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The Stratified Spatiality of Los Angeles: Excavating Counter-Memory in Nina Revoyr's *Southland*

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Abstract: My paper investigates racialized cityspace, concretized as geosocial strata. In this paper, I look to *Southland* to reimagine the city as a contested site of spatialized memory. Evoking the detective genre, the novel's plot revolves around the mysterious death of Curtis Martindale during the 1965 Watts Uprising. As narrator, Jackie Ishida, undertakes an investigation into Martindale's death and its connection to her grandfather Frank Sakai's store in Crenshaw and his relationship to the community. This paper investigates Los Angeles' racially stratified neighbourhoods as they collide or subduct; the use of geological metaphors a deliberate means of concretizing Los Angeles' multiple diverging histories. Socio-Material strata work through breaks and violent collision, a geological metaphor concretizing social unrest. My work examines the ways Los Angeles' neighbourhoods are fundamentally unstable, situated on a racial fault-line whose geologic activity resists the covering-over of history, connecting the originary violence of settler colonialism and racial categorization to modern structures of ghettoization and exception. The novel's use of the detective genre additionally gestures to the requisite need to excavate the socio-spatial surface of Californian urbanism, and investigates the subjugated counter-histories upon which the image of the liberal humanist city has been constructed. This stratified theorization of Los Angeles serves as a model for how contemporary urbanism contextualizes race, which is then mirrored in the architecture of the modern, global city. Attending to archaeology as a process examining the socio-spatial breaks within the real and affective urban sphere, my paper argues for a more complex exploration of geologic

city space as a way to unearth layers of counter-memory that have calcified and been covered over.

Keywords: *Archaeology, Race, City, Memory, Identity.*

Beneath the radiance of Los Angeles's sparkling visage is a city struggling to maintain a cohesive narrative in the face of social, ecological, and political cracks and fissures. Los Angeles, emptied of history or substance, has been called 'paradise with a lobotomy,' but claims of depthlessness ignore the significant role of cities like Los Angeles in theorising contemporary space. While for American thinker Mike Davis, Los Angeles is two-faced – city and anti-city – where the sublime and the dreadful mix together, in Edward Soja's formulation, it is not only the capital of the twentieth century but a postmodern 'exopolis', a city ironically defined by its outward expansion. The city, to say the least, is a material contradiction: a 'city of dreams' and urban hellhole, where the interplay between the real and the dreamy manifests materially. Nina Revoyr's 2003 novel *Southland* is an exploration of Los Angeles' spatiality, investigating intercity migration patterns, gentrification and ghettoisation, ways in which white supremacy spatially, politically, and culturally intervenes on ethnic communities. Revealing spatial and temporal layers of urban life, *Southland* suggests that the image of Los Angeles as a model of diversity, is reliant upon what theorist Lisa Lowe calls an "economy of affirmation and forgetting" (3) which is at the root of American cultural identity and which the novel's detective process aims to unearth.[i] The process by which this 'economy' is maintained is reliant upon socio-spatial structures that cover over contested counter-narratives and histories, the result of which creates dominant ideologies of space and subjectivity. *Southland* looks at the interconnected lives of a group of Angelinos rooted in Crenshaw, a historically Japanese and later African-American neighbourhood in South Los Angeles from the 1930s to the present, i.e. 2003. The novel begins with the death of Frank Sakai, whose granddaughter Jackie is tasked

with honouring his will, leaving a large sum to a mysterious Curtis Martindale of Crenshaw — a place Jackie actively fears. She enlists the help of a local, James Lanier, who is already investigating Martindale's life and death in the '65 Uprising. My reading of *Southland* provides an alternative lens through which to understand contemporary urban spatiality, one that reframes the liberal humanist vision of a post-racial urbanity as rooted in colonial thinking made modern. In the novel's depiction of lived space, the city is revealed as altered by forces attempting to cover over tensions that inevitably rupture. I argue that we must thereby read lived space laterally. Instead of theorising it as a homogenous surface upon which contemporary battles are waged, we see urban space as comprised of layers of narrative and counter-narrative in active, *geologic* opposition. Digging beneath the surface, memory and counter-memory are revealed as active and productive forces in lived space, thus demanding a larger *archaeological* expedition into urban spatial politics.

Michel Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* establishes a methodological praxis for examining multiple and overlapping elements that form systems of knowledge, past such "continuities of thought" to the "disruptions" of Los Angeles' spatio-social life (*Archaeology* 4). Archaeological work necessitates geologic inquiry, and Los Angeles is composed of temporal and spatial layers, counter-histories and memories covered over by the dominant narrative of a 'post-racial' mega-city that has somehow overcome its fraught and violent past.[ii] Applying stratification as a lens highlights subaltern traces, revealing an incongruity between the image and reality of Los Angeles, its disparity a product of successive *covering-over* of its internal contradictions. The novel opens ways of thinking about urban space as a geologic entity, calling for archaeological inquiry into the strata hidden beneath dominant, contemporary space and time. Undertaking the task of archaeology reveals cracks in personal and collective history and ignores the continuities that otherwise contextualise socio-spatial life. History is thus spatialised as Deleuzian strata, layers "giving form to matters, of imprisoning intensities or

locking singularities into systems of resonance and redundancy…coding and territorialising the earth" (Deleuze 40)[iii]. Strata are socio-geological layers and affective-material structures that create and uphold real and lived place identity. Stratification is not merely geographic; it is geologic, suggesting Los Angeles has never been anything other than a spatio-temporal contestation. Reading space stratigraphically suggests multiple layers of possibility, counter-layers working against a 'white supremacist' surface-structure. This reading echoes Henri Lefebvre's understanding of lived space and is wholly reliant upon those who *inhabit* social space. Theories of spatial revolution have been co-opted by the capitalist model of liberal humanism, and it is only by returning to Lefebvre's Marxist theorisation of city-space that we might better understand and address contemporary issues in lived material spaces. *Southland* is thus a model that attempts to unsettle dominant expectations about space, coded and recoded; space is imagined as *stratified* layers of affective and localised experience[iv]. It manifests in the contrast between two ways of seeing: geographically, along the surface map of the city, and *geologically*, a process of digging into the earth to reveal continuities whose presence troubles the geo-social order[v].

Southland's Los Angeles is composed of temporal and spatial layers masquerading as a uniform surface, and in examining Crenshaw's differing temporalities, we dig deeper into geologic strata. These strata are not inert but dynamic: counter-memories breaching the surface of Los Angeles, only to once again become subsumed by a politics of forgetting. The novel's interplay of 'now' and "then" gestures to the larger conflict within urban areas between the past and present. The novel begins in South Los Angeles in a neighbourhood formerly known as Angeles Mesa, a place "feared and avoided, even by the people who live there" (Revoyr 1). While Angeles Mesa exists largely in memory, it remains active, hidden beneath the present neighbourhood. The language suggests a process of spatial-temporal layering, and the temporal ambiguity of such forgotten spaces is a demand

to dig beneath the material surface of the city, as it is the erasure of history that allows for the larger ideological appropriation of space. We see in the erasure of Angeles Mesa how racialised enclaves like Crenshaw are constructed, coded, administered, and ultimately abandoned by the larger city. The novel notes the danger and ruin of contemporary Crenshaw. It has no value to greater LA and is thus an aberration, contrasting with the 'good diversity' of the liberal humanist city. Moreover, racialised urban territories are framed by fate, their danger endemic to the landscape. The process by which differing locales are hierarchised is not only rooted in colonial thinking, reimagined through capitalist use-value, but is structured by nostalgia in an attempt to recreate the ideal humanist city. The use of nostalgia is deliberate; it is, as Min Hyong Song argues, a "distraction that draws attention away from the invisible grids of capital flows […]. It is an expressive urban environment of dreamy wonder that can hide the deeply entrenched hierarchies of social and economic inequity, concentrations of power, and the manipulation of desire" (16) that continually produce the neat image of Los Angeles.

We can read the stratified layers of affective-material space as counter-narratives to an easily digestible surface structure. Archaeological inquiry excavates the substrata that would uncover "traces of that other time" that conflict with the current narrative of South L.A.—a time when people not only lived in the neighbourhood, but never chose to leave it" (Revoyr 3). These traces problematise the marginalisation of "ghettoised" neighbourhoods. If we look at a large and diverse urban space, it is possible to trace the creation of the cohesive city alongside the destruction or incorporation of urban conclaves. This process reveals the significant role of racialised categorisation in subject and space, undergirding a city's political and spatial organisation. This process is not new; it is continually evolving and is rooted in the originary racial violence of Western conquest and frontierism[vi]. Thus, race is a type of stratum that structures and supports the surface of the urban space. Crenshaw and Los Angeles proper sit on opposing sides of a racial fault; the

difference between these temporalized spaces exposes the larger dynamics of racialisation affecting the social realm. The interplay of the past and present initiates a practice of examining time non-sequentially. In fact, while spatial theorists often intone Jameson's maxim about time annihilating space, what occurs in contested urban space is an entirely different space-time relationship wherein time becomes spatialised, concretised into strata, forming a real and affective base upon which to build the contemporary city[vii]. Indeed, the modern city is composed of such confusing temporal structuring. Fragmented and non-linear, histories converge, speaking to and through the present. What Jameson did correctly predict was the manner in which modern capitalism covers over time and space, the depthlessness it initiates, a purposeful erasure of counter-history and a rejection of true urban social life.

Contrasted with the long-forgotten community of Angeles Mesa is The Holiday Bowl, a living site of collective memory. The Bowl is an active social space, and more importantly, a breach where counter-narratives break through and inhabit the contemporary urban surface. We can read the Bowl as a space of appropriation, a tactic Lefebvre explains as "natural space modified to serve the needs and possibilities of a group" and not the more rigid and domineering needs of Capital (Lefebvre as qtd. in Butler 192). Appropriation creates community, and we can thus read the Holiday Bowl as such a place, which problematises dominant spatial arrangements, providing a place for coalition. In the novel, Jackie is uncomfortable in The Bowl: "filled mostly with old people, about equal numbers of Asian and black…It was such a surprise to her, so visually inconceivable, that it was as if someone had taken footage of two senior citizens' groups and then skilfully spliced them together" (Revoyr 157). Her sense of estrangement stems from internalised racial melancholy, paranoia, and tactics, which prevent coalition and uphold the racial fault line running through Los Angeles. We thus see how the state creates racial hierarchies in material spaces, reinforced through "moral panics" that, as Mike

Davis notes, "reinforce and justify urban apartheid" as a result of a "middle-class demand for increased spatial and social inclusion (*City of Quartz* 226-7). This Bowl is a reminder that affective boundaries of race and class are not only contingent and unstable, but deliberately manufactured. The paranoia that produces ghettoised spaces of exclusion has its own agency, which seeks to keep marginalised groups separated from themselves. However, through the counter-narrative lens of the Bowl, the strangeness of the coalition is reframed by how normal it is to everyone but Jackie. The aporia between Jackie's and the reader's understanding of lived space reveals the efficacy of urban stratification in shaping perception, identification, and knowledge along class-racial lines.

The overlapping fields of race, space, and identity not only create a complex and contradictory social space, but they also create subjectivities that mirror those spatial arrangements. What we see in Jackie's discomfort upon entering the no-go zones of the 'ghetto' is the myopia of dominant urban narratives, which internalise and alienate the self from its context. The capitalist lens, which frames Crenshaw by violence and exclusion, is a racializing gaze that severs residents of urban areas from legitimacy as inhabitants and citizens. In turn, spaces like the Holiday Bowl are oppositional landmarks that restore a sense of continuity; they reveal the long history of areas reduced to no-go zones to re-appropriate the area as a communal space. Moreover, it presents an alternative racial geography subverting dominant narratives of marginalised spaces. The symbolic digging, which occurs here, additionally severs the self from reifying class and racial hierarchisation, which correspondingly reveals the productive work of white supremacist urban policy. The affective possibilities of an archaeological reading of space gesture to a hidden, layered spatiality, which directly confronts the abstracting process of contemporary capitalist urbanity. The Bowl is a place of "urban strategy," which Lefebvre argues is an orientation that "[strips] social practice from industrial practice," privileging cooperative and intimate social relations over capitalist use-value and order (Lefebvre, *Urban*

Revolution 76). Reasserting the primacy of the social as the productive force demands we read stratigraphically, which is inherently anti-capitalist. To Lefebvre, the city is dependent upon inhabitation, outside the framework of modern capitalism, which views the city through continuity, industry, and structure. Places like the Holiday Bowl are "true" spaces for Lefebvre for their ability to serve as discontinuities in the face of dominant spatial narratives, creating instead a rich, affective, social landscape in material space (Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution* 156)**.**

Southland makes visible the disjunction between lived and representational space, rooted in white supremacist strategies of subject formation. The characters' subject positions are aligned with their locale, which reveals that racial hierarchies are inscribed into lived space and the body. Jackie is a product of the places she both inhabits and actively suppresses. The novel uses the ironic contrast between what Jackie sees as the narrator and more objective descriptions of the place. Her entry into Crenshaw marks a shift in the socio-political landscape; the affective-material threshold marked by a collapsed section of the 10 Freeway does represent a very real boundary in a larger system of metaphorical lines running through the modern city. Along with Jackie's drive to Crenshaw, echoes of an idyllic neighbourhood are visible but are "misleading—like a glimpse of the ocean that obscured the sandbars and sharks underneath" (Revoyr 58). The aporia between what is within the city's affective bounds and what is merely urban marginality is materially manifest. The stratified racial spatiality of the contemporary city creates a rift between what we see and what we know, thus evoking intense paranoia within the city dweller. They cannot trust their own vision. Further, the novel's treatment of Crenshaw evokes Mike Davis's "ecology of fear," the sense of danger stemming from Los Angeles's "uniquely explosive mixture of natural hazards and social contradictions" (*Ecology of Fear* 54). Social unrest becomes an aspect of Los Angeles's geology, naturalised and ever-present within marginalised communities.

The temporal layering resulting from the interplay of contested memories extends to the body, creating a fraught cartography that is socially and racially contingent. This affective atmosphere manifests in two significant ways: racial melancholy and myopia. Jackie's fear of South L.A. is an internalised racial boundary revealing how local knowledge can be produced by media narratives, wherein Jackie can confidently reduce the area to "pretty much a black ghetto" without having to visit (Revoyr 20). What we see is that what we often refer to as local knowledge is in many ways a form of myopia. The material borders of the city are mirrored in a split-urban-subjectivity. For marginalised populations, this internalisation creates friction between the self and space, and it is difficult to know where, exactly, one can reside. Neighbourhood boundaries enact literal and figurative blindness. Her paradoxically myopic narration echoes Lefebvre's central argument regarding the right to the city, that urban space is and must be structured by those who inhabit that space. It is therefore ironic that Jackie's dominant capitalist lens is the one through which we view Los Angeles's differing neighbourhoods. While power lies in the needs of capital and the state, that control must be placed back into the social realm. Indeed, the novel gestures to Lefebvre's argument that the "right to the city" must respond to the needs of "the whole society and, firstly, of all those who *inhabit*" (Butler 158). We can thereby use the novel as a heuristic for understanding the dominant lens through which the city is arranged, and Jackie's ironic narration as a means of de-naturalising that ideological lens.

While Jackie aligns herself with post-racial optimism, her subjectivity reveals a creeping awareness of her own precarity. She rejects aspects of herself that she identifies as too Asian, and continually rejects her friend's attempts to discuss issues of race and injustice. Jackie's position highlights the precarity of the model minority myth, which functions as a 'safe harbour of whiteness' in a city built upon and shaken by racial violence. The safety of whiteness and the corresponding fortification against non-white populations reveals a general aura of pessimism in the post-racial

city, which manifests in what Mike Davis refers to as a "new class war" within the "built environment" (*City of Quartz* 228). As the contemporary city becomes more diverse, institutions of power respond with "a double repression" of fortification and exclusion, wherein they "raze all association" with signs of diversity to prevent any articulation with the non-Anglo urbanity of its future (*City of Quartz* 229). In both the literal separation between Crenshaw and Jackie's home neighbourhood of Fairfax, and in the deliberate erasure of her racial heritage, the twin forces of fear and narrative-making attempt to cover over the spatial and temporal depths in material and subjective space. Further, when Jackie's self-awareness does occur, it manifests spatially, creating an affective counter-cartography as she walks through Little Tokyo, forcing her to occupy a "*different* angle" where "bits of memory fell into some prepared, waiting place" (Revoyr 188, emphasis mine). Urban subjectivity is spatial. Spatial reconstruction is the catalyst for Jackie's personal reconnection with her Japanese past, but crucially, this shift is not neat, and while Jackie is able to reconnect to her heritage on a personal level, she can never fully surrender the 'national fantasy' of acceptance by white, upper-class society[viii]. It is only by engaging with racialised spaces as living spaces that the myopia and fear undergirding contemporary personal and material structures are removed.

The tensions inherent in Los Angeles's affective-material stratification violently break through the surface in the novel's depiction of the '65 uprising and '92 riots. We are oriented to this rupture by symbolically looking at the gap between conflicting narratives of racial and spatial violence. Jackie's flawed narration guides the reader through Crenshaw, giving us no real knowledge of place--there is a gap between the visible and articulable. In this way, the geological makeup of Los Angeles mimics the irreconcilability of space and history. By going beneath the surface of Los Angeles' dominant socio-political structure, the novel presents a counter-memory to the dominant narrative of the LA riots. By relating affective and material geologic structures, we can imagine Crenshaw as an aberrant plate

continually colliding along a convergent boundary. The material effects of such activity manifest specifically in riots and uprisings, moments when pressure violently erupts from below. Moreover, this rupture occurs when our 'economy of forgetting' confronts the insistence of counter memory. The L.A. riots are a master narrative of Los Angeles, one that attempts to provide stability and counter our deep anxiety about fluctuations in the urban cultural landscape. Los Angeles in the 1990s was a time of strangely opposing forces defined by a general pessimism about the present and future, while simultaneously creating and being nostalgic for an idyllic past. As Min Hyoung Song explains, there was "little optimism about the future, a general sense of futility about the possibility for positive change, and, as such, a vulnerability to arguments for greater state repression as necessary defence against…national decline" (25). The Los Angeles riots were the culmination of the confrontation between dream and reality, resulting in not only the realisation that the urban landscape was not the liberal humanist dream but that it would not be controlled by dominant neoliberal forces. The contrasting narratives of the era's unrest frame Los Angeles as a spatialised map of power, made clear in the disparity and interplay of neighbourhoods. The riots shatter the unifying image of Los Angeles, ushering in an atmosphere of pessimism, forcing inhabitants to shore up their defences[ix]. Moreover, the novel makes clear that the underlying structure of the riots is the conflict between forces of white supremacy and a racialised underclass.

The novel depicts the confrontation between counter-memory and ideological memory in a scene between Jackie and Lanier as they debate the riots. The scene highlights the larger disunity of the city's socio-spatial formations. Lanier's perspective reveals how dominant narratives of racialised space are explicitly rooted in a white supremacist ideology seeking to assert itself as total and unifying. His orientation—from within Crenshaw—gestures towards Lowe's understanding of the way contemporary space is separated into those areas "that develop modern liberal subjects and modern spheres of social life" and those that are deemed "irrelevant

because they do not produce "value" legible within modern classifications"" (17-18). For Jackie, this event is a *riot*, a terrifying eruption colouring a reading of Crenshaw she never fully shakes. Her position additionally embodies Mike Davis' maxim that "fear proves itself" and thus the "white middle-class imagination, absent from any firsthand knowledge of inner-city conditions, magnifies the perceived threat through a demonological lens" (*City of Quartz* 224). Her memory of the riots reproduces the popular narrative of 'us' versus 'them.' Moreover, framing her experience with media images, the novel explores how public memory is structured, the news recycling and reproducing events out of context to evoke a sense of panic. To those aligned with power, there is nowhere safe from racialised incursions, and the horror Jackie feels stems from a growing awareness that the structures providing her with her secure sense of self and place are only temporary[x]. Panic is a tool, and as Mike Davis notes, "The social perception of threat becomes a function of the security mobilisation itself, not crime rates" (*City of Quartz* 224). But for Lanier, the master narrative of the riots is a confirmation of the city's racialised structuring. A resident of Crenshaw, his lived knowledge of place affords him an alternative lens to the city's spatial politics. From this alternative orientation, the riot is in fact an "uprising," which offers up a correspondingly alternative spatial configuration of the confrontation, not as a riot endemic to the place, but as an uprising against a domineering, outside force. The novel's duelling perspectives posit history as a contradiction played out in socio-material space, with no side emerging victorious[xi].

The novel rightly notes two types of violence: that of the unnamed rioters and the violence of the police, both personal and institutional, and the source of the novel's central conflict. Indeed, the riots provide context and cover for narrative making and the militarised police presence in Los Angeles at the time[xii]. To Detective Lawson, a sadistic white cop, the riot fulfils a racial prophecy that in turn allows for his own brand of violence: "The blacks were finally doing it, acting like the senseless animals he had always known they were. He could say anything to

them, do anything, and there was no one around to stop him" (Revoyr 322). The riots are thus proof of "the decline of 'law and order'—wrought especially by black and brown peoples—in American society" (Wu 6). It is an explicit nod to contemporary pessimism and nostalgia, wherein a fictional past order is violently asserted in the presence, which has and will always fail to live up to the dream of white neoliberal capitalism. Casting all of Los Angeles's racialised persons as rioters *in potentia* upholds white supremacist nostalgia for a city where the racial landscape is rigidly delineated. Lawson and Jackie's reactions gesture to "a yearning to maintain a former glory, a recapturing of a conviction in our greatness that we had somehow—through inattention, the calumny of foreigners and other nonconformists…let slip through our fingers, even as others were quick to point out how less than glorious this same past was" (Song 1). Wedded to this feeling of nostalgia is a sense of betrayal. To those who believe we live in a post-race society, the riots are a sharp rebuke and a reminder of the colonial roots undergirding the contemporary[xiii]. And crucially, those who occupy an alternative orientation to dominant narrative experience their own betrayal, as the reality they have inhabited is seen as a shock and not as a crucial and ever-present layer in the geosocial strata.

In cities like Los Angeles, events like the '92 riots define material space as a catalyst for a particular type of narrative making. The precarious affective state specific to Los Angeles after the riots were a response to affluent white anxiety in response to perceptions of "racial unrest, the failure of liberal society, and general decline" (Song 1)[xiv]. The narrative of the riots relied upon myopia and nostalgia for a large-scale reimagining of the urban sphere, reframing the riots as an inevitable consequence of racialised space and not as a logical end point in a series of injustices writ socially and spatially. The novel notes that the same politics that constructed a racialised narrative atop the bones of Angeles Mesa were used in 1992 to justify South Los Angeles' exclusion from the city proper. We can therefore see a direct relation between geologic and social forces, as power structures manifest equally in

material and affective strata. Los Angeles' spatial layering suggests an arrangement of power that is not only mirrored in its geologic structure, but also a result of the complex process by which affective structures become material. As the novel argues, racism is a literal and figurative fault, and the tensions resulting from this socio-geologic structure have very real effects in lived space.

Examining cities like Los Angeles requires an understanding of how subjects and spaces are organised according to social and ecological hierarchisation and use value. At its core, this is a white supremacist spatial practice, which works through a continual process of "covering over" layers of counterhistory and narrative, flattening them into a seemingly smooth surface. The image of the homogenous, post-racial city is reliant upon twin forces of narrative-making and nostalgia. Revoyr's novel contextualises this process, revealing the mechanism through which certain populations are assimilated into dominant culture while others remain fixed in place. We thus see the interlinked themes of tension and rupture manifest in material space. Theorising the spatial structure of Revoyr's Los Angeles gestures to the necessity of archaeological excavation to unearth the colonial heart of contemporary spatial arrangements. Ultimately, *Southland* is an examination of the multiple fault lines running through the city that seasonally force a confrontation with marginalised socio-spatial elements. When characters, locked into coded territories, cannot move laterally, the only way *out* is *down*—into unseen depths that, once revealed, reshape the surface. It is, as Foucault argues, a way to "untie all those knots that historians have patiently tied", rejecting dominant "a series of homogenous events" composing, here, a neighbourhood or city (*Archaeology* 170-171). Stratification is a counter-lens to supremacy in its ability to view multiple layers simultaneously, and much of the tension within *Southland* is rooted in attempts to calcify and hierarchise racialised locales, giving the impression of successful post-racial diversity[xv]. The surface of Los Angeles is thus a *Pentimento,* traces of other subject histories are present but trapped beneath a dominant image.

Looking at Los Angeles through an archaeological lens reframes urban socio-spatial organisation as an ongoing process of exclusion, against which more privileged areas and subjects are defined. Ironically, the novel leaves this structure in place, suggesting that racial reconciliation is just another fiction of the liberal humanist era. The novel ends by restoring the spatial order of Los Angeles; Martindale's murder case, now solved, is handed over to the D.A., symbolically passed from Crenshaw to City Hall. The novel can thus be read as a "political bildungsroman" which Min Hyong Song argues, "narrates individual development as reconciliation with social order; is subsequently contained by, and takes place as a result of, the individual's boundedness to a locality; and finally provides in the process an anchor for the continued stability of the nation-state" (173). If we imagine the collected layers of history as an archive, forgetting the conditions of its making is a form of violence. Either materially or conceptually, erasing the foundation of our present opens a gulf along the fault lines beneath our feet. The creation myth of Los Angeles is of conquest-made-destiny through a reimagining of the human**.** We forget, and in forgetting create stories that become destiny; we make a trap of narrative. Lowe's "economy of affirmation and forgetting" (39) haunts the novel, and urban spatial politics as a whole, as "the social inequalities of our time are a legacy of these processes through which "the human" is "freed" by liberal forms, while other subjects, practices, and geographies are placed at a distance from "the human"" (3)[xvi]. Urban cartography is reliant upon boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, and the way in which the human is made legible is deeply ideological. Crenshaw, as symbolic of racially hierarchised and administered spaces of exclusion, haunts post-racial Los Angeles, making the cohesive narrative of the city irreconcilable with lived reality, exposing unity as instead a process of covering over the originary racial fault-line. By revealing the stratified spatiality of the urban environment, *Southland* suggests that we can only confront, on an individual level, social divisions and claims to power rooted in the material city.

Notes

[i] Lowe's work, *The Intimacies of Four Continents,* interrogates the "politics of our lack of knowledge" at the core of liberal humanism, which Lowe describes as the way the humanist archive naturalizes itself and "forgets the conditions of its own making" (206). The entanglement and interdependency of free and unfree peoples can be applied spatially to articulate the relationality of *good* and *bad* urban spaces.

[ii] Los Angeles' claims to multiculturalism is, to Mike Davis, a "pretension" and a "myth" of corporate liberalism. Davis also calls theorists of the L.A. School (Soja; Jameson) to task: by hyping Los Angeles as the paradigm of the future (even as dystopian), they collapse history into teleology and glamorize the very reality they would deconstruct. Indeed, the image of L.A. as the city of the future is so tenacious that even its critiques become "celebrants of the' myth" (*Ecology of Fear* 85-86).

[iii] Deleuzian strata are historical formations constituting what we know as knowledge. Strata are means of capturing flows of intensities, controlling and organizing what are otherwise free-flowing elements. We see this specifically in racialized enclaves that trap the novel's characters in their locales.

[iv] In theorizing stratified space I evoke Foucault's figuration of history, "knowledges in the plural" whose subjugated knowledge has "been buried…in formal systemizations." Archaeological methodology posits this process as spatial, revealing different substrata buried beneath a dominant and dominating history. The "fragments we have dug up" through the detective work of the novel compose a counter-narrative death and offer a methodology for reading urban space (*Society Must Be Defended* 179, 8-11).

[v] Deleuze and Guattari's strata are a material process of "sedimentation" coalescing discourse, history, and subjectivity into something of a geologic structure (40). A geologic understanding of strata interrogates layers of social-

spatial arrangements, formed by responding to and covering over previous layers to assert a unified representation of the present.

[vi] Stoler argues, "while American conquest attempts to evade comparison with colonial structures, its "internal colonialism" is in fact as dependent on colonial relations of dominance as were any of Europe's external incursions". Understanding the dependence on and continuation of colonialism rereads American history, disrupting the romanticized image of the United States as an exception to empire (12, 8).

[vii] Space-time annihilation serves as a necessary contrast to what seems to be a form of space-time stratification displayed in contested spaces. As Jameson notes, the "massive homogeneity" asserted by our commodified contemporary era results in a smooth hyperspace (*Postmodernism* 56) The confrontation between dominant and subaltern spaces, lenses, and histories in urban space reveals instead an intense and fraught heterogeneity, only revealed through theoretical excavation (*Postmodernism* 57).

[viii] Min Hyong Song locates this desire in melancholy, arguing "The enormity of all that has to be grieved in the racial subject becomes so great that the subject can no longer sustain a lasting attachment to national fantasies and must seek the political company of others similarly afflicted. Racial melancholics cannot articulate such a breaking away from these fantasies alone; as individuals, they struggle in silence against the gap between what they feel and what cannot be said" (149).

[ix] Pessimism here stems from a feeling of abandonment by the state and admits to the failure "to show us how we may move beyond loss and embrace a joy in, at the least, some future existence." For Los Angeles' privileged populations, this is rooted in the failure to contain perceived threats while for marginalized groups, it is knowing they have no "place." Either way, the riots reveal a "state founded on violence, that increasingly exists, or perhaps has always existed"

(Song 155-156). Crucially, violence does not recognize the man-made boundaries of the neighbourhood.

[x] Mike Davis attributes this to "extreme racial gerrymandering," arguing Los Angeles' "polyethnic diversity" initiated a struggle for power along racial lines, WASP elites frantically shoring up literal power centres, "militarized" zones protected by landowners and corporate interests, while the "inner-city" languished (*City of Quartz* 21, 104).

[xi] As Foucault argues, "The history of some is not the history of others…What looks like right, law, or obligation from the point of view of power looks like the abuse of power, violence, and exaction when it is seen from the viewpoint of the new discourse" (*History of Sexuality* 69-70).

[xii] Mike Davis identifies the logic of neighbourhood-building in Los Angeles as "reinforcing white residents' perception of local control" after the Watts uprising. To Davis, "concerns about integration" and "fears over 'outside' encroachments into white areas" led to a racialized hierarchy of spaces bounded by a protected "white wall," reflected in *Southland's* spatial organization. In this way, the riots have been made productive, justifying the marginalization of predominantly Black spaces (*City of Quartz* 188).

[xiii] The myopic idealism of the liberal humanist city demands confrontation. As Min Hyoung Song argues, "we commit an act of resignation from the founding compact of official race-neutrality, the belief that we live in a postracial society. Somehow, through the alchemy of neoconservative argument, we are supposed to be beyond race. We are told that race no longer divides us, breaks us up into antagonistic groups, or renders us with identities that are valued differently by one another…In all of these ways, colourblind talk helps to maintain White dominance in an era of formal race neutrality" (20-21).

[xiv] As Song argues, pessimism is not limited to Los Angeles, but the L.A. riots was a critical event highlighting "descent into economic polarization, social disarray, and ham-fisted reaction" (1-2).

[xv] Modes of organization creating strata limit the free movement of an otherwise chaotic, open city. This ensures that territories are quantifiable and predictable. Strata have a "code and a territory" equating to spatial and subjective organization. But strata cannot truly be locked into place; "Life on earth appears as a sum of relatively independent species…with sometimes shifting or porous boundaries between them. Geographical areas can only harbour a sort of chaos, or, at best, extrinsic harmonies of an ecological order, temporary equilibriums between populations" (Deleuze, *Thousand Plateaus* 41, 48). This tension is expressed in *Southland* in the interplay between established boundaries and acts of rupture like riots, earthquakes.

[xvi] Lowe continues, explaining that freedom was "constituted through a narrative dialectic that rested simultaneously on a spatialization of the "unfree" as exteriority and a temporal subsuming of that unfreedom as internal difference or contradiction. The ''overcoming'' of internal contradiction resolves in "freedom" within the modern Western political sphere…" (39). Within *Southland*, the literal contradictions of race and equality manifest spatially, buffeting the idea of the diverse city of the future (206).

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