), even though the radical empiricist phenomenology and informed subjectivity of Jackson (1989) works against notions of the detached observer still dominating as an "ideal" (Turner 2006:51). Similarly, Turnbull (1990) says that we need "a technique of participation that demands total involvement of our whole being" (51), and Stoller (1984) argues against "ethnographic realism" in favour of a subjectivity where:

the world of the field cries out silently for description and the anthropological writer, using evocative language, brings life to the field and beckons the reader to discover something anew (42).

The work that follows is, therefore, the condensation of at least three positions: the experiences, thoughts and opinions of the research participants, my particular stance in the world, and how the broader academic literatures speak to the issues that are explored in the ethnography. I turn to these literatures now.

Ordinary Generative Moments, Materiality and The City



*Pumpkins, Squash and Cabbage for Sale
James Street North (October 21, 2010)*

In order to unpack the ideas discussed so far, and approach the embodied shifts in materiality I have eluded to, anthropologist Kathleen Stewart's work on *Ordinary Affects* (2007) and the "Generativity of Emergent Things" (1993) is useful. I will then move on to trace and track some of the genealogies of material culture and urban studies.⁵

Affect and Sensual Objects

Stewart's work explores generative moments. These moments, she argues, have the potential to impact and open up possibilities for how people imagine their worlds and themselves. Generative moments are moments that happen every day and influence how we relate to each other and our environments. They occur in a:

wild mix of things—technologies, sensibilities, laws of power and money, daydreams, institutions, ways of experiencing time and space, battles, dramas, bodily states, and innumerable practices of everyday life (1993:1016).

⁵ See also Brian Massumi (2003), who discusses the importance of being open to the moments of affect in which we allow ourselves to affect and be affected by others in order to allow for transformative "transition[s], however slight" (212).

These generative moments of affect, which she terms “cultural poesis,” not only have the potential to show what is possible but to also show what is built up, what decays, what remains and what is lost. Her writing:

follows leads, sidesteps, and delays, and it piles up, creating layers on layers, in an effort to drag things into view, to follow trajectories in motion, and to scope out the shape and shadows and traces of assemblages that solidify and grow entrenched, perhaps doing real damage or holding real hope, and then dissipate, morph, rot, or give way to something new (1993:1016).⁶

Stewart makes the important observation that moments of affect happen in ordinary life and are hence accessible. She states, building on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), that:

ordinary affects are the varied, surging capacities to affect and to be affected that give everyday life the quality of a continual motion of relations, scenes, contingencies and emergences. They’re things that happen (2007:3).

Stewart’s ethnographic writing gestures at the speculative (rather than the representational), in order to evoke a sense of curiosity in her readers as she “tracks” the movements of objects through embodied experiences (1993:1029). De Certeau also questions the usefulness of “representations of society” and “its modes of behaviour,” advocating instead for questions of making and doing, for which he says poesis (a way to “invent, create, and generate”) is well suited (1984:xii).

Seremetakis’ view on objects is similar to Stewarts’ view of affect. For example, Seremetakis (1994) argues that studies in material culture should deal seriously with sensory experience, and that they should primarily be:

⁶ Further, in her ethnography *A Space at the Side of the Road* (1996) she also and talks about “heaping detail upon detail” (1996:21).

concerned with how intrinsic perceptual qualities of objects express their sensory history, and how this salience can motivate and animate their exchange and shared consumption (134).

An example of doing sensory history is found in the way she traces the life of Aphrodite's peach – a peach that was once found in Greek markets but has since been replaced by other “tasteless” peaches due to European Economic Community (EEC) market trends and restrictions. Seremetakis says that the loss of the peach “is a double absence; it reveals the extent to which the senses are entangled with history, memory, forgetfulness, narrative and silence” (Seremetakis 1994:2).

These theorists suggest a strategy for actively changing the very way that researchers can see the world and approach their work. Further, Taussig (2004, inspired by Benjamin, speaks of discovering a “dialectical optic” that discerns “the mystery in the everyday” and the “everydayness of mystery” (25), which works to “animate” sensory histories and moments of affect.

Taussig shows this everyday mystery in his work by using “the method of montage” (90). In montage, the idea of the dialectical image, with its “piled-up contradiction” and “juxtaposition of images,” produces a sense of shock, and this shock is:

a phase of compressed nothingness in which memory, space, and time all coagulate and then reconfigure past and present, leading to a third dimension, which is the alchemical one wherein image and material being fuse and transform one another (235).

Other ways in which theorists have shown contradictions include: “writing the interruption of writing” in order to “capture the shifting world” (Cadava 1997:xx), and

using story as a disruption of “homogeneity and repetition” (Tsing 1993:125) in order to purposefully *not* try to smooth over the rough edges of life, or to pin things down.

I think that it is valuable to at least attempt to track generative moments, trace sensory histories, reveal layers, pile up contradictions, shock, interrupt, speculate and imagine. I was introduced to Stewart, Seremetakis, Taussig (Stewart’s doctoral supervisor) and Benjamin (Taussig’s main source of inspiration) at the same time, and they fundamentally and profoundly altered the way I thought about the possibilities that might exist for me as an anthropologist.

In becoming familiar with the work of these scholars, I realized that it was possible to embrace contradictions, to avoid having final answers, and to find a sense of groundlessness in both the ephemeral and the material. My field site is full of contradiction. I use description, narrative, and detail to open up possibilities rather than close them. Hence, the reader will find at times that my work gestures, evokes, alludes and is intentionally open. My exploration of both the social imaginations and the material “stuff” within the arts scene on James Street North is highly influenced by the approaches of the writers I have discussed above.

Material Culture and Materiality

Another key body of literature that I draw upon in my discussion of James Street North’s art scene is work on materiality and material culture. The study of materiality has emerged as an important field within social and cultural anthropology in the past few decades. Material culture studies grew in the 1970s and 1980s, primarily in Britain with the formation of the Material Culture Group at the Archaeology Institute of University

College London. Scholars such as Barbara Bender (1998), Victor Buchli (2002), Adrian Forty and Susanne Küchler (2001), Daniel Miller (2005), and Christopher Tilley (1994) were important members of this group, and have produced an influential body of scholarship. Other important contemporary theorists outside of Britain who have worked seriously on issues dealing with materiality and material culture include: Arjun Appadurai (1986), Pierre Bourdieu (1977), Judith Butler (1993), Webb Keane (1997), and Fred R. Myers (2001) to name only a few. However, since its inception, the discipline of anthropology has been concerned with understanding societies through ‘things’.

‘Material culture’, as a term used to denote a field of study, was first used in the nineteenth century, and was institutionally housed in European and American museums (Buchli 2002:2). At that point in time, scholarly attention was focused on the artefact, and this focus can be understood as coming out of Enlightenment ideals such as a desire to order things and a general concern with “the materiality of social life” (Buchli 2002:3). Additionally, the particularly Victorian and ‘Western’ ideals of “empiricism, progress, and perfectible unilineal evolution”, along with the fascination with ordering and collecting of objects (and often people), helped to serve colonial political projects that put people in their place and Europeans on top (Buchli 2002:6). The development of structuralism and functionalism within British social anthropology in the 1920s, and specifically the advent of fieldwork, supplanted the artefact (and evolutionism) with the ethnography as the primary way in which culture should be understood (Buchli 2002:9; Tilley 2006:2). The object was dead, to be resurrected half a century later.

Material culture studies deal with the meanings embedded in objects, and what we can learn about cultures through the objects that are used and left behind. For Tilley materiality is a concept that “provides both the starting point and the justification” of material culture studies (2006:1). Materiality is both a reference to the material and a kind of thinking and theorizing about that same material. Materiality is a coming into being; a concept which considers how material is materialized.

There is, however, the question of what counts as the material being materialized. Here Tilley succinctly shows, in defining materiality, the common sense divisions between the material and the immaterial:

materiality can mean substance, something comprised of elements or constituents, of variously composed matter: the tangible, the existing or concrete, the substantial, the worldly and real as opposed to the imaginary, ideal and value-laden aspects of human existence. The concept of materiality is thus typically used to refer to the fleshy, the corporeal and physical, as opposed to spiritual, ideal and value-laden aspects of human existence. Materiality can also be taken to refer to individual things, or collections of things, rather than to persons or societies (emphasis in original, 2006:3).

Materiality, then, seems to be primarily concerned with real, physical, substances as opposed to values and ideologies. It also seems to suggest a division between people and things. Human beings (despite their corporeality) are often removed from the study of the things people use, construct, and are surrounded by.

Historically within the study of material culture, humans are only present in that they provide the meaning for such things. There is a sense that things cannot be understood on their own, but only as they relate to human experience. For example, Hoskins’ (1998) work on the biographies of objects in Eastern Indonesia uses objects to

tell the stories of people's lives. There is, hence, a strong sense that the object tells the human's life.

I do not think, however, that it would be difficult to convince anyone that people are also material beings. Still, it is interesting that a general trend in much of the scholarship on materiality has been to focus on the materiality of anything but humans. Buchli believes, for example, that "the nineteenth century idea that culture change could be evinced from our relationship to objects and thereby coped with more effectively has not really shifted much" in current scholarship (2002:13).

Perhaps this is true. Perhaps the study of materiality is still caught within the trap of a modernity that needs to purify nature from society, and do so by creating identifiable, dualistic subjects and objects (Latour 1993). I think that the fact that humans possess within them both the material and the immaterial complicates issues in a way that can be very productive and exciting when studying materiality. I do not want to suggest that we turn the study of materiality into yet another way to talk about ourselves. In fact, I find recent trends, which put humans aside and ask questions about the lively nature of things, inspiring. I do, however, want to question how these divisions operate and what they mean to our understandings of materiality.

Miller asks how a study of materiality that begins with an artefact, "breaks down as we move on to consider the large compass of materiality, the ephemeral, the imaginary, the biological, and the theoretical; all that which would have been external to the simple definition of an artefact" (2005:4). He goes on to suggest that we should look at the "the pluralism of materiality and the pluralism of immateriality" (2005:29), and that

even “immateriality can only be expressed through materiality”, and so the study of materiality is also the study of immateriality, and vice versa (Miller 2005:28). I seek to apply these valuable insights to my work.

I approach the ephemeral and the imaginary as materially real; a real that is haunted by spectres, as Derrida (1994) has suggested, a real in which material things have agency (Gell 1998), and a real where social lives that can be traced through objects (Appadurai 1986).

In this ethnography the arts scene on James Street North is analyzed as both a material thing and something that is becoming materialized. There is a sense of becoming, of coming into being that is particularly salient for those within the arts scene.

The City

There is a growing body of literature on cities that informs my work. This literature is interdisciplinary in nature and includes, but is not limited to, work done in the following disciplines and fields: anthropology, architecture and fine arts, cultural geography, cultural and literary studies, history, philosophy, and sociology. Here, I trace the development of some research in the area.

Social urban studies originated with George Simmel’s (1903) sociology of cities. Simmel looked at how modern cities were impersonal, and as such, were taking over individual agency. His work influenced the Chicago School of the 1920 and 30s, which approached the city as a microenvironment that could provide a model for understanding “cultural” groups. Sociologists such as Burgess and Bogue (1967) used a biological model when looking at cities, and as such, the work of this period is often characterized

as too general and reductive (Miles and Hall 2003:4). In the 1950s “community studies” became popular. This scholarship came out of programs designed to address “slum clearance and replacement housing in London, England and Lagos, Nigeria” (Low 1999:2). Here, interest in the city was focussed on kin networks and how government planning and land tenure rights were influencing communities. In the 1970s, studies out of Leeds University sought to show the links between the local and the national, and in the 1980s “the social organization paradigm that dominated earlier studies was superseded” by work on political economy and structural forces (Low 1999:4).

In terms of the discipline of anthropology, Setha Low (1999) outlines the major areas of focus that an anthropology of the city has taken: 1) studies on ethnicity and marginality; 2) work that considers how people are divided, displaced, abandoned, and segregated within cities; 3) feminist scholarship on how gender, sex and sexuality influence people’s access to and use of cities; 4) work that looks at contestation and resistance within cities in the form of social movements, parades and carnivals; 5) studies which consider the impacts of deindustrialization, globalization and transnationalism on people and cities; 6) work that tries to understand how new forms of communication and media are changing how people view space and community, and how that information can then become a form of power and control; 7) explorations of urban planning from modern, colonial, planned cities to “post-modern,” shifting and “non-spaces” to walled or fenced-in cities and spaces; 8) work done on the impacts of religious movements on cities (and vice versa); 9) and finally a focus on the tensions that exist in the desires and

attempts to preserve cultural traditions in the face of the perceived “rapid” social changes that occur within cities.

Within this framework, Low’s work on the anthropology of the city looks at “the social relations, symbols, and political economies” of cities in order to understand how “everyday practice provides valuable insights into the linkages of these [post-industrial and capitalist] processes” (1999:2).

Similarly, Richard Sennett (1994), in his discussion of the relationship between the body and the city, suggests that while modern cities have made bodies passive within, and desensitized to, urban spaces (21) this is not the whole story for the contemporary city is also a space that “intensifies the complexity of social life” by bringing diverse groups of people together, and in so doing the city can become a space in which people are able to resist domination (26).

Low is also interested in this intensification, and her focus on the city as a space that enables social change is currently a common theme in much of the work done on cities.

Additionally, it is useful to draw upon studies done in geography on everyday urbanism. Current scholarship in this area focuses on context, narrative, and “ways of perceiving and understanding the world and the incommensurate and divergent nature of people’s realities” (Adams, et al. 2001:xvii-xviii). These trends in the current scholarship, however, come out of the humanistic geography of the 1970s, which sought to understand everyday geographies by using phenomenological, hermeneutic and ethnographic approaches. Humanistic geographers asked, for example, “how do humans make the

world into a home?” They “focused on the richness of particular locales,” and they viewed the city as a social construction (Adams, et al. 2001: xv). Their approach was reflexive and subjective, but, ultimately, they too were criticized for being too universalizing and generalizing.

Other trajectories that have been highly influential in current studies of cities are: the Frankfurt school, with its neo-Marxist emphasis on contradiction and possibilities for social change through social research and criticism; cultural studies, with its emphasis on everyday life; and work influenced by Foucault’s attention to power in spatial practices (Miles and Hall 2003:5). Finally, Amin and Thrift (2002:3) argue that in the “new urbanism studies” of today, “there is a strong emphasis on understanding cities as spatially open and cross-cut by many different kinds of mobilities, from flows of people to commodities and information” (3) (see, for example: Allen, Massey and Pryke 1999, Appadurai 1996, Massey, Allen and Pile 1999, Smith 2001, and Urry 2000).

The intellectual trajectory of new urbanism, and the work of Henri Lefebvre, is particularly relevant for my work. This trajectory began with the surrealist movement, which was “noted for its fleeting encounters in the city in which the explorer set out without knowing what is in store” (Kofman and Lebas 1996:11).

Lefebvre, an influential figure in work done on cities and spaces, drew from this surrealism and was, despite his criticisms of it, the intellectual father of the Situationists. *The Situationist International* was formed by one of his students, Guy Debord (1967), and the group posited that situations were: “constructed encounters and creatively lived

moments in existing urban settings that could produce models for the transformation of the city” (Kofman and Lebas 1996:12).

While Lefebvre found the Situationist approach limited and, he was known to say his work was, “unsituated,” he did draw upon it as he explored how “the urban revealed the contradictions of society,” how space is political, and how studies of cities could show how people might change their lives and transform society (Kofman and Lebas 1996:14-15). This work was unapologetically utopic, as Lefebvre “couldn’t understand how people could simply accept the changes imposed around them” (Kofman and Lebas 1996:22). Again, the ways in which contradictions are revealed and played out on James Street North is a major theme in my work.

Another important figure in studies of everyday life and cities is Michel de Certeau. de Certeau was interested in how society might be transformed in the city. He argued that everyday practices are not simply a “backdrop of sociality,” nor is a focus on them a “return to individuality” as the individual, he claimed, is part of the plurality of social relations. De Certeau’s purpose, then, was to “make explicit the systems” of operation that comprise culture (1984:xi). His work came out of studies of popular culture and marginal groups, as he was interested not just in the “makers” of culture but also the “users” of it who shed light on the “hidden process of its utilization” (xii-xiii). He develops an analysis that emphasizes using and doing rather than simply making. This is in part an effort, influenced by Foucault, to ask how we might resist institutional power. De Certeau argues that it is through “a multitude of ‘tactics’ articulated in the details of everyday life” that this resistance is possible (xiv).

Contemporary urban theorists Amin and Thrift suggest that there are three main concerns or problems to consider when conducting a study of life in the city: description, epistemology, and inclusion or exclusion. Here, they are concerned with how social researchers working on cities find ways to “make the everyday life of the city legible,” how they make decisions about “what counts as knowledge of the urban” and what “material and sites” get included in research design (2002:5).

I have kept these questions at the forefront of my mind when conducting my research. To create such a “legible” description of the arts on James Street North I have worked to stay open to unexpected encounters in order to experience what possibilities might both “exist as well as emerge” through “ordinary” vantage points and slow movements (de Certeau 1984:98).

I also aimed to consider the ways in which James Street North is “embedded in a complex network of relations between people and things” (Thomas 2006:46, discussing Heidegger). I have attempted to, as Stewart has done, “describe how people are quite literally charged up by the sheer surge of things in the making” (1993:1029).

In working with the tangible textures of my field site, I attempt to show how the details of life—the nuanced, multiple, and diverse ways of knowing, telling, and experiencing—can provide avenues for understanding how generative effects and moments of affect can be traced, tracked and destabilized through a tactile and sensory attention to the materiality of things (Adams, Hoelscher and Till 2001; Seremetakis 1994; Stewart 1993, 2007; Taussig 1991).

Given that the city of Hamilton looms large on this work, I also extend this approach to show how Hamilton, as city space, is also a dense, diverse and shifting place of dwelling (Allen, Massey and Pryke 1999). Further, the city has generative effects on both the material structure of its environment and the imaginations of its inhabitants who then both shape and are shaped by it.

Found Collage

This ethnography is structured as a gallery for the arts scene on James Street North. This gallery is conceived of as one in which the aim is to challenge perspective so that the displayed is also on display; so that contradictions are made palpable; so that questions become, not answers, but more questions. I aim to challenge notions of not only perspective but of representation so that dialogic encounters are not only possible but are actively sought.

Like the Tate Modern where I began this chapter, I think of this ethnography as a gallery of “rooms” that will touch upon themes such as: landscape, place and space, materiality, urban and everyday life, art and creative expression, aesthetics, community building, gender and sexuality, hope, nostalgia, affect, and imagination. It will be impossible for me to show all the rooms that make up James Street North (and, to be honest, I haven’t visited them all myself) but I hope to give the reader some impression of the creative social life on this downtown street in Hamilton, Ontario.

It is useful to return again for a moment to the Tate Modern, which as James Street North is (potentially) becoming, has already become “part of a major strategic

redevelopment” (Nixon, et al. 2001:18) in a central part of the city. The Tate is located in an area, like some say downtown Hamilton is, which:

had traditionally been very run-down and populated by the “wrong people,” so that potentially valuable property and the land on which it stood were not being fully exploited. Tate Modern is a very important element in the gentrification of that area, a process that has meant, and will mean, driving out the poor (Stallabrass in Nixon, et al. 2001:18).

Gentrification (or redevelopment, renewal, revitalization, etc.), perhaps, is the star exhibit of this ethnography—the one that gets you into the gallery as Kahlo got me into the Tate Modern—but it is not the only reason to enter and it is not (I have found) what the spirit of James Street North is truly about.

Instead, this ethnography seeks to understand the connections between the materiality of what is built and destroyed and the imaginative possibilities of what is dreamed, feared, hoped and lost as articulated by those who live, work and play on James Street North. It is a cyborg of “imagination and material reality” (Haraway 1991:150).

I argue that art on James Street North is an ordinary everyday material response to the perceived challenges of poverty, crime and decay in downtown Hamilton, Ontario; it is a generative and tangible expression by arts stakeholders of the intangible hopes, desires and dreams for the city.

The impressions in this ethnography come specifically from the perspective of arts stakeholders on James Street North but it will quickly become clear that even within this relatively small group a myriad of ways of looking at the world are present.

And I will forget some things. There will be spaces and gaps in the interpretations. There is a wild forgetfulness to ethnographies as well as cites. Both can be viewed as a sought after and found collage.

Taken together this ethnography is a kind of pilgrimage: a weaving together of paradox (both the grim and the celebratory) in order to journey through to a world that is dirty but it is marvellous in its dirtiness.

...

I began this introduction with two references: a nod to surrealist Magritte's (1898-1967) famous painting "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" (This is not a Pipe), and to the beginning of Taussig's ethnography *My Cocaine Museum* (2004).

...

Magritte is referenced to highlight the surrealist effort to "make the familiar strange" (Clifford 1981:542). Magritte's painting is a realistic painting of a pipe and so the title "This is not a pipe" seemed very strange indeed. Like the surrealists who "value[d] fragments, curious collections, [and] unexpected juxtapositions" (Clifford 1981:540) early twentieth century French ethnographers "defamiliarized cultural reality" (Clifford 1981:542).

If you consider for a moment what ethnography would be like if it were a painting it becomes clear that it might look like anything in the range between a Picasso and a Realist painting. Still, we might agree that, in the end, it needs to reflect something familiar of what it is trying to capture.⁷

⁷ This idea came from a graduate seminar on ethnographic methods I took taught by Dr. Wayne Fife in 2005.

This ethnography nods to the surrealist ethnographers and is produced as a kind of collage. The writing is at times choppy. Field notes, interviews, photographs and description all collide in order to evoke a sense that nothing is fixed and to illuminate and show differing perspectives. In fact, I include a significant number of photographs for several reasons. In a project about art and materiality it is important to see a lot of the images I am talking about in order to bring the reader as close as possible to the “real” things. As a gallery of collages, I am attempting to show contradictions and show that things that don’t necessarily go together. For collage:

brings to the work (here the ethnographic text) elements that continually proclaim their foreignness to the context of presentation. These elements-like a newspaper clip or a feather-are marked as real, as collected not invented by the artist-writer. The procedures of (a) cutting out and (b) assemblage are, of course, basic to any semiotic message; here they are the message. The cuts and sutures of the research process are left visible; there is no smoothing over or blending of the work's raw "data" into a homogeneous representation. To write ethnographies on the model of collage would be to avoid the portrayal of cultures as organic wholes, or as unified, realistic worlds subject to a continuous explanatory discourse (Clifford 1981:563).

...

In *My Cocaine Museum*, arguably a contemporary surrealist ethnography, Taussig offers his book as “a sense of ornament”: “like the foot of a saint or a hustler with a gold wrist, something that allows the thingness of things to glow in the dark” (2004:x). How the material and the immaterial, the human and the non-human, and the subject and the object meet and merge is where we may be able to see how things can “glow in the dark.” Further, Taussig shows how art and anthropology might also meet. In order to further the connection between anthropology and art I turn now to anthropologist Glenn Bowman.

In a review of an art and anthropology conference that took place at the Tate Modern in 2003, Bowman notes that artists attempt to *show* “something immanent” whereas scholars attempt to *tell* of the “structures and processes” that make up events in the world (2004:25). He suggests that artist and anthropologist Susan Hiller’s approach is useful. Hiller:

pointed out that the ‘work’ the artist produces is generated from a profound knowledge of the cultural context out of which it is produced and in which it is subsequently placed. This work seeks to make visible to its audience the constructedness of that context and, by so doing, to ‘make strange’ features of its world which in normal circumstance might be simply overlooked. By stressing the labour of (not always conscious) cultural analysis which precedes the making of an artwork, Hiller demystified some of the processes of artistic creation, thereby drawing artwork and ethnographic study more closely together (Bowman 2004:25).

Taussig invites the reader into his ethnography: “when you face the sun, close your eyes, and watch the coloured lines dance. Follow them, follow the heat and you’ll get there like I did” (ix). When he says this he is doing what Hiller suggests artists do in reverse: he is mystifying anthropology and making it art.

Art and anthropology meet and engage when we notice and note the warmth and heat of the sun; when we allow for the full range of experience to touch us.

I watch the coloured lines dance with closed then open eyes.

This ethnography is not a street. Nor is it art. But it will hopefully imitate both.

2. Hamilton, (Post) Industrial City & “The Street that Built the City”

Heart. Beats.		
Cars drive: metal/steel on concrete.	Airplane, a voice, running water.	Clap. Silence.
Keys open a door, electric beep	hum, ding. Footsteps. Beep, beep,	
	...into reverberation.	
Tick tock, children play, static, plastic	bags in the wind, the honk of wild geese.	Drum. Beats.

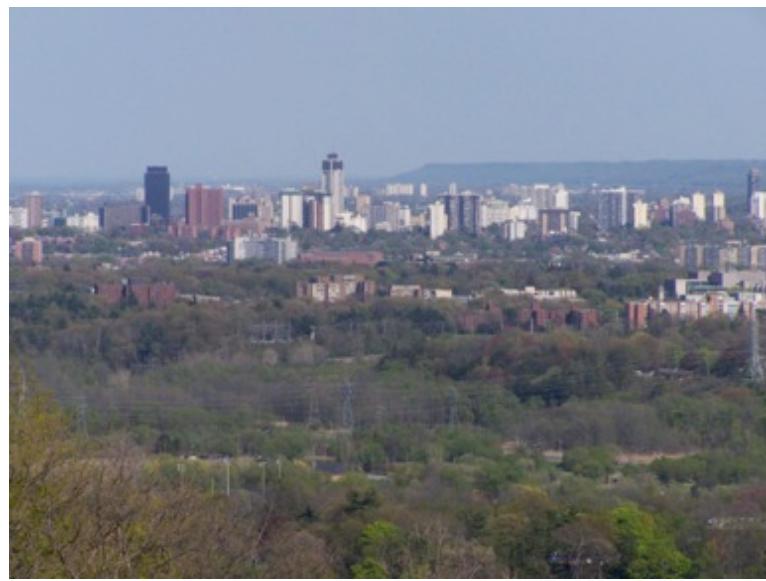
—My Interpretation of Christina Sealey’s improvised performance of found sounds in Hamilton (Orphx, The Art Gallery of Hamilton “Living Spaces Exhibit.” March 19, 2009).

Location: Hamilton



Hamilton Skyline 1

View of Burlington Bay, the Queen Elizabeth Way and the Steel industry in Hamilton, Ontario taken from Upper James Street. (April 27, 2008)



Hamilton Skyline 2

View of West Hamilton, Downtown and the Escarpment taken from Spencer Gorge near West Flamborough. (May 10, 2008)

To understand the hope that is currently being placed in the arts, and on the location of James Street North, one needs to know something of Hamilton's history, and while I do provide some historical context for Hamilton and James Street North, writing a history is not my main aim. I am interested in how statements such as those made in *The Hamilton Spectator: James Street Edition* (McNeil, October 30, 2010) saying that, "James Street North is where history was made in Hamilton" have generative impacts on the making and remaking of Hamilton's image.

Here I will, however briefly, introduce Hamilton's location, history and current position in Canada and Ontario before I move on to a discussion of Hamilton's image and an exploration of the built environment and history of James Street North.

...

The City of Hamilton is situated in the Niagara Peninsula, in the Golden Horseshoe, in between Toronto and Buffalo. It is 68 kilometers southwest of Toronto and 66 kilometers west of Niagara Falls and the United States border (Weaver and Cruikshank 2010). One of the city's main geographical features is the Niagara Escarpment, which cuts through the middle of the city, separating the upper and lower halves. The northern limit of the city is Burlington Bay (re-named Hamilton Harbour in 1991) on Lake Ontario. In 2001 the new city of Hamilton was established as a result of an amalgamation of the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth. Hamilton, Ancaster, Dundas, Flamborough, Glanbrook, and Stoney Creek all became part of this new city (Weaver and Cruikshank 2010).

Currently, the city comprises the third highest rate of non-Canadian born residents, after Toronto and Vancouver, in Canada. 86.4% of the population are non-visible minorities, however, and 34% and 37% are Protestant and Catholic, respectively (Arnott 2006). With a population of 692,911 in 2006, Hamilton comprises 4% of Ontario's population and there are 451.6 people per square kilometer (Arnott 2006). “Population growth has paralleled its economic cycles,” with workers arriving from the United Kingdom, the United States, Italy and Poland between 1900-1913 (Weaver and Cruikshank 2010). Refugees from Central Europe and the Baltics arrived in the 1920s, labourers from the East Coast of Canada and Quebec arrived during World War II, and Dutch, German, Italian and Polish immigrants looking for work arrived between 1945-1954. Since the mid 1970s people from Portugal, Eastern Europe, the West Indies, and South Asia have also settled in Hamilton (Weaver and Cruikshank 2010). In 2010 20% of the population worked in manufacturing and 75% worked in the service industry. Retail was the second largest sector followed by health and social services with the Hamilton Health Science Corporation acting as the city’s largest employer (Weaver and Cruikshank 2010).

In recent years Hamilton has grown in size and is trying to be known as more than a company steel town. The tourist industry works to highlight Hamilton’s natural resources. It is the waterfall capital of Ontario and home to the Royal Botanical Gardens (est. 1941) and the Bruce Trail.



Webster's Falls
(December 29, 2006)



Hiking Trail, South of Downtown
at the Escarpment. (April 27, 2008)



Bayfront Park 1 (June 20, 2007)



Bayfront Park 2 (October 05, 2008)

Further cultural draws to the city include the restored historic sites: Battlefield House (1796), Dundurn Castle (1835), Whitehern (1843) and the Hamilton Waterworks (1851). The city is also home to several museums: Museum of Steam and Technology, The Workers Arts and Heritage Centre and Custom House. Arts and cultural centres and organizations in Hamilton include: the Art Gallery of Hamilton, the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, the Mohawk College Singers, the McMaster Chamber Orchestra, Opera Hamilton, Theatre Aquarius and Hamilton Place. Hamilton is renowned for its football team, the Hamilton Tiger Cats, for the Canadian Football Hall of Fame, and for the annual 30 kilometre race “Around the Bay,” the oldest road race in North America.

Other landmarks include: Copps Coliseum, the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Christ the King and McMaster University whose move from Toronto in 1930 greatly impacted the city by bringing a major hospital and medical school in 1965-1966, as well as a new population of students, university employees and professors to Hamilton.

...

Hamilton, as a town, was founded in 1816 by land developer George Hamilton after purchasing 104 hectares of land in the Barton Township in 1815. The area had previously been occupied by the Neutral Indians, then the Iroquois, whom French explorer Étienne Brûlé visited in 1616 and 1624. In 1786 John Depew and in 1790-91 Richard Beasley, both United Empire Loyalists, colonized the area (Weaver and Cruikshank 2010). When George Hamilton purchased the land from James Durand in 1815 before founding the city, the area was part of the Gore District in Upper Canada, and “Hamilton was the first speculative townsite to evolve into a major Canadian city” (Weaver 1982:16).

The early economy of the city was built with foundries that manufactured wheat threshing machines and cast iron stoves (Weaver 1982:26). Hamilton grew quickly, and by 1832 a public jail and courthouse were built, and by 1846 it had official city status. The continuing development of the iron industry, as well as “machine shops manufacturing precision items” (Weaver 1982:41) worked to help Hamilton grow as a regional centre between the years of 1840 and 1870. The building of the Great Western Railway in the early 1850s, which lawyer Sir Allan McNab along with others bought into, further helped this growth. The Great Western Railway was the “first railway in

Hamilton, and the second railway in the Dominion of Canada” (Library and Archives of Canada 2011). Part of extended trade networks centring on Burlington Bay, the area was a commercial centre with links to Scotland, and American cities such as Buffalo, Cleveland and Chicago (Weaver 1982:15). A canal was also constructed through Burlington Beach to allow schooners and steamers access to the city.

Despite all of the growth in the early part of the 19th century, however, starting mid-century, when the Burlington canal encountered problems and the Gore Bank was “undercapitalized,” Hamilton became vulnerable to competition from Toronto and Montreal, which were both growing and faster (Weaver 1982:42). Additionally, competition from other railway lines threatened the economy and as a result the labour force was often exploited (Weaver 1982:71-77). When the railway “failed to bring renown” Hamilton “changed to an industrializing city” mostly associated with iron and steel, with the Steel Company of Canada (Stelco) forming in 1910 and Dominion Foundries and Steel (Dofasco) in 1912 (Weaver 1982:80). These companies consolidated many local mills and solidified steel as a central product in the area’s economy.

Further, the work that industry offered, as well as the “rail lines and canals transformed the city into an important wholesale and immigrant distribution centre” during this period (Weaver and Cruikshank 2010). For example, Irish immigrants (often poorer than the rest of the local population) settled in Hamilton during this period, making Corktown, an area in what is now downtown, and Port Hamilton, near the Waterfront, their home.

...

It is the kind of day some might call perfect: bright blue skies with wisps of clouds. Birds sing and children reach up into a tree branch to feel its prickle. The wind blows through the leaves of the trees and the tiger lilies. The Canadian flag snaps against its pole on the old Canadian National Railway building. There are a few men talking on the sidewalk. No one else is here on the afternoon of this holiday Monday. Cars and people pass by. I hear a police siren in the distance as bikes spin past. Car door closes. Engine ignites.

(August 3, 2009 Field Notes)



*CNR Tracks,
Next to the old CNR Station (June 29, 2009)*



*The Old CNR Railway Station,
Now LIUNA Station (June 29, 2009)*



*"Courage, Hope and Dreams" Statue in
Immigration Square (June 29, 2009)*

...

The population of Hamilton doubled between 1900 and 1914, as the steel industry attracted more immigrants (Weaver 1982:82), and by 1920 new apartment and office blocks were built to accommodate the increasing population and booming economy. Worker exploitation was a problem, however, while the steel industry profited from the First World War. The periods during the Great Depression and the Second World War saw urban deterioration and few social services, and by 1946 the city came to be thought of one “without refinement” (Weaver 1982:154).

After 1946 Hamilton came to be known as a company town with the continuing success of the steel industry (Weaver 1982:161), however, it would be remiss not to mention that Hamilton has a history of vigorous trade union activity, and has been a major Canadian centre for trade unionism. In the 1870s there was a push for a nine hour workday (instead of ten), and when the First World War increased demand for industrial products, while taking away many of the workers who worked in the factories, conditions for workers became dangerous as few safety precautions existed, materials were often extremely hot, or toxic, and there was poor ventilation. As manufacturing continued to grow after the war, efforts to organize workers grew in strength, but met strong opposition. Workers at Stelco became a local of the International Steel Workers in 1936, but the company did not recognize the union as the representative of employees until 1944. It took another two years before Stelco agreed to collective bargaining with the union, following a huge strike in 1946.

The strike of 1946 began on July 14th with Stelco workers, and workers from other major companies soon followed demanding the same benefits that the steel workers

sought, including: better pay, a grievance system, more holidays with pay, and a system of seniority (an important issue since it helped combat racism in the factories). Soon 12,000 workers were striking, but thousands more refused to strike, leading to tension and outbreaks of violence in the city. Supported by many working class Hamiltonians and by the Mayor of the city, the strike lasted through the summer and into the fall. Meanwhile, steel production had been halted and by October 4th a settlement was reached. Stelco recognized the union and provided the grievance and seniority provisions workers had demanded. The strike of 1946 is still the largest in Stelco's history, and is remembered as a landmark point in Hamilton's history.

Between 1946 and 1980 housing developed further east towards the factories creating class divisions between the east and the west. Prior to World War II “the harbour and the escarpment squeezed urban development along an east-west axis” but the growing population, along with the increased use of the automobile, and hence the increased mobility of the population, created a situation in which farmland was annexed and urbanized (creating suburbs) on the upper part of the escarpment, commonly known as “the mountain.”

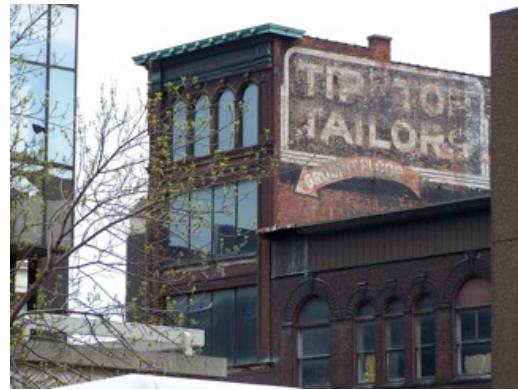
In 1956, due to complaints about downtown congestion, “the one-way street system was instituted” and “the old neighbourhoods under the mountain, which had been built in earlier days, now had streams of cars hurtling along the streets” (Freeman 2001:155). Further, expressways were constructed in the 1960s and 1970s to help deal with increased traffic (Weaver and Cruikshank 2010). The construction of the

expressways was not done without controversy, however, as protests associated with the building of the Red Hill Valley Expressway, described by Peace (1998) attest.⁸

This movement toward the suburbs away from the downtown impacted the downtown and an urban renewal project was meant to fix the problem of a “decaying” core. Lloyd D. Jackson’s (in office 1950-1962) term of office as mayor saw the old city hall on James Street North torn down and a new city hall built on Main Street West. Mayor Victor Copps supported a plan to annex, clear, and re-build Van Wagner’s Beach and the seven blocks of the North End to make room for “municipal services such as parks and cultural buildings, or sold or leased to private interests” (Freeman 2001:159). Further, the Civic Square Project displaced 260 businesses and 500 residents and many turn-of-the-century buildings were demolished over an 18-acre area of land between Main Street and Merrick and James and Bay (Freeman 2001:159-163).

Years after it was completed, the massive urban redevelopment program remains controversial. Jack MacDonald, the former long-time city politician and mayor, continues to defend it as the project that halted the decay of the downtown. Others are scathing in their criticism, claiming the project speeded deterioration. “We did all the wrong things in Hamilton,” David Coming, a planner in private practice said recently. “What did we learn? We learned that mega-projects don’t solve downtown problems” (Freeman 2001:164).

⁸ See also Robinson (2008) for a discussion of the conflict over the building of the Ancaster and Dundas Expressway.



Signs of Decay Still Felt in the Downtown Core.

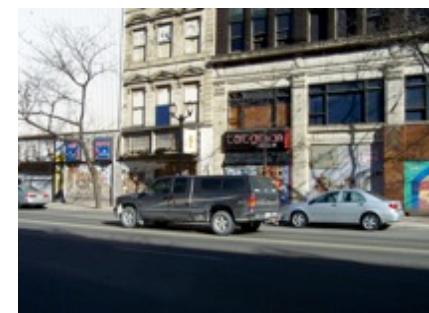
James Street and King Street, “Tip Top Tailors” sign. Across from Lloyd D. Jackson’s Square, a continuation of the urban renewal project, in the “heart” old downtown.

(April 26, 2008)



James Street and King Street. Location of the city’s first law office where Sir Allan McNab practiced. (April 26, 2008)

James Street North just past King Street. The Lister Block and abandoned store fronts (March 2, 2009)



The downtown renewal projects that began in the 1950s were not the first or last time that planning practices shaped people's lives. The social inequalities that are felt in Hamilton today began early on. Geographic features, transportation networks, and city planning all influenced where different commercial, municipal, industrial, and recreational areas were located, and, hence where different populations settled within the city.

Cruikshank and Bouchier (2004) convincingly argue, for example, that environmental inequality in the city was not only constructed through the urban planning practices of planners in the early 1900s such as Noulan Cauchon and E.L. Cousins, or the post World War II planner E.G. Faludi, but that these practices legitimated the social inequalities that had already been written into the environment in the early 1800s:

The residents of the port town never enjoyed a golden age of environmental equality. The terrain of the south shore influenced where people chose to live and how they used the land....wealthier residents claimed the high ground near the escarpment, and on a ridge that meandered from the escarpment towards the Desjardins Canal on the west end of the harbor. On that ridge, the City's mercantile and political leaders had their homes built on well-drained land that afforded them vistas of the city and harbor seemingly appropriate to their social ambitions. These homes would be high and dry...Hamilton's working classes, on the other hand, settled on the low, flat, and poorly drained lands east of the ridge, or north and northeast close to the shorelines of the bay (Cruikshank and Bouchier 2004:468).

The results of these early planning practices are still felt. When I arrived in Hamilton, for example, as a white, middle-class, female student I was warned not to live in the east because, I was told, it is a dangerous area for a woman such as myself. The north and east have historically been areas where industry and early sewers in Hamilton were located, and as a result the areas have experienced lower property values. The North End was zoned as industrial, which further lowered property values and has also allowed for companies to annex portions of the area (Cruikshank and Bouchier 2004:488).

The Hamilton Harbour Commission (est. 1912) has also had an impact in how social inequalities in the North End have taken shape. The HHC, which is not under “direct or exclusive” federal jurisdiction, and which exemplifies the formation of a coalition of elites whose focus is primarily on economic development, allowed for one

third of the bay area to be land-filled in the 1970s and since its establishment “gave highest priority to the shipping and port authorities, followed by waste disposal, and lastly, fishing and recreational use” in the North End (Ali 2002:133-134).



North End on James Street North
(June 29, 2009)

North End Homes (June 29, 2009)



Fisher's, North End Bar (June 29, 2009)

The south, west, and “upper” areas of the city, in contrast, are where many of the more affluent neighbourhoods are located. For example, Westdale (in west Hamilton) was one of the first deliberately planned suburbs in Canada. The land for Westdale became part of Hamilton in 1914 and was developed in the 1920s with the explicit intention to create an Anglo-Saxon neighbourhood that was largely self-contained with its own

schools, banking, shopping and so on. In fact, people were contractually not allowed to sell “their homes to Negroes, Asiatics, Bulgarians, Austrians, Russians, Serbs, Rumanians, Turks, Armenians ... or foreign born Italians, Greeks or Jews” from the 1920s to the 1950s (Weaver 1989 in Cruikshank and Bouchier 2004:466). Further,

The numbers living on the mountain have been increasing rapidly, but the lower city has been stagnant or ever shrinking. It is almost as if two cities have developed in Hamilton. The mountain is a city of suburbs and shopping malls where most people get around by car...The lower city, by contrast, has much older housing stock....In the downtown, many stores are still sitting vacant and the office vacancy rate hovers at around 20 per cent (Freeman 2001:179).

Distinctions between the west and the east, and the north and the south, are still palpable in Hamilton, as are the distinctions between the upper and lower cities, where the upper “Mountain” is mostly suburban compared to the lower “urban” core. Hamilton is a place of division and contradiction.



King Street just past James Street, South and West.
(April 22, 2008)

...

I began the chapter with two rather discontinuous, contradictory images of Hamilton: that of industry and that of a city surrounded by a lush, rich environment. This chapter includes many images of Hamilton precisely because of my focus on materiality and imagination in this work. Further, the two stereotypical images of Hamilton in particular, and cities in general (i.e. skyline images), that began the chapter are included to show the symbolic power images (both concrete and imagined) have in constructing a sense of place.

As previously discussed, Hamilton’s location on Hamilton Harbour—which both images show—gave it a “strategic position within Ontario’s transportation network” because eastern Canada (via Toronto), the northeastern United States (via Buffalo) and the American Midwest (via Detroit) were easily accessible (Cruikshank and Bouchier 2004:467). Using this strategic location, “the city quickly established itself as the undisputed steel capital of Canada in the early period before the First World War” (Ali 2002). Hamilton’s location is one way in which the story of the city gets told, and why these two contradictory images of the city as industrial landscape and as a lush environment have taken hold in the imagination of what Hamilton is.

Eyles and Peace (1990) discuss how the economic metaphor for Hamilton has been industry and how its place within, and its identification with, a global network of industrial cities such as Birmingham and Pittsburgh have helped cement the image of industry in people’s minds. Ali uses David Harvey’s idea of the *spatial fix* to understand how the Hamilton industrial sector created “a fixed and secure spatial infrastructure” to at

once define itself and help deal with crisis (Harvey 1982:176 in Ali 2002:135). These spatial fixes eventually become barriers, however, and the de-industrialization that occurred in North America, and in Hamilton, in the 1980s and 1990s, when factories shut down, moved and downsized, made the industrial spatial fix of Hamilton problematic.⁹ Seccombe (1993) explains in *Recasting Steel Labour: The Stelco Story* that post-Fordist trends in global restructuring, that make it essential for corporations and governments to both compete and co-operate, also impacted Hamilton. Seccombe states:

Stelco's experience typifies the main trend in the manufacturing sector: corporations survive by forging ahead with costly technological changes while massively reducing their labour forces. In the case of Hilton Works, the labour force is now roughly one-third of its size in 1980....In Hamilton, as elsewhere, the newer jobs were being furnished by small firms operating mostly in the service sector. The steel industry, while still central to the city's economy, had ceased to be a source of employment for working class male youths (1993:10).

Further, Hamilton's relation to places such as Toronto, where Hamilton gets read as the modern city compared to the “post-or-late-modern” city of Toronto has become something Hamilton also has to deal with (Eyles and Peace 1990:74). For instance, in the two models of cities offered by Russell (1981)—the machine and the organic—Hamilton is read as a functional machine that is both frightening and depressing, whereas Toronto is read as an orderly organic city that is peaceful and exciting (Eyles and Peace 1990:74-75). Additionally, industrial cities, such as Hamilton have also had to come to terms with the fact that their industries are now feared as a source of risk to the environment:

Industrial Cities like Hamilton try to make claims to links to industrial prowess, wealth creation and progress. Hamilton promoted itself as the

⁹ In 1968 Stelco moved its head office to Toronto and opened another location in Nanticoke (Freeman 2001:167). Steel lost 50% of jobs from 1980-1998 (Ali 2002:136).

“Birmingham of Canada” and the “Pittsburgh of Canada”...but today these cities have to work against the modern view that industry is polluting and the service sector produces wealth (Eyles and Peace 1990:75).¹⁰

Eyles and Peace further discuss that, in a sense, industrial cities have to work against anti-urbanism, which stresses “rurality, commonality, interdependence, variety, ambiguity and human-scale” (1990:75). In fact, given these pressures on Industrial cities, it is interesting that many texts on urban studies start by mentioning that the world is increasingly urbanizing. Their aim is to show the importance of studying cities and urban life when the majority of the earth’s population dwells in cities. However, these statements also echo, and perhaps, reinforce the centuries old divide between the rural and the urban or the city and the country. It can be argued that the nostalgia that is still part of that rhetoric points to a sense of collective trauma at losing the rural and a need to find the rural even within the urban.

In fact, this anti-urbanist emphasis on the human-scale is just what James Street North offers right in the midst of a major city’s downtown core: “in a world where many things are mass produced and fake, James is one-of-a-kind and the real thing” (McNeil 2010a). In other words, James Street North is seen to be authentic. Further, the realities of de-industrialization make this rurality within the city even more attractive. The country and the city as well as authenticity and tourism will be discussed at more length in the final chapter. I argue that James Street North, while deeply embedded in an urban setting, takes on the symbolic power and values traditionally attached to “the country.” James

¹⁰ See Ali (2002) for a discussion of the 1997 plastics fire at Plastinet Inc., which “was one of the worst environmental disasters faced by the province” to date (130), and Bouchier and Cruikshank’s (2008) photo essay entitled “Remembering the Struggle for the Environment: Hamilton’s Lax Lands/Bayfront Park, 1950s-2008” for more on industry and environmental risk in Hamilton.

Street North has become appealing to arts communities because it offers a sense of close knit community, a nostalgic materiality, and a kind of calm in the urban storm. However, at this point it should be emphasized that it is in the context of Hamilton's struggle to undo its previous image and spatial fix as an industrial city and, hence, to define itself as a post-industrial city, that James Street North must now be understood.

James Street North: “Small Town Atmosphere in a Major City”

I walk onto the street from a new direction today—east from Barton. I see a Laundromat with a blue sign, and warm air is cooling into steam in the cold winter air in front of me. A man with a long grey braided pony tail wearing a blue and black spandex outfit and a helmet takes his hand, presses on one nostril and blows while he bikes down the middle of Barton near James. It is a bright but bitter cold day. I pass a travel agency with signs in the window about a trip to Spain, Portugal and Italy: “the honeymoon special” (Field Notes, February 2009).



Irving's, James Street North
(March 2, 2009)



Morgenstern's, James Street North
(August 3, 2009)

It is March. I sit here looking out of a window onto James. The snow has melted once again. A young tree rises out of its circle of dirt cut in concrete on the sidewalk. Autumn leaves blow in the wind. The tree has a hint of bud. A crumpled receipt gets caught in a gust and hops down the sidewalk (March 4 2011, Field Notes).

As previously emphasized, the historic buildings themselves illustrate the importance of James North to Hamilton’s past. The loss of period architecture (a non-renewable resource) represents a sacrifice of the City’s history...In first viewing James North, a somewhat negative impression of many of the decaying buildings and storefronts, may be obtained. However, one can readily realize the high level of craftsmanship and design existing along the street, which increases the value of the buildings themselves. Of particular significance is the scale of the buildings. These buildings were all built at a scale comprehensible to people travelling on foot...James Street offers a small town atmosphere in a major city (Hamilton-Wentworth Planning and Development Department 1984:25).

Historically, James Street has been a major road in Hamilton. James Street North runs from King Street to Hamilton Harbour. King and James lie at the “heart” of the city

core and act as the dividers between east and west and north and south in the city. James Street North is part of Ward 2 and is also the dividing line between the Beasley and Central neighbourhoods.

Throughout its history James Street North has been a transportation, commercial, financial, governmental, and religious centre for the city. Further, as a street that connected the Port of Hamilton with the more central Gore area, small scale industry and crafts workers were located on James Street North in the Nineteenth century before industry expanded with increased industrialization and moved east (McNeil 2010b).¹¹

Before 1813 what is now James Street North was a farmer's field. The farmland was purchased and the street was named after Nathaniel Hughson's son James (much to George Hamilton's chagrin). At that time there was a rivalry between James Street and John Street (a major commercial street two streets east of James) that James Street won when a farmer put grass seed all down John Street (Hamilton-Wentworth Planning and Development Department 1984:17).

In 1837 “Andrew Miller gave to the community a triangular strip of land at York and James to be used as a market place promoting growth and prosperity in Hamilton” and “on Saturdays, it became a place of entertainment featuring travelling showpeople, medicine men, vaudeville artists with trained dogs and bears and teeth-pulling dentists” (Hamilton-Wentworth Planning and Development Department 1984:14,17). In 1839 the first city council meeting was held at Market Hall (City Hall).

¹¹ For example, American R. M. Wazer opened a sewing machine shop on James and Vine in 1860 and A. M. Forester Brass Foundry opened in 1873 on James and Colbourne. It employed 12 workers in the beginning and expanded to 140. In 1888 the building was used for a coal supplies business (McNeil 2010b).

1852 saw a building boom on James Street North when the population increased from 6,832 to 27,500 in Hamilton, and in 1855 sewers were built a year after the cholera epidemic. James and Catherine Streets were the main sewer lines for the city. Fourteen commercial row houses were built on James Street between 1883-1888, and these commercial spaces housed: a “grocer, painter, undertaker, gardener, tobacconist, druggist, stationer, fruit dealer, moulder, plumber, confectioner, merchant and jeweller” between Wilson and Cannon (Hamilton-Wentworth Planning and Development Department 1984:19).



*The Old Row Houses in 2010.
Mixed Media, Chaise Musicale and Loose Cannon Gallery.
James Street North and Cannon Street (July 22, 2010)*

With increased traffic on the street, the Hamilton Street Railway saw the first street cars on James Street in 1870, and in 1874 a 2-mile railway track was built. And in 1860 James Street North was made the official parade route for the visit of the Prince of Wales. It remains a route for parades in Hamilton to this day.



Pride Parade, at James Street North and King Street
(June 15, 2007)



Mardi Gras 1
(August 7, 2010)



Mardi Gras 2
(August 7, 2010)

In 1873 the Brick Tower was added to City Hall, and in 1884 the Old City Hall was torn down and a second City Hall, designed by James Balfour in Romanesque rival style, was built in 1899. But in 1960 City Hall was relocated to Main Street West and old City Hall and Market Square were demolished for the Eaton Company.

The 1950s and 1960s experienced a rising economy due to growing industry and commercial activity in the city. Then in 1972, “in response to a need for modernization of an aesthetically decaying core,” Jackson Square opened and York and Wilson joined “as part of Hamilton’s Civic Urban Renewal Scheme” (Hamilton-Wentworth Planning and Development Department 1984:22). “Since the development of Jackson’s Square and the

joining of York Boulevard and Wilson Street, little new development has occurred along James North” (Hamilton-Wentworth Planning and Development Department 1984:22).



Two Views of the Hamilton City Centre at York and Wilson (July 22, 2010)

Some significant buildings on James North include: the Canadian National Rail, now the Labourers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) owned banquet hall, Christ's Church Cathedral (1835), the Hamilton Farmer's Market (1837), City Hall (in use from 1890-1960 and demolished in 1961), the Bank of Hamilton (1842), the first life insurance company in Canada, Canada Life Insurance Company (1847), the Federal Building (1856), The Grand Old Opera House (1880), the first indoor mall in Canada, the Lister Block (1886), the John Weir Foote VC Armouries (1887), The Orange Hall (1905), and the Tivoli Theatre (1924-1990).

The following photographs, which I took during fieldwork, feature some of these buildings. Notice the period architecture, the “decaying” storefronts, and the “human scale” that is mentioned in the Hamilton-Wentworth Planning and Development Department for the James North Heritage District Report I cited at the beginning of the chapter.



72 James Street North.

Originally the Post office and then the Federal Building. Hamilton City Ballet opened in 2001 and has since moved to a Dundas location (March 2, 2009).

The Federal building was designed by Cumberland and Storm (a Toronto firm) in the mid-1800s in Renaissance Revival style. The brickwork on top is a 1920's addition. Ken Coit, an architectural historian, says that the building is a “good example of adaptive re-use and how the street has changed over time” (McNeil 2010b).



Lister Block
(April 26, 2008)



“Arcade,” Lister Block
(April 26, 2008)

The first Lister Block was built in 1886 and was rebuilt in 1924 after a 1923 fire that was the worst in the city's history up until that point. The fire started in a clothing store at the back, and there were one million dollars in damages. The second Lister Block was built in Classic Renaissance style and was six storeys high rather than the original four. "The building, along with the market and the Old City Hall on James was the centre of community life in Hamilton" and "there is no other standing building in Hamilton with as many passionate memories and strong opinions attached to it as the Lister Block" (McNeil 2010b).



*Scaffolding on the Lister Block
(February 12, 2010)*

Today it is owned by LIUNA and the city is buying it for 25 million dollars and spending another 3.3 million dollars to restore it. Restorations will be completed in 2012 and it will house 200 city staff, the offices of community services and tourism, as well as retail stores (McNeil 2010b).



Tivoli Yard
(February 12, 2010)

The Tivoli, along with The Grand Old Opera House, were two theatres that operated on James Street North at the turn of the 20th Century, and “between 1900 and 1930—in the height of the Vaudeville era—Hamilton had more theatres per capita than any other city in Canada” (McNeil 2010b). The 1200 seat, gothic style, Grand Old Opera House opened in 1880 and celebrities such as Al Jolson, Lionel Barrymore and Oscar Wilde performed there. In 1935 it became a movie house called The Granada, and in 1961 it was demolished to make room for a parking lot (McNeil 2010b).

The Tivoli began as the Pronguey Carriage Factory (1875-1908) and when Pronguey saw a market for silent movies he turned it into a movie theatre called The Wonderland (1907-1910). It underwent two more name changes, The Colonial (1910-1913) and The Princess (1913-1924) before the Pronguey family built an extension behind the old carriage factory and named it The Tivoli (1924-1990). The carriage building, the front section that was used as a lobby for The Tivoli, partially collapsed in

2004 and was torn down. In 2006 the Canadian Ballet Youth Assemble bought the building for one million dollars from the Sniderman family (famed for the Sam The Record Man Stores), and “launched a 15 million dollar capital campaign to restore the historic theatre” (McNeil 2010b).



The John Weir Foote VC Armouries
(August 8, 2009)

Christ’s Church Cathedral
(August 3, 2009)

Christ’s Church Cathedral, which is the second oldest Anglican Church in Canada and the church headquarters of the Anglican Diocese of Niagara, is “a landmark from an era when James Street was dominated by people of British heritage” (McNeil 2010b).



Vasco Da Gamma Futebol Clube.
Originally Orange Hall (August 3, 2009).

Orange Hall was originally built in 1905 as “the Loyal Orange Man’s Society Hall” for English Protestant immigrants (McNeil 2010b). William Palmer Witton, who also designed the Armouries, was the architect for the building. When the British moved out of the area the Italians used it after World War II and the Portuguese bought the building after that for use as a social club. The relief on the third floor is of William of Orange at the victory of the Battle of the Boyne, a 1690 battle in Ireland between the Catholic King James and the Protestant King William. It has been remarked that it is ironic that a Catholic group now uses the building (McNeil 2010b).

The Portuguese presence on James Street North can also be seen in the many social clubs, street markets, and restaurants. Ola Portuguese bakery is well frequented, soccer fans crowded onto the streets when Portugal won against North Korea 7-0 on June 21, 2010 in the World Cup, and there are many annual Portuguese festivals, or *festas*, with evening dances, food, marching bands, processions and services at St. Mary’s

Church, on a near-by street. The following photographs give some sense of the richness of the Portuguese community on James Street North.



Lighthouse Fish Market (July 22, 2010)



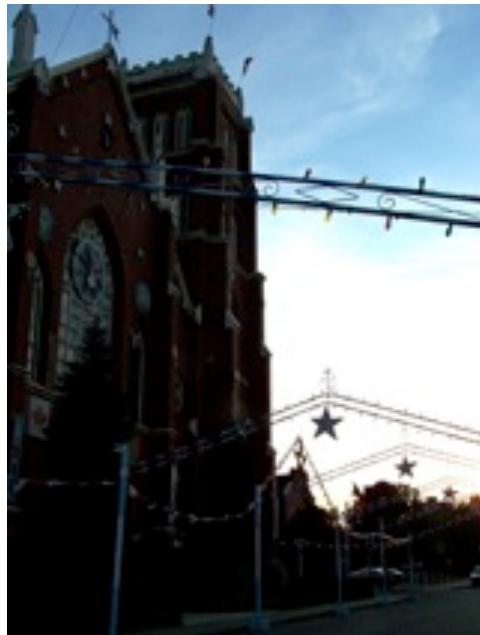
World Cup Fans (June 21, 2010)



Ventura's Portuguese Restaurant
(August 3, 2009)



Wild Orchid Portuguese Restaurant
(July 22, 2010)



*St. Mary's Church,
Portuguese Festival (August 7, 2009)*



*Marching Bands,
Portuguese Festival (August 9, 2009)*



*Cedar and Flowers on Church Steps,
Portuguese Festival (August 9, 2010).*

I let tears fall down my face
Mary, start my heart

Incense and cedar fill the air
Outside, the faint hum of Portuguese music

Blue skies and angels, white and blue
Light comes from everywhere and nowhere

Lift me to heaven,
Church of Mary

It is cool in here, a nice
break from the heat

(August 9, 2009, Field Notes)



Ola Bakery (July 22, 2010)

In the Ola Bakery the air is fragrant with steamed milk, cinnamon and chocolate. I order a cappuccino. A group of women across from and behind me chat in Portuguese. They are dressed in skirts and dresses and wear short heels and make-up. Top ten pop music plays overhead. Two men in suits and ties finish their sugar filled espressos and leave. On the television that hangs from the ceiling in the corner the weather is reported. It is sunny and warm in Portugal today. Only in the south is there even a hint of cloud. I have finished a sugar doughnut twist and a fried shrimp filled savoury that I still don't know the name of. All of this for less than five dollars! I start to perk up after a day of sleepiness. A dark burnt orange gloss glaze covers the walls. On the walls, art hangs (some pieces crookedly). Paintings of animals and town fairs. Bulls. No names. No prices (July 2010, Field Notes).

James Street North: Creativity Materialized

...Art is not just about putting pictures on walls or in people's homes. It is about how art enlists the participation of the entire community. How the work being done here on James is not just about art, but about identity, the identity of this city. (Lukasik-Foss quoting Colina Maxwell 2009)

During the period of 2005 to 2011 the arts on James Street North included over 20 galleries, connected stores and projects. To name only a few, you could find the following arts spaces on the street: Blue Angle Gallery, the Downtown Arts Centre (located nearby a few blocks away), Hamilton Artist's Inc., Hamilton HIStory+HERitage, James North Art Studio (later renamed the James North Art Collective), Loose Cannon Gallery (for sale as of April 2012), Mixed Media art supply store, The Factory Media Arts Centre, The Print Studio, Under the Moon Books and Art (relocated to Ottawa Street North), White Elephant, and You Me Gallery. When these galleries and studios collectively (but without formal organization) started opening their doors on the second Friday of every month they put James Street North on the map as an arts destination.

While it is hard to know exactly how and when the art crawl started based on my ethnographic research, Bruce Mowatt of the *Globe and Mail* attributes the beginning to the opening of Bryce Kanbara's *You Me Gallery* in May 2003 (2007:M2). The art crawl is organized informally and there is also an "Art Bus," operated out of *The Pearl Company*, that takes people around to the different galleries.

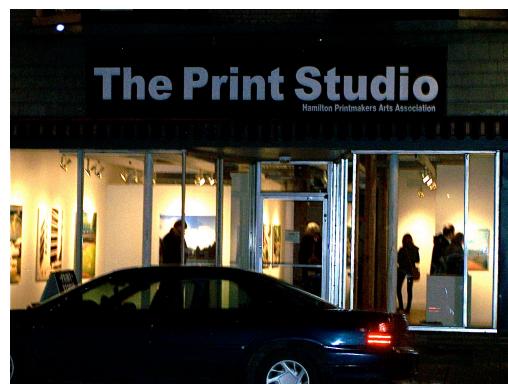
In 2007, the James Street Art Crawl was awarded an Award of Merit as a Visionary Project by the City of Hamilton Urban Design and Architecture Awards, and in 2009 the first annual Supercrawl took place in the fall. Supercrawl began by introducing live music to an art crawl evening and in subsequent years it grew and morphed into an

all day event with local vendors, music, entertainment and several large-scale curated art pieces. What follows is another series of photographs to give a sensory feel for arts on the street, the art crawl and for Supercrawl. It is also interesting to see is how the streetscape and the buildings are used in the arts scene.



Hamilton Artist's Inc.

Both at James Street North and Cannon Street. (July 22, 2010)



The Print Studio (February 12, 2010)



Blue Angel Gallery (July 22, 2010)



James North Art Collective
(July 22, 2010)



This Ain't Hollywood
(July 22, 2010)



Holiday Maker's Market,
Christ's Church Cathedral. (December 6,
2008)



White Elephant
(January 9, 2009)



Bike Hounds
(January 9, 2009)



Mixed Media
(August 8, 2009)



"Tin Men," August 2009 Art Crawl
(August 8, 2009)



Busker Crawl on James Street North
(April 23, 2010)



Person with TV on Head (February 12, 2010)

The Factory screens *Les Poupées Russes* by Jenn E. Norton.¹² About twenty people are standing, sitting, moving in and out of the room. The film is showing on two screens that interact with each other as my eyes go back and forth from screen to screen. Outside five women are wearing bright green glasses and skipping down the street together. Several men stand on the street speaking Portuguese. A young man with long brown hair and patent leather high-heeled boots struts. (March 13, 2009 Field Notes)

¹² Description of the film from the *Factory: Hamilton Media Arts Centre*:

A two channel video installation on opposing sides showing video projections of a film set. One side is the image of the subject from the point of view of the camera; the other is the camera and cameraperson from the point of view of the subject. Save the film equipment, there is no detail of the space. All subjects and objects inhabit a white void; there is no horizon, no foreground or background. The cameraperson traverses from one projection to the other. In one continuous shot, the loop is structured in a Mobius Strip, traversing from one projection to the other, timed to reflect each other as the loop overlaps. (<http://www.hamiltonmediaarts.com/fw2009.htm>, accessed May 1, 2010)



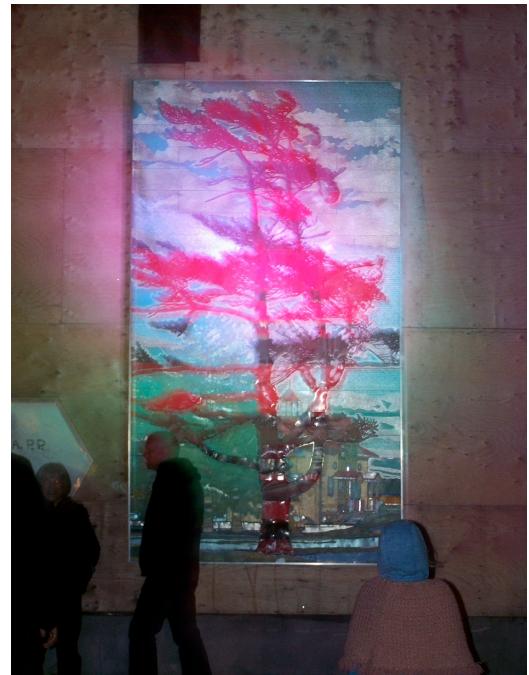
Film Projected on the Leon Furs Building (July 9, 2010)



Art By David Hind on the Leon Furs Building (September 10, 2010)



*Changing Moon Projected on the Dominion Building, Supercrawl.
(September 25, 2010)*



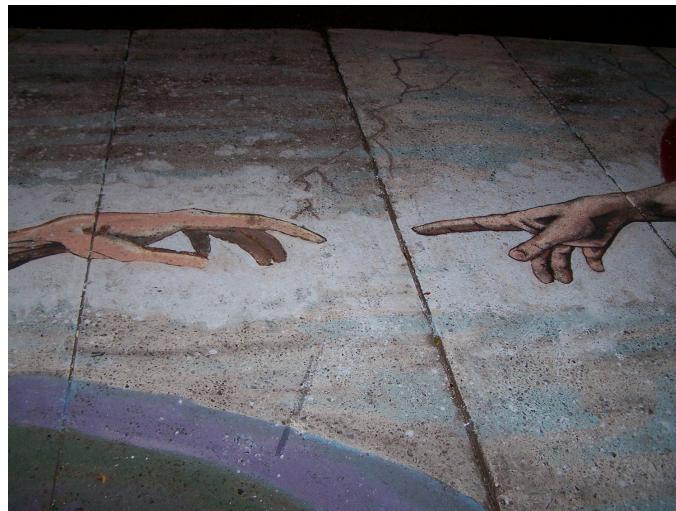
David Hind Art on the Tivoli Building, Supercrawl (September 25, 2010)



Sidewalk Painting 1, Supercrawl (September 25, 2010)



Sidewalk Painting 2, Supercrawl
(September 25, 2010)



Sidewalk Painting 2, Close Up, Supercrawl
(September 25, 2010)



Making Art on the Street, Supercrawl

(September 25, 2010)



*Chalk Art on the Street,
Supercrawl*

3. James Street North, Contradictory Imaginations

Sidewalk Ballets: Sustainable Collective Civic Pride

In May 2010 I was in the local art supply store on James Street North buying a journal when members of an Ecumenical Social Justice group came in to meet and talk to the proprietor about his work. This meeting was spontaneous (though not the first of its kind that I had witnessed). In fact, the proprietor, Dave Kuruc, is often looked to as a local spokesperson for the artistic efforts taking place on the street. Kuruc spoke to the members of the social justice group about the social problems on James Street North that he and a small group of like-minded individuals have been trying to address over the past six years. For example, Kuruc told them that an absentee landlord from Toronto owned the building he had bought, and there were drug deals and prostitution taking place in the building before he moved in. Kuruc was candid about how he is concerned about crime on the street and referred to Jane Jacobs' concept of the "sidewalk ballet" as an ideal where people from all walks of life come into contact with each other and keep each other safe.¹³ He talked about trying to make a difference in his neighbourhood and how he feels he is working towards a vision of a sustainable community. In particular, he said that he wants the abandoned buildings to be bought and used. He also wants more bike racks and is happy about the impact that turning the street back into a two way street has had for the neighbourhood: walk-ability, bike-ability, slowing down, noticing what is right in front of

¹³ Jacobs states in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, originally published in 1961, that:

Under the seeming disorder of the old city, wherever the old city is working successfully, is a marvellous order for maintaining the safety of the streets and the freedom of the city. It is a complex order. Its essence is intricacy of sidewalk use, bringing with it a constant succession of eyes. This order is all composed of movement and change, and although it is life, not art, we may fancifully call it the art form of the city and liken it to the dance...to an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole (1989:50).

you and “eyes on the street.”¹⁴, ¹⁵ He told me that he wants mixed-use neighbourhoods and buildings. In fact, even the name of his store, “Mixed Media,” while not named for this reason, echoes this desire.

The storeowner talked about his street using the word “ours” and it became clear that this sense of ownership is actively nurtured on the street. For example, when the Ecumenical group asked him about the Anglican Cathedral down the street, though he said he was not an Anglican, he referred to “our Anglican Cathedral.” One of the group’s members told him how happy they were to hear that there is a sense that the Cathedral is thought of as “ours” because of the community spirit that this kind of thinking can promote. Kuruc mentioned that the arts community in the area uses the Cathedral itself for a bi-weekly Maker’s Market (a local art market that takes place in the summer and once for the winter holidays). The Cathedral is also host to the New Harbour Music Series, and as such it has become one of the stops on the monthly art crawl, when more than twenty art galleries on the street open their doors.

¹⁴ James Street North was converted back into a two-way street in 2002. *Raise The Hammer*, an online Hamilton opinion site, stated that:

In 1997, a downtown revitalization charette sponsored by Architecture Hamilton recommended converting Hamilton's streets back to two-way. When James St. N. was converted in 2002, opponents predicted a disaster of gridlock and boarded-up windows. In fact, James North has seen a significant renaissance, with new investment, increased business, more pedestrian traffic, and a vibrant street life. John Dolbec, CEO of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, recently admitted that the two-way conversion helped spur the revival (Raise the Hammer Staff, November 7, 2006).

As a point of clarity, a charette is a group of experts or designers who work together in groups.

¹⁵ Jacobs argues that busier streets are safer than quiet ones because “watchers” keeping an eye on the street and its “users” will help keep it safer (1989:36-42).

In an interview I had conducted with Kuruc nine months earlier he addressed many of these same issues. When asked about how owning a building on James Street North changed his perspective on downtown Hamilton, he said that he had more of a stake there now. He further stated that:

People forgot that there is a collective ownership to the downtown and to the city. Now I think that is beginning to be reawakened. Regardless if you own a building or you have a business or you live downtown, I think there is a collective ownership for the downtown core so when something happens I think we all have a say in it. Now when I'm in this building I get to see why things are the way they are. This building was owned by a slumlord in Toronto and you see the impact of these things. We had nine units of varying degrees of people: everything from drug users to newly arrived immigrants and it all heaped up into one big mass with a landlord who wasn't in town who let things just slide. When that kind of thing happens you've got a building that is under distress and needs a lot of work and we figure that there are about 100 other buildings within walking distance that are like our building (Dave Kuruc interviewed by Vanessa Sage, August 24, 2009).

As someone who vocally takes pride in the local area, the store owner turned the conversation with the Ecumenical group away from the Cathedral and the art crawl and towards what has become the big issue on the street of late: gentrification. He told them that a local anti-gentrification group is using James Street North as an example of gentrification. His own views on the issue are multiple and sincere. He wants to see a street populated by businesses and residents who are creative and trying to contribute to the life of their neighbourhood by working and living on the street, not businesses and people only out to make a profit. Any time I have heard him talk about James Street North there is a true sense of heartfelt love and passion in his voice. In conversation with him and during our interview it was very clear, however, that gentrification is a

multifaceted issue with no easy answers. When asked directly about gentrification on the street Kuruc stated:

It's still really rough around the edges. There's still a lot of empty buildings. There's still a lot of abandoned properties. So, James Street is a long way from gentrifying, but it's how you use that term. So, one woman came into the shop and had just come back from buying shoes at Millers and said,

“Wow, you guys are really gentrifying the neighbourhood,” but to her that was a good thing. She had never ventured that far down and, for her, seeing a little shop open up where the variety store was, was amazing.

For other people they say, “Just wait. You guys are digging your own grave in what you are doing.”

So, how do you proceed? There is no winning. You don't win here. It's like, “Yeah, you're going to be successful but you're going to bring the wave on.” I don't get it. I don't even get what it means (Dave Kuruc interviewed by Vanessa Sage, August 24, 2009).

Contradictory Imaginations: Gentrification

Gentrification, in fact, is a common topic of discussion among many people in the local arts scene. While the topic is widely discussed, few can agree on the terms of discussion and what the effects of the process might be. Gentrification is a process of change within urban settings, which involves a movement of capital and people into typically lower-income areas.

From the moment an English sociologist invented the term “gentrification” to describe the residential movement of middle-class people into low-income areas of London (Glass 1964), the word evoked more than a simple change of scene. It suggested a symbolic new attachment to old buildings and a heightened sensibility to space and time. It also indicated a radical break with suburbia, a movement away from child-centered households toward the social diversity and aesthetic promiscuity of city life (Zukin 1987:131).

Some of my respondents spoke proudly and excitedly about how they are gentrifying the area; others fear the effects of gentrification; still others deny that the process is happening at all. Some will say two or three contradictory things at once.

A common point of comparison is Queen Street West in Toronto, an area in Toronto that has undergone gentrification in the past twenty years. Queen West evokes hope and fear for a possible future in the imaginations of many people I spoke with about James Street North. A further comparison can be made between Queen West and James North: *The Drake Hotel* in Toronto and *Studios at Hotel Hamilton*. Both are former rooming houses developed for the purposes of arts revitalization. Heather McLean argues, in an article about gentrification on Queen Street West, that, while promoting arts in neighbourhoods may create a needed interest in the arts,

it also encourages gentrification and the inevitable displacement of working and artist-class inhabitants as higher income earners come to buy their way into what is packaged and promoted as a hip-lifestyle. In this process, neighbourhoods like Queen-Beaconsfield and Parkdale become a new frontier for redevelopment (2005:158).

She further states that the Drake's owner Jeff Stober has used such frontier language when he referred to the area as the "wild wild west" in a *Toronto Star* article (McLean 2005:158). *The Drake*'s renovation is known to have had a major impact on the area and the costly renovation of *Hotel Hamilton* into *Studios at Hotel Hamilton* was both hoped and feared to create a similar impact during my fieldwork. Here are two comments made by respondents after Hotel Hamilton was purchased but before it was renovated:

It's taking a building that wasn't really contributing to the street and turning it into a place that will contribute. I think it will be, in terms of when they talk, if they talk, about the gentrification of James Street that it will be the pivot point. To me it seems that those are a group of investors

who want to turn it around and who want to doll it up with all the bells and whistles of a Drake Hotel in Toronto but a Hamilton version of that. “We’re in the cultural district and here’s a hip crazy place and we’re going to put in My Dog Joe’s¹⁶ on the bottom floor and it’s going to be ready to go.” I think if it works, and it looks like they are doing it smartly, and there is no reason why it shouldn’t work, then we’ll see... (Interview respondent, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, January 28, 2010)

That is interesting because there are four investors, so they bought the building, and it’s not too often when you have investors. It’s a huge job. These guys have come in and they’re putting money into it. Everything else on James Street so far has been Mom and Pop. Someone coming in and buying it, getting a mortgage, someone to back them, and these guys have come in and they’re just going to spend a lot of money. They’re going to spend, when they’re done, a million dollars. So, this isn’t going to be a rough around the edges sort of place. It is going to be a really thought out well designed space.

One side says this is great for the street and the other people are like, “Who is going to be able to afford these spaces? Artists aren’t, who are just squeaking by, it’s going to people like maybe an accountant or maybe a design firm or something like that.”...

Then there’s my neighbours who say, “well, that’s great. That means they’re going to come out and go to the restaurants or they’re going to shop here.”

So, you need balance, and regardless of the developments, that one and the condo project next to Acclamation that is being talked about as well. You can have those things on the street but you still need to have a space, like a \$400 apartment, for a young artist or a student be able to live in. And then they contribute to the street in different ways. They are the ones who are going to the concert down the street. They are the ones who are going to go to the market and buy their fresh vegetables and fruits. They don’t have a car, so they’re going to contribute to public transit. That’s how I believe in a real neighbourhood. You can have someone who’s got a \$250 000 condo living right next door to someone who is an up and coming musician who is renting their flat. Some of my neighbours don’t necessarily understand that. They just want that end result. They don’t understand there needs to be a flow and a real balance to it. James Street has a lot of that right now (Interview respondent, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, August 24, 2009).

¹⁶ This is an indie café in Westdale Village, near McMaster University, in Hamilton.

...



Hotel Hamilton before Renovations 1& 2
(August 3, 2009)



Hotel Hamilton During Renovations
(September 12, 2009)

The Far Future Pushing Closer

On its first day of opening, August 9th, 2010, I am sitting in the Mulberry Street Coffeehouse in the old Hotel Hamilton building. It is raining outside and buzzing in here. I'm drinking sugar and caffeine and wish I wasn't since I've already had too much today. I see the reflection of a red and cream period Waterfront bus going downtown whiz past in the large tall window that is newly framed in pine beside me. Most of the walls in here

are exposed red brick or painted white or yellow with concrete and wood surrounding the doorways. Art lines the walls in one of the two rooms. Where the old mosaic and stone is not polished and preserved, dark hardwood covers the floors. There are doors that lead nowhere but look good—their age meticulously shown off with peeling paint in vintage colours. The main counter-top is made of poured concrete with pieces of the mosaic floor embedded in it. A recovered tin ceiling painted in cream is overhead. In front of where I sit is a large paper lamp with historic black and white photos of houses in front of a factory, a downtown church, the Art Gallery of Hamilton and other city and residential streetscapes, one of which looks like James Street North. The lighting consists of drop down bare bulbs on thick black wires, chandeliers and ceiling spotlights. Daylight streams in even on this rainy day. The atmosphere is bright and airy.



Chandelier Inside the Mulberry Street Coffeehouse
(October 21, 2010)

I believe, if I heard right, a sweet potato coconut loaf (not shown on the menu) is being made behind me. Here you can eat local and organic: brownies, banana bread,

lemon yogurt cake, broccoli and cheddar muffins, frittata, quiche, and paninis. And you can drink fair trade and shade grown (iced) coffee, (iced) latte, (iced) mochacino, (iced) caramel vanilla latte, cappuccino, espresso, a various assortment of teas, Italian sodas, juices and smoothies.

I have been here for less than half an hour and two people I know have come in. At least three more had checked out the coffeehouse earlier. I see laptops, iPhones, cell phones and a large medical textbook being used on the twelve or so tables. Deals are being made, work is being done and friends are meeting. I joke about the weather and make polite conversation with people. I sit here using my laptop to write and feel comfortable getting up and leaving it as I walk around, certain that it won't be stolen or tampered with.

I hear "hellos" and the words "volunteering," "potential," "art," "international calibre," "after party" and "art crawl" in the air. "Material World" by Madonna is playing just loud enough to hear every word of the song, mostly muffling out the conversations all around and allowing me to hear my own thoughts. I think how perfect that this song is playing right now in this place where the materiality of bricks and stones and histories and futures meet. Madonna is followed by The Beatles' "Let it Be," and I can't help but think about the contrasts these two sentiments offer this street.

This coffee shop was long anticipated; both passionately hoped for and, in some cases, feared for James Street North. It's the coffee shop that wasn't here before. The one made "for us," the new artistic crowd in this largely Portuguese and Italian neighbourhood full of espresso machines, as some have said to me. I'm both excited and

not sure. It's not a Starbucks—that often dreaded and often welcomed symbol of capital and change—but I still paid \$7.80 for a dessert square and an iced coffee. It's not a Starbucks but it potentially signals a shift on this street. For good or ill. Time will tell.

“We are living in a material world.”

“Whisper words of wisdom. Let it be.”¹⁷



Hotel Hamilton After Renovations 2.
Inside the Mulberry Street Coffeehouse (October 21, 2010).

¹⁷ This piece was originally written for this chapter. It was then published on August 18, 2010 as “The Far Future Pushing Closer All the Time” (Sage 2010) on the *HMagazine* website (<http://www.new.hmag.ca/>) and then on its Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=5832949793>) wall. Within one minute of it being posted on Facebook I was asked what I meant by “us” in the article. Dialogue continued throughout the day about “the socio-politicization of these spaces.”

Several public comments were posted on the *HMagazine* website. The owners of the café made one of these comments. They liked the article and said that they struggled with the issues I raised in the article. They also said that their costs are high because they use fair-trade, organic and local ingredients and coffee, that the money that “gets spent here gets re-spent here” and that:

We are all big supporters of Hamilton and local, small businesses. If we really want local, organic, fair-trade and home baked, it's going to cost a little more. The surprising thing is that we can (at least in theory) compete with Starbucks and others at all. It's a good sign (Accessed Aug 19, 2010, <http://www.new.hmag.ca/?p=1084>).

It is also worth noting that I did much of the writing of this thesis at *The Mulberry Coffeehouse*.



Hotel Hamilton After Renovations 2.
Inside the Mulberry Street Coffeehouse (October 21, 2010).



Bricked in Window in Hotel Hamilton
(September 12, 2009)



Second Floor of Hotel Hamilton,
After Purchase and During Renovations
(September 12, 2009)



Hotel Hamilton, Old Bills Framed for Art Crawl (September 12, 2009)

SOS: Fear and all Eyes on the Street

Just over a year after the Mulberry Coffee House on September 20, 2011 I'm at my bank at King and James letting them know that once more I am still a student so they can waive my bank fees, and the teller asks me what I do. I tell her I'm an anthropologist studying James Street--I point northward--and that I study the arts scene. Curious, she asks what I'm finding. My mind swims to find an answer to the question (the answer always changing), and when I say that I'm looking at how the arts have become a symbol of hope for the city her face lights up.

...

The day previous I'm at the Mulberry Coffeehouse and another regular and I finally break the ice and say hello. In the usual, 'what do you do?' opening conversation you have with people you don't know I tell him what I do. He smiles and asks about how the arts scene started. I tell him it started recently as a grassroots movement with a few passionate individuals opening galleries and that they, for the most part, own their buildings.

He smiles again. "Oh, so it's real!," referring to the arts scene.

"This place was a godsend," he says, referring to the coffeehouse, and mentions he moved to the north end because of the character of the street but that his friends wince and worry that he's not safe.

...

At the third annual Supercrawl I'm listening to a voice on a headset that is talking about how there is a lot of fear about James Street North and the Downtown but that with

an increase in arts activity and street festivals hopefully the walls of fear will begin to disappear. These headsets were positioned at various points on the street and outside of the *Factory: Hamilton Media Arts Centre*. Here you were invited to listen to the sounds of the street as part of a *Canada Council for the Arts* and *Ontario Arts Council* funded project entitled, "Soul of the Street: Interactive Media, Performance and Installation / Displacement > Transformation > Revitalization / Bridging the Past, Present and Future of James Street North." The project was described as such on the display:

The term SOS is a call of distress. In many ways, SOS: Soul of the Street project is likewise a call. It is a call to the community to experience the creation of a unique new culture in one of the oldest neighbourhoods in Canada: James Street North in Hamilton, Ontario.

Formerly the site of Customs House and the centre of government, industry, economy and culture, historically the James Street North Corridor was the entry point for new citizens as they arrived by boat, train and carriage.

Like the downtown core in so many other North American cities, James Street North fell into decay in the 1970's. Now, an influx of artists is creating a whole new identity as Hamilton's Arts District, a phenomena that is being recognized across the country as an emerging model for successful urban renewal lead by the creative class.

SOS is the acronym for the Soul of Street, in which independent local artists working as an intersecting ensemble will send out a call to the community to experience and explore this emerging renaissance.

This, right here, is the story. Told over and over again--in multiple venues and various ways—during my fieldwork. It is the story that is re-acted to, re-enacted, and re-told. This is the story I entered fieldwork hearing and it is the story I left it with. Note too, that the exhibit is entitled “SOS,” and how in the title fear is evoked and then turned on its head when the acronym is read as the full title.

...

When I asked respondents about fear, they generally said that felt very safe on James Street North despite including the threat of crime in their representations of, and discourses, about James Street North during interviews. One female respondent said that, “I’ve never felt like I had a problem and I work at all hours of the night.” Another woman said her boyfriend doesn’t always feel safe and that she “get[s] approached by a least three crazy or crack heads a day but it’s only unsafe if you are engaging in dangerous activities.” People often mentioned in interviews how someone was stabbed or shot or almost shot on the street but the events never seemed to affect them emotionally in the interview or in how they discussed their activities on the street.

An artist and frequenter of art crawls discussed how crime might affect the arts on James Street:

There still is crime and because of the crime that continues I know people who refuse to take themselves down to James Street North for the art crawls because they are worried that it’s dangerous. And these are people who my kids are going to school with...I know quite a few people who are terrified of downtown...I don’t know, I don’t understand it. I think they are missing out and they are so intelligent and yet they’ve completely cut themselves off...I haven’t had anything bad to me happen to me on James Street North. Plus, I take my children there (Leslie Furness, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, December 1, 2009).

Before I moved to James Street North from the West Downtown area I was warned not to move because of fears for my safety. Fear about crime in the downtown (as this sense of unease and concern about crime is not limited to James Street North) is common. I would argue, as an artist who lives in the James Street North area did when I spoke with him, that:

There’s class issues involved and I think people are threatened by poor people because they look poor, they look scary, they’re hungry, they’re a

little more desperate. But that doesn't mean that they are violent or any more or less moral or more likely to hurt you (Interview respondent, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, August 12, 2009).

The artist further reflected on his experience of living in the neighborhood and in other "rough" areas. He felt that people are tolerant of difference "because a lot of them have been rejected by the middle class or their families. They've been rejected and don't fit in, so there is an acceptance of difference."

Still, some strategies have developed to manage the feelings of fear. As a store owner on the street discusses:

I think you have to be aware. There's dangerous stuff that goes on on James Street and there's bad things that go on. I've been on James Street at all levels of night and I've never had anything bad happen to me at night. I've had a few instances during the day that, a. maybe could have been avoidable and b. wrong place, wrong time but I've never felt unsafe. But I'm also not a woman... I know women who live on the street who love it...but there's the thing when you have other people who live down there...you have the classic Jane Jacobs' eyes on the street. The key to turning around James St. is having all those apartments filled above so that people look down at all times of the day. During the day; during the night. So, having the mixed use of studios and apartments is great because if you only have people who only work there they'd be gone most of the day and come home at night. When you have people working in studios and storefronts there's that level of, we all watch the street (Interview respondent, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, August 24, 2009).

Another respondent told me that the artists "make the bad guys uncomfortable." But he had different ideas, which interestingly, echoed the storeowner's suggestion that Jacob's 'eyes on the street' is a sustainable solution. He commented:

Someone else is going to have to deliver the final blow at the provincial or federal levels in terms of legislation because the police arrest people, charge them, they go through the courts and they are either on bail or parole or early release. I remember there was this one Vietnamese guy, he got nine months. He was a big drug dealer somewhere in Barton and James area and the judge said, 'well, first time offence, maybe he'll straighten his

life around.' Well, no, the guy's a professional drug dealer. So, I don't think we can go as far as China where they basically convict you, take you out in front of the courthouse and shoot you but something more drastic has to be done or those other more esoteric solutions like legalizing...the ultimate answer can't be police on James Street constantly beating up on the drug guys. I suppose the empowerment of the neighbourhood not to put up with it, because you can be intimidated by these people and not say anything. We have city housing buildings where crime and criminals thrive but nobody wants to say anything...Once the neighbours and everyone realizes that yes the police are on your side it's the Jane Jacob's 'eyes on the street,' then it moves. But directly to your point, where does the crime go? It goes elsewhere. That's the problem (Interview respondent, interviewed January 27, 2010).

Fear of crime directly relates to Hamilton's recent efforts at downtown revitalization and, subsequently revitalization efforts on James Street North. However, these present efforts, while in some ways based in fear, also come out of a hope for the future that is tied to a nostalgia for the past.

New Frontiers

Each year that we've been here we've seen a huge change. We see more and more stuff coming onto the street, more and more positive energy, more money invested here in terms of re-building the old buildings, there's more and more interest. I hope that this continues on to actually create what it potentially should be, which is the street should go right from the Bayfront right up to the mountain. (Josie Radman, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, March 19, 2010)

On James Street North a sense of the new frontier, that is commonly seen in areas that gentrify, is apparent as buildings are being bought and renovated for the use of artists, creative types and people moving onto the street from larger centres such as Toronto in search of lower rents in an area that promises to be "hip" and fashionable. When I asked an artist who had recently moved to Hamilton "What do you think of

Hamilton?” she said, “I like it, it has a kind of edge to it...there’s a rougher sort of edge to it.” She then compared it to Toronto in the 1980s:

Toronto in the ‘80s really wanted something, it wanted to be part of something, it felt like it deserved more or should be more and so the whole city was wanting more. Now it is a cosmopolitan city. There’s a hunger in Hamilton. [It’s] surrounded by a bit of decay, a bit of tiredness, a bit of dirt (Interview respondent, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, December 14, 2009).

The buildings that are purchased are often referred to as decayed, abandoned, derelict, or under-utilized, and their renovations frequently connect with larger projects to revitalize and clean up the downtown core. One respondent noted

I’m a downtown re-development guy...So of course I’m optimistic about the downtown and I think James Street North is neat because it is evolving on its own. There’s not really been a lot of city, I can’t think of any real city involvement, on James North, Nobody’s really designated it as an arts district. There wasn’t any real official plan and the artists themselves have just decided that that’s where they are going. Rent was cheap and there’s good culture, like the heritage of the old buildings (Glen Norton, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, January 26, 2010).

And, another said:

It’s unfortunate that these beautiful buildings are not being utilized especially with all the urban sprawl. A healthy downtown seems to be common sense. All you need is a large company like Kodak but the city is kind of messed up there. Like the city hasn’t really supported James Street. It’s taken a long time for them to pick up on it. They haven’t given any money or infrastructure to the art crawl, for example, yet they talk about how good it is (Interview respondent, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, August 12, 2009).



Collapsed Building, Next to the Lister Block
(April 26, 2008)



Downtown Building,
Near Main Street West and Hess Street
South
(April 26, 2010)



Alleyway on James Street North,
next to the Lister Block
(April 26, 2008)



Gore Park Fountain, 1860¹⁸



Painting of Gore Park Fountain. Notice the Steelworker playing the fiddle. James Street North (April 26, 2008)



"Wasted Words. Lasting Legacy."
(April 26, 2008)



Century Exhibit at Mixed Media
(February 12, 2010)

The building purchases and renovations also connect with a strong sense of value that is placed on aesthetics and preserving historical buildings among those in the arts community. The streetscape is one of the things that make James Street North so appealing for artists, but a complex problem soon emerges. That is, attempts to preserve the old buildings, that are taken to be so valuable, might efface the very evidence of their

¹⁸ <http://www.hamiltonpostcards.com/pages/gorepark.html> (Accessed on September 15, 2010)

age. The visible signs of decay—the abandoned buildings, the old signage painted on the sides of buildings, and the crumbling brick—are both a lamentable blight on the modern city and an indispensable tie to a vanishing past.



Renovating the Old Dominion Building
(July 22, 2010)



Old Signage on James Street North
(July 22, 2010)



Gutted Apartment 1 & 2
(February 2, 2010)



These buildings have become a way to look to the future for James Street North. However, it is important to note that not everyone is interested in buildings. As one respondent said:

I'm more interested in the people. Obviously I'm interested in James Street as an architectural space, a geographic place, as a connection to the water, as a place where people can congregate and its real outward expression of a healthy community but I'm more interested in making sure that the people who live and work there are paid well, are treated fairly and ethically and represent the diversity: age, race, gender, sexuality (Interview respondent, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, December 9, 2009).

These spaces (whether they are social or made of brick and stone), and what takes place within them, come to occupy contradictory imaginations where a gentrified and a preserved space become both a hope and a fear for the future. In the rest of this chapter I continue to discuss and set up some of the major themes that will be examined in later chapters.

“Contemplating the Gritty Core”

One event in a local gallery space that approached the question of downtown renewal directly, and gentrification indirectly, was Gary Santucci's exhibit in a group show entitled “The Hood, the Bad and the Ugly: Contemplating the Gritty Core of Our City.” The exhibit was shown at *you me gallery*, on James Street North and opened for the August 2009 art crawl. In the exhibit, the artist attempted to highlight issues of urban poverty and prostitution in Hamilton's near-by east end Lansdale neighbourhood. Particularly noteworthy in this exhibit were Santucci's series of photos of women standing on the street corner outside of The Pearl Company (his business and residence). These women were presumed to be prostitutes; the photos were taken and displayed

without their permission, and seemed to show the moral degradation of his neighbourhood.

A harsh critique of his work emerged immediately from critics working from a largely feminist and anti-oppression perspective, and an article entitled “Is it Art or Exploitation?” written by Amber Dean and Renne Wetselaar appeared in The Hamilton Spectator (September 12, 2009) arguing that Santucci had no moral right to photograph the women without their consent and that the photos put an already vulnerable population at risk.

While some members of the arts community talked about the show, there was very little mobilization from the arts community, and, if anything, the critique from that quarter was mostly about the quality of the art. Working as a participant-observer, I was informed at one point that the issue was “just too political” and I witnessed two female Lansdale community members leave Santucci’s public talk at the gallery feeling completely alienated and angered by the discussion of his work and their lives as women. The critique launched against his work has since become a more general critique of the potential neighbourhood displacement that artists and the arts may create in the downtown core.

Living Culture: Hope for the Creative

This critique also takes the form of a discussion about the effects that the creative class might have on James Street North. Hamilton’s historical shifts from a railway city to an industrializing city to a post-industrial city have opened up a discourse around creating, nurturing and promoting this “creative class.” The term is Richard Florida’s

(2002), and the “creative class” has become a buzzword among the arts community in Hamilton. Most admit to never having read Florida, however he was invited to speak at the first annual Hamilton Economic Summit on May 3rd 2008 at the Old Mill in Ancaster, a restaurant and conference centre and some of the people I spoke to had attended.¹⁹ In the sense that Florida means it, the creative class is a “new” economic driving force that develops in post-industrial cities and includes a wide range of creative people such as intellectuals, computer programmers, engineers, designers and bohemians.²⁰

This class is commonly credited with helping to revitalize James Street North, while it is simultaneously accused of ignoring neighbourhood displacement or gentrification. Ironically, if one uses Florida’s definition, the creative class is that group of people most often accused of the gentrification process and also most vocal in criticizing this same process.²¹ That is, individual members of the creative class (whether they define themselves as members or not) tend to focus on the problems created by others, excusing themselves for their own role in the very problems they perceive.

In a talk at the Art Gallery of Hamilton entitled “Can the Arts Save Hamilton?” in April, 2009 the arts were discussed in terms of hope for economic revival. The speaker

¹⁹ See a video of Florida’s speech here:

http://www.creativeclass.com/richard_florida/video/index.php?video=Richard_Florida_Speaks_at_the_Hamilton_Economic_Summit
(Accessed on March 28, 2011)

²⁰ He divides this class into two components: the “Super-Creative Core” and “creative professionals.” For Florida, the Super-Creative Core are individuals who “fully engage in the creative process” and who are involved in, producing new forms or designs that are readily transferable and widely useful—such as designing a new product that can be widely made, sold, and used; coming up with a theorem or strategy that can be applied in many cases; or composing music that can be performed again and again (2002:69).

²¹ Although critics of the class would not necessarily identify as being part of it since the term is not universally liked or accepted by those whom Florida includes in his definition.

Eddie Friel (the first Chief Executive of the Greater Glasgow Tourism Board) discussed Glasgow's post-industrial economic progress, based on selling the arts to tourists, as a potential model for Hamilton. This hope for the creative class and the arts is not uncommon. On November 14 2009, at a day long collaborative community building conference for the arts and culture sector called "The Big Picture," Ivan Jurakic, visual artist and curator of Cambridge Galleries, in the nearby city of Cambridge, gave a talk entitled "Sustainability of Arts Organizations" and used the hope that James Street North inspires for Hamilton as his focus.

Jurakic stated that James Street North has succeeded because of its failures; the abandoned buildings and low property values allowed cultural capital to transform the community for the better. On James Street, a street level living culture is both promoted and created, he argued. This is a place where people have a stake in their community, and the changes that have been occurring for the past five years on the street can be a boon to the city as a whole but particularly the downtown core. However, he said that James Street is also vulnerable and it may not be sustainable without more funding and structural support from the culture sector of the City of Hamilton. Here, Jurakic said, the culture sector needs to acknowledge living culture as a priority instead of simply focusing on Heritage and Museums. He concluded with the following statements: the downtown does not need to be feared, Hamilton (the arm-pit of Canada) needs to be re-visioned, and the routes for which Hamilton has always been a part can be avenues for building positive connections within the province. In this way, Jukakic stated, Hamiltonians can take pride in their city.

Not surprisingly Jurakic's visionary polemic was met with huge applause.

Revitalization, Growth, Hope and Loss

Throughout the research and fieldwork process several key themes emerged from the data. These emerging themes link James Street North to the larger social process and issues of gentrification, the creative class, and what happens to post-industrial cities, such as Hamilton, as they attempt to re-define themselves in national and global markets. However, while these themes offer valuable starting places for understanding James Street North, following them through to their logical conclusions also has the potential to flatten the analysis and life of this particular site by using it as yet another example of a location that is either affected by gentrification or actively gentrifying. My data has shown that this form of analysis, on its own, will not do justice, nor give dignity to, those in the arts scene who genuinely love this street and city.

I interviewed stakeholders in the arts scene, and as such my interpretations of their efforts at revitalization cannot help but be influenced by their voices. However, several local activists were also vocal during the course of the research, and their concerns provided a forceful counter-argument to what has been taking place in downtown Hamilton and on James Street North over the past several years. They have written numerous local and national media pieces, as well as engaging in culture jamming, a way to use media to disrupt conventionally held assumptions. Their arguments, along with the alternative views they bring to the table, are addressed with the utmost respect.

When I began this research I did not know that gentrification would be such a major theme, and as a result I chose early on to focus on stakeholders in the arts scene. If

I were to do this research again, knowing what I know now, I would have formally interviewed more long-term inhabitants and businesses on the street but when I began I chose to narrow my focus to arts stakeholders. Therefore, this thesis cannot be a formal study of the “effects” of the arts scene. If I attempted such a study I would risk, as I argue others have, missing the very voices that are affected most by the changes taking place. Given the fact that I lived on James Street North, however, and have spoken informally with many people, I do still feel confident discussing some of the effects but I will always be careful not to presume to speak for people whose voices I have not heard the sound of.

This thesis is, however, an in-depth perspective on those who build the things that either have the potential to push people out, or who are criticized for doing that, and as such it provides a valuable contribution to the literature. In the end, I have “studied up” within a particular group in order to understand more fully revitalization processes and gentrification in general.

Still, I must stress that I do not wish to reduce the artistic revitalization efforts of James Street North to a simple gentrification process—even if in many ways, it can be argued, that is what is happening—because that is not all that is happening.

Interestingly, during fieldwork, I observed that the word gentrification had the power to become one of those unspoken words, like “Voldemort” is in the *Harry Potter* books, and it is now commonly referred to as the “G” word by many of my respondents. In making this allusion to a fantasy book I do not wish to make light of gentrification or suggest that people throughout the world have not been negatively affected by it, but to

make clear that the word itself seems to have taken on a magical, powerful and frightening quality on the street. It has also produced equally forceful counter-responses.

In the following chapters, through a careful analysis of primary data, I discuss gentrification, revitalization and the creative class as they relate to the arts, to Hamilton and to James Street North. Further, I look at these issues as they pertain to how spaces are not empty or neutral but charged with the experiential intersections of gender, sexuality, class and ethnicity. James North stakeholders in local and national media venues have written much about these topics, and these media have been a major source of the debates. In addition, I discuss in detail some of the events I attended in Hamilton over a nineteen-month period from April 23, 2009 to November 22, 2010, which provided forums for discussion of James Street North, the gentrification process, and/or arts in the city of Hamilton.

I have found that there are competing visions of authenticity taking place in all of these ethnographic examples. I argue that what attracts the middle class to James Street North is the perceived “exotic” character of the street, the rural in the urban, and the old-fashioned and nostalgic aspects of the street, expressed through its architecture, and vintage clothing and antique stores.

One example of this theme is found at the storefront museum HIStory and HERitage. Here, the owner, Graham Crawford takes visitors on trips to the past through his curated photo exhibits of particular buildings, neighbourhoods and streetscapes throughout Hamilton. When talking about how he found his purpose on James Street North, he talked about the draw of history that James North had for him:

There's just something about James North that because it is one of the oldest, if not, in fact, the oldest street in the city, every immigrant that ever came here by boat or rail came to the bottom of James Street North and either lived on either side or went up James to wherever it was they ended up living (Interviewed by Vanessa Sage, April 22, 2010).

People want to be part of the exotic, nostalgic “vibe” because they perceive it as being authentic. Like going on a voyage elsewhere, a visit to James Street North takes people out of normal structured life into a “different place” (cf. Dubisch 1995). This different place becomes another way of living – a social and civic experiment – an attempt to build a better city. Interviewees time and time again told me that they wanted to retain the character of the street (the grittiness) to avoid losing its authenticity. However, a paradox emerges: the very grittiness that attracts the middle class because it is different and authentic is changed by them when they come into the area it because they find also the grittiness too unpalatable.

One of the things that struck me most when talking to stakeholders in the James Street North arts scene was their passion for Hamilton in general (the place they live) and James Street North specifically (the place they work and in many cases also live). *Passion* connotes a strong emotion that encompasses both a compulsion towards action and a root in suffering. Passion is closely connected to hope, nostalgia and imagination. As such, passion is highly relevant to the artistic efforts and activities that took place on James Street North during my fieldwork. As I show, there have been many passionate actions and responses that have taken place on James Street North in relation to the arts scene.

4. Gendered and Sexualized Spaces: The Hood, the Bad and the Ugly

Debates in the community over competing definitions of authenticity crystallized around several issues. One of these issues was the Gary Santucci exhibit that took place at *you me gallery* on James Street North. The exhibit sparked a passionate debate about the process of gentrification happening on James Street North. This chapter provides a thick description of that debate, showing the different voices that engaged in it and their competing visions for the street.

Not A Pretty Site: A Generating Force

Review: The Hood, the Bad and the Ugly

The room was packed and the energy was high. Approximately 40 people arrived for an artists' talk at *you me gallery* on a stormy Thursday night at the end of August to discuss the gallery's most recent show entitled "The Hood, the Bad and the Ugly: Contemplating the Gritty Core of our City." The show, featuring work by Jim Chambers, Will Heikoop, Cees van Gemerden, Hollie Pocsai and Gary Santucci, attempted to expose and explore the textures and realities of poverty in Hamilton. The artists' work does "not show people and places at their best" and this was, in part, why the energy in the room was so high; why, as gallery owner Bryce Kanbara stated at the beginning of the talk, the show has been so controversial.

Kanbara began the evening by saying that he hoped that the art in the show would be an impetus for a discussion about change. From this perspective, I would argue, the show was very successful. This success was evidenced by the lively discussion that took place at the artists' talk that night and by the fact that there were two Hamilton Spectator articles published subsequently (one by Jeff Mahoney, 2009 and the other by Susan

Clairmont 2009) on Gary Santucci's photos that highlight issues of urban poverty and prostitution in Hamilton. However, questions remain up for discussion: what changes are desired, how can Hamiltonians go about implementing those changes, and who benefits from these changes? But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's talk about the art generating this discussion.

Cees van Gemerden presented a selection of images and statements taken from his larger exhibit, "Surviving the (dirty) nineties," displayed at the Art Gallery of Hamilton in 1999. In this exhibit he portrayed and gave voice to community activists and people in the arts and environmental communities struggling to get by during the Harris government²². Hollie Pocsai, who co-runs a local store *White Elephant Vintage* with Jane LaBatte on James St. North, described her series of photographs taken of abandoned buildings as "beautiful bones." These images of beautiful bones captured industrial decay in order to expose what was once beautiful in Hamilton. Will Heikoop's photographs were spare but haunting. Simple images of doors under surveillance, boarded up windows and bedding left in a park effectively explored the theme of anxiety over surveillance and security in Hamilton. Jim Chambers used crime logs taken from crimespot.com to show the concentrations and types of crime that occur in the city. He stated that he is committed to the North End (he lives and works there) but is concerned about whether or not people feel safe coming down to this vital area of the city. Finally, Santucci's²³ work, displayed

²² Mike Harris, 22nd premier of Ontario (1995—2002). His conservative leadership in Ontario was known for its fiscal restraints and cutbacks to Ontario provincial funding for the arts, the environment and social services.

²³ Santucci is the owner the Pearl Company and engaged contentious zoning issue debate with the city because the building was not zoned for theatre use.

on a series of television screens, showed video captured from his surveillance cameras, 275 stills of abandoned buildings in Ward 3, and photos of women standing on a street corner outside *The Pearl Company* in Hamilton's Lansdale neighbourhood.

After each artist presented their work people in attendance were invited to ask questions. Santucci's work generated the bulk of the discussion, especially his photographs of women presumed to be prostitutes. People talked. They talked about the role of government (both local and provincial) in creating and sustaining poverty. They talked about the processes of abandonment and gentrification in neighbourhoods, and asked what responsibility do artists have? What does an ideal community look like? And they talked about questions of representation, exploitation and the victimization of women. There were no easy answers and, in the end, a consensus was not reached. The discussion was heated and it was emotional. Still, what came across to me is that these issues really mattered to the artists and those who ventured out in the rain and crammed into the gallery that night. Truly exploring the difficult questions and realities of poverty in Hamilton mattered. Art, in this moment, became a generating force in discussing social issues.

I wrote this review for *HMagazine* shortly after the talk and it appeared online on *HMagazine*'s website (Sage 2009). Volunteering for *HMagazine* was part of my fieldwork, and writing this piece was my first assignment. Further, I attended the talk as part of my volunteer job with *Hamilton Artist's Inc.* because I was about to start to help

organize a panel on sex work for the following February. Santucci's art clearly related to the topic of this future panel.

I showed this review to a respondent within the arts community on James Street North who had shared with me their deep political concerns about the exhibit and, while they didn't overtly say to me, "Aren't you forgetting about something here, Vanessa?," I could tell they were disappointed. So was I because I too was deeply concerned. To this day I wish I had written something different.

This moment in the fieldwork was a great learning experience. It told me: 1) that the questions Santucci raised were not easy issues for anyone involved, 2) that there was no way to please everyone, 3) that trying to do so was not a good idea, 4) that I was personally torn, 5) and that there were already a lot of tensions and dynamics existing within the arts community which had little to do with the art and which I was trying to balance and untangle.²⁴

A few months later I told a respondent who was involved with an activist group that formed in response to the Santucci exhibit about my choice to leave the activist group. I revealed I was having concerns about it and that while I agreed on a basic level with the group's goals I felt like I couldn't make my mind up on some of these issues right away and that I needed to keep my mind open, especially in my position as an

²⁴ I do find it interesting, however, that I feel as if I can write more critically about the Santucci exhibit now than at the time. There are a few factors involved in why this is so. One, at the time I didn't feel it was my place to do anything except provide a seemingly objective public perspective. I realize now that this goal is impossible and that reactions to any opinion I might have shared would have been useful data. Still, even my seemingly "non-political" stance gave me useful data to work with. Two, I was in the beginning stages of fieldwork and was still finding my feet. Three, the format of ethnography allows for a deeper exploration of the work than the review could. Finally, much time has passed, there have been many public reactions to the work, and the time and reading of these reactions has given me the ability to carefully consider a critical stance.

anthropologist. I was concerned about maintaining my intellectual freedom if I agreed with everything that was being said (as became required for participation).

The respondent affirmed my choice to remain an observer at this point in time, acknowledging that there are multiple layers of issues in the group, and that

we should be able to choose when we come in and when we come out as long as we stay committed to the overarching theme, which is seeking equity and finding a way to bring these women some rights, some voice, some respect for whatever choices they make or that anybody makes (Interview respondent, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, December 9, 2009).

It is my intent to stay true to these aims now, and I have come to see that while a dialogue may have been created through art about social issues it was still done so at the expense of one of the most marginalized groups in our society. Also, I have come to realize that the argument that art can be a “generating force” in such a dialogue could serve to justify any form of potentially oppressive art. These are important distinctions that I did not share in my review, in what can only be called my naïve optimism at the time.

Still, after viewing the show three times, and thinking about it for over a year, more and more layers have revealed themselves to me. As time has passed my views and reactions to the issues that were ultimately raised in response to his show continued to change in complex ways. This chapter seeks to reveal these layers by entering the exhibit repeatedly using multiple voices and lenses. Beginning with this reflexive section I move on to describe two points of entry (and departure) at the artist’s talk, I then look in depth at several articles that appeared in *The Hamilton Spectator* concerning the show, discuss artists reactions to the show, and describe how the combined effort of *Hamilton Artist’s*

Inc. and *The Worker's Arts and Heritage Centre (WAHC)* to put on a panel about sex work in Hamilton indirectly sought to address some of the issues that the show raised from the point of view of sex workers themselves.

Not A Pretty Site: Quiet Realization

On August 20, 2009 two women and I were standing outside of an artist talk at *you me gallery* while it was still going on inside. They had just left looking visibly upset after asking several critical questions about Gary Santucci's art in the group show, "The Hood, the Bad and the Ugly: Contemplating the Gritty Core of Our City."

Part of his work in this show included a series of generally unflattering images of women standing on the street corner outside The Pearl Company, his residence and business, cycling through one of four video monitors. These pictures were taken without their consent and they were re-presented as women soliciting for sex. The alternative title of the show was "Not A Pretty Site," and the experience of these women standing outside the talk, at least, was not pretty.

Their unanswered questions during the talk raised issues about what it is like to be raped in Hamilton, what it is like to be poor in Hamilton and what it is like to work as women in or around the sex industry in Hamilton. The impression they gave from their questions, and the urgency with which they asked them, was that they wanted to take the opportunity to talk about how the social issues that were raised in the art might relate to women's lives.

One of them addressed the room, defeated, after not getting any answers,
"Oh, this is about art."

And then they left.

And then I stood up followed them out.

One was crying, the other angry. It had been raining earlier and it was cool now. I asked if they were OK and told them I understood some of what they were talking about.

The woman who was crying looked at me and said,

“They will listen to you. Will you ask a question for me?”

I agreed.

She wanted me to ask about how certain places in the downtown core are commonly believed to be spaces of violence against women and she wanted to challenge an artist to take a picture of that!

I went back in and asked her question.

I also questioned how the artistic interest in the aesthetics of spaces—that was present in some of the art in the group show and was part of the discussion that night—might also include an exploration about what happens in these spaces and whom these actions might affect.

It was the last question of the night.

No one responded. The night was over.

Later another woman who attended the talk told me that the woman’s question, the one that she could not ask, was, in her opinion, the only moment of quiet realization during the whole night; a realization that women who work in the sex industry are actually very vulnerable to violence.

I wonder, though, if anyone remembers.

The woman crying outside the gallery cannot even remember.

She was not even present for her own question.

...

Santucci's piece caused a stir, unlike most of the art exhibits during my fieldwork. Even a year after the exhibit, when I tell people I am studying the arts scene on James Street North, the Santucci exhibit is mentioned as something I should consider. No other art or artist has been mentioned to me in this way. Further, Santucci's contribution to the August-September 2009 exhibition at *you me gallery* was a significant moment in the development of the gentrification debates that would follow in the coming year. This incarnation of the debate about what role the arts play on James Street North in the gentrification process was ignited by outrage over Santucci's exhibit from several local activists who critiqued the art from a feminist perspective and anti-oppression framework.

Not a Pretty Site: Perpetual Victimization

I can fairly talk about Santucci's intentions for his art by discussing what was said publically at the artists' talk. It must be clear when reading my interpretations that they have been made without a public comment given to me directly from Santucci. I did not interview him about this exhibit. However, the author's intention, or in this case artist's intention, is not the only worthwhile way to interpret texts that become part of the public sphere.

Further, this commentary is not a comment on Santucci himself and I hope that it is read as a discussion of the nature of the art and its effects. It greatly bothered me that he

was villainized, and while I critique the effects of the art, it is not my intent to further cause harm to Santucci, whom I believe is a human being doing his best as we all are.

While I refer to comments Santucci made publically, and while he was aware of my status as a researcher at the talk, I know from experience that often what people say and do are not completely what they mean to say or do. Nor is anyone's opinion static. To my knowledge, Santucci did want to help and never intended to hurt Hamilton sex workers. I would ask then, if possible, that my analysis of the discussions at the artist's talk be read with this *caution* in mind.

...

Santucci said he proudly sees Hamilton as his home, and from his comments I believe he genuinely loves the city and loves being active in its arts scene. In the artist's talk he mentioned how he had to reconstruct his assumptions and was learning about who he was as a man and as a Hamiltonian. He stated immediately that his work was a comment about men as victimizers. When talking about his neighbourhood, he said that he sees in it the marginalization of people, described it as a slum, and that he worries about his wife in the neighbourhood.

Underlying much of his commentary about his neighbourhood, however, is a widely known, publicized, deep-seated and long-standing battle with the city over the zoning issues that affect his theatre, the *Pearl Company*. Santucci says he's a businessman, not a capitalist (like the city) and said that all he wants to do is *play his guitar* (a refrain he's stated publically before). He admitted that one of the reasons he created this show was to "get even" to show city officials how sick they are. However,

after starting the project he said that he realized how trivial his problems were and that he truly wanted to help the women.

Santucci said that he wanted to “contemplate the faces and shapes of these women to feel something of who they are and where they are.” He asked: “Is sex work something we should tolerate, do we want our children to see this, and how can we stop feeding the cycles of perpetual victimization?”

Santucci explained that he had taken the photos from above the street, and estimated that there are approximately 300 sex workers in his area. He said that he is solicited all the time and that the activities taking place on the corner across from his building are well known and have become normalized. The women sex workers, he said, are exploited by pimps and he suggested that the women were the tip of the iceberg as the money they give to pimps goes back into feeding the crime network. The situation, he said, “is tragic and sad.” He added that he has stopped taking photos of the women.

Another part of his show was a series of photos of abandoned storefronts and buildings. He linked these images with those he took of the women by stating that this is where it starts: in the downtown that we’ve created. This sentiment was foreshadowed earlier in the evening when Jim Chambers, another local artist whose work was in the show, stated that, “the Government dumped their broken people down here,” and by “here” he meant downtown. When asked what he thought of the gentrification process being facilitated by artists displacing people Chambers responded by saying he was more concerned with the zoning laws.

When his art was opened up for discussion Santucci was asked about the effects of representing women in this way and one woman in the audience said that she knows first hand that some of the women who were photographed were offended. He said that he doesn't agree that he is victimizing them and that he believes that, "they deserve love, respect and opportunity." When asked if he had talked to the women he said that he was not qualified to talk to them. When asked about the morality of taking the photos without permission he said that there was no photographic law against it and that it was the women who were doing something illegal.

Not A Pretty Site: “The Truth Has a Face”

The images are raw.

Click.

A sex worker sitting on a concrete stoop. Leaning against a bright blue door. In broad daylight. Smoking a cigarette.

Click.

A marmalade cat appears. The gaunt woman pats it.

Click.

The woman crumples over, head in her hands, arms around her knees. Hugging herself.

Click.

The woman pulls her khaki pants down and urinates on the sidewalk.

Click. (Clairmont, Aug 20, 2009)

Susan Clairmont's descriptions in *The Hamilton Spectator* of some of the images found within Santucci's exhibit work to shock the reader and sensationalize the show. Her

article is titled “Unvarnished Glimpses of City’s Gritty Core” and the title, like an image in itself, speaks a thousand words.

...

Unvarnished synonyms: factual, unembellished, undistorted, truthful, exact, straightforward, accurate, literal, undisguised, unadorned, unadulterated, blatant, stark, obvious, naked.

...

The way Clairmont describes the images in Santucci’s show seems to literally point to a ‘truth’ that Hamiltonians push up against all the time: that Hamilton is *gritty*, it’s *raw*, it’s *gaunt*. As the article’s title suggests Hamilton is ever present in Santucci’s images. Hamilton is represented as *crumpled over* and *hugging itself*, as the women are. By describing the images of sex workers in such a way, and in titling the article as she does, Clairmont makes it seem as if Santucci is merely presenting a stark naked truth that evokes an image of a Hamilton that is trying to pick itself up.

Jeff Mahoney, also a writer for *The Hamilton Spectator*, echoes these sentiments in an even more *undisguised* way in his two articles about the Santucci exhibit. In “The Tragic Tales of Hamilton Don’t Just Disappear,” he writes:

Santucci started taking pictures and videos of what was going on around The Pearl Company. He’s not a voyeur. He made a case to the city for more police presence. It started with the parking lot, where his car has been broken into numerous times...

Then he started taking still pictures of the prostitution and other activities on the corner. After laying out the results on a light board he realized that he not only had a case for more police presence, he had a powerful, visual essay, with some hard truths about our city, our society and our priorities.

Santucci showed me the pictures. They are striking, haunting. Candid images of women, some clearly desperate and doing desperate things. Stopping men, leaning into car windows, squatting in the open to take a pee with no hint of self-consciousness. There are women with track marks up and down their arms, on their necks, women teetering on high heels, others in running shoes, some laughing, some with faces drained of all expression. Once you see these women, you don't forget them. All taken from Santucci's window.

Santucci is assembling these photographs to tell a story, along with companion photos of urban collapse from the Lansdale area and city core - - boarded up windows, defaced building fronts, tagging, general decrepitude (July 29, 2009).

And in “Should We See the Faces of Prostitution” Mahoney states the following:

Victims they may be, but their presence at the corner below Santucci's window is part of a wider culture of urban and neighbourhood economic decay that includes drug abuse and organized crime....

We take pictures of our worlds. Sometimes people step into the frame. The truth has a face (September 17, 2009).

In both articles Mahoney links Santucci's images of women to a deteriorating urban Hamilton landscape. Santucci is made hero (not voyeur) by unveiling an unnerving neighbourhood and showing it like it is. Mahoney gives the reader the impression that Santucci is merely showing his viewers what's going on and telling “hard truths.”

Mahoney and Clairmont's textual language become as powerful and pointed as Santucci's visual language. Both authors, for example, draw attention to the woman who urinates on the public sidewalk. Also, highlighting high heels and track marks further serves to construct stereotypical images of sex workers to shock their readers into believing that these images (and the words that describe them) are telling the truth. Additionally, the women in the photos are viewed as passive objects in these descriptions. They merely “step into the frame.” Not so innocent bystanders of a Hamilton that is out

of control.

Not A Pretty Site: Responses and Reactions

The Hamilton Spectator also published an opinion piece on September 12, 2009 (a few days before the second Mahoney piece) by Amber Dean and Renee Wetselaar. Wetselaar has a Masters degree in Globalization and the Human Condition and has been a leading voice in the arts in the Hamilton for much of her life. Among other projects and positions, she worked as the executive director at *The Workers Arts and Heritage Centre* for almost a decade. Dean is an English and Cultural Studies scholar who works at McMaster and lives in Hamilton. She has published several articles on arts and gentrification in academic journals (c.f. Granzow and Dean 2007; Antwi and Dean 2010). The authors describe themselves in the Spectator article as “individuals who write about or work in cultural industries, but also as feminists who have worked as advocates for and with other women from an anti-oppression framework” (September 12, 2009).

They begin their piece by posing the question: “What role does art play in examining social issues, giving voice to marginalized members of a community, or creating social change?” They further explain their concerns when they state:

This exhibit has troubled us due to its apparent lack of an ethical framework with regard to what we see as representation and appropriation of some of the most marginalized and frequently misrepresented women of our community.

More specifically, we're concerned that the images were taken without the consent or knowledge of the women pictured, and apparently without much concern for the harms that could arise from their display in a gallery space.

...We worry that his exploitation of the women's images in the interests of art making only serves to reinforce the segregation of women doing sex

work from the rest of the community...

In our conversations about the exhibit with Santucci, he has said repeatedly that he wants to help the women, but we wonder -- how will this art show offer help or create change? What assumptions underpin the offer to "help" in the first place?

And how does Santucci know that all of the women in his photos do sex work? Does this mean that any woman walking the streets in Lansdale, or dressed a certain way, could be presumed to be offering sex for sale, and therefore become targets for harassment or surveillance?

The images in this exhibit work as a kind of spectacle for the titillation and consumption of conventional gallerygoers, who are usually white and middle-class. Sex workers who have gone to view the exhibit have expressed anger and disgust at this appropriation of their lives. They have their own voices and their own points of view about this exhibit; we don't claim to speak for them, but we have heard their concerns, and we are working on other opportunities for their voices to be heard.

In framing the exhibit in such a way Dean and Wetselaar enter into the conversation feminist concerns over violence against women. In their concern over the ethics of appropriating women's lives without their consent or consideration for the potential damage that displaying the photographs, Dean and Wetselaar attempt to expose how the show does violence to the women photographed. In pointing out how the women were "captured" and used by Santucci to further his agenda without their knowledge Dean and Wetselaar also call into question the overall safety of women on the streets of Hamilton. They also allude to the connections between the oppression of women and other related oppressions such as racism and classism.

A few days later *The Spectator* published Anita Himes' response to Dean and Wetselaar's opinion piece. Himes is an active member of the Lansdale neighbourhood association, as is Santucci. In it she states that,

there was no marginalization of the oppressed. The photo exhibit simply demonstrates what Lansdale residents and their children see and deal with on a daily basis.

Should the writers move from theoretical to practical, they'd find residents calling 911 when these women are beaten or laying unconscious in a doorway; residents pulling them from train tracks when they are too stoned to move; residents putting girls in cabs and paying the fare to get them out of harm's way; residents giving them clothes and shoes when they have traded their own for drugs (September 15, 2009).

Himes goes on to evoke the harms to children who see sex workers on the street and to other women (not sex workers) who are being solicited for sex. She further accuses sex workers of abusive language and implies they are working for drugs. She ends her article by saying she and other Lansdale residents want funding for programs to help support female sex workers. Himes turns Dean and Wetselaar's argument around by accusing them of “sensationaliz[ing]” the exhibit.

Himes at once highlights the realities of violence against women on Hamilton streets while removing their citizenship as community members and residents. They are set apart from residents in the community and their marginalization is further secured in the later negative descriptions of them and the ways in which they are treated as special cases in need of support. Nowhere does she include them as part of her neighbourhood except in the comment that, “Lansdale residents have pleaded for programs that would support these women, rather than displace them.” Have the women themselves also pleaded for support? What are the smuggled in assumptions when only two options available: support or displacement?

Himes' concerns *are* practical more than theoretical, however, she is not necessarily seeing how Dean and Wetselaar are also being practical. They seem to be

deeply concerned with the practical harms to the women who were photographed and to the general impression, representation, and marginalization of sex workers in Hamilton and elsewhere. Clairmont, Mahoney, Himes and Santucci want us to believe that the photographs represent a harsh reality and that something needs to be done about it.²⁵ They are not concerned with how these images are actually constructed in very particular ways. For example, the exclusion of female sex workers from society is visually made real when they are exhibited next to urban decay and collapse. This is a creative choice that leads the viewer down a particular path. It must not be forgotten that the images were presented in a gallery as art. As such they are still an interpretation of an artist's vision of the world.

Interestingly, artist responses to the show varied widely from comments about it being an irresponsible show to saying the show made an important social statement. Further, some felt it was good art while others—the majority—casually dismissed the whole social question by saying it was simply bad art.

Two artists spoke positively about the show in interviews. One said that she felt that the show was engaging:

What I do like about that show was that it was that generational group of artists actually making a critical statement about their stance and their relationship to this community, which previously their work has never exposed before... Gary Santucci's video installation I guess was a visually strong point but it was what it was. I think there was a certain amount of spin going on to give that piece in particular a higher profile within the show, obviously because of his zoning issues with the city. Like I think the city just loves to put his name in the paper to watch the sparks fly (Interview respondent, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, January 18, 2010).

²⁵ I comment only on public statements made by them and not on privately held views. This is an important distinction. I am reading their texts as texts and not commenting on individual character/traits.

And another said:

I think Gary is fabulous. I think Gary and Barbara are the heartbeat of the arts community. I really do. Not only are they lovely people, they are hugely educated and intelligent people...Gary was directing at his councillor basically to tell them that this is what they look out at every day from their front window and that they've had their building damaged by the kind of crap that is attracted to these women and they have people having sex in their alleyway right along the side of their house. I think that is what I got out of it. I know there were other levels to it too, but they were digging politically at them and he was using that as a vehicle so it goes beyond just the prostitution. Like they run a business there and they can't get property to have a parking lot and so they can't run their business as fully realized because the City of Hamilton is stopping them...and that is what that neighbourhood needs is *The Pearl Company*. And the bigger it gets and the more easy you can get people to come it will push all that crap away (Interview respondent, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, December 1, 2009).

The zoning issues were not lost on other respondents. One respondent empathized with Santucci saying, “He gets picked on by the city,” and also commented:

It's tricky, from his perspective I understand why he thinks he has the right to turn the camera around on the community and say, “this is what's honestly going on in my neighbourhood, this is what I have to work against to have a successful business.” But I think he is completely insensitive to the realities of the world of prostitution. I would imagine none of those women are there by choice or by a choice that is valid or whatever...it's a choice they've had to make to survive. And he is completely insensitive to that side of that exhibition and I find it awkwardly naïve (Interview respondent, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, April 6, 2010).

Yet another responded that he felt it was an irresponsible show that made it impossible for the arts community and the activist community to “negotiate a shared space.” He commented that members of the arts community “are completely naïve and they’re making dumb mistakes,” and concluded by saying:

I read the comment book in Bryce's show and no one seemed to see too much of problem with photographing someone urinating on the street without their consent (*laughs*). I'm laughing because it is ridiculous. In a perfect world the person who runs the gallery should know that you don't do that (Interview respondent, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, January 28, 2010).

Beyond comments made in interviews nothing critical, to my knowledge, was said publically by artists in response to the show. The arts community is very small and Gary Santucci is a major player. He is regularly invited to public arts panels, is very vocal in advocating for the arts in the city and he, with his wife Barbara Milne, won an arts award for Lifetime Achievement in 2008 from the City of Hamilton's Arts Advisory Committee. Given his position in the community it is not surprising that this is the case. One place where the arts community and the activist community did negotiate a shared space, however, was in a sex worker event that took place at *The Worker's Arts and Heritage Centre* the following spring. The next section will describe this event.

Not a Pretty Site: Sex Work

As part of *The Worker's Arts and Heritage Centre's (WAHC)* "Labour Lounge" series, Hamilton Artists Inc. and the WAHC put on an event in February 2010 which explored the issues of sex workers' rights and their working conditions. One of the purposes of the event was to treat sex work as work and to consider the labour concerns sex workers, like all workers, might have. This goal is in line with the goals of sex worker action groups created for and by sex workers such as *Maggie's* in Toronto, *Stella* in Quebec, *Stepping Stones* in Nova Scotia and the national sex worker action group: *Sex Professionals of Canada*. Another explicit goal for the event was to provide a space in which Hamilton and area sex workers could speak for themselves and talk about their

experiences. The emphasis on sex workers speaking in their own voices about issues that matter to them was deemed important given the general atmosphere in Hamilton following the Santucci exhibit where sex workers were stigmatized and spoken *about* and *for* rather than *with*. The hope for the event was that it might provide a powerful and invaluable experience for those speaking and attending the event and that it might help combat a sense of social isolation that sex workers report as part of their experience.²⁶

When I began volunteering at *Hamilton Artist's Inc.* in August 2009 I was given the task of helping to organize this event. I watched short films and videos about sex work by sex workers, wrote letters to local organizations asking for support, attended information meetings to request funding and to create collaborative community ties, and I stage managed the actual event.

The event included a panel of local male and female sex workers who commented on the short films and videos that were chosen to highlight important themes and areas for discussion such as: working conditions, advocating for rights, health and safety, poverty, working within the porn industry, legal issues, as well as the positive reasons why people chose to do sex work. There was a strong message that sex workers are people who deserve the same dignity and respect as anyone else.

The *WAHC* was jam-packed early, with many sitting on the floor or standing, and a large line-up of people (estimating 150) were turned away at the door. Great care was taken to keep the identities of the sex workers private and to keep the venue as safe and

²⁶ See: Maggie's <http://maggiestoronto.ca/> (Accessed March 22, 2011)
Stella <http://www.chezstella.org/stella/?q=en/> (Accessed March 22, 2011)
Stepping Stones <http://www.steppingstonens.ca/> (Accessed March 22, 2011)
Sex Professionals of Canada <http://www.spoc.ca/> (Accessed March 22, 2011)

positive as possible.

The event was sponsored by: *The Hamilton AIDS Network, The Well: The LGBTQ Wellness Centre of Hamilton, and SACHA (Sexual Assault Centre of Hamilton and Area)*. In addition to providing contact information for the above, information about the following organizations in support of the event was provided to attendees: *The Van Needle Exchange Program, Public Health, Elizabeth Fry Society's S.T.A.R.S Program (Sex Trade Alternative and Resource Services), The Sky Dragon Centre²⁷, and local medical and STD clinics.*

The evening ended with several performances, which included a self-proclaimed feminist and lesbian singer, a drag queen, and a burlesque performer. The performers were purposefully chosen to create a sex-positive atmosphere. This sex-positive atmosphere is in line with the sex positive feminism that emerged out of reactions to anti-porn second wave feminists in the 1980's. This period in history is often referred to as the "feminist sex wars" and its impact can still be felt today in the struggles of sex positive feminists who work from a perspective that says sex work is not inherently exploitative, that women should have rights over their bodies and to their sexual freedom, and that it is important to approach the subject of sex work from the viewpoint of sex workers themselves. This approach to sex-work is also inherently anthropological in that both are inductive strategies for understanding a social phenomenon based on what one can observe.

The Gender Studies and Feminist Research Department at McMaster University

²⁷ A non-profit worker co-op in downtown Hamilton near James Street North.

and *Big Susie's: Hamilton's Sex Worker Advocacy Group* planned a second event at the *WAHC* for March 2011. The 2011 event was called: "Sex Worker's Event 2: Challenging Our Assumptions," and their aim, according to the online *WAHC* newsletter, was to help "demystify" sex work and highlight some of the challenges experienced by sex workers.

On the surface these events may not appear to be related to Santucci's art, but they are actually a community-based response and reaction to his work. The first event was in the works before the exhibit but its planning and actualization were deeply motivated by the lack of choice sex workers had about their own representation within his exhibit. Further, the second event was co-sponsored by *Big Susie's*, the organization that formed in 2009 in direct response to Santucci's art. The organization's website states:

Big Susie's developed largely out of a response to a problematic arts show that happened in downtown Hamilton in the fall of 2009. The art show was entitled "The Hood, The Bad, and the Ugly" and featured photographs taken by Gary Santucci. It depicted images of local street based female sex workers that were taken without the consent of the women and put on public display. This in effect "outed" the women and put their safety at risk. The show further dehumanized, stigmatized, and blamed the women for destroying and making Santucci's downtown neighbourhood unliveable.

A group of sex workers, activists, community members and academics came together and protested this event. Several articles were written and Gary Santucci along with local neighbourhood associations were confronted. However it quickly became clear that there were few if any services in the Hamilton area that supported or understood the issues surrounding sex workers or their rights. During this time a tremendous amount of ignorance around the issue surfaced in both the local community, the arts, women's organizations and the media.

Further, the inclusion of a "Creep Alert" on their web page makes *Big Susie's* position on the exhibit very clear:

Beware of Santucci, he will hide in the bushes with his camera and get you when you least expect it. He is still out there on the loose and no woman is

safe. He still refuses to acknowledge his style of “Peeping Tom” picture taking as being a problem. Super Creep!

This message is publically accessible and reads like a warning one might get from a “bad trick” list. It clearly attempts to get back at Santucci, shows little concern for him or the complexities of the issue and exemplifies the sheer anger that the exhibit inspired for some.

Interestingly, while Santucci and *The Pearl Company* were boycotted by Big Susie’s, James Street North was not. Even though James Street North was a site for protest and was where the exhibit took place, James Street North was used by *Big Susie’s* in contradictory and complex ways in their political actions. Stickers, leaflets and buttons were handed out at the art crawls of September and October of 2009 with messages printed on them such as: “Sex Work is Work” and “Sex Workers are part of our Communities.” These messages were meant to combat the possibility that sex workers might not be accepted as part of the neighbourhood in which they work and effectively made unwelcome.



“Sex Workers Are Members of Our Communities”

Sticker on the window of you me gallery. Put on the window in October 2009 and still there in February 2010. It is interesting that the gallery kept the stickers up for so long. (February 12, 2010).

Still, two venues on James Street North were used by *Big Susie's* for events of their own: *The Factory Media Arts Centre* was the venue for an event in support of The International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers on Dec 17, 2009 and *This Ain't Hollywood*, a bar that was recently revamped because of increased business traffic due to the arts scene, was the venue for a fundraiser for Big Susie's, which took place on January 21, 2011 and raised \$1,447.87 (www.bigsusies.com, Accessed March 24, 2011).

While the photos in Santucci's show were not taken on James Street North, or in the Beasley neighbourhood, on which James Street borders, they were shown on James Street North on an art crawl and as such the art crawls became a place for political action. James Street North's art scene, in effect, became a target for accusations of gentrification

because of the way in which sex workers were exhibited by a gallery on the street, because of the perceived lack of action and silence by other artists about the exhibit, and because of what seemed to be an accepted discourse against sex workers at the artist's talk by members of the James Street North art community.

Discussion

Underlying the discussions about sex workers in Hamilton's east end Lansdale neighbourhood is a deeper debate about gentrification and the role the arts play in that process. It is a common trope that thriving arts communities will propel gentrification (with the hidden danger of gentrifying themselves out of business as well). This accepted wisdom about gentrification often generated fear and/or defensiveness (which only increased with time) among many of the artists and stakeholders I spoke with. However, one respondent characterized Santucci's use of power and privilege as an artist to have a platform for himself *and the development in his neighbourhood* as being a typical patriarchal attitude of control and therefore highly problematic. This same respondent also saw the gentrification process on James Street North playing out in a similar way to that on Vancouver's Eastside.

Vancouver's Eastside is one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Canada, known for extreme poverty, crime, drug-use and prostitution. It has also been home to expensive development projects intended to clean up and revitalize the area. Dara Culhane and Leslie Robertson's ethnography, *In Plain Sight: Reflections on Life in Downtown Eastside Vancouver* (2005), explores this neighborhood through the eyes of seven marginalized women who live there. Often, women's stories are not told or heard among

the debates that take place around neighborhood change. Culhane and Robertson attempt to address this problem. The Santucci exhibit provides a parallel example from Hamilton of an occasion where the voices of women were not heard in their own words.

The Santucci exhibit also provides a small but significant lens through which to understand some of the larger issues at stake for the arts community. Santucci's long-held and influential positions within the arts community, as well as his well-known clashes with the City over zoning, are important pieces in this picture. Further, the very notion of Hamilton as a city in trouble in need of rescue through the arts, as well as the City's current emphasis on "cleaning up" the downtown in order to attract and keep business, are also critical factors for understanding the charge that this exhibit had in propelling further questions about just what it means to construct a *creative city* and whom that city includes and excludes. I will now continue to explore these issues by showing how the gentrification debates materialized, and came out of, discussions about the creative class in Hamilton.

5. Creative Spaces: Where Business and Bohemians Meet in the City

This chapter includes three thick descriptions of community debates that occurred at three key points in my fieldwork. All of these debates show members of the community trying to come to terms with and make sense of the possible futures of the Hamilton arts scene and how it relates to Hamilton's industrial pasts. Further, these debates show how people on the ground attempt to negotiate diverse desires and visions for their city.



Art Gallery of Hamilton Window
(April 26, 2008)

Community Debate 1: Can the Arts Save Hamilton?

"If a place gets boring even the rich people leave," begins Terry Cooke, former elected Chair of the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth and moderator for the night of "Creative Cities: Can the Arts Save Hamilton?" at The Art Gallery of Hamilton on April 23, 2009.

"We are in the middle of an economic crisis and we need excitement," he continues. He mentions the "renaissance" of James Street North as an example of one such exciting place.

I am here with seventy-five to one hundred others who also paid \$15 to hear Professor Eddie Friel give the keynote address. Three other panellists accompany him: Jeremy Freiburger, Jacqueline Norton, and Gary Santucci.

Cooke ends his introduction by asking everyone—the panellists and the audience alike—to be civil. We are Hamiltonians after all. “We don’t need this turning into a fistfight!”

Eddie Friel, originally from Londonderry, Northern Ireland, is a cultural tourism and marketing expert. As the Chief Executive of the Great Glasgow Tourism Board he made his mark for over 25 years transforming Glasgow “from a perceived decaying industrial city to a major tourist destination,” and found his niche in re-branding and marketing industrial cities as “centers of creativity, innovation and wealth creation”.²⁸

He began his talk by asking the following:

“Are we trying to create dynamic cities?”

“What is our role in doing so?” and

“Where do we fit into the global economy?”

He further stated that “places are for people” and that “commerce creates cities.”

Arriving in Glasgow in 1983, he worked for the tourist board. He told us that upon arriving he found that the post-World War II collapse of the old industrial economy, which was built on shipping, had created an atmosphere in which people felt they were surplus to the environment. “How can you say that to people? What does it do to their civic pride?” he asked. His answer is to give the city back its heart—its core—to create

²⁸ www.cdntourismmarketing.ca/index.cfm?pagePath=Eddie_Friel&id=2942
(Accessed April 20, 2010.)

consumers for places, and to make cities liveable. Glasgow was despised as an industrial slum within Scotland, said Friel, and his job was to try to make its image positive. He did this through the arts.

The “arts make us fall in love with our cities” and they “elevate our lives beyond the ordinary,” said Friel. They “are a reason to get up in the morning.”

The good news for Hamilton, he stated, is that it is way ahead of 1980s Glasgow, and Glasgow turned around quickly. Further, Hamilton is one of the few places that is growing. Buffalo and Niagara Falls, New York, where he is presently working, are not growing.

His advice, following what he did in Glasgow, was to have an events-led, tourist industry strategy in order to attract people to the city. For example, he cited the National Garden Festival, which brought 4.5 million visitors to Glasgow in 5 months.²⁹ The challenge is trying to create wealth.

“We need to be objective about the world as it is, instead of pretending it is what we want,” stated Friel.

“We need to start inventing something that the world will consume.”

“We need a successful core.”

“We need to give children the opportunities to be heroes of their own lives,” he concluded, echoing the words of David Copperfield.

The response from the panellists was generally positive but varied to some extent, in my opinion, depending on the panellist’s relationship to the City of Hamilton. All three

²⁹ The Glasgow City Council says that 3 million visitors went to the 1988 Glasgow Garden Festival over five months.

<http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/en/AboutGlasgow/History/Cultural+Renaissance.htm>. (Accessed April 21, 2011.)

did, however, emphasize individual ingenuity and hard work above all else. Jeremy Freiburger was introduced as one such individual. He said that from a very young age he had been taught to always step up to a challenge and worked to do things that he was told could not be done.

His story in the arts shows this tenacity. Briefly breaking from describing the “Can the Arts Save Hamilton?” event, I tell part of his story now as it was told to me in an interview conducted on April 6, 2010, just under at year after the Art Gallery Event described in this section.

...

As a child, after his teacher told his parents Jeremy was creative, he went to Theatre Aquarius summer school and eventually got an agent. He did film and television when he was only 13 years old but when the film and television industry moved to Vancouver he did not move with it. After studying theatre and music at McMaster University he went to school in New York and did shows off Broadway while he was there. When returning to Hamilton he found the *Hamilton Conservatory for the Arts* and started creating the drama department. While there he spent three years as a producer and stage manager and it was there that he discovered his love for buildings. When he helped re-build its theatre he found that he felt at home in the building and was amazed at how artists reacted to the building. He left the *Hamilton Conservatory for the Arts* and worked at *Hamilton Urban Theatre* and then at the *Hamilton Arts Council*, where he acted as program coordinator, ran workshops and the gallery.

The arts council is where the idea for the *Imperial Cotton Centre for the Arts* (ICCA) came. Jeremy took a co-location facility project off the strategic plan (everyone had to take something off the plan and work on it), and spent one and a half years researching it. He found out about other co-location facilities, looked at dozens of buildings in the downtown core, interviewed artists to find out what they wanted, and got a letter from Sheila Copps³⁰ saying she would fund part of it but the council felt uncomfortable running a building. He told me in an interview that, “I was a theatre artist who needed space and was already ‘waist-deep’ in the idea so I quit.”

Jeremy then ran the *Festival of Classics* in Oakville, an outdoor Shakespeare theatre company, but was still “really interested in making the building thing happen.” He left the Oakville job and the good salary that came with it, in order to run ICCA full-time. The first building that was re-constructed and rented for use by artists is on Sherman Avenue North, about 2 km east of James Street North, where 9000 square feet of industrial space was turned into artist's studios. He did not make a living at the ICCA for several years and took whatever jobs (producing small films and teaching theatre classes, for example) he could in order to make it happen. Eventually the ICCA got a Trillium grant and by 2010 they employed four staff.

Freiburger also worked with the city on several committees, most notably the economic development advisory panel. He started working with the city because the ICCA wanted to develop a better relationship with them.

³⁰ Prominent female Hamilton political who entered politics in 1981. She is known for being the first woman to be deputy prime-minister, and is generally very well liked in Hamilton.

The ICCA then took \$30,000 of their budget to do an economic impact study on the culture cluster in Hamilton. Freiburger told me that this study basically clarified the city's database on the 460 arts businesses and organizations and did an online survey to which 25% of the business and organizations replied. The study found, according to Freiburger, that: just under 80% of people employed in the creative community are local residents, the creative industries employ 9000 people, that 50% worked with less than \$50,000 a year but that the annual income of the 120 businesses and organizations which responded was 62 million, that there was a 50/50 split of clients from within/without the city, and that the three geographic areas for creative industry were Dundas, the Downtown core, and Southwest (Locke and Aberdeen area). Respondents to the survey said they needed help with marketing and searching for investment and venture capital. The ICCA has since expanded the database from 420 to over 1200 businesses and organizations. It is interesting to note that James Street North did not even exist on the original database.

Describing the economic impact survey, Frieiburger stated that, “it became a buzz document for them,” which “started our good relationship with the city.” He said that as a result the ICCA has worked on a Creative Catalyst Project with the city, has done a program review for the culture department for the arts award program, and has ended up working with Burlington, running the city of Burlington public art program. He said proudly that the ICCA “found a connection with municipalities that we are willing to play with when most organizations aren’t.”

Frieiburger said that, “we fell into what we do because we found that funding bodies don’t consider what we do artistic” and that “we had a hard time convincing Trillium why we were, and that we were, non-profit.” They learned that they needed to work with the city based on a different value set: “not the traditional model, i.e. culture matters and it’s not about making money so therefore the city must invest.” He said,

We aren’t about creating work. We are playing the role of being the communicator with the city and willing to learn the city’s language. Most want the city to learn their language. I want to understand what motivates them, and I dedicate a lot of time and energy to do this. The end goal is funding for our industry but not through traditional channels.

When asked how he does this “cultural translation” with the city he stated that it “depends on who you talk to” and that “there are people within city culture...that understand the core merit of the arts and culture community from the social fabric side of things.” It is from this place where “you can initially make a connection.” He also said he, “find[s] out who they are answerable to.” You have to “understand the hierarchy” because you “can’t force something in city hall.” However, most importantly there is a deep:

Acceptance of the bureaucracy that they are bound to is mandatory. Arts organizations will demand change but they are part of a system. Change takes time. Timelines are slow and process bound. It’s not this way because they want it this way. You can say you don’t like that it is a certain way but you still have to work with the system.

When I asked him if he thought everyone wants a positive relationship with the city, he replied,

I think they’d be idiotic not to. It’s where you physically exist. It’s the body in our community that governs everything from how you build your building to how you market your business and they have a great amount of influence and not just within their own four walls.

Translating city culture back to the arts community is no easy task, however, and Frieburger and the ICCA have been criticized for involvement with the city. Some of the criticism has been that they have been given a unique funding relationship with the city, to which Frieburger stated the only financial funding has been \$20, 000 for writing the cluster profile in connection with economic development and the program review for the arts awards in which they responded to a public call. Frieburger also mentioned that:

Another chunk of the criticism is that maybe people think that we take our name seriously and that we are imperialistic and that we take over space and that we are on this never ending quest to fix up buildings and turn them into studios. I'd love to know what the negative of that is. There is still a need so we still serve it. We've been entrepreneurial in how we've made partnerships. I think a lot of organizations think we own all of our buildings and that we've financed the renovations. We don't own any of them. We've financed none of them. We've convinced derelict building owners to do it: you fix it, we'll fill it, and you'll make money. They like that and so they've gone off and done it....I don't know what's wrong with that.

It is with a hint of sadness that Freiburger talked about how he has lost old friends since getting involved with the ICCA and about his frustrations in wanting to help people feel more included while being criticized for being exclusive. He said, "I would never do anything to harm the culture community. It is where I have spent my entire life so why would I be detrimental to it?" When talking about gallery owners on James Street North, for example, he talked with great respect for the work that they do. He said,

The business community doesn't understand that these people running galleries have another job because no one is buying work in their gallery. They don't get small business support and they don't get loans from the bank because banks don't loan to galleries. It's a calling.

...

Freiburger's response to Friel's ending questions about what "we" can do for Hamilton was to highlight his work on the 2007 creative impact study done for the City of Hamilton. Freiburger told the audience that he wants to create the spaces and networks that can act as a roadmap towards creating something like the Banff Centre for the Arts³¹ or the Toronto Harbourfront Centre³² in Hamilton.

Jacqueline Norton is the manager of the Hamilton Film and Television Office and works at City Hall. She is also on the board of the ICCA. One hundred and ten productions a year are filmed in Hamilton, she claimed, and more and more people are "trickling" in from Toronto because of the arts community they are finding here. She referred to a "dense group of champions" for the arts as a "rat pack" of risk takers. It is these risk takers that she says will save the city, not the arts, and we need to embrace and support them. She emphasized the importance of alliances and referred to the importance of the creative class within this networked community. The creative class in Hamilton is what will attract other people in the creative class from Toronto to Hamilton. "The old city is changing" and a "new dynamic is being created," said Norton.

Gary Santucci talked a lot about the struggles he had been having with the City over zoning for *The Pearl Company*. In discussing his formation of the Lansdale neighbourhood organization, he stressed how important his work in "restoring a public realm that is distressed and neglected" was in "saving" his community. He agreed with Norton, that it is the stamina of people who save communities, not the arts, and disagreed

³¹ Previously called the Banff Centre for the Arts it is now called the Banff Center, it is a multi-disciplinary institute offering programs and training. It is located in Banff, Alberta.

³² The Harbourfront Centre is a performing arts center located in downtown Toronto.

with Friel's economic approach to the arts: "It's about the art not the economy." He did agree that art is what is left "when things fall down" and that the arts bring an intellectual and cultural life that has been denied to people. However, he strongly stated that, "it is the people, not the government, that save the city."

After the panellists spoke Friel clarified his position: "The arts are not for tourists. They establish a narrative for a place." He advocated expanding the audience so artists can develop their art form, and developing a narrative for Hamilton that markets the city's difference, history, heritage and culture.

The audience, made up of many long-time members of the arts community in Hamilton as well as city planners and politicians, then discussed and debated issues such as: how to create partnerships with the city, how to fight the bureaucracy of the city, how to handle the city, and how to create support in the community and among the press. Key audience members in attendance were:

Bill Powell (former Earthsong founder), Loren Lieberman (owner of the *Westside Concert Theatre*), Ron Weihs (Director of *Artword Theatre*), Jean Paul Gauthier (founder of the *Hamilton Music Awards*) and Anna Bradford (Director of Culture for the City of Hamilton)...[as well as] Ken Coit, the city's Art in Public Spaces coordinator, and ward two councillor Bob Bratina, later elected major in 2010. (Kenny 2009).

One audience member spoke up and said, "We're not about a creative class!" This individual further stated that attracting film to Hamilton is not supporting what is already here. Councillor Bob Bratina responded by claiming that: the city is not in need of saving,

it's not "a basket case." He pointed out that property values are going up, and suggested that the arts community needs to have an entrepreneurial sensibility.

Then there was an argument between Santucci and Bratina in which Santucci emphatically rejected the idea that artists were entrepreneurs. Another audience member broke this confrontation up by saying, to applause,

"Let's get some positive vibes! I didn't come here for a Hamilton bitch fest!"

He then continued to say, "How many people know that Hamilton has a UNESCO biosphere?" "We are more than a steel town!" and "How can the environment be part of the arts scene?," he concluded.^{33 34}

One person asked Friel how to talk to the city. "This is Hamilton. Things don't happen easily."

Friel understood that it wasn't easy and suggested that the city give land, money, creative people and the systems and processes that they need. "Politicians want to hitch their wagons to success," he said.

The closing comments were as follows:

Santucci: "All I want to do is play my guitar."

³³ The Niagara escarpment was "designated a UNESCO World Biosphere in 1990 (<http://www.escarpment.org/home/index.php>. (Accessed April 21, 2011.)

³⁴ Amy Kenny writes:

By focusing on \$180 million of recent downtown development, he [Bratina] sidestepped the arts issue until the end of his statement, when he asserted that Hamilton artists need to be more than just creative; they need to be entrepreneurs.

Of course, this didn't go over well. Santucci immediately took to the onstage podium for a rebuttal that caused Bratina to start towards the stage himself. The entire outburst was only diffused when Ancaster resident, Paul Lakin, stood to declare that enough was enough; the audience was there to talk about something positive (Kenny May 2009, <http://www.new.hmag.ca/?p=52>). (Accessed April 21, 2011.)

Norton: “This is not the night I thought it would be but it is what it is. I’m a happy bureaucrat and I’m not happy if the community is not happy. My heart is in it.”

Freiburger: “We didn’t do a creative impact study for ourselves. We did it for the community to have communication...We need to learn each other’s languages.”

Friel: “Can you imagine what it would be like if you were to take all the intellectual capital in this room and start working together to win for Hamilton?”

...

Attending this event was a pivotal turning point in the research process. Friel’s experience working in Glasgow’s cultural tourist industry spoke directly to many of the issues facing Hamilton arts communities. He delivered a hopeful message, and his cry for the audience “to win for Hamilton” was full of emotive passion. Still, this message evoked a sense of danger that only a growing economy could keep at bay. His address to the Hamilton audience was not just built on hope but also on fear and distress: that there is something wrong with Hamilton. This is why, I believe, then councillor, now mayor Bob Bratina was so emotional and vocal when he stood up and said that Hamilton did not need to be saved.

The evening revealed the tensions that exist in the Hamilton arts and culture communities among: building a place for the people who already live in Hamilton, building a city that sells civic pride and civic stress, art and entrepreneurship, and community building versus individual success.

Community Debate 2: “What is James Street North?”

“What is the creative economy and what does this mean to Hamilton?,” Martinus Geleynse³⁵ began on April 6, 2010 at *Acclamation Bar & Grill* on James Street North. The evening’s event was titled, “What is James Street North?,” but we were quickly told that this discussion was really about Hamilton’s creative economy and not necessarily about James North. The panel consisted of: Tim Potocic, owner of *Sonic Union Records*, Jacqueline Norton the manager of Hamilton’s Film Office and Creative Industries, Paul Shaker who works with Norton on creative industry, and Jeremy Freiburger.

So, what is the creative economy? Geleynse asked again. Freiburger says that the concept is new and ever changing. Richard Florida popularized it and the definition is very broad including bohemian artists and accountants. Shaker adds that there are two sectors to the creative economy: 1. The Super Creative Core, including anything from fine art to computer programming, where the primary focus is creative. 2. Creative Professionals, which he explained, refers to a re-branding of the old knowledge based economy. Collectively, the two together make up the creative class, and Hamilton is focused on the super creative core at the moment.

Norton asked the question “why in Hamilton?” and answered it herself, stating that in recent history Hamilton city council, due to a view that the arts are “soft” was not paying attention and putting resources behind the arts but that this is changing. Potocic continued that in the downtown there are huge opportunities. For example, he’s “grown

³⁵ Entrepreneur, producer and artist who ran for local election as a city councilor in Ward 2 in October 2010.

out of space” and people on James North are taking the opportunity to buy buildings cheaply and develop the area.

“Look at Hamilton in a bigger picture,” Freiburger said. “We've been taking a hit and we can't rely on manufacturing and multi-national companies. We need local, sustainable economies and it can't be farmed out to India. 78% of people employed in Hamilton are residents. We're creating local employment.”

Geleynse then asked, “What is it about James North in the context of Hamilton? Why this synergy?”

Shaker answered, “A critical mass has formed and there are business opportunities.”

Potocic answered, “There is unique architecture where you can have live/work spaces.”

North answered, “There is desire and pent up demand for more cultural activity. We saw this on Locke Street and Hotel Hamilton will make a big impact.”

Potocic added, “Hamilton has walkability and bikeability” and then named the cool areas he could get to on his bike from his Westdale residence: Locke Street, James Street and Ottawa Street.

An audience member then asked about gentrification. Doesn't all this “work against the residents who are actually hungry? What is the cost and to who? Are marginalized people getting displaced? Is this ethical? What about an ethical community?”

Norton responded that this was a good point and that she's thought about it a lot. “We’re in an exciting stage, getting properties at good prices, but you are right. How do we keep this going without displacing people? There are different forms of ownership, such as co-operative ownership. It’s not an easy answer.”

“What co-ops are happening?”

“The Sky Dragon,” Norton replied.

Shaker said he was sympathetic to the issue but gentrification is a red herring, “We have a structural problem in Hamilton.” He claimed, “We need to revitalize the city centre. We need environmental sustainability. This is part of a broader issue in Hamilton.”

Potocic stated he “doesn’t want to displace people” and that he had bought five properties over 13 years and he’s never displaced anyone and he doesn’t charge his tenants more. “Renovations don’t go from \$600 to \$2500.”

“I’m not trying to do this for money but for community,” he concluded.

A business owner on James North then said that he was concerned about this issue as well. He was concerned about crime in the area but also concerned about whether people are trying to drive out the “riff raff” to make it “safe” for the middle class. He wants a mixed community.

Shaker agreed and said this concern for safety is an elitist view: “Signs that you think are about gentrification are really about suburban development values that don’t like the dirtiness.”

Freiburger added that, “We need to recognize that we’ve been working on the creative economy with the City for years. The City hasn’t just bought into Florida’s ideas...We need social enterprise. How do we create sustainable business and how does that solve social issues? How do we put those together?”

“But who are the ‘we’ and with whom are you talking? We know there is heightened policing in the downtown. People no longer fit the new model. The downtown is being cleaned up. Who is the WE!?,” said an audience member who later distributed pamphlets titled “Living Wage” produced by a group calling themselves H.A.N.D. (Hamiltonians Against Neighbourhood Displacement). This was the same group that has taken many different names and incarnations and whose counter-discourse I have referred to several times in this work. However, they were not the only people voicing concerns that evening.

Geleynse then made his first attempt to change the focus of discussion by saying, “We’re talking about the creative economy. The issue of gentrification is a separate discussion.”

Another audience member stood up and voiced concern over white male privilege. “The arts community is extremely white. We are surrounded by those who aren’t white and if we’re going to talk about the creative class we have to talk about class.”

Someone else from the audience responded by talking about making individual decisions and not blaming the city. He further added that he thinks it is great that artists can make a living and that service industry jobs are better than no jobs: “Hamilton needs something.”

The discussion then quickly moved on to The Studios at Hotel Hamilton building. An audience member seriously questioned Norton's interests in the building because her husband is one of the owners of the building. Someone else said they had no problem with the building but wondered how many from the James North arts community are in the building and said that the “building doesn't serve the street.”

Freiburger, who manages the building, disagreed. “That building was deplorable,” he said. They found the former residents places to live without increasing their rent and they spent millions of dollars, making it safer, employing people, and bringing in a local coffee shop.

A business owner on James North then voiced concern about the “hype” about James North saying that transformations on the street needed to have their own pace. He suggested that artists need to be grassroots, that they need to do what city hall won't and that city hall needs to make permits and zoning easier (mentioning the Pearl Company's struggles as an example).

This is when the H.A.N.D. group got up to leave and said they were concerned about the ethics of artists like Santucci. They didn't leave and the following heated conversation ensued.

To Freiburger: “Sherman is not empty” (he had referred to it as empty earlier). “We are talking about service workers. You support structures that need to employ and then displace previous workers. This intensifies the class divide. This isn't sustainable and affects most of the Hamilton residents.”

Shaker talked about urban sprawl and said “the creative industry in not creating the divide.”

H.A.N.D.: “I want to know about the city’s plan for the sustainability of the people of the downtown core.”

Potocic: “I take delinquent properties and pay higher taxes.”

H.A.N.D.: “Not all art generates tangible sales. We are lucky in Canada but in Hamilton we don’t have an arts council. Publicly funded spaces are suffering. What about cultural policy? When we are talking about the creative class we are talking about privilege. I have choices. Not everyone does.”

Freiburger agreed that we need diversity in the arts and said he’s been working on re-defining the city’s arts awards to make them truly inclusive. “The culture division is re-writing the policies. They are working to actually make it more diverse.” He added that, “the reality is it is a process and you need to put positive energy into city hall in order to make change.”

An audience member suggested, “We should have a group of artists talking to city hall. I’m amazed at what is happening on James North. We have two people at city hall here taking arts seriously. I’m impressed by what has happened...I’m here to talk about possibility. It is possible because it is happening.”

Geleynse: “You just nailed the entire discussion.”

An audience member interjected, “Unfortunately certain arts make a lot of money and others don’t.”

H.A.N.D.: “Public funding is disintegrating. The creative class degrades the value of art. Only some can benefit. It creates a business model.”

Geleynse then cut off the discussion as it was starting to get very heated.

...

I do not recount the details of such events in an effort to air the dirty laundry of the arts community but to show how these conversations have formed. Further, the dialogue of a public forum can bring life to these debates in a way that media battles or Internet disagreements do not. Public debate is, in many ways, part of the life of this arts community, and it is not unique to Hamilton. The creative class discussions that took place on James North on April 6, 2010 have also taken place in other contexts throughout the province, the country and the world. The points of discussion are at once highly relevant and contested with intricate crossovers and alliances.

Community Debate 3: “To the Footsoldiers of Gentrification”

On November 23, 2010 approximately seventy people crowded into The Sky Dragon Centre on King William Street for the evening event “Sustainable, Inclusive Downtown Development.” The Sky Dragon Centre, “a non-profit worker-coop dedicated to the goals of progressive social and environmental change,” is a busy community hub located in Hamilton’s downtown core a few blocks away from the main artistic activities on James Street North.

This forum was called because of a huge community response to the November 2010 issue of *Mayday Magazine* (a publication of The Sky Dragon Community Development Co-operative) in which three critical articles and an editorial were

published on the subject of gentrification in the downtown core targeting James Street North as their main example. The most controversial, adversarial, and read article was “To the Footsoldiers of Gentrification,” by Daniel O’Rourke (presumed pseudonym). The event was advertised as following:

All are welcome to an open, moderated discussion about the revitalization of downtown Hamilton. Downtown is currently undergoing several important changes. Exciting new developments and initiatives are emerging, along with issues and concerns about the vision guiding development. Passionate and invested people, including residents, business-owners, artists and activists are expressing their diverse perspectives about what a revitalized downtown should look like and what challenges need to be overcome.

Despite some ideological and political differences, there are close cross-overs and connections between the Sky Dragon community and the James North arts community: The Sky Dragon exhibits art, is officially on the map for the James Street North Art Crawl and several people who are involved in the James North arts community also frequent the Sky Dragon. So, it may have come as a surprise when some members of the arts community opened up the May Day publication and found some serious criticism being levied against them.

When I took a seat I was given a “King of Clubs” playing card and a handout that included three question clusters and instructions for discussion. Kevin MacKay, the executive director of the Sky Dragon Community Development Co-operative, welcomed the packed room by saying, “Hello you courageous people.” He thanked everyone for coming and acknowledged that some were there reluctantly, that some were very upset and that there was a lot of emotion in the room. He further said that he now realized that the magazine gave a biased presentation of the issue and that he was “internally

conflicted.” The purpose of the evening, he said, was not to come up with definitive solutions, but to hear people's thoughts and ideas.

The room was split into four, according to card suits, and each question was timed and moderated by the Mohawk College Social Justice Society. The questions were:

1. What kind of downtown do we want? What would our vision of sustainable, inclusive, creative development look like?
2. What are the current and potential challenges facing this vision of downtown development?
3. How can people with different views on downtown development talk together? Who needs to be involved; what important voices aren't here; what is the optimal format, location & time-frame? How should this process move forward?

The room then split into five, with one group sitting in the middle clearly not playing. After saying again that he sensed that this was an emotionally tense issue, MacKay further instructed the groups to let their opinions be heard but not to attack one another so that we could have a “peaceful, healthy, proactive” discussion that could “perpetuate justice.”

The first question, dealing with visions for the downtown, was answered in my group with a focus on compassion, support and inclusion. We talked about having a downtown the whole city could be proud of, how there should be a sustainable economy for all of “our neighbours,” where there is an increase in access to services. One person said that we ought to have compassion for the downtown: “framing it as a shit hole or as gentrification is not compassionate.”

When talking about challenges faced in the downtown, the first thing that was mentioned was the issue of absentee landlords in downtown buildings. People expressed

frustration with how insurance companies benefit from this situation, with how tax breaks are given to people who don't fill their buildings, and with the general lack of will and inertia of some downtown building owners who hold onto the buildings and do nothing with them.

The next challenge that my group discussed was the “image perception problem” in Hamilton. Hamiltonians, it was said, “are their own worst enemy” and lack pride in their city. “30% of McMaster students don't promote Hamilton,” someone said, and “they are not engaged with the city.” Further, the city is segmented. There is local pride in some areas but other areas are viewed as “bad” and neighbourhoods are in opposition with each other. It was lamented, how can we generate pride in such a self-defeating atmosphere?

However, the arts scene was held up as an example of a group of people finally taking pride in their city. They are systematically fixing their neighbourhood and, one person commented, that we are “watching the joy of the north end.”

“Local talent comes from within,” said another. We need “independent local artists,” they continued. We don't need 3000 jobs in one place, we need 300 businesses that employ 5 people each, said another, citing the independent businesses in pre-Jackson Square times, as an example of a sustainable vision.

As the discussion continued the point was raised that “artists don't really have a supportive community. Not even at the Sky Dragon.” Further concerns were raised about making sure businesses were locally owned and that they paid living wages, so that people could have a sense of civic ownership that was lacking.

The final remark of the discussion: “give people beauty!”

Question cluster three addressed how people could talk together and how different voices could be heard. One person suggested that councillors, who do have a sense of civic ownership, should be talking to people and that professionals needed to reach out to the under-represented. We could have a community response that was city led and empowered organizations that have day-to-day contact with diverse populations through planning and implementation within the city.

When the question of prostitution and crime was raised in the discussion there was concern that we need to support prostitutes and stop talking about getting rid of businesses and people. One person in the discussion said we need to realize people (it was clear at this point they were now talking about people experiencing homelessness in the downtown core) are not as scary as they seem and that the language “scary” need to be fixed: “We should be talking about the reality of downtown rather than the perception.”

It is a “good thing that we have people who come here and get assistance. To hell with people who think that is a problem.”

“But are they being appropriately served?” asked another.

The discussion continued:

“We have to think about a continuum of housing.”

“We need a unified vision. If we want a sustainable community we need someone to do that.”

“It needs to be built into a city planning document. Vision 2020 wasn't put into practice.”

“We can't have one document. It needs to be implemented throughout the whole system.”

For implementation we need, they said: effective leadership and participation (experts, residents, everybody).

“We have an unequal society and we have to recognize that.”

“We have to recognize privilege.” There is a “risk to barrier.”

“We refuse to have the difficult conversations,” concluded our discussion.

...

What was meant to be a final wrap-up and sharing of ideas after the groups discussed their questions actually turned into a quite heated community argument. Much of the attention was directed at and from the centre group who had refused to “play” earlier. It was clear from the conversation that followed that the centre group were, at least in part, responsible for the “To the Footsoldiers of Gentrification” article, and for a website that made the same points as the article and for “Fat Cat” stickers placed on many of the James Street North galleries and businesses at a recent art crawl.³⁶

Someone from the group stood up and said that they felt that the evening was not what they were expecting, and therefore, they did not want to participate in it as it was set up: it wasn’t a neutral discussion and the Sky Dragon must do away with this idea. Further, another person sitting in the centre group said: that the Sky Dragon should take an anti-gentrification stance, and that we should be building allies given the pro-gentrification stance that the Hamilton Spectator has been taking.

³⁶ The website was removed from the Internet shortly after it appeared, therefore its content is not citable.

There was further frustration expressed by others who had participated in the group discussions: the questions were too general and they were not able to discuss the May Day article. It seemed as if many had arrived hoping to discuss the issues raised in the article directly, and when the questions did not allow for this and when those who seemed to hold the views appearing in the article removed themselves from the group conversations, great tension and irritation was experienced.

Much of the frustration levied against the group was concerned with anonymity. Here were some of the comments made about the groups wish to remain anonymous:

“It’s a privilege,”

“You should stand behind what you say,”

“It’s a sniper attitude,” and

There is something wrong with “free expression without repercussions.”

MacKay asked the room, after saying that “no one wanted a battle royal,” “How do people see more conversation happening?”

One vocal audience member responded quickly: “conversation can’t happen through fucking stickers or anonymous attacks you can’t respond to.”

MacKay, validated his comment by saying, “people want openness and accountability.”

A community member from my group responded to these accusations (and other like them) by saying, “openness is not neutral either. Some are accepted and others are not.”

MacKay said, “we must recognize privilege.”

“I want to know why I’m a Fat Cat!,” someone called out.

“Admitting it is the first step,” said another.

“Anonymity shouldn’t be used as a way to launch an attack.”

“People aren’t being attacked. It’s a sticker! There are people concerned about going to jail,” members from the centre group continued.

“Suck it up. We’re more concerned about people being arrested on James Street for not looking right,” they continued debating.

“Displacement happens subtly. People can’t afford to live.”

“Your businesses are not moving in socially sustainable directions!”

The night ended with much debate and little community ally-making. I have repeatedly seen this group’s strategies actually shut down dialogue and create division rather than build bridges. I must admit I seriously questioned, and was myself angered by, the strategies of non-discussion and attack on the part of this centre group, many of whom I agree with and genuinely like. It also became clear to me that if you were not sitting at the centre table you were the enemy. I must also admit this is a kind of politics I do not like to engage in. I left wondering how people are supposed to make change without talking to each other. I also left wondering why James North has become such a target for these attacks. It seemed to me, and still seems, a bit misplaced.

However, this was also another great learning moment. Over the next week I stepped back and reflected on the evening and the events over the past year. I realized that while attempting to remain neutral I was anything but. My own personal history in the city, where I experienced uneasy relationships in an activist community I had hoped to be

active in, was influencing my ability to be neutral. Further, and perhaps a big part of the reason I have had a hard time being an activist in the way that seemed required of me, is my commitment to anthropological views of the world in which I hold cultural relativism as a high value. Part of my anthropological outlook includes a commitment to understanding, listening and being able to talk to the many diverse viewpoints that exist in the world and not holding some up as better than others. It also includes a commitment to critical thinking and social justice, and I have never thought that these two things are incommensurate.

As such, even though the anti-gentrification group is committed to social justice, I was more inclined to favour a community building approach that also emphasized social justice, and I felt for those at the Sky Dragon meeting who had arrived just wanting to listen to other viewpoints and learn from them. Unfortunately, there could have been a captive audience for the anti-gentrification group who were willing to listen and implement alternate viewpoints. I cannot help but feel my own sense of frustration at seeing a community, who could have come together and had the difficult conversations, implode. I was also surprised to hear from two respondents the day after the Sky Dragon meeting that a sense of distrust of academics is beginning to be felt on the street because the anti-gentrification group is perceived as being comprised of “McMaster intellectuals who are simply using the street for their own intellectual gains.”

Discussion: Creative Cities or Gentrified Spaces

I find these community debates fascinating, not simply because they are rich ethnographic data, but because the people in them are performing and attempting to work

out solutions to problems that the academic literature on city revitalization and gentrification have been trying to work out for at least 40 years. The community members who are taking part in these debates are smart people. Some, as previously mentioned, are academically trained but most are simply highly intelligent citizens of a city that they love and want to see thrive. From all of the research and fieldwork I have done, this I can say without hesitation: every single person involved in the debates I have portrayed cared deeply about what happens to Hamilton.

The participants in these debates may be invoking a long literature on city growth and change but this is not an academic exercise for them. *It is on the ground creation of city futures.* These debates show the messiness of hope and the difficulties of communities getting together to create change. While debates such as these are not isolated to Hamilton, they are still unique to this setting. However, the local Hamilton dialogue is informed by the fact that similar debates have occurred in places around the world such as New York (Deutsche and Ryan 1984, Sieber 1987), Hoboken, Jersey City, and Newark (Cole 1987), Pittsburgh, San Francisco, and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (Cameron 2008),³⁷ Bridgeport, Connecticut (Benson 2005),³⁸ Toronto, Vancouver, Paris,

³⁷ Cameron (2008) explores a: “small urban festival called “Musikfest” in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Launched in 1984, Musikfest appeared at a time of dramatic industrial decline in a region which had been the center of industrial production since the mid-19th century and the home of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation, the second biggest steel producer in the US. But, in the 1980s, the giant steel company began to cut production and to lay off thousands of workers. Civic leaders worried about the rustbelt scenario unfolding in other parts of the country began discussing modes of economic renewal. The public discourse of the time included the idea that the arts, culture, and history might help revive the region, in part through tourism. Thus, Musikfest and other events were born” (160-161).

³⁸ Benson (2005) studied how a major investment in a new ballpark for a minor league baseball team in Bridgeport, Connecticut (a “gritty” city experiencing a post-industrial depression) was connected to: “what Peck and Tickell (2002) call a “neoliberalization of space” and what Smith (1996) calls “gentrification,” where the city government is catering to corporate seduction and elite partnerships. This involves the “serial reproduction of cultural spectacles, enterprise zones, waterfront developments” (Peck and

London, Northeast England (Comunian 2011),³⁹ Manchester (O'Connor and Xin Gu 2010),⁴⁰ Glasgow, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Groningen (Smit 2011), Sydney, Melbourne, Singapore (Chang and Lee 2005)⁴¹ to name a few. Here I will provide some of this broader context in which the social processes unfolding on James Street North can be located.

In 1964 Ruth Glass identified a phenomenon whereby England's rural gentry were settling in London city neighbourhoods, which she called *gentrification*. This term is now used to describe similar “gentry” (or middle class) migrations to inner-city neighbourhoods. This is not a simple process of movement, however. The term implies a kind of displacement and change that occurs in these neighbourhoods when the *gents* move in (see also Jeffrey Henig 1982, Bruce London 1980). Hammnet (1991) defines gentrification as follows:

gentrification involves both a change in the social composition of an area and its residents, and a change in the nature of the housing stock (tenure, price, condition etc.) and an adequate explanation of gentrification will

Tickell 2002: 393) and the seduction of reality effects produced through advertising, the marketing of civic identities, and the simulation of community and heritage” (98-99).

³⁹ Comunian (2011) discuss how: “The region’s [NE England] focus on cultural investment began with the Year of Visual Arts in 1996. The ability of some regional actors (led by Northern Arts, now the Arts Council North East) to attract large public investment to the region is widely acknowledged (Bailey et al., 2004). This enabled the creation of large publicly funded cultural infrastructure such as The Baltic and The Sage Gateshead (Figure 1), together with other developments supported by the umbrella organisation Newcastle Gateshead Initiative (NGI). The region, and specifically Newcastle Gateshead, had enjoyed a new image as a ‘creative city’” (1166).

⁴⁰ O'Connor and Xin Gu (2010) studied creative industry policies in the city of Manchester as urban policies. They argue that, “creative industries benefit from and contribute to the image of the city, but they are also embedded in its social and cultural life. Creative industries tended to actively share narratives of urban regeneration, local identity and the “creative city”” (134).

⁴¹ Chang and Lee (2003) discuss how government initiatives to make Singapore a “Renaissance City” comparable to other cultural centers such as New York, London and Hong Kong (130) have succeeded in creating the physical spaces needed for the arts to flourish but more attention needs to be paid to what they call “heartware,” a value in the “intrinsic” nature of art (139).

have to cover both aspects of the process; the housing and the residents (176).

Sieber's (1987) research on New York brownstoners, whose move into a lower income neighbourhood he called Chestnut Heights, shows how they have drastically changed this area through their renovation of buildings, beautification and greening of spaces, and political reforms in the neighbourhood (55). Further, he connects these urban reforms to old rural ideals. He argues that:

The search for the rural ideal is an old one in Western culture pursued with renewed intensity since the advent of the industrial revolution, particularly in England and the United States....This search for the natural and the simple and the accompanying rejection of urban disorder, artificiality, and pollution, as many observers have noted, historically led to the middle-class abandonment of the city for the suburbs in the age of the streetcar a century ago (Warner 1962) and in the post-World War II age of the automobile.

Recent social scientific observers have seen the last decade's "back to the city" movement, urban revitalization, and gentrification as evidence of a national cultural reversal toward more "pro-urban values" in the United States (Allen 1982). The Chestnut Heights case suggests that it may be more useful to see the new urban ideology not as a reversal of older patterns, but instead as a continuation of them. Brownstoners retained the traditional negative urban images, but they also advocated other, long-standing American bourgeois cultural ideals—individualism, voluntarism, democratic localism, and privatism—ideals to which the city in the past has been viewed as inimical (1987:62).

Zukin (1987), moving beyond an analysis of gentrification as simply a displacement of lower-income residents by higher income residents, addresses the values of the gentrifiers and relates them to Bourdieu's *habitus*. She writes:

It [gentrification] suggested a symbolic new attachment to old buildings and a heightened sensibility to space and time. It also indicated a radical break with suburbia, a movement away from child-centered households toward the social diversity and aesthetic promiscuity of city life. In the public view, at least, gentrifiers were different from other middle-class people. Their collective residential choices, the amenities that clustered

around them, and their generally high educational and occupational status were structured by-and in turn expressed-a distinctive habitus, a class culture and milieu in Bourdieu's (1984) sense. Thus, gentrification may be described as a process of spatial and social differentiation (1987:131).

Early studies of gentrification also identified artists as part of this gentrifying class. Artists are a different kind of gentry, however, and are often portrayed as the victims of their own efforts to revitalize areas, as was seen when artists were pushed out of neighborhoods such as: SoHo, TriBeCa, and the EastVillage (Cole 1987:391). However, Deutsche and Ryan's (1984) study of the "new arts phenomenon" (91) in the Lower East Side shows that artists were also complicit in the processes of gentrification that eventually will push them out. Here Deutsche and Ryan explain the processes occurring in this particular setting:

The representation of the Lower East Side as an "adventurous avant-garde setting," however, conceals a brutal reality. For the site of this brave new art scene is also a strategic urban arena where the city, financed by big capital, wages its war of position against an impoverished and increasingly isolated local population. The city's strategy is twofold. The immediate aim is to dislodge a largely redundant working-class community by wresting control of neighborhood property and housing and turning it over to real-estate developers. The second step is to encourage the full-scale development of appropriate conditions to house and maintain late capitalism's labor force, a professional white middle class groomed to serve the center of America's "postindustrial" society" (Deutsche and Ryan 1984:93).

Similarly, Cole's research in New Jersey (one of the places where displaced Manhattan artists ended up re-locating to in the 1980s) shows how artists "become participants in the displacement process" (1987:407) through the way in which they changed land use patterns by either buying property or making the areas more attractive to real-estate developers (1987:402).

The early gentrification literature clearly presents a strong picture of social displacement and connects this displacement to both the gentrifiers and to larger city strategies. This train of thought does continue but becomes more nuanced as researchers begin to include even larger global processes⁴² in their analyses, and to look at the related processes of city revitalization. For the purpose of this work, however, the most relevant studies on urban revitalization concern the now common term: “the creative city.”

The creative city gets invoked in city policies and community dialogues as an important concept and, in a sense a symbol, for the “re-creation” of cities, which are perceived to be in decline or simply attempting to compete on the world stage.⁴³

Evans, for example, (2009) states:

The prime catalyst for the identification and promotion of creative industries and wider knowledge industries has been their growth performance and potential during the 1990s and into the new century. Critically, these underpin policy interventions and are typically measured in terms of three quantitative indicators: employment; the proportion contributed to national and regional economies’ gross domestic product (percentage of GDP); and gross value-added (GVA), normally measured as sales/turnover per employee (Table 2). City growth is therefore measured in terms of absolute job and wealth creation, and in comparison with the economy as a whole and, importantly, relative to other industrial sectors. This is a significant and symbolic shift, since the creative and knowledge sectors are now commonly cited alongside mainstream

⁴² For example, Davidson argues that: “the responsibility for gentrification, and the relationship between globalisation and gentrification, is found to originate with capital actors working within the context of a neoliberal global city” (2007:490). Further, he “argues that the current collection of commentaries on the relationships between gentrification and globalisation has not adequately considered how capital has been central to the creation of globalised gentrified spaces” (2007:491).

⁴³ For example, “Within a year or so, the Mayor of London’s Creative London commission and new agency (Creative London, 2004) had been replicated by a roll-call of Creative New York, Creative Amsterdam, Create Berlin, Creative Baltimore, Creative Sheffield, Design Singapore, Design London and Creative Toronto, to name a few” (Evans 2009:1007).

See also Pratt (2008), who states: “Until the late 1990s nobody used the term creative industries; after the UK Creative Industries Task Force produced its first mapping document, the creative industries became the flavour of the moment” (113).

industrial sectors in national (and more so) and in city-regional economic strategies, and in international regional area and global trade forecasts (Evans and Foord, 2006b)” (2009:1018).

What is at stake here is economic growth, which is highly connected to place-making strategies. Here, creativity has become a new “driver” in that economic growth (Flew 2010:85). Flew gives a useful review of the trends that have been taking place since the 1970s:

Renewed interest in creativity has coincided with what Allen Scott (2008) refers to as the resurgence of cities. Whereas much of the talk of the 1970s and 1980s was of the crisis of cities, faced with the shift of manufacturing to lower wage economies and the decline of the inner city, and the 1990s saw prophecies that the Internet heralded the “death of distance” (Cairncross 1998), what has become apparent is that globalization, the rise of digital media networks and industries, and the need to develop postindustrial urban development strategies have all contributed to cities becoming “motors of the global economy” (Scott et al. 2001) (2010:85).

It is within these global trends that Hamilton arts community members attempt to make sense of what is happening in their city. The fact that Eddie Friel was invited to Hamilton to discuss his efforts with creative tourism in Glasgow shows that Hamilton also wants a piece of this global stage. In a globalised world of place-based economic and cultural competition it makes sense that the creative city discourse would be favoured. If it has worked in other places why not Hamilton? Hence the title of Friel’s talk: “Can the Arts Save Hamilton?”

It also makes sense that a backlash would develop to such strategies. These are ideologically competing visions. When the focus becomes how do *we* grow the economy and how can the arts play a role in that project the question can easily become, who is included in this “we?”

Both the literature on these subjects, and the ethnographic example of Hamilton trying to work out how to best move forward and improve its social standing and economic capital, show that urban renewal and gentrification are highly complex and fraught topics.

I found that, in the end, these debates were also closely tied to questions of authenticity. I argue that in the inner city spaces of James Street North people are attempting (despite external pressures, difficulties, and contradictions) to imbue these spaces with a humane vision that creates spaces wherein valued personal and social transformations can take place.

6. Exits: Visioning James Street North

In this final chapter and conclusion I argue that the debates about gentrification that I witnessed during fieldwork are part of larger questions about the authenticity of place, and that gentrification and creative class debates in general cannot work to protect people from displacement or rising capital interests when they operate from, and reinforce, the very dualisms of insider and outsider, real and fake, and being and becoming that the discipline of anthropology has had to face and overcome. Additionally, I pick up and explore further, a theme that was introduced in the contextual chapter on Hamilton and James Street at the beginning of the thesis: that of the rural within the heart of an urban core.

On closer examination, it is not a surprise that the arts scene on James Street North incited so much debate. This script has been re-enacted in many other places. What I will explore here, however, is how the arts on James Street North are also part of a different script, a script that is common in tourism literature but not in the literature about neighbourhood change: how the past, and the material culture tied to it, become more valuable and more authentic than the perceived banality of the suburban everyday world in the contemporary city.

This chapter, then, will piece together several different frameworks in which James Street North can be theoretically envisioned, and in so doing it will also tie together the last three ethnographic chapters through the discussion of these different visions.

Industrially Quaint

Despite James Street North's location in the downtown core, and despite the emphasis on its contribution to a thriving future for Hamilton, James Street represents something rural, something simple, something linked to the past. It is this longed for past that literature on the pastoral ideal and the country and the city has dealt with for decades.

Pastoral Ideals

Leo Marx and Raymond Williams both talk about the pastoral ideal in their respective works, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964), and *The Country and the City* (1973). What is clear in reading these works is that there is a vision of the country which becomes idealized in relation to the city, but that while both the country and the city are often “reduced” to “symbols or archetypes” a focus on the “persistence and the historicity of concepts” is what is needed (Williams 1973:289). It is the patterns, then--as situated in time and space--that are of primary interest. Williams begins by teasing out the archetypes of country and the city:

On the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light. Powerful hostile associations have also developed: on the city as a place of noise, worldliness and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation (1973:1).

These distinctions are also a product of modernity itself, and William's focus on Britain--which is the site of the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution and large-scale urbanization--is telling (1973:2). Thirty years later, however, cultural geographer David Harvey takes up the “powerful hostile associations” of city and country in his discussion of Balzac's pastoral ideal in France.

The city of Paris is seen as the centre of the world, yet it is also a centre that dispossesses large groups of people in the struggles for power that take place within its streets. The country is provincialized, and those from the provinces are thought to be in need of civilization. Yet the country still holds something that the city is lacking. Balzac writes about the country as a place where “a peace is released from the competitive dynamism of Paris and of metropolitan business struggles” (Balzac in Harvey 2003:26). In a sense, this process of provincializing the country is what Chakrabarty means when he discusses the “mimetic” history in India. This mimetic history is one where the modern citizen and the nation state are produced as *known* tales (2000:39).

In Leo Marx’s focus on America, a further connection is made. Here, America is “the dream of a retreat to an oasis of harmony and joy...[that] was embodied in various utopian schemes for making America the site of a new beginning for Western society” (1964:3). America was quite literally the undiscovered country upon which pastoral ideals could take hold. Marx describes two forms of this ideal. One is a popular feeling and the other an artistic form. The first is described as being a feeling of “longing for a more ‘natural’ environment” (1964:5), which gets criticized for being a kind of naïve idealism, which “mask[s] the real problems of an industrial civilization” (1964:7). Marx, therefore, focuses on the second kind of pastoral ideal, the artistic form, and his attention to literature’s “power to enrich and clarify our experience” is extremely valuable. Still, I would argue that popular nostalgia is just as valuable a site to consider, and one which that is salient for James Street North.

Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* explores as a central metaphor "the ominous sounds of machines...[that] reverberate endlessly in our literature" (1964:15-16). He begins with Hawthorne's 1844 description of a train interrupting his "green" Sleepy Hollow "retreat." The central thesis is: the city meets the country through the technology that breaks into this Eden with its noise and there is no escaping its power. Marx begins by situating this thesis within the Romantic Movement's "protest on behalf of the organic view of nature" (quoting Whitehead 1964:19), but goes further by suggesting that Hawthorne's train in the garden is also a "modern version of an ancient literary device" (1964:19).

From Hesiod's myth of the Golden Age to Virgil's Arcadia in the *Eclogues*, rural locations have been idealized, conceived of as threatened and then mourned (Marx 1964:21 and Williams 1973:14-18). The Garden of Eden then stands against the Tower of Babel where disturbing sounds prevail and symbolize the loss of bliss (Marx 1964:21).

The past, then, stands for all that was good. In a sense, the good earth is perceived of as gone yet still sought after, and James Street North, in its nostalgic return to those values, comes to symbolize a future, which recaptures that goodness. This utopian country past is lost, and people are alienated when the city—which is supposed to stand for the future and for progress—"master[s] the world" (Harvey 2003:47-50 and 86). In addition, consider the following:

The radical change in the character of society and the sharp swing between two states of feeling, between an Arcadian vision and an anxious awareness of reality are closely related: they illuminate each other. All of which is another way of accounting for the symbolic power of the motif: it brings the political and the psychic dissonance associated with the onset of industrialism into a single pattern of meaning (Marx 1964:30).

These two states, the Arcadian vision and the anxiety over its loss, are linked. One comments on the other. A more recent and useful perspective is found in Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* (2000). He argues that humans do not "exist in a frame of a single and secular historical time" (2000:16), so that our understandings of life experiences are influenced by our understandings of the past, and that a new relationship to the future is formed when the past becomes a form of critique. Further, as Heidegger suggests, the past is necessarily future oriented: "there is...no 'desire for going back,' no 'pathological' nostalgia that is also not futural as well" (Chakrabarty 2000:250). Viewed in this light, the country and the city are not static places, and time is not simply linear. Nor do they need necessarily be found in the country and the city but also become symbolic and lived ideals that are not dependent on physical place.

What takes place on James Street North is an amalgamation of the country and the city so that what remains might be called "Industrially Quaint." The handmade, vintage, craft, and art aesthetic that flourished during my fieldwork appeals because of its ties to the past and to a different kind of aesthetic than the contemporary city is usually thought to be able to provide. The appeal seems to be a reaction in part to the larger sense of alienation from the usual surroundings within the city, which Williams and Marx discussed almost half a century earlier. For example, the old ads still painted on buildings or the old business signs still left above new businesses serve as tangible links to a more aesthetically attractive time and place, a place where, perhaps, life was more meaningful.

Here the past and the older material culture that signifies it becomes more valuable and therefore becomes linked to a more authentic domain. In the attempt to

construct a new environment in the older environment, what is retained are things that are perceived as being authentic: wood floors, exposed brick walls, painted tin ceilings. However, only certain pasts are claimed and used for the future. The old signage, brick walls, aesthetically pleasing buildings, and Portuguese markets are attractive, but the crime, dirt, drugs, prostitution and poverty are not. These latter aspects are cleared away through increased surveillance and police presence, rising rents, and what some might call the social ‘colonization’ of a particular creative class into the neighbourhood. What people often forgot when I heard them talk about the dangers of gentrification was that gentrification also has a social side. It is not just about renovations and the dangers of artists being pushed out by rising rents but also about whether the men standing outside of their social clubs every day still feel part of their street.

Tourism and Authenticity

James north of Cannon is bracketed by single-family homes for much of its length. That underlying familiarity, never far from the commercial mix, makes it a palatable introduction to urban life. A portal for people to sample the aestheticized grittiness of James North, the Art Crawl derives authenticity from the strip’s eclectic mix. Soup kitchens, street grocers, raucous Portuguese sports bars, multicultural eateries and sporadic eruptions of violence all contribute to the air of uncontrived Bohemia (Lukasik-Foss 2009).

What remains of the past on James Street North contributes to a mindset that going there is, in some ways, like a mini-vacation from ordinary life, a place that is much like a tourist going to the ‘exotic other.’ It is not the ‘mountain,’ suburban Hamilton.

And while, the art itself may not be reminiscent of, or evoke, the past (although many local shows and photographers have used the past as their main inspiration), the art is still extra-ordinary and, at times, nostalgic. This is why, for example, Santucci’s

photographs of sex workers were placed next to a slideshow of decaying downtown landscapes and why they were not just criticised but popular. The women, like the landscape, became part of the aesthetic, part of the exotic, and his photographs provide a glimpse (or gaze) into an ‘other’, more intriguing, more authentic world, a world worth at least visiting.

Nostalgic Travel

Many modern urban people believe that much of the world in which they live is no longer really authentic. A strong trend within the underlying philosophy of modernity is that ‘authenticity’ lies somewhere outside of everyday modern urban life: in the countryside or in nature...or equally that authenticity is a quality of the past and of history that has somehow been lost in modern life (Graburn 1995:168-169).

Hence, Graburn suggests that the trend toward the creation of historical sites as new destinations is growing in the tourist industry, and that “one of the key forces imbuing power to tourist attractions is nostalgia” (1995:165). This view is echoed by Coleman and Crang when they talk about how nostalgia is produced in tourism and with it a, “the loss of that which it itself has ruined” (2002:3).

Further, Coleman and Crang argue that, “places now have to market their specificity [and] ...what results is not globalisation so much as glocalisation (Swngedouw 1988), where the local has to be recovered, packaged and sold” (2002:3). Coleman and Crang go on to make the connection to how the marketing of place as outlined above also happens in “formerly industrial cities” (2002:3). This process is seen in Hamilton as it attempts to re-brand itself and on James Street North in the monthly art crawls and annual Supercrawls.

Authenticity Wars

So, the romantic attraction to James Street as a destination, to art as extraordinary, and to a decayed past made new becomes, “a dynamic field where the very idea of authenticity is part of a reflexive poetic and political field—a term to be contested and used” (Coleman and Crang 2002:7).

The romanticization and othering of the landscape of James Street North creates a situation that is ripe for just such a field of political and poetic contestation, a place that is ripe for an ‘authenticity war.’ A paradox is created when what was old becomes new, and when the searched for places with “symbolic capital” turn commonplace and then, “[corrupt] the idea of reaching an authentic and truly different culture” (Coleman and Crang 2002:3). Authenticity is at once threatened and up for grabs:

“Authenticity” is an eminently modern value (cf. Appadurai 1986:45; Berger, 1973; Trilling 1972), whose emergence is closely related to the impact of modernity upon the unity of social existence. As institutions become, in Nietzsche’s words, “weightless” and lose their reality (Berger 1973:86; Trilling 1972: 138), the individual is said to turn into himself. If nothing on ‘the outside’ can be relied upon to give weight to the individual’s sense of reality, he is left no option but to burrow into himself in search of the real (Cohen 1988:373)

In his article, “Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism” (1988) Erik Cohen shows how previous arguments stating that tourism necessarily leads to commoditization and that commoditization then destroys cultural authenticity by creating what McCannell (1973) called “staged authenticity” do not question the philosophical ideas described in the above quote about authenticity (1988:374). Instead, Cohen argues, authenticity is a much more fluid concept re-interpreted and experienced by the visited and visitors alike.

Authenticity, then, is “negotiable” (1988:374) and “emergent” (1988:379) based upon perception.

Bruner also argues against McCannell’s idea that the tourist pursues the real in an attempt to overcome the alienation of modern society. He says: “most tourists are quite satisfied with their own society, most are not alienated, and they are not necessarily seeking an authentic experience elsewhere” (1991:240). Instead, he says it is *not* the tourist self but the native self that is transformed by tourism. It is important to note that the changes Bruner describes here are not ones of exploitation or colonization as previous literature has argued, but that, “the native self may gain more, in the sense of expanding more and changing more, than the tourist self” (1991:246). Tucker, however, suggests a more reciprocal relationship between the tourist and the toured exists. She says that,

the successful development and continuation of tourism in a particular locality would be best conceived as a situation in which, given certain conditions, tourists’ quests and expectations may be negotiated along with the character or the identity of the visited site and people (2001:869).

I further appreciate Belhassen and Caton’s insistence, that despite the problems with the idea of authenticity and alienation these concepts should not be thrown out because they still hold salience within society, and are thus reacted against and acted upon. These researchers state:

that although traditional conceptualizations of this idea within the academic literature are philosophically problematic in numerous ways, as long as the many notions of object authenticity are still “out there” in the minds and lives of individuals acting in the “tourism world,” it is for academia to study them. Such notions play a significant role in the tourism industry; they are quite real in their consequences, and thus cannot be ignored if scholars are to understand society (2006:855).

Scholars themselves are also part of society and the study of anthropology itself has an “authenticity problem” (Graburn 1995:160), where the ethnographer and the tourist play a similar role. Further, the question is asked:

In a world of repeated replications and multiple co-existing truths, are the results of anthropological research any different from (or better than) journalism, or tourists’ accounts? (Graburn 1995:160).

Further, tourism and anthropology have both thrived on difference. Without the different, the “exotic, ethnic, foreign, more natural or even ‘primitive’” both would “lose some of their attraction” (Graburn 195:171). Additionally, Coleman and Crang see a similar comparison between anthropology and tourism. They say, “both are seeking to create symbolic capital from travel and both work by translating foreign experience into domestic categories” (2002:9).

Perhaps the connection of the anthropologist to the tourist is why, after the November 2011 community debate at the Sky Dragon Centre, people on James Street were questioning academics’ motives and why I felt in some way complicit and conflicted about the accusation. I often wondered where my life and research began and ended. In the end, I realized it was impossible to separate them when doing research at home: when the journey taken does not follow the typical tourist’s trajectory of leaving home, going somewhere and returning, and when the foreign and domestic categories blur or when the main translation between them is done for the sole purpose of bridging the gap between lived life and scholarship.

The ‘authenticity wars’ that were exposed in the community debates in Chapter Five took the form anti-gentrification vs. pro-creative cities, and it is here where we see

that authenticity is truly contested. So, while the anti-gentrification argument seeks to humanize the aestheticized human subject, and what material objects such as buildings represent for people, it also suggests that in order for a neighbourhood to stay humane as it changes it must hold onto what is truly authentic: *what was there before*. This makes change an oxymoron, and I fear, steps into the terrain of reifying culture and holding it up to impossible standards. This is not to say that social equalities should not be fought for or that displacing people because of race or class should not be actively challenged. But it is to say that the script that is used needs to be re-considered in order to effect the very socially equitable changes that need to be made. How stories are told affect the actors and their actions.

This is also true of the Florida-esque story that says the arts can save Hamilton through economic investment. The creative city story equally takes part in this authenticity war by attempting to create new but ‘authentic’ places and forgetting local contexts or the role that social and economic power has for the lives of people living in places that get newly branded for the so-called greater good. All of this calls into question what is a truly authentic place and who owns it. James Street North, and places like it, become ‘othered’ by commentators on all sides.

However, the very attempt to aestheticize the urban landscape is also an attempt to humanize it and democratize it rather than dehumanize and colonize it. The nostalgia for the past, and bringing those sought after values of a friendly, safe and thriving community into the present and future, are enactments of, and hopes for, a more humane world. It is

in this way that the arts community has tried to re-create the world, and, many do not understand why they are criticized for doing so.

The Past Accelerated or a “History of the Future”

Dreams of a Better Life

Utopias are “dreams for a better life” that are now thought of in terms of the future, rather than a place (like in More’s *Utopia*), and these dreams are open to change with time (Bloch 1974:3-5). It is the sense that “another world is possible” (Graeber 2004:10). Williams, in his work on utopia, discusses two kinds of utopias: systematic and heuristic. In systematic “dystopia” the attempt for something better brings about “the exact opposite” in the processes used to bring about the change (1983:12). Anarchist anthropologist David Graeber argues that this kind of systematic dystopia is not enough of an argument against the value that “imagining better worlds” can bring. Anthropology, then, can be a part of Williams’ second form of utopia—that imaginative and creative, “critique of an existing system” whose purpose “is to form desire” (1983:13)—by ethnographically understanding how others are imagining alternatives and proposing a dialogue between ethnography and utopian visions (Graeber 2004:12).

Present Hopes

The truth of things is lodged in the concrete yet shifting life of signs—a network of tellings and retellings, displacements and re-memberings (Stewart 1996:4).

Memory, space, and time all coagulate and then reconfigure past and present (Taussig 2004:235).

James Street North, “the street that built the city,”⁴⁴ is a place where what used to be (and what was lost) is invoked in the hopes of what may be. At the beginning of my fieldwork every time I walked onto James Street North it seemed to me as if something had changed: a new store replacing a store that had moved or closed, renovations on old buildings, stores and galleries opening in empty buildings, more events and bigger crowds. ‘Change’ was the word on the street. In my very first conversations with people about James Street North (before people were talking about gentrification) this word, change, more than any other, was how people characterized the street. James Street North was in vogue during my fieldwork, and it was a place where the past, the present and the future were invoked so that the story of Hamilton might also change.

With these changes there was also a kind of acceleration of history where the street became a source of memory in form. Pierre Nora states that the, “rapid slippage of the present into a historical past that is gone for good, a general perception that anything and everything may disappear” opens up space for memories, and then the re-creation of memories (1989:7). This loss of the present into the past grows “because there is so little of it left” (1989:7), and as a result material forms stand for, and invoke, histories in order to tell stories of presents and futures.

Zournazi’s exploration of hope as a concept adds to Nora’s discussion of the past in an interesting way. She writes that hope is:

that force which keeps us moving and changing – the renewal of life at each moment, or the ‘re-enchanting’ of life and politics – so that the future

⁴⁴ This phrase, written by Mark McNeil, appeared in the *Hamilton Spectator* on May 14, 2010. Since then I have heard others repeat it in conversations about James Street North.

may be about how we come to live and hope in the present (Zournazi 2003:274).

While Nora sees the present slipping into the past, Zournazi sees the present moving into the future; made in how we live now. What is interesting is that while the salience of the present is pulled in opposite directions in these works, the present is still where the story of the past or future is made. The present is often the ‘place’ ethnographers go to in order to deal with the arguably elusive concepts of the past and future. For example, Rosenburg and Harding in *Histories of the Future* (2005) say that the everyday present is where they situate their analyses of future making.

These simultaneous processes of looking at the past and the future through the present is at the heart of why multiple visions can exist on James Street North, and why it is possible to hold such vastly contradictory positions, yet find them to be all emically valid.

If James Street North Could be Anything?...

At the end of each interview I asked the question: “If James Street North could be anything what would it be?” At the end of this thesis I want to share some of the answers to put the future of the street out of my analytic hands and back into the hearts and minds of those who gave me their time and consideration during fieldwork. What follows is a series of voices simply to be listened to.

To be itself. I don’t think Bob Bratina should impose any face onto a street or a neighbourhood or anything. It’s a collective, and it’s probably random and there is a dynamic in that. I don’t think you can put country western clapboard fronts and pretend you’re a western cowboy village or a Bavarian village. It either is or it isn’t. And whatever it is seems to be pretty good....If it is going to be art and culture it has to breathe on it’s

own I think (Bob Bratina, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, January 27, 2010).

...

James Street North? I don't know. I really don't have any vision, long-term vision. I think it is great that it is always in this state of becoming something and that means there's a lot of, not necessarily, tensions, but there's a diversity of expectations and opportunities and it will be interesting to see which ones emerge or are strongest. I think it is really good to be aware of all the potential dangers too that gentrification can bring and I think it is good that there's people around that put the breaks on it in some ways... (Bryce Kanbara, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, September 16, 2009).

...

I think you have to be very careful about gentrification in areas and I really like the idea that there are so many diverse groups working in the area at the moment and I kind of like that for that reason. That's why I like the art crawls too because so many different people come out from all different areas of the city. So, I'd like to see the places that have their gallery spaces there, like, you know, maybe keep up their level of their quality of their presentations and that sort of thing. I'd like that to improve in some way but not that's it's restrictive...I wouldn't want to see the whole street end up like Queen Street. I mean Queen Street still does have some of its original spaces but really it's been taken over quite a bit (Interview respondent, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, December 4, 2009).

...

I would like to see James Street be a place where people understand the importance of dialogue with people we are not like. Pretty simple (Matt Thomson, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, January 18, 2010).

...

Vibrant. It is definitely the hub and definitely the stuff where things can start to radiate out from. It has the opportunity for things to push forward in that way and to set the Hamilton stage for something, about something. So vibrant! (Interview respondent, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, December 14, 2009).

...

I want it to retain the character it has now. I want it to be a mix still. I think James Street has always been a really kind of multi-cultural street, with the Portuguese community here and the Italian community. I want it to stay that. Like the markets and the mix of art galleries and that, but it needs more. Like right now the art galleries are great but there's only a couple of stores. It's not really a shopping destination. And there's really only a few restaurants, no there's a lot. I think it just needs to be more of a package, more of a destination where people come and stay for the day...I want James Street to stay as it is but grow cohesively together into something more (Jane LaBatte, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, April 3, 2010).

...

I have to admit when I first saw it right away I thought this place needs some, I wouldn't say some Toronto attitude, but it could certainly do with like a proper coffee shop for one thing. It doesn't have to be Starbucks, I don't care if it is Starbucks, I'm not married to that corporation, but you know what I mean a place where average people, normal people, average is not a good word, neither is normal. The majority, I don't know, you know what I'm talking about, like people who live on the mountain and stuff who aren't into the kind of avant-garde underground of a downtown would be drawn to and spending some time. So they know they could get their really nice coffee. I think it needs a bookstore...I just think it needs a little bit more of that kind of, you know, those little neighbourhoods in Toronto where it is like a village. It just needs to be a little more like a well-rounded village. It's on the edge of it but, personally, for me to spend more time down there I would need a few more stores to attract me to do my shopping...does that make sense? I feel like I just fumbled through that. I feel like it needs to be a little bit more whole (Interview respondent, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, December 1, 2009).

...

It's kind of like eating the elephant one bit at time in many respects because you have 100s of James Street North kinds of places in Hamilton and this just happens to be one that, by its location, is probably one of the more important ones. So the elephant is the city of Hamilton, and particularly the old city of Hamilton, and the issues that are facing Barton Street, and Cannon, and Ottawa Street. You know Ottawa is maybe a year or two behind James Street in some respects and maybe a year or two ahead in others and Locke Street is maybe five years ahead. Now it's got challenges out of its success: the rents are too high and people are leaving.

They are going to Ottawa Street. I think what is most important for James Street North is that it is the linkage between what could be a successful waterfront and what could be a successful downtown core and if you've got strong anchors on either the whole area stands to win just as that success spreads from those anchors (Scott Smith, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, December 7, 2009).

...

Nothing except for what it is. Pretty Simple (Interview respondent, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, December 1, 2009).

...

I would not want to see a Starbucks on James Street but I would like to see James Street to have more mixed incomes. I would like to see the people on James Street to have more economic choices and options then what they do and I would love to see a much more mixed neighbourhood. I would like to see much more cultural activity for sure and just expand upon what's already there. Would love to see more support and development. It would be great to get that Go station up and happening I think it's really key. I would hate it to see it suddenly gentrified or see a Walmart or something like that come in. I definitely don't need to see another Giant Tiger open up or a dollar store...you want it to retain its character and you want the small shop keepers and the Portuguese fish markets to stay because I think that is what makes it a liveable place to live. I don't want to see all that stuff gentrified away. But I do want to see more mixed incomes. A bookstore would be great. Alternate movie theatre would be great. A video store would be great. A good greasy spoon would be great....Some public art and murals on the street. It would be nice to see the street less ghettoized as well. Like it would be good if Mohawk or McMaster opened a campus downtown. It would be nice to see more intellectual activity engaging in stuff. I think that would make for a pretty great neighbourhood (Interview respondent, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, August 12, 2009).

...

I'd like it to still be an arts centre. I really want it to step up. I want there to be better galleries. Maybe not even more, just better. I'd like to see a lot more of the vacant spaces being used to their potential. I'd still like a lot of the older shops and restaurants to still be there. I'd like the streetscape to not change drastically from what it is now. That's what things like the potential condo development worry me. It's going to change the façade of

the street. Like I want it to retain its historical character. I want it to look like what it is. I'd like the Lister Block to be functioning. I don't know, honestly, like that seems remarkably un-ambitious for 'if it could be anything.' Like anything could be a whole sorts of awesome shit, and I'm sitting here saying, 'oh, it would be fine if it was what it was now but better.' I don't know but yeah that's basically it (Stephanie Vegh, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, January 18, 2010).

...

Successful. However the people of this street want to define success. Sustainable. Maybe sustainable is a more effective word for me. I try not to think about just James Street. I try to think about the downtown. (Jeremy Freiburger, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, April 6, 2010).

...

Complete success, without the trappings of success (Dane Pederson, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, January 22, 2010).

...

I just want to see a vibrant community. I want to see everything filled, including parking lots being rebuilt and having buildings that face the street and having people live there and hopefully people raising families close-by who then contribute to the street. So it should be a constant flow...so for me in five years, ten years down the road it's just having a street that people take pride in, people enjoy being there, it's a real public space and that's where the new ideas people have about Hamilton can come to life, people see it on James Street and then can imagine it elsewhere in the city. That's my goal and of course to be part of it, to be there, to see it happen, will be an amazing thing but there's a lot of work that needs to be done to make that happen...and again, it's that collective ownership: well, I care about the street, I own a little piece of the street, I want to see the street happen, I want to spend some money on the street. It's all of those elements that have to come into make the street what it was. It was the most social street in the city. This is where everything happened. And when things start to change I think people forget that this street has a long history and it's kind of ebbed and flowed and it's going to ebb and flow again. So for me it's just: vibrant, healthy, interesting, exciting. And that's a real city. All those things (Dave Kuruc, interviewed by Vanessa Sage, August 12, 2009).

Concluding Thoughts

This ethnographic work has addressed the fundamental questions of how people come together, both individually and collectively, to experience material spaces, and then how those spaces become sites of imagination where notions of past (nostalgia), present (passionate action), and the future (hope) collide and have the potential to spark further social change through community actions. I have, throughout this ethnography, emphasized the multiple and contradictory ways people make sense and meaning of themselves and the spaces with which they engage. I have also considered how these understandings create a sense of sacred value on the street itself. Further, I have set the scene for future research into how different forms of power limit and/or expand actions and imaginations within a particular context: one part of one street in a city.

Throughout this work I have been interested in how people experience, and make sense of, the places that matter to them, and I have sought to further our understandings of how people are affected locally by social and cultural forces such as modernity, deindustrialization, globalization and transnationalism. This doctoral research has documented and analyzed a specific instance of the way in which these forces come together in an urban setting, and has additionally explored how people have created and used nostalgia, community action, and hope in their lives as residents, artists and stakeholders on James Street North in Hamilton, Ontario during the time frame of 2005-2011.

Epilogue

In 2012 James Street North continued to grow and change. The Lister Block's restorations were complete, and *Tourism Hamilton* opened its doors in the historic building in April 2012. The street remained packed on the monthly Art Crawl nights and the street received more foot traffic during the rest of the month than it did during my fieldwork. The Supercrawl got bigger and showed no signs of slowing down. The old Friendship Shop (also known as the old Dominion building) was also restored and both the *Art Gallery of Hamilton* and *CBC Radio* took spaces in the two street level spaces for rent. More shops opened as well such as: a flower shop, three vintage clothing stores, two new galleries, a sewing and fabric store, a furniture/video rental store, a clothing store selling articles designed and made on the premises, a diner, and a *Green Smoothie Bar*. A few places moved. *The Factory Media Arts Centre* moved a few blocks north, *White Elephant* moved across the street, as did *Books & Beats*, and *Hamilton Artist's Inc.* moved next door into their newly designed, and very modern, gallery space. The Portuguese markets, old bars, social clubs and restaurants remained. Instead of seeing displacement I simply saw more, and more varied, people frequenting the street.

My life grew and changed too. The fieldwork ended up transforming me and I found that I had a deeper love for Hamilton and this street than I knew. I stayed living and working on the street and in the city as I began the next phase of my life. At the end of this phase I was at once the pilgrim in the midst of the betwixt and between, and the traveller come home altered by the experience. This was certainly not the plan when I started but, in the end, I found my life right where I was.

When I began graduate school I truly wanted to understand the meaning place had for people. This was my interest in Glastonbury when I studied goddess pilgrimage and in my Masters research on crop circles as a new religious movement. When I began studying James Street North it was because I wanted to explore how I might understand the mystery in the everyday and the everyday in the mystery—nod to Benjamin (1999). The connections to deep meanings that I researched within the field of the anthropology of religion I also found by studying materiality, the everyday and the city. I may be accused of romanticism but I hold true to my conviction that the extra-ordinary can be found in our everyday lives. We may encounter the sacred in our churches, on the tops of mountain peaks, in our communities or families, in our creative expressions, in our work, or in the simple act of walking down the streets where we live.

It is also here, in the everyday mystery, where the ethnographer's art of seeing how theory plays out in everyday life connects to the artist's or community member's efforts to make the familiar circumstances and settings of their lives more rich and meaningful.

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Appendices

Interview Guide

1. Do you live in Hamilton?

If yes:

- a) How long and where have you lived in Hamilton?
- b) Have you lived in other places?
- c) Why do you live in Hamilton?

If no:

- a) Would you live in Hamilton? If not, why?

2. What is your experience of James St. North?

- a) When you think of James St. North what comes to your mind?
- b) How would you compare James St. North to other places in Hamilton or elsewhere?
- c) Do you remember the first time you were on the street?
- d) When was the last time you were on the street, and why?
- e) Are there places on James St. where you like to go or places that you avoid?

3. What is your experience of the arts in Hamilton and on James St?

4. Has James St changed as a result of more art galleries opening?

5. Have you ever been to any of the art events on James St?

If yes, did you enjoy them?

If no, have you considered going?

6. If it could be anything, what would you like James St. to be?

7. a) Is there anything else you would like to add?

b) Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

Consent Form

Letter of Information / Consent for a study on Visions of James Street North in Hamilton, Ontario

Principal Investigator:
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Why am I doing this study? I am conducting a study on James Street North in Hamilton as part of my studies towards a PhD in Anthropology. The study asks the following question: how have the changes in James Street, North shaped people's hopes, fears and dreams for Hamilton itself? I am interested in understanding people's experiences of James Street North because the street has been very important in the history of Hamilton and may be important to the city's future.

What will happen during the study? If you agree to participate in this research I would like to interview you. These are a few examples of the questions I will ask:

When you think of James St. North what comes to your mind?
Are there places on James St. where you like to go?
Are there places you avoid?

I would like to tape the interview, but will do so only with your permission. If you agree to having our interview taped, I will make a written copy of what you said on your request. You will have a chance to read it, add, change or take parts out. If it is alright with you I would also like to take notes. The interview will probably last about half an hour, but it may be longer if you are interested in continuing.

Possible Harms, Risks or Discomforts: It is not likely that there will be any harms or discomforts associated with talking about the James Street neighbourhood.

Possible Benefits: I hope this study will help people understand more about the city, about its place in Canada, and about how cities work in general. I also hope that being part of the study will be interesting for you, because it will give you a chance talk about your life and where you live.

Confidentiality: I will not use your name in my study, unless you would like me to and I will remove any information that might make it easy for someone to identify you. However, those who know the neighbourhood and read what you've said might still be able to identify you. You should keep this in mind in deciding what to tell me.

The information you give me will be kept in a secured, locked and private area of my office. I will be the only one with access to the tapes and notes. I will destroy all tapes and notes when my study is done.

Changing your mind about in the study: Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is your choice to be part of the study or not. No one but me will know whether you decided to participate or not and I will not be sharing this information with anyone. If you decide to participate, you can decide to stop at any time, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study. If you decide to stop participating, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided to that point will be

destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but can still be in the study.

Information about what was learned in the study: I expect to have my study done by about June of 2011. I would be happy to send you a short summary of my results if you are interested. If so, please provide me with your contact information below. Or you can simply get in touch with me. We can decide then the best way for me to get the summary to you. I could mail or e-mail the summary to you. Or, if you prefer, I can leave a copy for you somewhere so that you can pick it up at your convenience.

Information about Participating: If you have questions or require more information about the study itself, please contact Vanessa Sage at 905-979-5542 or e-mail vanessasage@gmail.com

This study has been reviewed and approved by the McMaster Research Ethics Board. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, you may contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Board Secretariat Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

CONSENT

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Vanessa Sage of McMaster University. I have had a chance to ask questions about being in this study, and to get any extra details about the study. I understand that I can stop being in the study at any time, if I choose, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

I agree that the interview can be recorded.

€ I do not want my real name used if quoted in the report

€ I prefer to have my real name used.

I would like to receive a summary of the results

€ Yes

€ No

If yes, please send them to me at this email address _____

or at this mailing address: _____

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date: _____

Deconstructed Abstract



As part of a presentation of this research I made a word cloud from the abstract that begins the thesis.