

THESIS

A SOCIO-SPATIAL RHETORICAL ANALYSIS
OF *THE RUINS OF DETROIT*

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ABSTRACT

A SOCIO-SPATIAL RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF *THE RUINS OF DETROIT*

The Ruins of Detroit is a bound collection of recent photographs by Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre of decaying architecture and infrastructure in Detroit, Michigan. This thesis finds that the experience of reading *The Ruins of Detroit* constitutes the reader as a post-Fordist colonist, and in turn constitutes Detroit as a post-Fordist frontier.

Informed by Foucauldian historical understanding and Edward Soja's argument for the foregrounding of critical spatial studies, I first discuss the history of Detroit to demonstrate how spatial practices in Detroit have influenced the enabling or disabling of human bodies in the city. These events are characterized within definitions of Fordism and post-Fordism.

Secondly, I detail the relationship between ruins and the body within Western art history. I find that ruins in art echo human understandings of our bodies in relation to materials. Looking at art pieces as diverse as Andrea Mantegna's *Saint Sebastian* (1480) and Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970), ruins prove to be places of dissection. Contemporary representations significantly merge the body with ruins, and ruins with the body.

Thirdly, I point out symbols in the text that construct the reader as a post-Fordist colonist of Detroit. Using Richard Slotkin's critiques of the frontier myth as a model, I find that the interaction between reader and *Ruins* recycles the myth of the frontier in several ways. By acknowledging some of the failures of capitalist development, such as the prevalence of waste, the spaces within *The Ruins* critique the legitimacy of formerly organized institutions. Yet *The*

Ruins simultaneously gives entitled access to resources within Detroit, encouraging adaptive use and re-use. The privilege and expressed availability produces an anxiety in the midst of the bodily presence of the indigenous population.

This thesis enhances several perspectives for rhetorical studies. It argues that the frontier myth still holds rhetorical significance in the late capitalist era. The exploration serves as an example of a rhetorical analysis that accounts for the interrelatedness of subject and text. Within this understanding, it follows, and is used as a method in this study, that modes of production influence dwelling practices, a partly rhetorical action. Additionally, this thesis has political and philosophical implications concerning the nature of dwelling practices in the twenty-first century. For instance, this thesis suggests that the violence of imperialism continues to influence a post-Fordist era. In sum, this study seeks to infuse a rhetorical analysis with critical geography, inspired by Thomas Rickert, Jane Bennett, and Debra Hawhee, among others, who point out that rhetoric is intertwined with spatial and bodily practices of dwelling and an ecological relationship with materials.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCING A SOCIO-SPATIAL RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF *THE RUINS OF DETROIT*

Understanding how history is made has been the primary source of emancipatory insight and practical political consciousness, the great variable container for a critical interpretation of social life and practice. Today, however, it may be space more than time that hides consequences from us...(Soja 1)

The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated Self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. (Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” 148)

Public discourse surrounding the city of Detroit, Michigan in the past few decades has largely focused on the extent of decline in the inner city. Although there are statistics to represent the conditions of Detroit—the population has declined from 1.5 million in 1970 to just 700,000 in 2012 (*Detroit Demographic Report 4*, US Census Bureau); Detroit experiences three times as many structure fires per year as Los Angeles, a city of four million (*Burn*)—the visual images of downtown Detroit are particularly captivating, inspiring collections of photographs and boosting the tourist industry in the city (Semuels). Abandonment and destruction seem to characterize the current narrative of Detroit. *The Ruins of Detroit* participates in this discourse as a bound collection of photographs of disintegrating architecture and deserted streetscapes. Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre present over two hundred glossy photographs of abandoned buildings in Detroit taken from 2005 to 2010, a period of economic devastation in the area (Marchand and Meffre 14). The images include exterior and interior shots, as well as scenes of the street with views of several buildings. Their camera captures the dilapidation, trash, and destruction of a seemingly abandoned city.

The cover image (figure 1) presents the crumbling exterior façade of Michigan Central Depot. This image is obscene, as it presents the desecration of boundaries and the ruining of

structures in a manner that is outside the expectations of what is appropriate for a city. The obscenity presented on the cover echoes the themes within the book in both content and form. There is a sense that the photographs, possibly lustful and consumptive, glory in the degradation of the city. Numerous galleries internationally have exhibited Marchand and Meffre's work. Four years after publication, *The Ruins of Detroit* is now on its third edition. Profiting off such work through a coffee table book, gallery tours, and merchandising sales, supports a possible comparison with pornography, in that the book profits from the consumption of ob[scene]ity. These images include representations of hidden, prohibited spaces that the reader now has implicit permission to see from a safe, detached view. It is not surprising that Meffre and Marchand have been accused of creating *ruin porn* (Binelli; Dickson; Hemmerle; Lowman; Nield).



Figure 1. "Michigan Central Station" (front cover image).

Ruin porn is a phrase that has entered the popular press to describe the trend of photographing architecture and places in disrepair. An article in *The Atlantic Cities*, a section of *The Atlantic Monthly* devoted to urbanism, titled "The Psychology of Ruin Porn," comments on increasing interest in photographs of decaying infrastructure around the United States: of post-

industrial cities, abandoned theme parks, suburban shopping centers, and neighborhoods of foreclosed homes (Greco). Andrew Moore's collection of photographs, *Detroit Dissassembled*, and Matthew Christopher Murray's *Abandoned America* series are two other examples of photography collections that approach the ruin porn label. Detroit ruin porn is a subject of the popular press, receiving attention in *The New York Times* (Dickson; Binelli), CNN (Neild), *The Washington Post* (Lowman), and *Time Magazine* (Hemmerle). The author of the *Atlantic* piece notes that the practice of photographing abandoned spaces is a popular adventure hobby for professionals and amateurs, who are excited by the danger of entering, usually trespassing, into neglected spaces.

A recent documentary, *Detropia*, filmed evidence of the decline, providing footage of the hollowed out structures downtown and prairie-like expanses where neighborhoods once stood. In one scene, two Swiss tourists explain to a barista in a coffee shop that they are in Detroit to see "the decay," because where they are from everything is clean (*Detropia*). *Detropia* films gatherings of young people outside the Michigan Central Station who are gawking and snapping photos. In his 12-seat van, Jesse Welter, a local Detroiter, leads tours of the ruins for \$45 a ticket (Semeuls). The Detroit Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau acknowledges the popularity of the unkempt ruins within the city, advising tourists with a "fascination for urban decay" to visit the *Fabulous Ruins of Detroit* virtual tour of the city produced by the *DetroitYES!* Project (Drake). The popularity of seeing the abandoned architecture of Detroit and its label as ruin porn suggest that these images are a source of public fascination and controversy. Although Marchand and Meffre directly reject the title of ruin porn (or "detritus porn"), *The Ruins of Detroit* portrays seductive images of buildings in Detroit. People are attracted to the devastation of the area, as evidenced by their willingness to purchase books about the ruins, watch documentaries, risk their

safety by trespassing into the unstable structures, and even travel long distances to visit the area. This attraction relates to excess, to consumption, to breaching appropriate boundaries, and to voyeurism.

Justice Potter Stewart famously wrote in 1964, in the ruling of *Jacobellis v. Ohio*, that he had difficulty expressing with words what hard-core pornography is, but he knew it when he saw it (*Jacobellis*). Justice Stewart's phrasing points out the centrality of the bodily experience of obscenity. He knows porn when he sees it. Would Justice Stewart see *The Ruins of Detroit* as pornography? Probably not. However, I introduce Marchand and Meffre's text via a discussion of ruin porn because the text produces a bodily, affective experience catalyzing a judgment about public appropriateness. The text incites both shame and excitement about issues of public space, public buildings, and public bodies. The text proposes an identity for Detroit that encourages particular attitudes and behaviors toward the city. That is to say, it is rhetorical.

The choice of the title *The Ruins of Detroit* likewise points to the rhetorical importance of material, embodied elements of the text. Two other photography collections, *Detroit Disassembled* (Moore) and *Abandoned America* (Murray) both contain photographs of abandoned spaces in urban areas taken during the same time. In Moore's text Detroit is disassembled; Murray's collection represents places that have been abandoned. *Disassembly* points to the undoing of Detroit's industrial manufacturing history, a process occurring only within the last century. *Abandoned* suggests an action that is relatively sudden. Yet *ruins*, as named in *The Ruins of Detroit*, is an odd word choice considering the decline of Detroit more closely represents a quick deterioration within an extant American empire, not the slow devolution of a civilization associated with ancient cultures. In addition to the symbolic content represented within *The Ruins of Detroit*, the selection of the label *ruins* suggests a tie to a

tradition of representing or referring to ruins. Western art so strongly and consistently ties the two together that it is necessary to acknowledge this pattern as revealed through several key works and artistic movements.

The title specifies the ruins as *of Detroit*. Notably, the photographs are limited to a specific place, Detroit, carrying weight as a symbol of characteristics of United States identity. The history of Detroit, and Detroit's particular role in American history, is woven symbolically and materially throughout the book. While the label of *ruins* recalls a past of ruins in art, and *Detroit* can bring to mind centuries of American history, *The Ruins of Detroit* depict contemporary settings (from 2005 to 2010). Direct written historical narratives are scant in the text, and these references are only as distant as the previous century. Although the few references to history are relevant, the real relationship explored by the text is spatial and material. The experience of reading *The Ruins* contributes to a notion of history that recognizes (public) spatial production as consequential for public identity. As *The Ruins of Detroit* depicts spaces, it is itself a space, delineating a space where the text is consumed. This space, both represented and created through the reading of the text, is a site of bodily and material interactions.

Rather than describing this text as pornographic, it reveals more to describe the text as bestowing a frontier identity upon the city. Although the Western frontier of the United States closed over a century ago, the frontier myth continues to inspire exploration into other kinds of spaces, material and conceptual. Within an era of post-Fordism, the exploration of Detroit as presented through *The Ruins* uses patterns of thought and habits that are characteristic of the post-Fordist economy. The affective and symbolic resources of the text, which include references to an historic relationship between the body and ruins and an urban history of economic and structural changes, position the reader as a fragmented/diffuse body who colonizes Detroit via

practices of post-Fordism such as consumerism. I will describe how an interaction with *The Ruins of Detroit* induces the reader to see Detroit as a post-Fordist frontier, an effort that begins by approaching three subcategories of discovery to organize this introduction to a rhetorical analysis of the text. The first subcategory labels the rhetorical text that motivates the reader. The second describes how the rhetoric moves the reader to act or think. Lastly, the third subcategory explores how the argument of this thesis will move through several chapters of explication.

Before I trace the details of this thesis further, it is important to note my position in relation to the text. Although I have not visited Detroit, the spaces of *The Ruins* represent an intimately familiar experience. Marchand and Meffre's collection of photographs are as much a representation of conditions of all post-Fordist cities as they are a representation of actually existing Detroit. Indeed, many of the spaces that are photographed would be difficult or impossible to reach just by visiting Detroit. However, in the sense that these photographs are metaphors for heart-spaces—poetry of public memorials—*The Ruins* presents places that most people, including myself, have inhabited. My personal interest in the text stems from my experience growing up in Atlanta. The architecture of John Portman, who also designed the Renaissance Center in Detroit, dominates much of the downtown area of Atlanta. Many of these structures, such as the buildings in Peachtree Center, are connected internally by sky walkways, yet closed off from the streets around them. The metropolitan areas outside of the Atlanta city center are mostly sprawling, low-density regions that have little access to public transportation options, relying instead on congested freeways and infrastructure catering to automobile travel. The psychological and political consequences of Atlanta's development are different but related to Detroit's challenges, and endemic to post-Fordist cities. Just as the people in *The Ruins* have been erased or buried, I felt disappeared in Atlanta and not able to connect to the city around me.

I saw others in the community struggling to connect with each other. Because I felt impacted by car-centered development, I explore issues of Post-Fordist disconnection and alienation within representations of the epicenter of Fordism.

The Text is an Environment of Interaction

Beginning an analysis of the text requires adumbrating the boundaries of the text. Where is the energy motivating the meaning making? A first part of the text is the contents and qualities of *The Ruins of Detroit* as a book, containing photographs, linguistic code, paper, and binding materials. However, the fuller rhetorical text encompasses the interaction between the body of the reader and the content and quality of the book, reader, and the space of connection that intertwines them.

A First Part of the Rhetorical Text is the Book Itself. Hence, multiple textual and affective elements are rhetorically significant. For instance, the *Ruins* has rhetorical potency through the medium of photography. Photographing cities in disrepair has its own tradition within United States history. Jacob Riis in *How the Other Half Lives* used his camera to represent the slums of New York City in the late 19th century. His photographs were meant to be persuasive, intending to bring unsustainable housing conditions to light. Along with his collection of photographs, Riis held a publicity and lecture tour where he displayed his slides accompanied with dramatic music. Riis is attributed with being the first muckraker, and an early member of the progressives (Yochelson and Czitrom). The poor conditions represented by Riis were attributed to rapid industrialization and population increase. The conditions of *The Ruins* are in line but opposite, reflecting rapid deindustrialization and population decline. Yet *The Ruins of Detroit* draws from

the same tradition. Similarly to Jacob Riis' work, the conditions uncovered by the photographs are made to bring to light some unfairness. Just as *The Ruins of Detroit* does, Jacob Riis' photographs provided an aesthetic and rhetorical experience that encouraged a judgment about spatial justice and motivated future reforms. As a collection of photographs of cities in disrepair, the text joins a tradition of public address, a history of visual rhetorical resources that both define and critique national US American identity.

Photographs are a reflection of contemporary conditions as well. Susan Sontag remarked that photographs are an intrinsic part of capitalist society. Since the point-and-shoot camera became affordable and readily available, the image of anything, in any moment in time, can be captured. With the technology of the smart phone, images can be captured and submitted online. Websites and applications like Flickr and Instagram host a constant stream of user-submitted images. The breadth of what can be captured as a photograph expands to virtually everything. "Like all credible forms of lust," Sontag says, "it cannot be satisfied: first, because the possibilities of photography are infinite; and second, because the project is finally self-devouring" (179). Anyone with the available technology can turn any aspect of daily life into a digital representation. Taking a picture becomes a form of consumption and photographs offer the opportunity for limitless consumption. *The Ruins of Detroit* depicts Detroit as having been consumed. The city apparently has been stripped and emptied. As a collection of photographs the text itself has contributed to the act of consumption by commodifying these images. In sum, the photographs within *The Ruins* are an important part of rhetorical text.

The photographs themselves contain meaningful content within what the images represent. Any piece captured within a photograph could be worthy of analysis; however, I would like to preview human bodies, broken buildings, and space (an ideological construct that

is nonetheless represented within the photographs) as particularly important for this study. The body is a primary means of expressing and expression in the text, and through the body the reader is invited to make judgments on the conditions revealed through the book. How strange, then, that in the hundreds of images in *The Ruins*, living human beings are only rarely present in the photographs. The city, viewed through Marchand and Meffre's photographs, seems deserted. Yet humans [being] are present in nuanced and significant ways within (and without) the spaces represented and inhabited by the text. The way people are *not* present points to the rhetorical power of absence, as absent bodies have suasive qualities as well. The motivating rhetorical force of the work is the presence and absence of bodies, through the dialectical tension within the way bodies are both ignored and heralded by the text. This method is inherently rhetorical, acting by means of the aesthetics of ruins.

Tying architectural ruins with the body is a motif of Western art. Architecture, particularly ruined architecture, is literally and symbolically connected to the human body, especially to the broken human body. Yi-Fu Tuan in *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* points out that all human relationships with space, and therefore architecture and infrastructure, are relative to the human body, to human relationships with other people and to biological needs. Even the basic axes of Cartesian geometry, a horizontal axis and a vertical axis, are drawn from the human body that walks upright upon the earth. The origins of many units of measurement are based upon the human body, such as a mile, initially representing a thousand paces (Tuan 45). Cultures tend to place their region as the center or highest point of the world. The word *world* itself can be traced back to the word *wer*, meaning man (34).

It is likewise true that spaces, and the way humans have organized their spaces, motivate and discipline the human body. This intimate relationship is apparent in the history of rhetorical

studies, evident in the way ancient orators memorized long speeches prior to the written word. As described by Cicero's *De Inventione*, the *Ad Herennium*, and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, creating associations between language and places through the *method of loci* enabled the brain to be changed through an interaction with space. Broken places and architecture have likewise been placed with or as representing bodies, literally, figuratively and metonymically. Ruins have particularly aligned themselves with the disabled or broken body. The martyrdom of Saint Sebastian, for instance, is often depicted in paintings, pierced with arrows and tied to a broken column. This relationship to the history of art is crucial to understanding the presence and absence of bodies in the text, and a key aspect of *The Ruins of Detroit's* rhetorical power. Additionally, the association with ruins ties the experience of the text with concerns of space and place. Reading *The Ruins of Detroit* persuades us of the importance, not simply of the body or of place, but of the significant relationship between the body (embodiment) and place (produced space). Therefore, the presence and absence of bodies, representations of architecture in various states of disrepair, and space (transgressed, redefined, or forgotten), as they are represented within the photographs of *The Ruins* are an important part of the rhetorical text under analysis.

A Second Part of the Rhetorical Text is the Interaction between the Reader and the Book. To say the text is fully contained within the book *The Ruins of Detroit* ignores the intertwined nature of reader and image. *The Ruins* includes the qualities of the material object that is the book: the quality of the paper, the size and weight of the tome, the cover image and texture of the binding, yet these qualities become rhetorically consequential only when filtered through the body of the reader.

The parameters of analysis are not limited to the contents of the binding of *The Ruins*. Although my analysis seeks out symbols (interpreted broadly, beyond speeches and linguistic texts) of rhetorical consequence as constitutive of identity, an analytic tradition since the critical-cultural turn of the 1970s, the experience of interacting with *The Ruins of Detroit* proves that its force lies beyond linguistic, discursive, or cultural codes. Attuning to affect, the entanglement of reader and text, and the space of/within the text places this work within a conversation of scholars such as Jane Bennett (*Vibrant Matter*), Brian Massumi (*Parables for the Virtual*), Donna Haraway (“A Cyborg Manifesto”) and Thomas Rickert (*Ambient Rhetoric*), among others, who draw attention to the inherent, prediscursive, embodied rhetorical power of things, materials, and environments of interaction. The rhetorical text includes the body of the reader, which acts within, and by, disciplining structures inherent in the space of interaction. As bodies are consequential as represented within the photographs, the body of the reader is similarly worthy of analysis.

Additionally, the analysis necessarily involves the space containing both the reader and book. This space, existing within certain cultural, historical, and economic realities, is ideological. As a relationship with ruins, the body, and city spaces suggests, *The Ruins of Detroit* holds rhetorical weight by displaying a relationship with spaces. Several scholars conceptualize space and place as inherently rhetorical. Henri Lefebvre, drawing on post-Marxist philosophy, explains that space is a social production. Michel de Certeau argues that space is a place of both restriction and possible emancipation. Michel Foucault, the self-identified archeologist, even attests that conceptualizing spaces is a key aspect of understanding social consequences, for it is through relationships of power that geography is invented (Foucault and Rabinow 252). Spatial influence, in turn, restricts the body. Readers uncover these spaces as they turn the pages,

forming judgments and affectively responding to the material and representational aspects of the text. Even here, within spaces, the body is pre-eminent. To engage a fuller analysis of *The Ruins of Detroit*, I will expand on both linear (historical) and lateral (material and spatial) consequences for the body in the text.

The rhetorical text under scrutiny in this work is the context of interaction between the reader and the bound volume of photographs. The text is therefore diffuse, encompassing multiple sources of influence, and not the discrete artifact *The Ruins of Detroit* (Brummett 80). Such a text includes the content of a copy of *The Ruins of Detroit*, but it also considers the place of reading (the reader's body, the time and cultural geography) as rhetorically significant.

The Rhetorical Action of the Text is the Bestowal of a Frontier Identity

The content of the book, the context of the reader's interaction with the *Ruins*, and the bodily practices involved in being with the book manufacture Detroit as a certain kind of place, a place I label as a frontier unique to a post-Fordist moment.

Identifying Detroit. Describing a place such as Detroit means to bestow subjectivity upon the city. This involves labeling its geographical parameters, its people, its history, and its cognitive landscape. Such an identity is not a factual accounting of demographics; rather it is an embodied, affective experience of fragmented memory, nostalgia, and myth conversing with material realities. Bestowing an identity suggests an agentic entity and a path of future direction.

Thus, this project draws from rhetorical studies of memory, particularly from memory studies that intertwine rhetorical studies of space and place. In one study that also uses Detroit as a setting, Victoria Gallagher and Margaret LaWare look at the memorial to Joe Lewis in

downtown Detroit: a large bronze arm and fist hanging from a triangular frame. Gallagher and LaWare's treatment of the monument finds that the sculpture makes present the memory of African-American history and culture through geographical resources as well as symbolic and material resources. By including the context of place within their analysis of the monument, the writers acknowledge that the city can be viewed as a social production. Gallagher and LaWare similarly reference Kendrick Ian Grandison's studies of black colleges, noting that historical meaning reveals itself through an analysis of changing spatial relations. To say that an experience of Detroit is affective or embodied can be more clearly understood through Gallagher and LaWare's exploration of *The Fist* memorial as it emphasizes on the import of the body as intrinsic to the rhetorical discussion of place:

The devastating and long lasting transformations in Detroit's scenic components (which speak to both the material aspects and the rhetorical context of the monument) and the disparate impact on blacks and whites who were forced to moved (but generally in different directions) leads to a rhetorical reading of *The Fist* from within a psychological framework of place, or, more accurately, of loss of place. *The Fist* is what remains when the body is torn asunder. (Gallagher and LaWare 98–99).

The identity of place as related to the body necessitates a discussion of affect. Memory texts are particularly animated by affect, in that they instruct, motivate, persuade and change the audience via emotional and psychological means. Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson and Brian L. Ott write, in *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, on the recognition of the importance of affect: “[p]erhaps the most underdeveloped of public memory’s assumptions, it may also be one of the most central” (Blair, Dickinson, & Ott 7). Brian Massumi describes the sense of affect as “a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act” (Massumi *Plateaus* xvi). Attuning to the bodily experience of a text

involves attention to prediscursive phenomena that originate outside of the body but initiate movement within the body. In the realm of this study, these phenomena will incite the reader to delineate terms for the identity of Detroit, positioning the reader as neo-colonist.

Identifying Detroit as a Frontier. As Detroit is viewed and constructed through the book and practices of interacting with the book, this thesis argues that this action can be defined through the notion of frontier, adopting a metaphor and myth used throughout US American history. Reading *The Ruins* suggests to the reader that Detroit is broken, but also empty. Detroit is presented as an open frontier, an experience to be used and consumed by the reader. As a presentation of a broken but cleansed frontier, Detroit is open to the reader. Even as emancipatory potential is suggested through the unburying of oppressed bodies, the act of reading *The Ruins* in some ways repeats or extends a tradition of colonization, and of biopolitical oppression.

Frontier can refer literally to land that is artificially deemed open to settlers by a colonizing state, as it did until 1890 in the continental United States. The frontier is likewise a foundational myth for the development of settler-colonial societies. The myth encompasses narratives, metaphors, poetry and rhetoric surrounding aspects of frontier land and stories of pioneers. Theories of the frontier include Frederick Turner's thesis (1893) and subsequent critiques of that thesis, such as the work done in three volumes by Richard Slotkin. Turner's thesis proposed that the frontier constructed American identity. The process of shedding the ways of civilization to make new settlements in the "wilderness," made the American supposedly independent, rugged, and opposed to tyranny (Turner 226). According to Turner, the frontier was a "free land with abundant resources" and "the meeting point between savagery and civilization"

(200). Slotkin, in turn, points out that this meeting is characterized by violent conflict and often-cruel oppression, although narratives glorifying the mission of exploration, settlement, and heroism mask this violence (Slotkin *The Fatal Environment*; see also Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*).

In US American literature and folklore the frontier myth shows up through the poetry of Walt Whitman; Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show; and an entire genre of Western movies like *Stagecoach* (1939), and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949). The frontier myth of the American West is part of a "western dreamscape," encompassing a host of cultural artifacts, narratives, and imaginings about the Western frontier (Deverell 37). Additionally, the frontier myth continued to motivate exploratory missions in the twentieth century even after the Western frontier was officially settled. John F. Kennedy used the frontier as a central rhetorical device in his presidential campaign in 1960. In his acceptance of the Democratic nomination, he describes the new frontier as conceptual and ideological, a metaphor to encourage further exploration in the areas of technology, space exploration, civil rights and world peace (Kennedy "The New Frontier"). President Reagan similarly used the metaphor of the frontier to lionize the mission of NASA after the Challenger 7 Disaster in 1986, calling the astronauts "pioneers," and comparing their mission to the sea voyage of Sir Francis Drake when "the great frontiers were the oceans" ("The Space Shuttle 'Challenger' Address").

Although the frontier of the American West closed, aspects of the frontier myth continue to have influence over the way the United States makes policy, develops land, conducts foreign affairs, and considers national identity. As Richard Slotkin argues, the frontier myth still has violent consequences as the mission of metaphorical pioneers meets in conflict with material realities of existing space and indigenous people. The frontier myth is a helpful metaphor to

describe how Detroit is presented through an interaction with *The Ruins of Detroit*, in which the reader approaches an apparently free space of available resources. Yet how Detroit is a frontier should be further articulated.

Identifying Detroit as Post-Fordist Frontier. Detroit is certainly not a part of Deverell's "western dreamscape," nor is it a place of frantic settlement. It is, however, a place in desperate need of conceptual redevelopment for the sake of national identity. Detroit was the symbolic heart of the automobile manufacturing industry. It goes without saying that automobiles had a tremendous impact on all aspects of infrastructure over the course of the twentieth century; car ownership had a cultural effect over all aspects of first-world life. "As G.M. goes, so goes the nation" is a quote attributed General Motors president and secretary of defense Charles Wilson in 1953 (Robbins "As Warren Buffet Goes, So Goes..."). As manufacturing shifted overseas, and United States automobile companies approached bankruptcy in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, Detroit's decline became a symbol of broader failures of the American economy (and by proxy, aspects of American culture). In the early twenty-first century, during the time Marchand and Meffre captured the images included in *The Ruins of Detroit*, Detroit in shambles is indicative of dramatic economic and cultural shifts. Detroit is in the midst of an identity crisis, a crisis that is tightly connected to a crisis in American identity.

Labels of Fordism and post-Fordism can describe the turbulent changes of Detroit's economy and infrastructure usefully. Fordism describes an economy based on manufacturing, especially by means of the technical efficiency of the assembly line. Consumer goods are mass-produced cheaply, sacrificing craftsmanship in favor of availability and standardization. Under Fordism, Detroit enjoyed decades of prosperity as the center of the automobile industry.

Post-Fordism accounts for shifts in the economic system after manufacturing tended to move outside the United States, due to cheaper labor, easier access to raw materials, and increasing pressure to compete globally. US American workers since the 1970s typically work in service, retail, technology, design, and financial industries. Post-Fordist citizens are defined by their power as consumers. Choice and freedom are expressed through consumption. In contemporary conditions characterized by mediation, what is real or meaningful is culled from specific choices of which media to consume. Post-Fordism is likewise characterized by fragmentation. Identity, location, and relationships are diffuse and seemingly ephemeral. This is the context within which the reader explores *The Ruins of Detroit*. To fully articulate how Detroit is found via *The Ruins*, this project attests that identity for Detroit is found, or colonized, within and by the post-Fordist context. This exploration will filter through habits of consumerism, fragmentation/diffusion and reality as mediated.

Map of the Trail

The path of this thesis will include, first, a chapter describing a history of Detroit within the context of Fordism and post-Fordism. Then, a chapter follows that provides a context for the history of the relationship between ruins and the human body. These two chapters provide a context for the following chapter, a thorough analysis of the text as a post-Fordist frontier, demonstrating that the reader's interaction with *The Ruins of Detroit* enacts practices of post-Fordism to act as neo-colonist, bestowing a frontier identity upon Detroit. The concluding chapter emphasizes the implications of this study within a brief synopsis of the argument. The discussion of this thesis is arranged around a necessary discussion of history, theory, and direct analysis of the contents of the book. Considering the text as diffuse, it is beyond the scope of this

work to account for all factors that warrant consideration for developing a place of settlement for Detroit. However, looking at a socio-spatial history of the city of Detroit and a history of ruins in Western are two elucidating studies to contextualize Detroit as a post-Fordist frontier. The following paragraphs provide brief synopses of how these arguments will proceed.

A Socio-Spatial History of Detroit. The reader views *The Ruins* within a context that is not contained simply within the bound volume of Marchand and Meffre's photographs. Before the book is opened, the title *The Ruins of Detroit* produces impressions, references public memories, and recalls stories of what Detroit means. In a sense Detroit has its own dreamscape, though this collective imagining draws more from a history of racial struggle, economic boom and bust, and infrastructural decline than from mythic portrayal in film or literature. Public memory about Detroit is a factor that influences the way the reader will interact with *The Ruins*. Considering an important part of the diffuse text under analysis is the reader's interaction with the book requires a robust discussion of what this public memory entails. Additionally, the history of Detroit is referenced throughout the book, in captions, commentary, and visually through the photographs. By *socio-spatial* history, I refer to historical narratives that pay attention to critical geography. Critical geography sees land use, human migration, and the theorizing of space as influenced by ideological and material relations of power (Soja 78; Harvey ix).

A presentation of the history of Detroit within a socio-spatial context is included within this thesis for two primary reasons. First, it is a key component of the text. Detroit history is referenced throughout *The Ruins*, and it is sure to be a context within which the reader approaches *The Ruins*. Secondly, it uses a theoretical framework that conceptualizes an ecological relationship between space, architecture, and embodied presence.

The chapter begins with an examination of this theoretical framework. In *The Ruins of Detroit*, the rhetorical power lies literally within human bodies, both as they are represented within the photographs but also as an intrinsic part of the readers' bodily interaction with the text. Discussing history in a text such as *The Ruins of Detroit* should perhaps be better described, as Foucault characterizes, as an archeological analysis, because picking apart the past as revealed by *The Ruins of Detroit* most clearly fits with an approach that surveys the buried messes of history, looking at power relations (looking at looking, so to speak, as power relationships are often expressed through surveillance) that have affected the bodies of people in the past. This approach to history is intimately connected to Foucault's theoretical understanding of history not as a directional narrative funneling toward any specific purpose, but as a multinodal patchwork of power relationships that incite change through mutations or accidents. Foucault's view of history ties together with neo-Marxist critical geographers such as Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, and Edward Soja. The socio-spatial dialectic is discussed through an understanding of space as a social production. Then, I relate the work of biopolitics (Foucault) and critical geographers to rhetorical studies, especially with those working on studies of public space, memory, and public identity (such as Eric Aoki, Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, Thomas Dunn, and Brian Ott).

In order to emphasize the ecological interaction of bodies in space and with materials as consequential to public identity, I will analyze key events that have served to discipline the human body through the arrangement of city spaces, and concurrently through planning that favored industrial development within Detroit since its inception as a city through the twenty-first century. Using Fordism and post-Fordism as an organizing framework, elements of decline point to the consequentiality of spatial production. Within the era of Fordism, I reference hints in Detroit's founding by Judge Woodward in 1805, followed by a description of the early Fordist

industrial practices. Then, I point out traits of Fordism within the spatial consequences of the automobile, such as the development of the Interstate Highway system, the expansion of the suburbs, and the isolation of the inner city: illustrated by blight-clearance efforts of the Detroit Plan, the riotous protests of 1967, and the expansion of eminent domain laws illustrated through the violent destruction of Poletown. The shift to post-Fordism is shown through the relative decline of manufacturing in the urban core (closing of plants, crumbling infrastructure, and joblessness), coincident with the development of places of spectacle and consumerism. The Renaissance Center, Woodward Avenue, as grassroots revitalization efforts provide specific illustrations of post-Fordist patterns of development.

The history of development within cities like Detroit echoes what artists within the Western aesthetic tradition have represented for centuries, that is, the disciplined body within architecture. After discussing the history of Detroit, I will attend to this equally consequential aspect of the text.

The Body in Ruins/The Ruined Body. Issues of the materiality of the text, a focus on spatial and material consequences, and a persistent vantage point of bodily presence or absence as a node of interaction with these forces, suggest a kairic moment for new development in the post-Fordist city. Marchand and Meffre's compilation of photographs interacts with the body to produce judgments regarding Detroit. The reader is forced to acknowledge a relationship between neglected spaces and absent people. Broken architecture, broken streets, and splintered bodies are aligned together. This alignment between bodies and architecture, reflecting how bodies are enabled or disabled, is a relationship that has been represented through centuries of Western art.

The Ruins of Detroit, as a collection of photographs of ruined architecture, representations of broken and absent bodies within the images, and the bodily interaction the reader has with the brokenness of Detroit, are all elements of the text that reference this tradition. The practice of exploring the nature of the body through ruined architecture has visualized a theoretical conversation about what identity entails, how humans are intertwined with, or transcendent from, the material universe. It is closely related to a question of “how we dwell in the world,” a phrasing Thomas Rickert uses to describe the action of rhetoric: “it transforms our fundamental disposition concerning how we are in the world” (xiii). Hence, as an important tool to understand the rhetorical work of *The Ruins of Detroit* and as an aspect of the text itself, an essay on the history of the relationship between architecture and the body in Western art is included in this thesis.

Within this chapter, I connect aesthetics to the project of rhetoric. Aesthetics attempts to account for the influence of materials that is beyond (or beside) reason. Rhetoric encompasses many of the meaning-making experiences embodied by works of art. These experiences of meaning-making, discursive, pre-discursive, and aesthetic, continue to influence through *The Ruins* as the book patently represents ruins. Indirectly, the relationship of ruins and the body is referenced through representations of fragmentation, both material and bodily, and through experiencing the spaces of Detroit in a fragmented manner (through layers of mediated representation). This chapter is a crucial discussion of the complicated enfolded nature of the body in ruins that both a contextual element of the text as well an enactment of how the reader themselves may interact with *The Ruins*. In attempted fulfillment of this task, I analyze three broad categories of artistic works describing the expression of this relationship. The first is two works in which architecture is dominant over the human body. The second is an analysis of two

works in which the constructed works of humanity are inevitably fragmented by the power of natural forces. And the third looks at two works since the 1970s that merge the broken or fragmented body with architectural forms. Recognizing this aesthetic tradition attunes to the body's role in spatial practices, suggesting the affective power of the broken or fragmented body and its rhetorical power for constitutive identity. Introducing this attunement through artwork of the past provides a context for analyzing *The Ruins of Detroit* more directly to understand how post-Fordist practices situate Detroit as a new kind of frontier.

Analyzing the Detroit as a Post-Fordist Frontier. A chapter analyzing the history of Detroit and the history of the body in ruins contextualizes the final work of assessing Detroit as a post-Fordist frontier via *The Ruins*. *The Ruins of Detroit* serves as a resource for interpreting the contemporary conditions of Detroit, conditions characterized by anxiety caused by unresolved trauma. I find that the text uses material and affective resources to unbury injustices within Detroit's history, a rhetorical action that serves to guide nascent identity for the reader. Through a dialectic of absence and presence, the text uses symbols of the body in space to suggest a post-Fordist frontier identity for Detroit. *The Ruins of Detroit* motivates the reader to investigate the constitution of civic identity from a vantage point of the body in space. These judgments are gleaned within and through the context of post-Fordism.

Through this context, the metaphor of frontier applies to Detroit. I use a metaphor of frontier that is partly culled from Frederick Turner's frontier thesis of 1893 (*The Significance of the Frontier in American History*) and Richard Slotkin's articulation of the frontier (in *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860*; *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization 1800–1890*; and

Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century America). After a review of the frontier as metaphor and mythology, I demonstrate a post-Fordist articulation of Detroit as neo-frontier through three kinds of experiences, with evidence from the text. The first is through an experience of leaving the metropolis, so to speak, by acknowledging some of the failures of late capitalist development, especially through a condemnation of waste and wasteful practices. The second experience is one of privileged access to resources and previously restricted spaces. Lastly, the third experience is of anxiety produced by the irksome presence of indigenous people, or the previous residents of downtown Detroit, who show up in fragmented, ghostly fashion throughout *The Ruins* (as well in the public memory of Detroit). These experiences enact Detroit as a neo-frontier, providing hints at a future Detroit. However, this identity illuminates serious challenges for the city, such as how to justly account for the buried, uncovering presences of inconvenient people.

The first kind of neo-frontier experience expresses a departure from the cosmopolitan environment into a space shamed by waste and inactivity. Broken tools, still machines, and stilled spaces use absence and fragmentation to signify that the urban is gone. However, the remnants suggest not a complete escape from the urban, rather a potential for reuse. The potential resources at rest within Marchand and Meffre's book point to the existence of latent resources within a potentially recyclable frontier.

The entitled access to these latent resources is a second kind of experience that defines an interaction with *The Ruins* as a post-Fordist frontier, with the reader situated to recolonize this space. Access and invitation to open space are represented through the reader's ownership and interaction with the book, an effortful act of consumerism and an expression of aesthetic taste. The medium of photography invites bodily participation. The myriad ways that Detroit is

presented as cleansed and emptied of people, place (intentional space), and geographical orientation strongly suggest, through symbolic representations in the text and through the action of reading the book, that Detroit is available for reinvention.

Lastly, the reader shares in common with all colonists the anxiety of the mythic nature of the cleansed frontier. In fact, evidence of existing communities remain, however faint. The ghostly reminders of those bodies that were pushed out are equally unsettling. The specter of the natives creates unresolved unease as it has in all previous frontiers, yet the oppressed natives are a tribe unique to the post-Fordist condition. Although an interaction with *The Ruins* provides no clear solution to the violent conflict that occurs when a myth of frontier confronts the existing geography of a struggling settlement, the text materializes and acknowledges this anxiety.

These three organizing experiences categorizing the evidence to argue that an interaction with *The Ruins of Detroit* enact practices of post-Fordism to represent as a frontier, and the reader as an explorer/pro prospector with access to both the resources of a disassembled Detroit and the anxieties inherent in this endeavor.

Placing the Work

This thesis engages a conversation within rhetorical studies that looks at materiality, the body within space, and space as an inherently rhetorical production. Scholars within memory studies have especially engaged these questions. Nate Stormer, for instance, combines the practice of remembering with the body and place, describing public memory as a performative space. Stormer describes the rhetorical performance of memory as a practice of constituting the present as a relationship with the receding past, a practice called recursivity (28). Consistent with Gallagher and LaWare's study, in Stormer's conception of memory, the rhetorical capacity of

memory is conceived within a relationship between space/place and the body. Kenneth Burke, in his conception of rhetoric, described language and rhetoric as inherently related to practices of the body. Debra Hawhee draws out this notion in *Moving Bodies: Kenneth Burke at the Edges of Language*. She points to the way Burke's articulation of such concepts as the pentad, dramatism, and identification are motivated by his early research into mysticism, psychotropic drug-related experiences, endocrinology, constitutional morphology, and Sir Richard Paget's gesture-speech theory, among other research that links meaning-making and communication to bodily practices (Hawhee 106).

What I am analyzing in this thesis, then, is not simply a book. Rather, my aim is to analyze the environment in which this bound object is entangled. I hope to light upon the ecological interaction of the reader and *The Ruins of Detroit*. This is an interaction that attunes to the affective power of materials, especially as an embodied performance of memory. This study answers the suggestion of Dickinson, Blair, and Ott to recognize the importance of affect within texts that seek to comprehend, interpret, and recover from (that is, to publicly remember) large-scale traumatic events in national history (*Places of Public Memory* 7). Additionally, this study contributes to an ongoing discussion that broadens rhetorical studies within a post-Fordist context that complicates the agency of the subject and recognizes geographical as well as historical consequences.

So, while I must attend to the strong symbolism within the textual elements of the book, I will also highlight the character of rhetoric that George Kennedy described as an "energy existing in life" (Kennedy 13), and which Peter Simonson described as something that "exists prior to speech and cuts across physicality and signification" (Simonson 108). My research will look specifically at what these material and affective resources are, how themes of presence and

absence interact to make a socio-spatial comment on the conditions of Detroit, and how these aspects of the text point to a new subjectivity for the future of Detroit, with implications for all US American post-industrial urban environments.

CHAPTER 2: A SOCIO-SPATIAL HISTORY OF DETROIT

Rhetoric accomplishes its work by inducing us to shift, at least potentially, how we dwell or see ourselves dwelling in the world. Rhetoric does not just change subjective states of mind; it transforms our fundamental disposition concerning how we are in the world, how we dwell. I use the term dwelling here to mean how people come together to flourish (or try to flourish) in a place, or better, how they come together in the continual making of a place; at the same time, that place is interwoven into the way they have come to be as they are – and as further disclosed through their dwelling practices. (Rickert xiii)

As a book primarily of photographs, Marchand and Meffre's text contains relatively little writing on the history of Detroit. The photographs are hardly a longitudinal study of the city, as they were taken in a period of only five years. Yet *The Ruins of Detroit* makes consequential statements that reframe our understanding of Detroit's condition, a condition relating to the history of dwelling practices within Detroit and within the larger conditions of Fordism. In myriad ways, Marchand and Meffre reference bodily interaction with space, or the way spatial practices have touched the body. The text itself, as its own space, invites an affective response within the reader, which in turn makes a comment upon the practice of dwelling with texts. Even when foregrounding spatial relationships, it is impossible to isolate practices of dwelling (the lateral relationship of space, an environment of interaction) from the events of history (a linear interpretation of time explained through cause and effect relationships). *The Ruins of Detroit* presents an attitude about spatial practices and historical consequences simultaneously, a rhetorical presentation that I will refer to as a socio-spatial dialectic, borrowing from Edward Soja (81).

The socio-spatial dialectic within *The Ruins of Detroit* places emphasis on spatial practices as a motivating factor for public action and thought, falling in line with a theoretical conversation on the relationship between geography and history in postmodernity that deserves

further unpacking. The humanistic tradition, with roots in Platonic idealism, conceived of history as a projected path, a march with moral intention (see Plato's *Phaedo*, Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, and Engel's *Dialectics of Nature*, for instance). As a result, the trajectory of history tended to narrowly regard the actors and events of the past in favor of ideology. Scholarship in the past century has complicated this assumption of history, arguing for an increased focus on the role of space and place, the marks of political power on the body, and the accidental nature of history's path. As John Berger describes, a novel in the postmodern era that tells a story sequentially, neglecting to reference geographical inequalities "is incomplete and acquires the oversimplified character of a fable" (Berger 40).

A historicity that draws attention to spatial environments of interaction, rather than a Hegelian teleology, echoes challenges to subjectivity broadly within postmodernity. For the purposes of this paper, a focus on geographical inequalities within Detroit, which themselves are represented within *The Ruins*, and performed through reading *The Ruins*, draws attention to the interactive, enfolded nature of material circumstances of urban development with the agency of Detroiters. In addition to drawing out these arguments further, in this chapter I will discuss Detroit's history motivated by Edward Soja's idea that "human geography not only 'matters' but provides the most revealing critical perspective" (Soja 23). The socio-spatial dialectic interests me because, given Rickert's description of rhetoric as an attitude of place-making and public subjectivity, the rhetoric of *The Ruins of Detroit* seems to be motivated by the same historicity.

To meet the need of this thesis, which is to demonstrate the constitutive power of the environment created by reading *The Ruins of Detroit*, I will begin with a theoretical discussion of historicity from a Foucauldian and Nietzschean perspective, which analyzes the bodily effects of power relationships. Some brief comments on the importance of spatial practices within a study

of history follow, including an acknowledgement of space as a rhetorical practice. Using a scaffolding of Fordism and post-Fordism, I will point out various events in the history of Detroit that echo the pattern of interaction with space within *The Ruins*, exhibiting an environment of interaction between bodies and space that is reflective of post-Fordist identity. The purpose of this chapter is not to give an exhaustive account of Detroit's past, nor does it posit that all readers of *The Ruins* will approach the text with prior knowledge of Detroit's history. Rather, this chapter 1) notes elements of Detroit's past, organized around the economic conditions of Fordism and post-Fordism, that may have served to cement an impression of the city within the reader's mind prior to an encounter with *The Ruins*, and 2) establishes a tradition of interaction between space, place, and the body that is both referenced and repeated within *The Ruins* (and through the event of reading the book).

Studying the Consequences of Space

Drawing on Nietzsche, Foucault argues that history is best undertaken as a search for origins that involves looking at the way “descent attaches itself to the body,” regarding the way the body is materially impacted by relationships of domination. History's “task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body,” Foucault explains (83). Foucault seeks a genealogical practice that searches not for a single origin of events, nor a linear progression of moral development within history. Rather, Foucault searches for key moments in history that arise from mutations in human behavior: accidents, mistakes, and destructive interactions between the human body and materials. He states, “genealogy must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history—in sentiments, love, conscience,

instincts” (76). Foucault calls for a closer attention to affective qualities in historical study: prediscursive, material, phenomenological persuasions. These relationships of “biopower” play out through any method of public discipline over the body. Foucault wrote extensively on these practices, evidenced through the practices such as surveillance, scientific analysis, incarceration, labeling sexual deviance, and the treatment (and classification) of mental illness. Foucault’s notion of genealogy is a method of historical study that requires meticulous and extensive study into “the ancient proliferation of errors” (79). This is a challenge I will not attempt for the purposes of analyzing the experience of reading *The Ruins of Detroit*; however, the Foucauldian perspective is useful to highlight an affective, bio-political history of descent (attaching itself to the body) within Detroit.

Foucault draws attention to biopower within several aspects of civilization, including space and place. In a condition that began when Galileo dis-placed the Earth from the center of the medieval conception of the universe, Foucault writes, “I believe that the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, a great deal more than with time” (“Of Other Spaces” 2). Several critical geographers, such as Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja, agree with Foucault. As a Neo-Marxist scholar, Lefebvre drew attention to the concept of space as a social production governing material relations of power and class. Although the concept of space is often mistaken as an ideologically pure concept (making it ripe for hegemony), space is both symbolic and discursively produced:

[A]n already produced space can be decoded, can be *read*. Such a space implies a process of signification. And even if there were no general code of space, inherent to language or to all languages, there may have existed specific codes, established at specific historical periods and varying in their effects. If so, interested ‘subjects’, as members of a particular society, would have acceded by this means at once to *their* space and to their status as ‘subjects’ acting within that space and comprehending it. (*The Production of Space* 17)

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre discusses how philosophical notions of space have classically placed it within the realm of “object,” separate from the “subject,” which acts upon it. Lefebvre questions this subject/object duality, as it is a duality propped up philosophies of space that serve specialized groups, such as mathematicians, philosophers, property developers, and governments, rather than serving the laborers (*The Production of Space* 38). Lefebvre seeks to both expose the notion of space as produced and ideologically-laden, and provide possibilities for agency within the production of space.

As Edward Soja points out, drawing upon the writings of Lefebvre, space is socially produced simultaneously as socially-produced space produces culture. Soja remarks that this describes a socio-spatial dialectic: “that social and spatial relations are dialectically inter-reactive, interdependent; that social relations of production are both space-forming and space-contingent” (81). Soja, along with Samir Amin (*Unequal Development*), Manuel Castells (*The Urban Question*), David Harvey (*Social Justice and the City*), and Ernest Mandel (“Capitalism and Regional Disparities”) argue for a radical, post-Marxist, materialist understanding of space as reflective of (and creating) social inequalities. As Soja points out, the implications of the socio-spatial dialectic reach into all aspects of social life, not simply with work relationships (production), but also within the realm of reproduction and consumption (the home and marketplace). His work *Postmodern Geographies* calls on all critical theorists to bring attention to the political and social consequences of the interaction between space, place, and history.

While philosophers and critical geographers have explored this dialectic, rhetorical scholars have the ability to analyze these interactions deeply, as rhetoric can be described as the study of that character of public “discourses, events, objects, and practices” that is meaningful, consequential, or partisan (Blair, Dickinson, and Ott 2). Rhetorical studies of memory spaces,

museums, and memorials have looked at the affective, material, and political persuasive power of space, and materials in space. “[The] rhetorical use of memory gave rise to city planning,” Dickinson states, “that is, the creation of urban spaces for the explicit purpose of evoking particular responses from a mass public” (“Memories for Sale” 3). In one example, Brian Ott, Greg Dickinson, and Eric Aoki analyzed the Cody Firearms Museum in Wyoming, noting that the arrangement of materials (guns) in the space erases the violence caused by these instruments. The bodily interaction with the materials (looking), combined with the absent portrayals of violence, suggested that the space of the museum encompassed a “fully embodied rhetorical experience” of interaction. Within the space of the museum, a space of memory, the socio-spatial dialectic plays out clearly. Although the portrayals of firearms suggest an interpretation of history that is erased of violence, the ideologically-laden space is likewise consequential. Dickinson broadens the idea of a memory space by bringing a rhetorical analysis to spaces of consumption, such as the shopping mall. While a Marxist approach would see spatial ideology as a consequence of economic class struggle, Dickinson also provides a performative perspective. He attributes the contrived nostalgia of the Old Pasadena suburb in Los Angeles to unresolved collective anxieties. Tying the rhetorical practice of memory to public identity, Dickinson finds a crisis of public identity inherent in crises of public memory.

In his analysis of Old Pasadena, Dickinson asserts that productions of nostalgia are reflective of consumer culture within late capitalism, and these productions serve to remake notions of the self (“Memories for Sale” 4). To argue for the production of identity, a remaking of the self, for post-Fordist Detroit enacted by reading *The Ruins*, I structure a vision of Detroit within the broad categories of Fordism and post-Fordism. The purpose of this organization is not to portray the history of the city as a narrative, transitioning cleanly from one theoretical model

to another in anticipation of a transcendent goal, but rather to organize some events of time as characterizing broad relationships between space, bodies, and identity. To call the era of late capitalism “post” Fordism is somewhat problematic, as it incorrectly implies that the industrial model is no longer relevant. I use the term post-Fordism to stay consistent with the work of critical geographers like David Harvey and others, but a more accurate understanding of post-Fordism is that it is new, or simply different.

Fordism

Fordism describes an era of social and cultural practices influenced by economic relationships, characterized by “intensive accumulation” of capital and motivated by mass production enabled by the assembly line. Fordism encapsulates the consequences of the industrial practices exemplified by Henry Ford in 1913 for the purposes of more efficient production of the Model-T car. Assembly line production employed unskilled workers to perform a singular task, rapidly and repeatedly. Ford’s practice resulted in a dramatic increase in efficiency, enabling the boom of the automobile industry, and the entire regional economy to develop around the creation of the automobile. Ohio produced rubber for tires, for instance, and steel was shipped from Pennsylvania. The technology of the assembly line affected the development of city spaces to accommodate the needs of workers and industry. Industrial cities had already developed in Europe and the United States; however, Fordism increased the productivity of industrial cities. This, combined with the increasing ease of automobile ownership, encouraged the development of infrastructure supportive to car travel. Fordism describes the economic, sociological, and geographic consequences of the assembly line mode of production, as well as the consequences of the emergence of the automobile. Assembly line

production employs a vast workforce who can buy the products and that it produces. As potential consumers of automobiles, Henry Ford took particular interest in the character of his workers. In exchange for relatively high wages, Ford attempted to keep factory workers sober, housed, literate and patriotic (that is, loyal to US American industrial interests). He had a particular view of family and familial roles that his “Americanization” efforts similarly affected (Bak 72). In this way, Fordism produced a change in the bodies and behavior of its workers. Fordism is a pattern of production and consumption that is increasingly self-reinforcing. The model of production creates more goods for consumption while simultaneously creating more consumers and a culture that increasingly supports the consumption of goods as a good in itself. This production is in turn balanced by state regulation of monopolies (Jessop 136). The consequences of Fordism, then, affect the body of the workers, the behavior of the workers, and the arrangement of urban spaces that are affected by factory work and the resulting practices of consumption. To describe events and practices of this particular brand of capitalism within Detroit, I will begin by looking at characteristics of Fordism planted within the founding of the city in 1805. A century later the industry that defines Fordism blooms, so it is necessary to outline characteristics of this founding that drastically rearranged land use and served to discipline the human body. Moving through time, this essay subsequently outlines the spatial and bodily consequences of the tenets of Fordism through the middle of the twentieth century: including class and racial strife; and chaotic shifts in communities affected by urban land-use policies.

A century prior to the opening of the first Ford plant, Judge Augustus Woodward was appointed by Thomas Jefferson to organize the settlement of Detroit in 1805 (Conot 8). The frontier town on the strait of Lake Michigan consisted of less than a thousand French-American settlers. Woodward arrived in the aftermath of a decimating fire. Despite the sparse population

demoralized by the destruction of their village, Woodward did not allow the town to be rebuilt in time for winter. Instead, he waited on plans to create a “Paris of the West,” based on Pierre L’Enfant’s plans for the nation’s capital (Conot 19), which were inspired by the street grid of Paris. This plan, known as the Woodward Plan, was a grand abstraction, calling for streets to spread in a spoke-like pattern. Not based on current uses of the town, the Woodward Plan was a grid that could have been laid out over almost any land mass (Reps 269). Representations of space such as the proposed street grid of Detroit provide insight into the imagined uses for space (Lefebvre 182). Rather than accommodate to the current uses of the town, Woodward attempted to put the signature of the nation-state upon this newly acquired land. The plans were a stamp that foreshadowed the uniformity of the mass-produced commodity.

The Woodward plan was only partially realized in Detroit. The streets radiating from Grand Circus Park downtown represent the small area in which this plan was actually constructed. The conception of mass production, however, was fully realized in Detroit through the invention and production of the automobile. When laborers in Henry Ford’s plant began constructing Model T’s using the assembly line technique in 1913, the time it took to build one car reduced from twelve hours to one and a half hours; in five years production increased tenfold (Bak 75). Ford was able to hire unskilled laborers to complete production. Ford, Dodge and General Motors brought wealth to Detroit, turning the downtown area into a playground for the wealthy. The grand circus, part of Woodward’s original plan for Detroit, did become a sort of “Paris of the West:” a place for beautiful modern era architecture with hotels and theaters, such as the Book-Cadillac Hotel and Adams Theatre (Marchand and Meffre 11). Industrialization attracted immigrant workers, and strong immigrant communities developed. In 1914, Henry Ford’s plant in particular drew labor into Detroit (Bak 72).

Although the high wages of Ford's early Model T plant made it an attractive place to work for unskilled laborers, the work made marks upon the workers' bodies in several ways. The work was incredibly hazardous; workers constantly risked losing a finger or other body parts (Bak 75). "In 1916, the Ford Highland Park plant recorded almost 200 severed fingers and more than 75,000 cuts, burns and puncture wounds" (Hopper). To receive the high wage of five dollars a day, corporate policy required that all employees were monitored by the Sociological Department, whose workers monitored employee home and social life outside of work to ensure that laborers were clean, sober, and frugal. This department educated immigrants on topics such as hygiene, childcare, and the English language. Additionally, these workers were required to attend a rigorous Americanization program, which aligned the interests of industry with those of patriotism and citizenship (Bak 72). Women were not allowed to receive the high wage, unless they were single with children. Men with wives who worked outside the home were likewise unable to receive the high wage. Any worker who could not comply with the restrictions of the Sociological Department, and any workers who could not assimilate properly, were also refused the high wage. Henry Ford's program established a norm for working bodies, enforcing notions of gender, health, family, and citizen identity.¹ Although the Sociological Department of the early Ford company placed restrictions upon the factory workers, Ford was wildly productive.

¹ Only three thousand positions were available when Ford initiated the higher wage. The fifteen thousand workers that remained outside the factory seeking employment were sprayed with fire hoses to force them to disperse (Hopper). Significantly, the excluded bodies of the Ford system were symbolically aligned with fire. Fire, an element that destroys both bodies and place wildly and rapidly, has been a strong rhetorical symbol of oppressed people throughout the history of the Fordist city. Black Power leader Hubert "Rap" Brown spoke prior the Detroit riots in 1967, saying "Motown, if you don't come around, we are going to burn you down!" (Conot 688). The fire hose has become a strong symbol of violent oppression of "othered" bodies in American civil rights struggles, as in the Birmingham riots of 1967. Arson remains a concern for Detroit today. Detroit's rate of structure fires is multiple times that of Los Angeles, a city much larger and more populated (*Burn*). Arson has become a ritual crime in Detroit. Widespread fires mark

Detroit in the 1920s was a boomtown due to the success and growth of the automotive industry. Yet by the 1940s, Ford and other US American automotive companies were showing signs of decline, even as the United States was to enact several federal policies supporting the development of automobile infrastructure, culminating in the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956. The automobile had already drastically changed the landscape of Detroit as early as the 1910s. The planned spoke-patterned street grid of downtown Detroit was not adequate to accommodate a car-owning population, as by the 1910s the streets were clogged with cars during the workday. Although Ford provided a wage that made the Model-T affordable to laborers, the manufacturing plant did not provide parking for employees. Congestion and lack of parking created unsustainable conditions in both the downtown area as well as the suburban neighborhoods.

The popularity of the automobile pushed neighborhoods further and further out. Federal housing subsidies in the 1940s further encouraged workers to move outside the city to the northwestern suburbs. Formal and informal housing policies were unapologetically racist. African-Americans were specifically denied access to low-interest loans that allowed other ethnicities to relocate to new suburban developments. Neighborhood covenants guaranteed that neighborhoods were segregated. Following the trend of increasing automobile traffic and suburban housing development, shopping developments followed. In 1954 the Hudson Company opened a new development in the suburban area of Southfield. The Northland Shopping Center arranged several stores horizontally amidst an expansive parking lot, in symbolic contrast to the downtown department store housed within a skyscraper and lacking sufficient parking. The center was one of the first shopping centers of its kind in the world, the precursor to the enclosed

the night prior to Halloween, called Devils' Night. In the 1990s, Mayor Dennis Archer officially named the night before Halloween "Angels' Night," and community initiatives exist to guard threatened structures (www.detroitmi.gov "Angels' Night") (Time.com "Detroit Fights Devils' Night").

shopping mall. The Northland Shopping Center marked the trend for postwar development: an accommodation to suburban auto-dependent development to the detriment of downtown, high-density development (Conot).

Downtown Detroit rapidly segregated in the 1940s and 50s as infrastructure supportive of automobile travel encouraged suburban development. White people had the privilege of moving to the new suburban developments. “So rapidly were whites moving to the suburbs that 150,000 of the 250,000 people the city gained during the 1940s were black. In Paradise Valley, the worst slum section, the number of Negroes increased from 87,000 to 140,000 in 1950” (Conot 517). In an effort to curb blight in the downtown area, the Detroit Plan of 1946 decreed slum clearance. The Detroit Plan cleared blighted areas, selling the land at steeply reduced prices to commercial developers. Although these neighborhoods were “blighted,” they were nonetheless populated. The Detroit Plan cemented a pattern of land development that favored private enterprise over the human rights of the poor residents of blighted areas. The pattern of development initiated by the Detroit Plan spread across all Fordist cities when Truman signed the Housing Act of 1949, which was modeled after the Detroit Plan (Conot 517).

A generation later, a police raid on a speakeasy in a black neighborhood sparked violent protests. The race riots of 1967 resulted in the deaths of forty-three people over five days. Additionally, the riots were dramatic performances of destruction of private places. The race riots of 1967 reflect a pattern of rioting that carries throughout Detroit’s history. Detroit experienced violent riots previously in 1863, and then again in 1943. Similar riots, racially motivated, took place across the country in Chicago in 1919, Harlem in 1964, Los Angeles in 1965 (again in 1992) and in Washington D.C. in 1968. Although the riots of ’67 could be seen as a protest against the conditions initiated by the Detroit Plan, and the principles of Fordism

generally, in fact the riots acted *in accordance* with the blight clearing initiative. “The tragedy... was not that so much of the city was burned, but so little,” reported a mayoral aide on the riots (Conot 703).

Shifting blighted land from poor residents to industrial developers did not guarantee progressive development. Despite the efforts of the Detroit Plan, By the 1960s, foreign automobile companies, such as Volkswagen, were outselling American car manufacturers, while American auto exports were falling drastically (Conot 555). A decade later, the debacle at Poletown demonstrated that the paternal partnership between the city of Detroit and the automobile industry was at an end. The example of Poletown provides just one example of the failure of private enterprise to sufficiently provide for the needs of Detroiters. In 1980, eminent domain laws legalized the taking of private land for the public good. Mayor Coleman Young and the city of Detroit agreed to sell the land on which the community of Poletown rested to the General Motors Corporation. The city hoped the plant would provide thousands of jobs and encourage the emergence of other industrial development in the area. Furthermore, the city found itself in competition with other US cities for General Motors’ business, as GM struggled to compete within a global marketplace. Desperate to keep the automaker in town, Mayor Young insisted that Detroit must become more business-friendly to avoid losing the GM plant to a greenfield site in Oklahoma (Wylie 49). For the residents of Poletown, this plan involved the razing of 1,400 homes, 144 locally owned stores, and 16 churches. A new policy called the “quick-take” law allowed the municipal government to streamline the eminent domain process, bypassing community opposition to transfer the land quickly to GM. The story of Poletown is a dramatic example of a trend in Detroit’s continual decline – and evidence of the changing relationship between industry, the municipal government, and the bodies in the street.

Jane Jacobs describes a vibrant neighborhood as one with “eyes on the street” (45). According to Jacobs, a community in which people are present and active in their neighborhoods, in which people sit on the porch or watch out the window, is a community that can provide safety for its residents. First-hand accounts of former residents describe Poletown as a vibrant community according to Jacobs’ description. “People watched out for one another in Poletown...Everytime I went on vacation...we wouldn’t have to worry about somebody breaking into the house or stealing anything; we watch our own neighborhood over here. You don’t have no baloney going on [sic]” (Wylie 22).

While there were eyes on the street, the buildings, shops, restaurants, and churches, were also infused with local energy. The Immaculate Conception Church was built in 1935 entirely from local funds. The church was a center of cultural life, providing education and aid to the immigrant parish. In 1981, Immaculate Conception became a center for the resistance against the demolition of the community. When a SWAT team forcibly entered the church, a large group of parishioners and protesters, many who had occupied the church for weeks, refused to leave. A tow truck ripped the doors of the church open. Several protesters had to be taken out of the church by force. Protesters were arrested, including a group of elderly women. Sixty police officers protected the demolition process, as stained glass windows, the bell tower, and the organ were taken apart. Presently all that remains of Poletown is a walled Jewish cemetery, hidden within the grounds of the sprawling GM Plant that now occupies the land, accessible only with permission of security guards from the church. On the land of the Beth Olem (*Eternal Home*) Cemetery, many bodies are literally and metaphorically buried: the bodies of homes demolished, the memory of eyes that protected the streets, the hands that repaired lawn mowers and served barbecue. Zygmunt Plater, professor of law at Boston College, labeled the Poletown incident, “a

classic case study of how not to do industrial development...It adds anguished flesh and blood to the technical text of legal case reports” (quoted in Wylie back cover). The life of the community, as it was contained within the materiality of the infrastructure of that community, is now buried.

The incident of Poletown is only one example of the violence done to existing communities within the city. Mayor Young, who presided over the destruction of Poletown, was himself a resident of what was known as the Black Bottom area of Detroit. Along with a future mayor, the neighborhood was home to Marvin Gaye, the Supremes, and Smoky Robinson. Aretha Franklin’s father pastored the New Bethel Baptist Church on Hastings Street. Nightclubs in the area supported jazz artists such as Duke Ellington and Ella Fitzgerald (Binelli 20). This thriving center of the African-American community, and enclave of American music, was halved by Interstate-94 in the 1950s, destroying around 3,000 homes and crippling neighborhood businesses. The destruction of the Black Bottom neighborhoods fueled increasing resentment against racist housing policies and employment practices. In the 1960s, this area of Detroit served as an incubator for radical, sometimes violent, black empowerment thought and action, including the UHURU organization and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) branch of Wayne State University (Conot 688). The activity of these groups, elements of which later organized as the Black Power Party, contributed to the overflow of violence in the riots of 1967. The outpouring of violence in the 1960s in Detroit must be considered within the context of geographic and bodily violence of Fordism.

As the events of the early and mid-twentieth century suggest, the Fordist economic engine had dramatic effects within Detroit. Spatial practices changed, with the development of the suburbs and the resulting isolation of the inner city. Interacting with space through a car changed the way individuals viewed urban spaces. The construction of roads literally

restructured neighborhoods. Favoritism towards the needs of manufacturing emboldened state apparatus to quickly give over neighborhoods to plants, such as in the case of Poletown. The availability of mass consumer goods aligned with the practice of shopping as a central activity of life, necessitating and facilitated by shopping centers.

As the events of Fordism in Detroit show, these events affected the body and the way society sees the body. Working on an assembly line mechanizes the body. The early workers of Ford were managed into a specific ideal of an American, which included limitations on language, food and drink, hygiene and sleeping habits. The practices of Fordism and the burgeoning of automobile culture continued and enabled racial segregation and prejudice (and to some extent, racial identity and empowerment). Where people could live, and what defined a household or family, solidified into a cultural ideal. I have presented these occurrences, moving from the first Ford plant to some circumstances of car-centered culture, to analyze the context of the interaction between the reader and *The Ruins of Detroit*. Additionally, the label of Fordism forms the foundation for an understanding of post-Fordism, the condition of late capitalism that Marchand and Meffre's camera finds Detroit, and the condition within the reader interprets *The Ruins*.

Post-Fordism

The violent riots of the 1960s in Detroit, throughout the United States, and Europe, mark a symbolic transition to post-Fordism. Post-Fordism is often described synonymously with *late capitalism* or *neoliberalism*. Post-Fordism in Detroit represents a shift in the relationship between automobile corporations, the municipal government, and the people of Detroit. This shift represents a new way of doing business that had drastic material, local and hyper-local

consequences on the geography of the city and its residents. After delineating the essential elements of post-Fordism, I describe some events within Detroit's development that are indicative examples of this economic and cultural condition.

Post-Fordism represents the move beyond the regulation of industry by the state to regulation by the global economy. Trends of deregulation enable industries to find labor in the most business-friendly environments, where low, or no, minimum wages combine with little state interference. In turn, nations, states, and cities are forced to compete in a "race to the bottom," providing tax breaks, fewer environmental regulations, and other incentives to attract potential employers. Since 1972, the United States has shifted from an industrial economy to an economy based on information technology, financial services, and media industries (Harvey 373). David Harvey notes several effects of this new economy, all of which make their mark upon urban spaces and the body. One primary characteristic of the post-Fordist economy is the alienation of workers from the previously paternalistic corporation. Without the paternalism of the loyal corporation or the support of unions, workers are increasingly put in part-time, adjunct, or contract positions, receiving little to no benefits. The post-Fordist worker is highly mobile, changing jobs often. According to a longitudinal study of American workers by the US Department of Labor, workers born between 1980 and 1984 held an average of six jobs (US Bureau of Labor Statistics). The skills needed in the post-Fordist economy require specialized training beyond high school. In the absence of employment for unskilled and poor workers, an informal sector develops that is outside the legitimate business community (Harvey 372). Drug trafficking, prostitution, sweatshops, babysitting, and informal housekeeping services allow disenfranchised workers to make a living, although without the protection and benefits of formal employment.

A second characteristic of the post-Fordist economy involves the production of symbolic capital. To attract the skilled and affluent labor force needed in a post-Fordist economy, municipal governments, in cooperation with the business community, create places of culture and taste for consumption. Symbolic capital includes building neighborhoods in a fabricated style to recall authentic architectural periods. Manufactured, nostalgic design stands in for authentic public identity. Harvey articulates this phenomena as the “mobilization of the spectacle” (“Flexible Accumulation” 376). Places of spectacle, such as shopping plazas, theme parks, and sports stadiums, are a hallmark of post-Fordist cities, as places to express and consume taste and culture in a controlled environment.

As Western economies shift from manufacturing to consumerism, many became increasingly concerned with the reliance on image over substance. In France, for instance, Guy Debord and the Situationists cautioned against what they saw as the “spectacle society,” a civilization that manufactured consent from illusion, that is, entirely through mediated images. In the 1960s Debord wrote that the society of the spectacle, a consequence of hypercapitalism, results in alienation and homogenization. Within this society, authentic human relationships are impossible, and access to reality is constantly disrupted by representations. Debord’s philosophy is an indicator of the anxiety inherent within postindustrial civilizations.

The causes for anxiety in Detroit are myriad and ongoing. And yet, the anxiety of Detroit itself has become a commodity. Representations of cities become crucial within the post-Fordist environment, as cities must attract non-native, highly mobile workers and businesses. The conception of the *cityscape* describes a rhetorical landscape of images and narratives that are crucial for a region’s identity. The later part of the 20th century in Detroit was marked by a high crime rate, disinvestment, and mismanagement. The grim reality of contemporary Detroit has led

to the construction of its own cityscape, an identity that both discourages and motivates change in the area. John Atkinson and Clay Rosati, in their analysis of the online “Fabulous Ruins of Detroit” tour, note, “In the case of Detroit, the economic and political problems of the city become the mediated experience that one can visit without actually being there, or mediate how to be there... Interestingly, this bleak urban landscape is contrasted with a new one or, rather, an affirmation of the old one’s constitutive opposite” (49). The construction of Detroit through mediated images, such as photographs of the abandoned architecture, allows post-Fordist Detroit to be visited and consumed by outsiders. As some who construct and disseminate Detroit via images are not native to Detroit (Marchand and Meffre, for instance, are French), anyone has the potential to construct Detroit. Thus, the cityscape of Detroit has become the evidence for its decline while simultaneously presenting itself as open to reinvention.

The rhetorical cityscape of Detroit as a city in ruin is more than a series of mediated images. The devastation of the city had material and measurable sociological impact as it transitioned out of the industrial era. In the early 21st century, many American automobile-manufacturing plants, such as GM and Ford, continued a pattern of plant closures that had begun in the 1950s (Gregory). In 2005, a budget deficit of \$230 million burdened the city of Detroit, forcing the city to eliminate thousands of city positions and end 24-hour bus service. Meanwhile, the mayoral term of Kwame Kilpatrick (2002–2008) was wracked with charges of mismanagement and corruption (Thottam; Yaccino). Urban population in the early 21st century continued to decline dramatically, as it had in the second half of the 20th. Census data in 2010 revealed a return to population levels of 1910. From 2000 to 2010, Detroit lost of quarter of its residents (Knapp). The material infrastructure of downtown was similarly affected. Preserving and restoring the vacant architectural remains was financially impossible. In some cases, even

demolition was prohibitively expensive, as in the case of the sprawling Packard Motors Plant. At over eighty acres and filled with environmental contaminants, demolition of the plant is estimated to cost at least twenty million dollars (Dixon and Lamb). The mortgage crisis of 2007 and 2008 further depleted the economic resources of this once-wealthy city; some properties were almost worthless (McGreal).

New development in the city center has focused on attracting tourism and low-wage service jobs. The Renaissance Center, constructed in the 1980s, is a glass and steel complex of skyscrapers that houses a convention center, office spaces, and several casinos. The architecture is optimistic and new, looking to a future without nostalgia for Detroit's past. Yet the complex, designed by architect John Portman, has also been criticized for its insular design, which seems to protect itself from the streets surrounding it. As originally constructed, a high concrete wall, thirteen lanes of Jefferson Avenue, the Detroit River, and a railway depot surrounded the ground floor, making it almost impenetrable to pedestrians (Thomas 156). The Renaissance Center was designed to attract those at a distance: wealthy businesses, conventions, and hotel guests. The construction of the Renaissance Center served the auxiliary function of looking like progress. The complex, seated by the river and striking public monuments such as the Monument to Joe Lewis (or "The Fist"), was built to express a hopeful vision of wealth and relevance. "[Mayor Coleman Young] used highly visible redevelopment projects—such as the Joe Louis Arena, the Detroit People Mover, and developer Max Fisher's Riverfront Towers apartment complex—to cover up deep-seated social and economic decline... 'You could look at Detroit from [Canada]... and understand Detroit pretty much at a glance' (Thomas 158)" (Gallagher and LaWare 100).

The Renaissance Center is not the only attempt to rebrand Detroit. As an apposite reaction against the cityscape of Detroit, entrepreneurs are attempting to disrupt the prevailing narrative of the city. In part due to cheap real estate, Detroit is attracting start-up companies, artists, and young urbanists, intrigued by the potential of what seems like a blank slate. Pockets of downtown are slowly gentrifying. For example, Michigan Central Depot is often depicted as an icon of decline. It is featured on the cover of *The Ruins of Detroit*; it sits abandoned, with broken windows and graffiti. Yet within sight of the station on Michigan Avenue, across the lawn of Roosevelt Park (which sits in front of the depot), begins a strip of popular restaurants and coffee shops within renovated shop fronts. Tech companies such as Twitter are opening offices downtown. Woodward Avenue has been dubbed *Webward Avenue*. Detroit Venture Partners, a firm that invests in tech startups in Detroit, has invested in eighteen startups in two years, all with offices in the M@dison Building on Woodward (Harris).

An emerging trend to develop urban gardens reimagines the city of Detroit by re-appropriating brownfield spaces left by abandoned and demolished industrial and residential sites. These gardens serve neighborhoods that lack access to fresh food, since no grocery store chains exist in the downtown area. Some of these urban gardens are small cooperatives, such as the non-profit Urban Farming or the D-Town farm of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network. Some are run by large corporate structures, including the largest urban farm in the world, Hantz Farms (Cockrall-King 245). Others have expressed new understandings of city spaces through community art. The Heidelberg Project is a powerful expression of the already-existing life on the streets of Detroit. Residents/artists, following the lead of Tyree Guyton, attach colorful materials to the exterior of their homes. These materials are found objects, such as stuffed animals, furniture and appliances. The project was partly dismantled by the Detroit city

government in 1991 and again in 1999, and is repeatedly targeted by arsonists (*Connecting the Dots*). Of the original ten houses of the Heidelberg Project, six have been destroyed by fire (Davey). The persistence of the folk art project suggests that the work is an act of resistance. In a sense the urban farming movement and local action through community art and activism envision Detroit in a way that the municipal government and the national public cannot. Picturing Detroit as neither an empty husk nor the booming metropolis of the 1920s, these movements approach Detroit at eye-level. As Jacobs described a thriving neighborhood as one with eyes on the street, those groups attempt to address the human needs of already-existing Detroit. Although these projects are local, they attract national attention. They are highly visual transformations of neighborhoods and land.

The mobilization of the spectacle, the mercurial civic loyalty of global corporations, and a nation of citizen-consumers have changed the character of Detroit in the twenty-first century. The practice of looking, consuming mediated images, distinguishes the era of post-Fordism. Looking at Detroit has become a popular hobby, as Detroit's problems have become a commodity in themselves. The popularity of ruin porn, ruin tourism, and Detroit boosterism presents Detroit as an empty place, a depopulated place of empty land and empty buildings. *The Ruins of Detroit* is a text that works within this identity of Detroit.

As I have hoped to show within this chapter, that identity, as presented through an interaction with *The Ruins of Detroit*, is traced through the movement and touches between material bodies in space. Fordism and post-Fordism serve as markers to delineate a change in the characteristics of spatial relationships, not necessarily as markers of teleological moral progression. Analyzing history by regarding space as ideological reveals ways that the bodies of Detroiters have been constricted, oppressed, changed, and enabled. The material consequences of

urban organization show up in myriad ways within *The Ruins of Detroit*. These consequences are represented within the photographs and within the experience of viewing, reading, and engaging with the text.

Specific events in the history of this city become part of the extra-textual resources that readers will draw upon as they experience *The Ruins*. Yet it is, more broadly, the practice of acknowledging the material consequences of spatial geography, as Rickert describes it, “our fundamental disposition concerning how we are in the world, how we dwell” (xiii), that will reveal the rhetorical power through an interaction with *The Ruins of Detroit*. An understanding of Fordism and the shift to post-Fordist conditions, as this chapter illustrates, reveals motivations for how contemporary choices about geography are made. The practice of redirecting Detroit will be guided by current understandings of what a city should be. As the reader digests *The Ruins*, the reader will interact with this space according to post-Fordist ways of organizing space. In the wake of the disappearance of manufacturing into more hidden parts of the world, readers will seek places of consumption and spectacle. Recycling Detroit will involve acting remotely through virtual spaces of interaction. In the absence of the paternal beneficence of the automobile corporations, informal, *perilegal* spatial practices develop, such as trespassing into abandoned train depots to photograph, film, or paint; or scrapping the metal from abandoned schools that the city cannot afford to demolish. These behaviors, which are shown in *The Ruins*, are also literally enacted by the reader through practices of looking, purchasing and choosing. Thus the space of Detroit, represented, influences the development of Detroit, the landmass.

Bodily practices and spatial organization have been linked historically; the history of Detroit viewed through economic relationships of production and resulting infrastructure show that. However, there is a long history of the human relationship with crumbling architecture

represented through ruins, a tradition that *The Ruins of Detroit* participates in as much as it references practices of development within the downtown area of Detroit. While the spatial practices within the Fordist and post-Fordist era were consequential to position the reader as a unique sort of colonist, understanding how humans have engaged with materials, expressed themselves through materials, and been defined by material infrastructure will more firmly place the reader's position as a participant within *The Ruins*. The following chapter will analyze this relationship within the aesthetics of Western art, tying the human body with the built environment.

CHAPTER 3: THE BODY IN RUINS / THE RUINED BODY

The Ruins of Detroit recalls a long tradition of ruins within Western art, literally as the title labels the photographs as representations of ruins, through representations of decaying buildings, and in the way the text links decaying architecture with the human body. The practice of symbolically tying ruined buildings with the body is as old as the tradition of representing ruins artistically. These aesthetic manifestations become an expression of the ways in which architecture, place, and space work upon the corpus. Considering that, the bodies represented with and through ruins are usually as broken, disabled, or fragmented as the buildings crumbling around them. Within the entangled nature of architecture and body, how bodies are portrayed aesthetically amidst ruins has provided meaning and identity for citizens. A study of aesthetics, intimately related to both the body and affective experience, gives clues to how identity is constructed through art. Art asserts itself in a manner that complicates the nature of subject and object. In seeking to describe public identity, such the identity of Detroit presented through ruins, aesthetics can reveal the interconnectedness between reader, city, and citizen. This thesis broadly looks at the affective rhetorical resources available through, and enacted by, a reading of *The Ruins*, pointing out a practice of identifying Detroit through characteristics of contemporary identity. The study of ruins in art contextualizes feelings of fragmentation amidst broken buildings within the book and through an interaction with the book. *The Ruins* is a collection of photographs that contains strong artistic elements that cohere with a tradition of ruins that has served to provide an identity to ruined bodies. Similarly, the reader of *The Ruins* is also a body amongst ruins. The interaction of the reader with the collection of photographs and the collection itself constitute the text under study. Therefore, analyzing a history of connecting the body and

ruins aesthetically within Western art is crucial to understanding the rhetorical effect of an interaction with *The Ruins*. It draws our attention to a centuries-old cultural relationship with ruins, a relationship that if not immediately recognized is unconsciously remembered through common tropes. By looking at pieces representative of three broad themes within the aesthetics of ruins, this chapter analyzes both aesthetics as a portrayer of the affective experience, and provides a reference to a common theme aligning the body, embodiment and ruined architecture. The first theme describes art in praise of technical power. The second portrays the power of natural elements upon ruins. The third denotes an exploration of the aesthetic quality of disability, specifically highlighting the dis-abled human body, in effect merging the ruin and the body. To begin this project requires a discussion of what aesthetics is, or has come to be, including a discussion of the integrated goals of rhetorical study and aesthetics. After considering six artworks exhibiting the three themes, I conclude by discussing the implications of this particular tradition for the larger rhetorical study of the text.

Finding a Space for the Sensible within Reason: Aesthetics

The philosophy of aesthetics began to be discussed as a discipline by 18th century German philosophers. Influenced by Platonic idealism, Kant describes aesthetics as an activity of judgment according to feelings related to a transcendental, idealist understanding of beauty (Kant 51). Countering Kant's idealism, twentieth-century philosopher Theodor Adorno describes aesthetic judgment as an interaction between the subject and the material art object, rather than any external standard of beauty (Adorno 165). In any case, the philosophy of aesthetics began less as a study of the formal qualities of fine art and more of a way to account for the material, bodily phenomenon of experiencing objects that have a strong affect on the body. As such, the

study moved philosophy beyond the abstract, transcendental space of Reason, acknowledging the sensate experience of materials, while also attempting to apply reason to the study of sensations. In its original conception, labeling the beautiful became a way of taming the sensate. As Alexander Baumgarten wrote in *Aesthetica* (1750), “Science is not to be dragged down to the region of sensibility, but the sensible is to be lifted to the dignity of knowledge” (Cassirer 340). The study of aesthetics gives definition to a subject as one who experiences. Initially, the conception of aesthetics conceived by German philosophers of the 18th century was a means of qualifying science and reason as superior to subjective bodily experience. A natural consequence of this qualification, however, is that it acknowledges and gives value to the power of the object as acting upon the subject.

Later conceptions of aesthetics emphasized the closer connective experience between subject and aesthetic object. In the late modern period, the art object bestows and reflects the subject’s identity. Terry Eagleton describes this shift as a consequence of political and economic changes in Europe in the 18th and early 19th centuries. A growing middle class required more autonomy and less autocratic control (23). Eagleton notes that the shift towards individualism shifted the philosophical importance of aesthetics. A nascent materialism developed from the inception of aesthetics. As Eagleton summarizes, “Aesthetics is born as a discourse of the body” (13). The experiential bodily effects produced by aesthetic objects have been increasingly valued since the 18th century. In his book *Disability Aesthetics*, published in 2010, Tobin Siebers argues, for example, that the study of aesthetics bestows value and humanity upon human bodies that are targets of exclusion and disgust (“Disability Aesthetics” 64). In the 20th century and into the 21st, the move away from idealism has blurred the line between subject and object, and both subject and object support the identity of each other. Hence, it should be no surprise that John Dewey

writes in *Art as Experience* (1934): “Instead of signifying being shut up within one’s own private feelings and sensations...[experience] signifies active and alert commerce with the world; at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events” (25).

In his analysis of the National Jazz Museum, Gregory Clark argues that the aesthetic experience as described by Dewey and Kenneth Burke is inherently rhetorical, in that it is an embodied occurrence of meaning-making. He demonstrates that the experience of the National Jazz Museum in Harlem constructs an identity for visitors. Although the museum does not have a permanent location, through events, exhibits, and performances in diverse locations,

patrons of the museum are invited to by these encounters to share an identity as they understand themselves—at least temporarily—to be at home in this place...When they encounter jazz as an expression of the community of Harlem that, in turn, epitomizes the community of the nation, people change what they think Harlem is, what they think America is, and who they think they are in relation to those collective identities. (121, 124)

Reading *The Ruins of Detroit* is a similar aesthetic experience. Readers of *The Ruins* will refer to a past of ruins in Western art. An exhaustive account of the ruins in art would be impossible and impractical, so I have culled six works from the Quattrocento to postmodernity that illustrate the practice of aligning ruins with the body, and the changing motivation behind this alignment.

Technical Power. Andrea Mantegna’s *St. Sebastian* (Figure 2) and Charles Estienne’s “Heart and Lungs” from *De Dissectione Partium Corporis Humani Libri Tres* (Figure 3), are two pieces that literally display the human body placed upon dilapidated architecture. The style of these artifacts emphasize a humanist optimism that is capable of describing, analyzing, and therefore subduing nature in a manner never before achieved, although reminiscent of the power of the ancient Roman Empire.

The early Italian Renaissance painting *Saint Sebastian* by Andrea Mantegna portrays the saint bound with rope to a Corinthian column. The saint's body, shot through with arrows, shares equal space in the central panel with the Corinthian column behind him, a disabled body of another sort. The column is attached to a ruined archway from antiquity; behind the central bodies in the distance other ruins comingle with contemporary structures.

Mantegna venerates the saint by showcasing the suffering of the corpus. The dramatic expression of his face, the anatomically realistic portrayal of his body, and the posture of his pose demonstrate his anguish. The contemporary viewers of the painting could see their own body represented in the painting. Saint Sebastian was the protector from the plague, which was thought to travel through the air like arrows. As an intercessor for plague victims during the pandemic of the 15th century, Saint Sebastian and *St. Sebastain*, the painting, took on an aesthetic relationship with ruin and injury that reached out to the body of the contemporary audience (Laborie).

Although the saint's body is venerated, the true focus of this painting is a boastful mastery of natural elements. Renaissance artists built off the technical teaching of the ancients in areas such as geometry and anatomy to paint and sculpt in a more realistic style. Celebrating and using these advances, Mantegna establishes a dominant relationship over space through his ability to express realistic perspective. The equal emphasis on the body of the saint and the column suggests a reverence for the architecture, and architectural expertise, of the Roman Empire. Ancient Roman architecture was notable in its stylistic and mechanical consistency over its vast empire. Caesar conquered peoples; the architecture of the empire conquered lands as varied as Great Britain and northern Africa. The ruins in *St. Sebastian* are still lively. There is a stone foot by the saint's foot, as life-like a representation as the bleeding saint's. Stone bodies

line the head of the Corinthian column, which is also flocked with vines, verdant in stone as they are living within the scene. Ruins within the landscape in the distance are thriving structures, crowded with people. These elements of life within the ruins suggest the continued relevance of ancient Rome.

The arrows that pierce the body of the saint are both literal arrows and symbols of technical mastery of space and perspective. The arrow is an abstract symbol of direct movement through space. The lines of the arrows echo the lines of perspective that give the painting dimension in a way that medieval art neglected. As Michel Jeanneret points out, expressing movement was a high priority for Renaissance artists. In contrast to the flat iconographical pieces of the European Middle Ages, “The humanists, partisans of change,...accorded veritable epistemic and aesthetic status to variation, accepted that ideas and forms fluctuate, that they live normally in temporality, and that it behooves art and thought to integrate these mutations, no matter how capricious they might be” (3). Notably, the arrows pierce through Sebastian’s body. The abstract, conceptual conquest of perspective and space subdues the living body.

These same themes are repeated with more acute intensity in Charles Estienne’s anatomical textbook *De Dissectione Partium Corporis Humani*. One representative woodcut, “Heart and Lungs,” illustrates a human figure draped across ruins. He sits on a crumbling stone structure, next to a broken arch. The liveliness of the ruin is shown in the parallel style of the ivy and the cracks in the stone. The Renaissance principles of perspective are emphasized in the receding lines of the stone steps. More an object of dissection than a whole body, his chest cavity is open to display lungs and a heart. Lines cross his chest for the purposes of labeling the organs. A key in the bottom left of the print explains the labeled parts. These lines, like the arrows streaking through St. Sebastian’s body, are marks of technical power over the body. The

confidence of realistic perspective permitted Renaissance thinkers to conquer space and the body. Even as they celebrated the strong earthly body, this was a relationship that celebrated control through surveillance and new frontiers of scientific knowledge. The body is fully bound by instruments of ordered control. In fact, the body is lifeless, rendered as an open frontier for inspection and classification. Like St. Sebastian, who interceded for plague victims, the figure in the anatomical textbook is sacrificed for the larger purpose of ever-expanding medical knowledge.

Natural Power. The relationship of ruins to the body has been a relationship of conquering, of surveillance for the purposes of human progress. Ruins have likewise been used to express the ineffectuality of human efforts within the vast power of nature. In other words, studying aesthetics acknowledges the power of the subject to feel the affective qualities of the external world; the awareness of these objective qualities can overwhelm the senses, on the other hand, leaving the subject to who or what is acting. In this case, nature overpowers the efforts of humans to conquer natural elements. In contrast to the confident mastery of space and the body, ruins have also been used to portray the ruinous power of affective elements. Edmund Burke's notion of the sublime is helpful here. The sublime describes the intimidation, almost terror, and sometimes disgust, created by a powerful aesthetic experience. Burke writes, "the passion caused by the great and sublime in nature...is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other" (58). A resplendent sunset can be sublime; so can a violent sea. Two pieces, Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin's *The Ray* (Figure 4), and Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem *Ozymandias* (1818) effectively illustrate the aesthetic

portrayal of affective elements conquering human efforts at agency or rationality. These pieces illustrate the Pandora's box of a rationality that attempts to account for the affective resources of external forces.

Daniel Cottom describes Chardin's *The Ray* as a parody of Renaissance works like *St.*

Sebastian:

At the center of the painting, or at once everywhere and nowhere, geometry is mortified...Hung ever so slightly off kilter, its right wing curling toward the viewer, the diamond of the rayfish has been slashed open. In place of its smooth, pale, bilaterally symmetrical ventral surface, we are shown gaping hollows and ungainly, blood-tinged internal structures. It is as if a curtain has been yanked aside in the theater of this creature, which greets us as a tragicomic mask. Its surface conflates genres just as the entire painting, a still life, presents itself also as a caricatural portrait and as a mock-historical treatment of martyrdom. ("Orifices Extended in Space" 1)

The Ray depicts an eviscerated stingray hanging from an abattoir hook. The ray hangs above a still-life arrangement of shellfish and bottles. The underside of the ray resembles a face, with a parted slit for a mouth and two dots that seem like eyes. Blood and water drip from the fish.

Although it is not beautiful, it is nonetheless powerful in its subject matter and presentation. *The Ray* does not portray ruins per se, but it elicits a strong affective response. In fact, in its blatant evisceration of cherished symbols of geometrical perfection, the painting is a comment on the affective power of objects; their ability to convey disgust, revulsion, and attraction. While works such as Estienne's anatomical woodcuts and Mantegna's portrayal of St. Sebastian conquer the flesh through symmetry, rational arrangement, and geometric discipline, *The Ray* mocks such confidence. The body, of a fish, yet like a human, overwhelms human attempts at conquering space through rational arrangement. In doing so, the body asserts itself as oppressed by the discipline of spatial arrangement celebrated within Renaissance architecture and art. Like *St. Sebastian* and the "Heart and Lungs" woodcut, *The Ray* features a line. Cutting across the

drooping square-bodied ray is the line of evisceration. Cottom describes the metonymy of the ray as a comment on both space and human identification: “*The Ray* proposes that the basis of representation, the foundation of all our knowing of things, is not a surface but an orifice, or a line opening onto heterogeneous surfaces of potential identification...the line appears as an evisceration of the human will to see itself affirmed in all things” (*Cannibals and Philosophers* 17). While the lines cutting across the Renaissance pieces cleanly brush over the body, the line of *The Ray* spills the body out, refusing the control of geometric organization.

In its relation of the body with ruins, the poetry and literature of the Romantic period similarly conveys the power of nature over human attempts to control space. For example, the poet Percy Shelly exemplified Romantic interest in ruins in the poem *Ozymandias*. The inscription of a decaying statue tells the reader to “Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair” (Shelly 11). “Round the decay / Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare / The lone and level sands stretch far away” (Shelly 12–14). The irony of the boastful empire within an ocean of sand conveys the futility of human effort in the passage of time. Like *The Ray*, the body is broken, mocking the attempts of the artist to express immortality and transcendence. *Ozymandias* instead notes the sublime might of time and space. While Estienne’s anatomical textbook dismembered the human body, Shelly points to the broken body as a consequence of natural forces completely out of the human realm of conquest.

Disability Aesthetics: The Merging of Body and Ruin. As industrial capitalism spread across the globe, massive consumption in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries guaranteed that the memory of human empires would leave behind more than crumbling statues. The advent of photography in the 20th century documented this trend and encouraged the development of

consumerism and consumer waste. Jacob Riis used photography to document the decay of the industrial city in *How the Other Half Lives*. While these photographs of the tenement slums of New York capture ruined spaces, they simultaneously capture the faces of disenfranchised people.

Twentieth century art in all mediums continued to explore ruined and disabled bodies. However, a focus on ruin as waste emerged. Human bodies and architectural bodies seemed ruined in a new way – not over centuries, not according to the natural process of decay, but because of accelerating production and the needs of the industrial machine. The discomforts of the industrial city: pollution, traffic, surveillance and oppressive architecture, merge seamlessly into an aesthetic of human trauma. In contemporary art, ruins often serve as a vessel for the splintered body; a body that co-mingles with the materials of wrecked architecture, that is represented as yet another deconstructing structure. Makarius writes, “ruins reflect an image of a contemporary world where meaning splits into an infinitude of branches; implicitly, they figure the obliteration of that point toward which the march of history seemed to converge, mirroring the atomization of the individual in society and in life” (8). The atomized individual within contemporary art hints at the historical condition of late modernity, a point of proliferation of signs, images, and technologies of communication. A sense of fragmentation is thought to pervade contemporary everyday life (Ott and Keeling 364). The history of aesthetics seems increasingly to be about understanding and communicating otherness, describing difference. Exploring difference aesthetically, then, is an action that involves exploring the obscene, the injured, the ill, and the set apart. Meanwhile, the disappearance of distinct places, as seen through the mass conformity of the suburban landscape, and the remarkable consequences on global climate, brings awareness to the detritus and waste of the post-industrial landscape.

Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (Figure 5) is an exaggerated representation of the combined nature of body and ruin in the twentieth century. The work is not in praise of transcendent idealistic principles of geometric abstraction; nor a celebration of the organic elements of the bodily experience, but a comment on the disappearance of both. *Spiral Jetty* is a volute mound of earth materials such as basalt, limestone, and dirt from the shore, stretching out in a coil 1,500 feet in length into the Great Salt Lake (Fineberg 315). The spiral pattern mocks the linearity of the straight shore, yet the jetty is made of the same material as the shore. Large white salt pieces gathered around the spiral soon after its construction. Smithson noted that the shape of the jetty mimicked the molecular structure of the salt crystals that adumbrated the edge of the structure. Like the land around it, the piece is constantly changing, slowly eroding, exposed during drier periods, and submerged when water levels rise. Smithson's work explored the concept of entropy, which eventually combine both body and structure into rubble. *Spiral Jetty* becomes a sort of anti-ruin. Inspired by the placelessness of the post-industrial landscape, he describes the philosophy behind much of his work in the essay, "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey": "That zero panorama seemed to contain *ruins in reverse*, that is—all the constructions that would eventually be built. This is the opposite of the 'romantic ruin' because the buildings don't *fall* into ruin but rather *rise* into ruin before they are built" (Smithson 54–55). In *Spiral Jetty*, Smithson attempted to channel the original state of ruin with the scale of geological time, a state indifferent to human history, existing as rubble prior to humanity and falling back to rubble after humanity.

In the spirit of the geological sense of time and memory, in addition to practicalities of scale, Smithson's work was often necessarily exhibited outside of gallery spaces and museums. As the museum is a place of memory within human proportions, Smithson's land art pieces were

not fit to be remembered or analyzed in these contained spaces. Rather, Smithson chose his own methods of memory. Through photographing his pieces, filming them, and explaining them through his essays, Smithson portrayed and contained the works in a manner that allowed him to manipulate scale, color, and perspective. In his essay “The Spiral Jetty,” Smithson states that he filmed the land piece for his documentary film *The Spiral Jetty* via helicopter, to display the land art on a disorienting scale, to remove the piece from the context of human history and human cultural orientations (109). Just as in several of the pieces discussed above, the feature that is expressed most distinctly in the structure *Spiral Jetty*, the film *The Spiral Jetty*, and the essay “The Spiral Jetty,” is a bold line. In the case of this piece, the line is a spiral, a revolving whirlpool that leads within the lake. The line is the line of mineral molecular lattice, and the strata of rock layers. It is essentially a path of eonic, entropic movement, both prehistoric and posthistoric. Smithson’s work represents an expression of transcendence over human existence and human attempts to conquer space.

Marc Quinn’s work *Alison Lapper Pregnant* (Figure 6) merges the body and ruins in a different way. Alison Lapper, the model, is herself an artist who uses her unusual bodily figure to comment on the aesthetics of disability. Lapper has no arms and severely foreshortened legs. In *Alison Lapper Pregnant*, her nude form sits on the plinth, eight months pregnant. The marble sculpture occupied the 4th Plinth on Trafalgar Square in London, sharing the space with statues of a king, two generals, and a naval admiral (Siebers *Disability Aesthetics* 41). The statue is disruptive: it contrasts strongly with the other pieces in the square. Lapper is female, pregnant, nude, disabled, and unusually formed. Yet, Quinn’s work contains familiar elements. *Alison Lapper Pregnant* can be compared to the famous Venus de Milo statue of the Hellenic goddess housed within the Louvre.

Although the statue was constructed around the 2nd century BCE, the Aphrodite of Milos, or Venus de Milo, is admired as a masterpiece in the ruined form in which it was found in 1820. Historians are not certain that the statue is of Aphrodite, yet she has been gifted with the name because of the work's strong aesthetic appeal (Astier). She is called the goddess of beauty, despite her condition. Yet part of her aesthetic appeal rests in the formal qualities of her elongated, armless torso. Her disability gives a balance and grace to the piece. René Magritte specifically emphasizes the vulnerability of her injury in 1913, by reimagining the Venus de Milo in *Les Menottes de Cuivre* (Siebers 5). *Les Menottes de Cuivre* (*The Copper Handcuffs*) is a painted replica of the Venus de Milo that emphasizes her disability rather than her marble architecture. Her skin is painted to resemble flesh, and her arm stumps are painted blood red as if to reveal injury. Alison Lapper similarly highlights the aesthetics of disability within the Venus de Milo through the use of her own body. Marc Quinn represents her as a ruin, but as nonetheless beautiful. Or, like the Aphrodite of Milos, the ruin of Lapper's body is an aspect of her beauty. Her distinctness encompasses the power of ruins by aligning the sublime aesthetics of disability with the formal aesthetic quality of ancient ruins. The disabled body and the crumbling building are aesthetically aligned. While the line of Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* swirls both ruins and body into oblivion, the line of Alison Lapper's spine builds up body and ruin as one.

The history of the aesthetics of ruins and the body lead to a contemporary question of the nature of subjectivity itself, of otherness, which is simultaneously questioned and accentuated. Within the condition of postmodernity, ruin and body overlap. Ruins serve to communicate exclusion and the recognition of difference. As the body is a ruin of sorts, a place of uniqueness or difference is recognized. The qualities of broken spaces impose on the human body. When broken buildings and broken bodies have affective power, it is no longer clear who, or what, is

the meaning maker. The “author” is not the one who necessarily provides meaning to a creation. Aesthetics becomes a way that excluded, dis-abled (ruined) and absent bodies communicate their exclusion in relation to other bodies. Bodies are recognized as diverse elements. Ruins are buildings in descent. Yet in the late twentieth century, “descent attaches itself to the body” (Foucault “Nietzsche” 147) Whereas in ancient cultures buildings and stone were inscribed with records of events, in the late modern period the body is described as “the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated Self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration” (Foucault “Nietzsche” 148). Ruin and body merge.

The study of aesthetics began as a way to rationally account for the bodily experience of objective reality. It is the argument of this thesis, however, that the experience of reading a text such as *The Ruins of Detroit* can be more precisely described as a rhetorical experience. There are discursive and pre-discursive elements of *The Ruins* that goad the reader to create an identity for Detroit. These elements do not necessarily come directly from the pages of the photographs. The rhetorical power is not necessarily transmitted intentionally via Yves Marchand or Romain Meffre. Rather, it comes through the experience of the interaction between reader and book. While an aesthetic analysis may look at what is beautiful, moving, or meaningful, the rhetorical analysis will look at what the experience of interacting with a text asks the participants to do, to be, or to fundamentally change. It moves the creative onus from the text onto the reader or viewer. Grasping the aesthetics of ruins is crucial to understanding the experience of *The Ruins*, but a rhetorical analysis will look beyond lines and into vectors (lines extending, representing movement). When we experience *The Ruins of Detroit*, what are we motivated to do?

This essay analyzed two paintings that used ruins to express mastery over the human

form, two works that used ruins to mock human efforts within the power of natural forces, and two newer works expressing acceptance of the intertwined characteristics of body, architecture, disabled body, and ruin. Searching through aesthetic ruins is a process by which humans have explored their positionality in the world. Although *The Ruins* may appear muddled, the furthest place to obtain an understanding about organizing principles for urbanity, places of brokenness can, and have often been, used to organize understanding about our orientation in space. In the next chapter I will return to Marchand and Meffre's bound collection of photographs. In light of the traits of post-Fordism, readers approach the city as consumers, performing a fragmented identity through mediated expressions of taste. Yet, as the aesthetic expression of human bodies within ruins shows, an identity of fragmentation is intimately tied to the qualities of ruins. Colonizing Detroit within the context of Detroit and ruins positions the reader as a unique kind of explorer, one whose experiences will be formed by and within materials unlike mythic or geographical frontiers that have existed before.



Figure 2. Andrea Mantegna, *Saint Sebastian*. Paris, Musée du Louvre. Tempera on canvas. 255 x 140 cm. 1470-80.

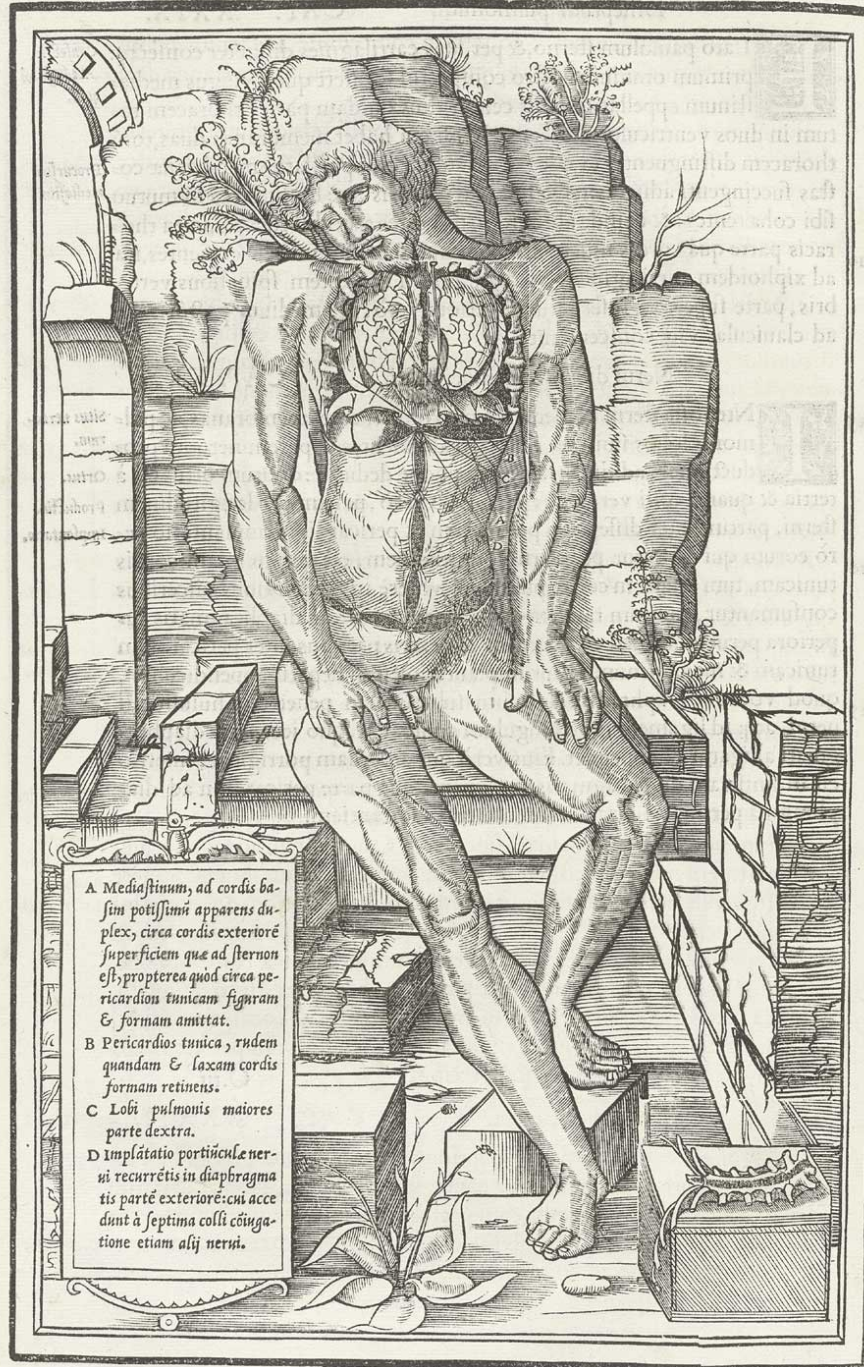


Figure 3. Charles Estienne. "Heart and Lungs." *De Dissectione Partium Corporis Humani Libri Tres*. Woodcut. 1554.



Figure 4. Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin, *The Ray*. Paris, Musée du Louvre. Oil on canvas. 114.5 x 146 cm. 1725–1726.



Figure 5. Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*. Great Salt Lake, Utah. Black basalt, limestone rocks, and earth. 457.2 m. April 1970.



Figure 6. Marc Quinn. *Alison Lapper Pregnant*. London, 4th Plinth, Trafalgar Square. Marble. 355 x 180.5 x 260 cm. 2005.

CHAPTER 4: POST-FORDIST DETROIT THROUGH THE AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF *THE RUINS OF DETROIT*

The Ruins of Detroit breaks free from former restraints of property and land ownership. The photographers trespass into privately owned, precarious structures. The confinements of drawers, shelves, walls and roofs no longer hold their contents within the spaces of *The Ruins*. The images provide privileged viewing of the spilled contents. The reader's access to these disinhibited/disinhabited spaces enables entitled exploration. For Marchand and Meffre, for the scores of adventure-seekers who travel to Detroit to explore the abandoned spaces of the city, and for those who explore the ruins via photographs, Detroit is a kind of frontier. Richard Slotkin writes on the concept of the frontier as myth in American history. He notes,

In every phase of Frontier development...the prospective colonist or investor was asked to regard the new territory as a Garden of Earthly Delights, 'earth's onely paradise' (as Elizabethan poets called it), endowed with fabulous wealth and fertility, gorgeous and exotic to the aesthetic mind, a Garden of Eden to be settled by men forewarned of serpents...Since the Frontier lies outside the Metropolis, achievement there is not limited by the competition of a whole society, nor by the rules and hierarchies of the established order: these rules are remade according to the occasion, and after the preferences of the makers; and property is there for the taking. (Slotkin *The Fatal Environment* 40–41)

Detroit within *The Ruins* is not an idealized virgin wilderness, as a mythic frontier is often portrayed, but it is a neo-frontier, presented as open and available to the reader to colonize. Through the affective experience of reading *The Ruins*, coming to a text of absence and fragmentation, the reader is encouraged to colonize Detroit within a post-Fordist context. Seeing Detroit as a post-Fordist frontier involves participating intimately with (attuning to) materials. Detroit as a post-Fordist frontier means the frontier is fragmented, polysemous, and approached through layers of mediated representations. Detroit as a post-Fordist frontier involves anxiety about the unburying ghostly bodies of people, now absent. Although the reader of *The Ruins*

reacts in revulsion to the consequences of industrial capitalism, *The Ruins* simultaneously uses practices of consumerism to present Detroit as an open, available space. As in all mythic spaces, Detroit, presented through an interaction with *The Ruins*, is meaningful in its absences, in what is unacknowledged yet adumbrated by its negative space. Reading *The Ruins* provides an example of how we colonize, explore, exert power over, and “map” spaces within a post-Fordist context. As neo-colonialist, the readers’ activity aligns with post-Fordist practices: an attunement to materials through environments of interaction, acting as a fragmented self (sensing prosthetically), and an ongoing struggle to properly acknowledge those most seriously affected by the spatial and economic consequences of the transition to a post-industrial urban life. To analyze the rhetorical power of absence, and the related experience of fragmentation experienced through *The Ruins of Detroit*, I present three rhetorical and affective experiences of interaction with Marchand and Meffre’s text that encourage the reader to view/consume Detroit through a post-Fordist lens, recycling the myth of the frontier.

The first way that an interaction with *The Ruins* moves the reader to view Detroit as a new kind of frontier is through an acknowledgement of some of the failures of previous capitalist development. In the emphasis on waste (in practice and substance), there is a mournful lamentation at the inefficient use of resources. Here, fragmentation and absence, broken and missing pieces highlight the ideal (what could have or should have been hinting at what can be). This draws attention to the importance of materials and human interaction with materials for human sense-making. The formerly arranged spaces, closed drawers, and dry roofs gave order and legitimated power for the institutions represented. In the disordered mess of the spaces in their current condition, these spaces no longer respect the legitimacy of these institutions within Detroit. Yet there is a sense that the objects remaining have potential for use in new ways.

The second experience of Detroit as a neo-frontier provides a feeling of entitled access to resources that are presented as available for adaptive re-use by re-imagining former boundaries of property or intended use. Fragmentation and absence are presented as potential opportunities for the reader. Absence is particularly presented as a significantly valuable resource. This experience parallels the experience of the post-Fordist self: participating via layers of representation.

Lastly, anxiety is manifested by the absent and/or fragmented bodily presence of the indigenous population. Questions remain unanswered about where they are and what space will belong to them in the post-Fordist frontier. Just as in the frontier of the 19th century American west, the existing culture of the native residents within the city are noted, yet buried. The anxiety of this neglect is a part of the affective phenomena of reading *The Ruins*. While an experience of shame about waste and the opportunity of absent spaces welcome the reader to use the space of Detroit in a way that mitigates anxiety about industrial capitalism, noting the unburied bodies of Detroit is a troubling consequence of reader-as-colonialist, forcing the reader to acknowledge the indigenous population of Detroit. All of these experiences are a rhetorical performance enacted through the dialectical play between absence and presence. What is absent—human beings, orientation to place, and productivity—actually serves to produce what ghostly remnants of human *being* are, or potentially are, present and active within Detroit. At the same time, this absence notably neglects the lively presences of people in currently existing Detroit.

These notions build largely upon Richard Slotkin's description of the myth of the frontier (*Regeneration Through Violence; The Fatal Environment; Gunfighter Nation*). A frontier identity is intrinsically a relationship with space, subjectivity, and the body. It draws from an understanding of space, presence, and absence as ideologically laden concepts. In previous

chapters I have discussed how spatial, in addition to historical, consequences matter rhetorically, especially within the events of Detroit's history. I have discussed how ruins and the body have been aligned throughout the history of Western art. Analyzing the experience of reading *The Ruins of Detroit* through a lens of a post-Fordist frontier draws these constructs together. While previous studies of the rhetoric of the decay in Detroit have placed themselves within the work of memory studies (Atkinson & Rosati, Gallagher & LaWare), analyzing Detroit within the context of a frontier looks at how we interpret spaces for their future potential use or meaning. To illustrate how a reading of *The Ruins of Detroit* motivates the reader to colonize Detroit as a post-Fordist frontier, I first theorize the frontier as myth and rhetorical concept. Within this conversation, conceptualizations of subjectivity, agency, and problems with the notion of subjectivity reveal themselves. This conversation enables an analysis of *The Ruins of Detroit*, or, more specifically, *The Ruins of Detroit* as an interactive experience that presents Detroit as a neo-frontier for the reader.

Hence, the primary goal of this chapter: to expand on three kinds of experiences constituting Detroit as a post-Fordist frontier for the reader of *The Ruins of Detroit*. I approach each experience individually, looking at specific references in the photographs or characteristics of the text.

Frontier Mythology

Richard Slotkin notes, "The Frontier in whose real geography Custer moved and acted was already in his own time a space defined less by maps and surveys than by myths and illusions, projective fantasies, wild anticipations, extravagant expectations" (11). As Roland Barthes notes, "Myth is constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things" (142). In *The*

Ruins of Detroit, the reader finds the physical disintegration of historic architecture enfolded the symbolic disintegration of the institutions that historically structured urban life. In the loss of this structure, and in the marked absence of human life, the photographs open to a mythological interpretation that is akin to a familiar American narrative, that of the frontier myth. The frontier myth represents a set of narratives, symbols, and stereotypes that have guided US American historical thought and interpretation throughout its history.

The Turner thesis of 1893, promoted by Frederick J. Turner in *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, attributed qualities of American individualism to the availability of the supposed wild western landscape. According to Turner, the western wilderness of the North American continent fostered a rebellious, anti-urban self-reliance (Turner 226). Turner's thesis suggested a direct tie between the frontier American democracy, and capitalism, directly influencing public policy into the 20th century. Rhetoric incorporating Turner's frontier thesis has motivated military action in Vietnam, space exploration and research through NASA, and inspired John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign (Slotkin *The Fatal Environment* 17–19).

Yet the myth of the frontier as Turner described it has been analyzed differently within critical studies. Contrary to Turner's claim that the frontier enabled and encouraged independent governance, free thought, and democracy, Richard Slotkin analyzes the frontier myth as essentially a justification for capitalist development, supporting industrialism, and the inherent oppression and violence of these systems. Slotkin works with Barthes' understanding of myth as a method of naturalizing historical processes. He recharacterizes the American frontier in his trilogy including *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860*, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization 1800–1890*, and *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century America*. In

his work, he details several consistent themes presented by the American frontier myth. Slotkin critiques the ideology that presents the frontier as independent and wild, not encumbered by the confinements or refinements of urban life. Yet the frontier at all times was in fact delineated by the needs of industry, property ownership, and state restrictions. The notion of the frontier as a bastion of individualism and reckless freedom is an invention heavily promoted *after* the closing of the frontier, through documents like the Turner thesis; Theodore Roosevelt's *The Winning of the West*; conservation rhetoric that secured the preservation of natural parkland; and the solidification of legends within the Western film genre. During the 19th century, western expansion was guided by the needs of urban industry. The construction of the railroad, the development of agriculture, and mining opportunities opened the frontier. The prospect of economic development motivated continued exploitation of the land, resources, and people of the western continent. These industries existed for the benefit of what Richard Slotkin calls the Metropolis, encompassing not only the geographical city, but also the social and economic engine of bourgeois society. Slotkin notes several characteristics of the frontier myth. The frontier myth ignores or disregards the "perilous consequences of capitalist development in the New World" (*The Fatal Environment* 47). As a result, the frontier myth simplifies social conflict and exploitation, such as that of the indigenous tribes, into a simple mythic narrative. By simplifying the conflicts into a simple narrative and discrediting the influence of capitalism, the frontier focuses on the Manichean conflict between the cowboy and the American Indian, ignoring the stresses and existence of class conflict and the imbalance between property-owners and laborers.

By the end of the 19th century, the frontier was officially closed. The 20th century of the United States saw increased settlement on the frontier as industry expanded domestically,

drawing waves of immigration. Population increased dramatically as the economy, and the trends of warfare, supported growth. The availability and infrastructure built for the automobile continued to affirm that the frontier was settled and urbanity was total. Cities sprawled into suburban landscapes dotted with shopping malls and traced with interstates. The interstate highway system provided a paved passage from coast to coast, border to border. Arizona, the last state to be ratified in the continental US, held a population of around 120,000 in 1900. By the year 2000, over five million residents inhabited the state (US Census). Industry had contributed to the growth and settlement of the frontier, but in the latter half of the 20th century industry began to change, changing the characteristics of settlement and the nature of *frontier*. The United States economy adjusted to a post-Fordist economy, relying on industries such as technology design, service, and marketing. American companies moved manufacturing plants overseas. This shift has had a dramatic effect on the economy and infrastructure of cities like Detroit, who struggled to transition as automobile-manufacturing plants eliminated jobs.

Waste

Detroit, Motor City, classically the birthplace and center of US American automobile manufacturing, would seem to be a place of production. Even if the reader of *The Ruins of Detroit* was unaware of Detroit's reputation and history as a center of American manufacturing, the introductory essay by historian Thomas Sugrue, "City of Ruins," informs the reader on Detroit's past, with supplemental archival photographs. This history contrasts with the main body of text: two hundred photographs that seem to persuade the reader that nothing is being produced in Detroit. The tools of production sit rusting in snow.

The captions of the photographs, for instance, provide a short title containing the name of the building. However, sometimes Marchand and Meffre supply a longer explanation of the building in the corresponding photograph, describing the building's former use and its subsequent demise. On page 87 the caption reads: "The Metropolitan Building (1925), of Gothic and medieval inspiration, was entirely dedicated to jewelry and watch making. It included manufacturing and repair workshops and a shopping mall. Like all businesses that gradually moved to the suburbs, the Metropolitan was no exception and closed in 1979." This note says little about the building's presence and function in the current landscape. The Metropolitan Building still stands, but the authors' caption suggests that the Metropolitan Building has been use-less for over thirty years. The fuller captions (with a few exceptions), all provide information about the building's past usage and productivity. Cass Technical High School receives an entire paragraph of commentary. The reader is told that Cass Tech "produced most of Detroit's elite in all fields," but that the now abandoned school building "offers a disturbing vision of a disposable product, used and then thrown away" (94). These captions suggest that the current state of the structure is without use and abandoned.

The subjects that Marchand and Meffre choose to photograph further emphasize the absence of productivity in wasted spaces. Many of the photographs capture still cityscapes. Symbols like undisturbed snowfall and the absence of traffic encourage us to believe that movement, and therefore production, is absent. The photographs of interior spaces are disproportionately buildings that are former centers of production or manufacturing. Within those photographs that reveal interior spaces, many contain representations of tools or machines that are used for manufacturing purposes, either as a part of an assembly line or as a machine in an office. In all cases, the machine or tool is inert, broken, or decaying (see figure 7). The

prevalence of broken materials and infrastructure throughout *The Ruins of Detroit* convinces the reader that things are not being fixed or maintained in Detroit – another signal that productive activity is absent in the city. In every photograph in the main body of the text, at least one of the objects shown in every image is broken. “Broken” means existing in a state of change from its originally functioning state that makes the object difficult, impossible, or undesirable to use as it was originally created. Broken streets, slanted doors, overturned toilets, paperback novels floating in water, laboratory equipment spilling its contents onto empty desks all suggest that nothing is being made in Detroit *and* little is being maintained. The absence of productivity amidst the presence of tools highlights the disposability of these objects. By highlighting these objects divorced from their original intended use, *The Ruins* appreciates the bare materiality of the tool, the office, the room, or the machine.

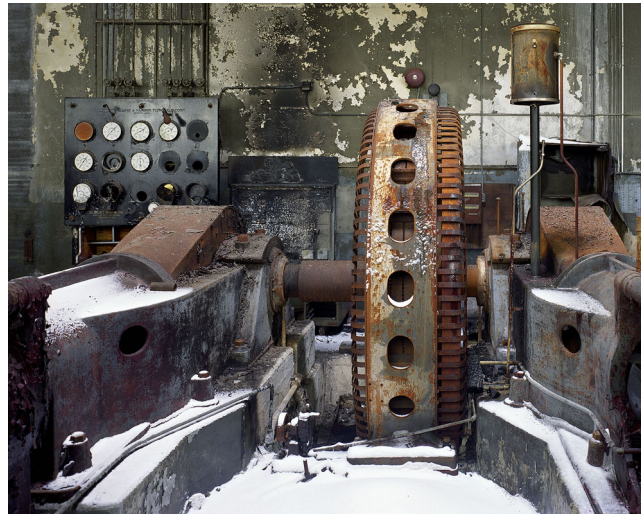


Figure 7. “Detroit Railway and Harbor Terminals Warehouse” (35).

An emphasis on seeming waste, which is unused potential that cannot or will not be used, is a rhetorical strategy, motivating action. This perspective is in line with dialectical materialism, which, as Dana Cloud points out, “emphasizes the idea that class position and the experience of exploitation combine to form an epistemological potential in the dialectical contradiction

between the lived experience of exploitation and the mystifications of ideology” (Cloud 292). The unused potential within *The Ruins* is perhaps not the availability for the tools or machines presented therein to be reused; rather these materials (and material environments) have untapped rhetorical potential to teach the reader of the significance of materiality. Photographs portraying human interaction with other spaces of unused (or misused) potential have been used for rhetorical effect. For instance, Jacob Riis’ photographs of the slums of New York in *How the Other Half Lives* (1898) enthused progressive slum-improvement initiatives.

Rhetorical regret over the misuse of materials points to the importance of what Thomas Rickert calls attunement to the rhetorical power of the material environment. Rickert points out the woven connection between subject and material object. He quotes Nietzsche, who describes the world as “a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back” (Nietzsche 550). As Nietzsche describes, forces of influence flow freely through both subject and object. As the agent acts, so do the objects act upon the agent. Rickert calls for a rethinking of the duality between subject and object. He proposes a new attunement to ambient rhetoric, which involves noting the power of place and the extra-discursive elements of the text. Understanding the rhetorical effect of prehistoric cave paintings at Lascaux, for instance, involves not simply attunement to the visual symbols of the animals on the wall, but also a recognition of the powerful auditory experience of being in the specific location in the cave. Attunement to ambient rhetoric would involve a recognition of bodily presence in the cave as part of the experience of the cave paintings. To have the authentic experience of cave paintings at Lascaux requires a presence of sense-able body as well as the stimuli within the cave that would produce it: such as sights, sounds, and temperatures. For Rickert, not recognizing the push and pull of forces between what would classically be subject and object prevents a complete

understanding of inter/intra-action with the world. In a similar manner, *The Ruins of Detroit* foregrounds what was background. Within the absence of, and isolation from, human subjects, the power of materials, and the significance of human interaction with materials is (somewhat) allowed to assert itself.

In the resting stillness of factories and other places of production, the significance of these objects becomes apparent, alongside a realization that these environments have value in their presentation of present absence (see figure 8). A series of photographs capturing interior and exterior shots of the Packard Motors plant, the Fisher Body 21 plant, and other nearby plants, especially emphasizes waste, the dialectical contradiction of material reality and the expectations of ideology. Placed at the beginning of the text, after some introductory material, eight shots of this plant (which are grouped within a series of images of other abandoned industrial plants) introduce the reader to the landscape of Detroit. The view of the expansive southern side of the abandoned plant stretches out like an entire city of empty factories. The caption tells the reader the plant inhabits an area of fifty football fields (22). The lots are not maintained. Hardy plants shoot up through cement cracks, or snow piles on sagging roofs. Paint peels off the surfaces; bricks are split and scattered. Windows are cracked and missing, allowing trespassers, like the photographers, to enter uninhibited.



Figure 8. “Packard Motors Plant” (227).

The photograph, “Painting line, Fisher Body 21 Plant” (24), is a peculiar expression of the condition of manufacturing plants in Detroit. The photograph displays a stretch of track inside a green-tinted assembly room, where presumably the body of an automobile would travel through, as workers and machines painted and assembled the body. The track is a strong symbol of the assembly line and Fordist manufacturing practices. Yet in the moment of the photograph, nothing passes along the track. Ironically, the space is littered with paint. Paint chips off the walls, ceiling and floor. There is plenty of paint, and a track, but no progress. In that sense, in that absence, the outline of the latent goods not on the assembly line makes itself apparent.

The concept of absence is rhetorically significant in any medium. In Ott, Aoki, and Dickinson’s study of the Cody Firearms museum, displaying firearms as art pieces behind glass cases, arranged artfully, evades a history of gun violence by leaving out visual or auditory reminders of gun violence. The decorative elements of the guns are emphasized over their function as tools of death and violence. As such, the museum, an institution of memory, remembers the U. S. American history of firearms as a past sterilized of gun violence. This

absence has an affective, material power over the audience, as it directs the gaze of the viewer to desensitizing repetition of the technological or craft elements of gunmanship (Ott, Aoki, & Dickinson 216).

Throughout the hundreds of images of *The Ruins*, a similar theme emerges. A wasteful neglect of resources and tools highlights the ghostly presence of what these environments are, were, or could be capable of. In the repeated display of tools and spaces broken and unused, there is a sense of shame produced by perusing *The Ruins*. The consequences of Fordist manufacturing, and the infrastructure surrounding this development, are not ignored. In fact, they are exaggerated by the scale and volume with which the decay of the Fordist system is represented within *The Ruins*. While Frederick Turner and Richard Slotkin's American frontier ignore the consequences of capitalist development, an experience reading *The Ruins* begins and ends with a blunt confrontation of mass systemic failure, through the repeated presentation of failed institutions: manufacturing plants, schools, churches, and police services, to name a few. Yet now, through *The Ruins*, these environments become a mediated expression of value for the material objects and environments themselves. A failure to recognize the inherent value of the material environments, in the post-Fordist context, is now morphed into a photograph, in a photography book, to be experienced as an object of artistic taste.

Entitled Access

Within the potential energy of the waste presented, within the absence and fragmentation, there is simultaneously an epideictic tone to the presentation of the waste. That is, in the mournful loss of what was destroyed, there is simultaneously a celebration of virtues inherent in what is missing or destroyed. For example, in a series of twenty-four photographs of the front

façades of twenty-four apartment buildings, the distinct artistry of each building is noted (136–141). The buildings are shown as a set of four on each page, framed from the exact same perspective each time. Hence, what shines forth is the uniqueness of each structure. The reader feels that perhaps these buildings should be preserved. These apartments are presented as unoccupied. Some are merely shells of brick, with rectangular spaces where windows used to be, now displaying the sky behind the building. In a sense, they are open: not to the residents of Detroit to live in, but to the reader to interact with through looking, via the entitled access granted by Marchand and Meffre’s camera.

While there is shame at the consequences of Fordist development, there is potential for reuse and adaptation presented within *The Ruins*. The experience of reading Marchand and Meffre’s text enables privileged access to these latent resources within Detroit. As *The Ruins of Detroit* indicates, the remnants of a successful industrial economy: the manufacturing plants, workers, and culture supported by the wealth of industrialism, remain in broken pieces in Detroit. An interaction with *The Ruins* uses post-Fordist consumer practices to invite the reader to view Detroit as a cleansed space, available for renewed settlement. The suggestion of creative re-use, a value inherent in post-Fordist culture, is hinted by the interaction of the reader with the text, and through representations of artistic practices within the photographs.

From the initial moment the reader is introduced to *The Ruins of Detroit*, this interaction is characterized by post-Fordist consumer practices and identity. Many readers have purchased the book, at a cost of \$80 US dollars or more. The readers hold, open, and look at the pictures as an act of cultural consumption. Owning *The Ruins of Detroit* is a symbol of taste and culture. Although the photographs represent decay, the collection of photographs is an expensive, weighty coffee table art book, containing art pieces that are displayed in gallery tours worldwide.

The medium of photography itself can motivate an audience. Material aspects of photography point to the affective power of the medium. The photograph literally moves the bodies of readers in specific ways (Gronbeck 134). Multiple facets of the camera limit the range of sight: the viewfinder frames the image, the angle of the camera restricts the perspective, the aperture prejudices some aspects of the image to focus on while others are blurred, colors are distorted, and time is manipulated by the extent of the exposure. The photograph dictates what the eye of the viewer will see, and the eyes of the viewer react. The cornea reacts to the bending of light from the photograph, the eyes dilate or contract in a physiological response to the content of the image, resulting in other bodily reactions of varying intensities, such as goosebumps, tears, or increasing levels of cortisol. The medium essentially becomes an extension of the physical body, as Marshall McLuhan articulates: “The transformations of technology have the character or organic evolution because all technologies are extensions of our physical being” (164). Mediums of visual rhetoric become physical vestiges of the human body. Experiencing *The Ruins* requires physical effort from the reader. The book is heavy and large. With a wingspan of over thirty inches, to turn the pages, the reader needs a wide table space or a generous lap. The pages are large, and most of the full-color photographs take up the entire page. The reader must look at a large surface area. Within each photograph, there is a lot to look *at*. Therefore, to say that the rhetorical power of photographs is epistemic or constitutive can mean that an audience is encouraged to participate in a collective affective, material experience. In the case of reading *The Ruins*, consuming the photographs combines the practice of consumer choice.

A sense of availability pervades the images within *The Ruins*. Absence and fragmentation serve to present a frontier that is cleansed. Perhaps the most apparent absence exists in the absence of people. Within the 203 photos taken by Marchand and Meffre, living people only

appear in six of the photos. In every photo in which a living person is present, they are presented anonymously. In four of these images, these people are blurred due to long exposure photography (45, 91, 112, 227). In all cases, the figures are either too small, camouflaged, or otherwise too hidden to be recognized as the subject of the photograph. The *Ruins* presents image after image of cityscapes, street scenes, and interior places of formerly productive activity. These are places where the viewer would expect to find people. Within over two hundred images this expectation is never satisfied.

People are absent, and there is similarly an absence of identified space. There is a lack of direction and orientation as the reader moves through *The Ruins*, suggesting anonymous spaces. Michel de Certeau states, “A place is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. It thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location. A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability” (117). Certeau characterizes a space as the place in use: a *practiced*, dynamic place. Yet the spaces represented by *The Ruins* lack stability or evidence of use.

Over two hundred images are presented, but these images are not arranged in any apparent order – there are no chapters, no subheadings, and the reader is left to guess at a logic for the order in which the photographs are presented. The order that the images are presented within *The Ruins of Detroit* leaves the reader without orientation. Although representations from all over downtown Detroit are photographed, the order of the locations presented does not follow an indicated geographical pattern. The images do have discrete captions, usually only labeling the name of the building or street, such as “Melted Clock, Cass Technical High School” (figure 9). These captions give the reader, who may be unfamiliar with Detroit’s geography, scant guidance as to where these buildings and streetscapes are located. The photographs seem

placeless, without orientation. Placelessness emerges from anonymity of location, an absence of navigational aids, a map, or any indication of where a building is located in relation to other markers.



Figure 9. “Melted Clock, Cass Technical High School” (101).

The way the photographs are framed enhances the feeling of placelessness. A caption may identify an interior as the Broderick Tower, but the room itself is one room among many rooms. Because many of the interior shots are of rooms within skyscrapers, it is not even clear what floor the interior is on, giving an impression of floating at an invisible height from the ground. Several of the shots are interior shots. While inner rooms are not necessarily place-less, an interior provides no reference to the rest of the city as a whole. Not only do the interior shots provide no orientation to the larger city, few provide any unique identity within the walls of the shot.

Although sometimes the materials within the space give a hint as to what the function of the room used to be—a dentist chair indicates a dental office, for example—the image does not reveal a specific identity for the room. Neither the image nor the caption indicate which dental office the room is. More importantly, none of the interior shots can identify how the space should

be identified at the moment of the image capture. These interior shots leave out the function of the rooms in their current state, instead focusing on their former function, or simply listing the name of the building, suggesting that these buildings have little current social function.

Of the 203 photographs in the text, 118 (58%) are interior shots that provide little visibility to the outside. Of the 82 photographs that capture the outer facades of buildings or streetscapes, many of these (eight) contain exterior facades of buildings that spill outside of the frame on at least two of edges. The cover image of the book, for instance, captures the Michigan Depot, but the edges of the building extend beyond the photograph (see figure 8). In doing so, the viewer has no way of discerning where the building is, what its setting is like, and what the surrounding infrastructure is. Even among the exterior shots in which the buildings do not overwhelm the frame, 45 photographs are mostly represented by a building façade. That is, even though the shots are taken outdoors, orientation is impossible, as the lone building encapsulates the entire scene. In sum, 53 of the 82 photographs (65%) that were taken outside still provide no orientation to the rest of the city. The order that the images are presented within *The Ruins of Detroit* leaves the reader without orientation. There is no indication that *The Ruins* is a tour. Instead, each devastated scene is presented as alienated, yet equal in status (as a ruin). In sum, absence shows up in the disorientation that comes from a lack of directional context presented throughout the book, as well as in the absence of context for the background of destruction of each of the buildings. Each building is named, but each building is presented as existing in the same condition as all others. The Michigan Central Depot is a ruin under the same state of disrepair as the Packard Motor Plant, despite the differing contexts of their neglect and destruction.

Makarius writes, “ruins reflect an image of a contemporary world where meaning splits into an infinitude of branches; implicitly, they figure the obliteration of that point toward which the march of history seemed to converge, mirroring the atomization of the individual in society and in life” (8). The fragmentation of the ruins represented through the text mimic the splintered disorientation of subjective identity within a post-Fordist condition. The atomized individual within contemporary art hints at the historical condition of late modernity, a point of proliferation of signs, images, and technologies of communication. However, *The Ruins* suggest a point of connection through the photographs. The point of connection is found within the reader’s connection to the material environment of *The Ruins*. The post-Fordist self is split, but this can be a point of recognition of a diffuse self. Material environments are intimately woven through the reader, as the text is an interaction with the reader.

The post-Fordist frontier in Detroit is suggested through the reader’s interpretation of the book itself. It is work that produces something unique for each reader. The text provides a loose structure: a hard cover, a binding, a few essays, simple captions, and many colorful prints of photographs. The reader brings feelings, personal knowledge of the city, a capacity for storybuilding, and interest in the text. Using the resources of the book, how the reader organizes the meaning of *The Ruins of Detroit* is up to the reader. Looking at photographs of spaces in Detroit does not move the viewer through a geographical or topical path through the city. Rather, the text moves the reader’s eyes across disorienting, seemingly empty representations of fragmented architecture. The text guides the reader’s hands to open the cover, to move to the next page, and to place the book somewhere worthy of its heft. It is not actual Detroit that the reader moves through. It is the space of the reader’s world, and the reader’s affective responses to viewing the images of *The Ruins*. As they move through the space, their expectations interact

with the photographed images of the city. Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki call this interaction between the cognitive landscape and the experienced landscape an *experiential landscape* (30). Yet the act of looking at a photograph of a space adds an additional layer of distance from the material space itself. This distance increases both the feeling of disconnection and the need for sense-making symbols. Marchand and Meffre provide little familiar markers for the viewer, creating a heightened sense of anxiety, followed by a need to satisfy this anxiety through sense making. Absence, in its power to accentuate what is not present, creates an outline of what we wish to see and feel about the city. The reader must find relief from this anxiety, forcing new interpretations of what is present in the city, what space and place mean for the city, and what is produced in or by the city. In the absence of (apparent) people within Detroit and (apparent) proper place orientation, the onus rests on the reader to conquer this Garden of Earthly Delights, to define according to the reader's needs.

And the spaces within the text are presented as a vulnerable frontier space, a useable place, blank yet full of raw materials. Marchand and Meffre often capture panoramic shots of open fields, large empty auditoriums, and vacant streetscapes, as if the city is a blank canvas. Rooms, buildings and landscapes are pictured with piles of things within them, yet these objects are often deconstructed to the point where they can no longer be used for their original function. Notably, these assemblages of broken pieces are often set within frames, or strong, skeletal structures that frame the image as if the scene is within a bound frame for displaying the work within. For example, twelve squares on the exterior façade of the former Cass Technical High School frame images of the interior of twelve rooms within the school (see figure 10). These rooms are dark, contrasting with the tan brick of the high school building, yet it is clear what is within each room. There are piles of desks, office furniture, and papers. It is a space that needs to

be put together; the frames ask this of the reader. Overall, although the blankness and detritus of the spaces is somewhat disorienting, the way space is expressed does orient the reader in a way that is related to the production and potential production of space in a way that is both transgressive and creative.



Figure 10. “Courtyard, Cass Technical High School” (109).

Creative re-use is thus a suggested practice throughout *The Ruins*. For instance, the photographs themselves are aesthetic art objects. One photograph is labeled, “18th floor dentist cabinet, Broderick Tower” (figure 11); however, the disarray of the room suggests that the office has not been used for dentistry in many years. The paint is chipping, fragments of plaster cover the floor, wires and tubes hang limply from rusty implements. The furniture and implements in the office appear outdated for the 21st century. This image is interesting as a vintage dentist’s office and for the aesthetic value of the photograph of the space itself. The patient’s chair, including the sink bowl and tray that are attached, has an antique or retro quality of appliances from the 1960s. The dramatic arm of an insectoid lamp, reaching from the wall, is backlit by a window. The entire photograph is warmed by a dull yellow tone, with interesting lines and textures. Like all the photographs in *The Ruins*, the photograph is meant to be looked at. While

the function of the space may be labeled as “dentist cabinet,” while the contents of the office may suggest another function for the space, Marchand and Meffre are photographing these spaces as art objects, as pieces of a large, coffee-table art book. The readers of the book, in turn, use these spaces of Detroit, captured by the photographers, as art objects.



Figure 11. “18th Floor Dentist Cabinet, Broderick Tower” (57).

Photographs that demonstrate Detroiters using their spaces for art further declare this point. Several photographs capture the extensive graffiti within many of the abandoned buildings, such as the Michigan Grand Depot. The omnipresence of graffiti suggests a calling for personalized artwork, for a subjectivity that tags the spaces of Detroit. Graffiti appears in fifty of the 203 images, evidence of the presence of the hand all over Detroit. Even the cover of the bound book displays the façade of the Michigan Grand Depot with graffiti scrawled across the upper columns. Artwork, or material suggesting artistic creation, including graffiti, prints of paintings, prints of illustrated works, student drawings, pottery, musical instruments and folk art

projects, appears in 63 of the images. Student sketches and student pottery appear frequently. Prints of famous works of art are unfolding with messes on the floor or still hanging as posters on a classroom wall.

One poignant example of original art in *The Ruins* is a picture of an unusual dark green house. The image is placed late in the text, page 209, and seems to encapsulate a pattern that is more subtly hinted at in several earlier images. Colorful stuffed toys hang from the wooden boards of the house, seemingly weighted and faded from rain, snow and sun exposure. The house is part of the Heidelberg Project, in which the artist attaches objects found in the street to a series of houses in the neighborhood (208). This photograph is one of the few images in which the photographers describe the current use of the building, rather than referring to its prior function, pre-abandonment. A full-page caption on the previous page introduces the work of Tyree Guyton and his grandfather, who began decorating abandoned houses in the Heidelberg neighborhood in the mid-1980s, as a way to publicize the plight of the area's disinvestment. People are present and making things in Detroit. However inscrutable, these productions are nonetheless artistic creations utilizing the leftovers of apparent abandonment. Hence, the post-Fordist frontier identity produced by *The Ruins* acts within a unique Garden of Earthly delights: a garden built upon the remnant resources of industrialism, through acts of consumerism, personal choice, and personal creative expression.

Anxiety Resulting from Indigenous Remains

Much like the frontier that the first Anglo settlers of the American continent reached, Detroit's abandonment as represented by *The Ruins of Detroit* reflects the aftermath of the loss of a large population (Mann 2). William Bradford, governor of Massachusetts Bay in 1622,

wrote in his journal, “Thus farre hath the good Hand of God favoured our beginnings, in sweeping away great multitudes of the Natives by the small Pox a little before we went thither, that he might make room for us there” (Stevens 193). Marchand and Meffre have taken photographs of seemingly empty spaces in Detroit. Readers approach the text in a manner that is similar to the pilgrims approaching Plymouth, considering Laura M. Stevens thoughts on Bradford’s journal: “Even as it manifests a fascination with waste, Indian death suggests moral accomplishment and conveys narrative closure” (Stevens 193).

The felt absence of human beings in the frontier of Marchand and Meffre’s Detroit is almost oppressive. Yet, this absence highlights the pieces of humanity that are present. Actual human materiality emerges from *The Ruins*, although in pieces and phantoms. Subjectivity, a condition of identity and agency, classically refers to the one who acts, the one who thinks. Modernist interpretations of subjectivity, such as Descartes’, created a dualism between the subjective and objective. The objective, as the realm acted upon by the subjective, is more passively acted upon, with less agency and independent thought. The idea of the author, the democratic citizen, the free enlightened thinker, and the classic scientific method are all supported by a belief in a rational actor who creates from an independent and rational source. The first human subject that is made apparent by *The Ruins of Detroit* is the reader. In the absence of obvious subjects represented in the text, the first major protagonist in *The Ruins of Detroit* is the one holding the book. The reader of the text is required by the text to participate bodily and fully with the book.

The affective environment created through engagement with *The Ruins* mediates the experience of the reader. Considering how the text and reader’s body intertwine, postmodernist and post-structuralist thinkers, such as Louis Althusser, Theodor Adorno (*Aesthetic Theory*), and

Michel de Certeau (*The Practice of Everyday Life*) indicate that media texts are tools that both express hegemonic ideology and become places through which identities are bestowed upon readers. Yet, media texts are not autocratic distributors of subjectivity. Rather, the agency is enabled by the scaffolding of the text, found in the liminality of the text. Viewing Detroit expressed through *The Ruins of Detroit* as a frontier and as a text, the capacity for agency, and therefore embodied exploration, is enabled and restricted by the text.

Hence, to say Detroit as presented by *The Ruins* is a frontier is to say that it is an environment of interaction. The reader acts upon the text, interprets the text, and thus shapes an identity for the represented spaces. Likewise, the material and affective qualities of the interactive environment influence the identity of the reader. To frame Detroit as a frontier accords an identity of pioneer to the reader. Echoing Thomas Rickert (*Ambient Rhetoric*), Allen Scult (*Being Jewish/Reading Heidegger*), and Donna Haraway (*Modest-Witness@Second-Millennium*), among others, identity and agency, and hence the distinction between subject and object, are fluid, developing together as the factors of reader, culture, text, and all aspects of the material environment develop together through time.

This understanding foregrounds the significance of emplacement or situatedness. As Rickert emphasizes, rhetoric becomes about dwelling, analyzing the ecology of a place or situation to describe motivation and action. The frontier of Detroit is simultaneously a broader and reverse frontier. As the reader delves into the maze of abandoned structures within Detroit, the guiding influence of the text defines the reader too. Within the back and forth of influence and interpretation, the community of reader, text, and other humans [being] builds itself.

Within this understanding of an ecological subjectivity, the text produces a user of spaces: the reader of the text. However, other(ed) bodies, hidden within *The Ruins* assert their

presence. The bodies that do emerge in *The Ruins*, fragmented, broken, or present-in-their-absence, create a sense of anxiety. These unburying bodies create anxiety because they are reflective of the fragmented identity of the reader, and because they are a nagging reminder that the spaces of Detroit are not *really* vacant.

The bodies of the native residents of Detroit, those who do live in the city at the time of the photographs, are notably absent. Yet it is a fact that several hundred thousand people do live, work, and move the space of downtown Detroit. Absence can accentuate what is not present – in the invisible space an outline is created of what we wish to see and feel about the city. The reader must find relief from this anxiety, forcing new interpretations of what is present in the city, what space and place mean for the city, and what is produced in or by the city. These questions on what the presences of the indigenous population of Detroit remain unsolved, even amidst their acknowledged fragmented presence within the text.

What types of bodies are expressed as emerging within the ruins? Of the over two hundred bodies that are represented, the representations are various. Many (14) are cartoon-like abstractions, without clear race, ethnicity or gender. Many more (around 140) are African American or black. Around forty are depictions of apparently female figures. Children often appear as well. The predominance of African-Americans in the images is understandable given that the population of downtown Detroit was and is predominantly African-American. It points to the continuing burying of African American bodies within dominating structures.

The kind of bodies which are absent, or present in pieces, are particularly important, giving rhetorical significance to the way that which is present within an image highlights expectations for what should be with the scene. In one image captioned “Classroom, St. Margaret Mary School” (154), the absence of school children and teachers is alarming. Desks are

arranged in a classroom, some in rows, some overturned, and some arranged without orientation. This is a room full of seats, but no students. The blackboard is scribbled with markings: instructions for an assignment and a reminder for the final. These notes are written in chalk: a temporary medium, easily erased. The notes on the board in chalk, then, at first glance suggest recent classroom activity. These markings on the board belie the peeling paint that hangs off the walls and coats every surface like dust. Reading the text on the chalkboard reveals that the markings are over twenty years old: “11/08/83 Finals” (154). The materials in the room suggest an apocalyptic archeology; a sudden abandonment that has remained unchanged for over two decades. The scene brings to mind the ghostly presence of school children. The presence of the text on the board, the desks arranged and misarranged, and the structural degradation of the walls and floor give definition to the negative space of those students and teachers who would have used the room. The potential students in the parish of St. Margaret seem similarly abandoned. The absence of students and teachers suggests that the educational system of Detroit is similarly neglected—a neglect that was abrupt, disruptive, and never ameliorated, even many years later.

A separate image further highlights the violence and decay exhibited by the sudden disappearance of active students in a photograph captioned “Biology classroom, George W. Ferris Elementary School” (figure 12). A chalkboard, a wall lined with cabinets, and a large laboratory table indicate that this room originally functioned as a biology classroom. Certain objects in the room, bugs, anatomical models, glass pipettes and rulers, suggest that this was a space for studying living bodies. The absence of bodies within this image is two-fold. First, there are no students or teachers within the classroom, suggesting the pedagogical function of the room is over. Second, there are *disordered* bodies where one would expect to find ordered bodies. What were once specimens to be analyzed, measured, and dissected now lay strewn

haphazardly across the space. The uniformly structured drawers of the cabinets are open asymmetrically or out of their casing entirely. The central focus of the photograph is a large anatomical model of a woman's torso and head. The left half of her armless body is hollowed out to reveal her plastic ribs, breast tissue, kidneys and intestines. While some of these organs remain in place within the model's body, several of these organs have spilled out onto the table and floor. On the floor, an anatomical model of a child's head peaks out under rubble. An enlarged model of the structure of skin lies within the trash. On the wall, a hanging diagram details the organs inside a child's body. Actual, large, black and brown dead locusts are scattered throughout the classroom. Tools to order or measure specimens, such as rulers, drawers, tweezers and glass pipettes, are broken or disordered. Rhetorically, the presence of these disordered bodies draws parallels to the absent bodies.



Figure 12. "Biology Classroom, George W. Ferris Elementary School" (165).

The bodies within the classroom are not simply teachers and students. The symbols here hint at pillars of the Western tradition of studying/disciplining the body. The anatomical model recalls the iconic, so-called Venus de Milo, a symbol of white beauty even in her disfigurement. Dead locust bodies in piles on the table and floors remind the viewer in the Judeo-Christian

tradition of the plagues sent by the Hebrew God to punish Egypt. Perhaps some readers will even recognize the irony of the locusts in this image. In the Old Testament story, God sends a plague of locusts to Egypt specifically for Pharaoh's refusal to free the women and children of Israel from bondage (*New Revised Standard Version*, Exodus 10.9-12). Not only are students and teachers missing, their departure is heralded by a destructive swarm. The bodies of traditional education in this classroom are not only missing or absent, this image performs rhetorically to offer a statement about the abandonment of education in Detroit, using assemblages of materials to suggest that apocalyptic disappearance of students has a moral component related to the oppression of those bodies in Detroit, hinting specifically at women and children.

Pieces of human beings littered within the photographs suggest a history of oppression within failing institutions. Similarly, human organs, either actual or represented, including hearts, teeth, mandibles, genitalia, handprints, human heads, intestines, kidneys, lungs, brains and blood, portray brokenness as a result of some violence. Weapons used in assault or murder cases, such as bullets, hammers, and knives, also appear. Although these are not human parts, they have intimate connections with human bodies. One photograph of the interior of the Michigan Central Station captures magenta graffiti spray painted on the stone wall. Two hearts are drawn; one has a sword piercing through it (40): a simple example indicative of a pattern with which most of the human parts are represented.

In another photograph with the caption "Benjamin Atkins' evidence, Highland Park Police Station" (183), four plastic bags rest amongst crumbling plaster. The image contains a short paragraph-length caption explaining the bags were found in a "damp basement" (182). Each bag is labeled "EVIDENCE: DETROIT POLICE DEPT. CRIME LAB," and in pen, "Atkins, Benjamin" with the date "9-3-92." One bag has a red biohazard label, complete with a

description of its (unseen) contents: “Head Hairs.” Another contains a small vacutainer tube filled with red liquid that appears to be blood. Although Benjamin Atkins’ face is not pictured, the reader can see pieces of a body intimately related to Atkins’ body. These pieces may be parts of Atkins’ body or his victims. Either way, these are pieces of a broken body, *broken* in myriad ways. Marchand and Meffre explain in the caption that Benjamin Atkins was a serial killer who raped and murdered eleven women, dumping their bodies in abandoned buildings in the city. Atkins himself died of complications related to HIV four years into his prison sentence. Atkins’ evidence is a gruesome example of bodies, broken violently, emerging from the rubble.

The human bodies represented within the *Ruins* are spilling out of a formerly disciplining structure. The graffitied representations of human bodies are illegally painted inside the Michigan Central Depot, a privately owned building in which trespassing is prohibited (39). The portrait drawings in an art classroom (103) are unframed, spilling out of drawers, bent and folded along the floor. In the police station (figure 13), mug shots cover the floor. The mug shots are held in plastic binder sheets, as if they were formerly organized in files. Unburied bodies reveal their former oppression as victims of violence. The fact that these are representations of humans via an artistic medium is in itself an escape from disciplining structures. Even more uncovering human remnants make appearances in the form of artistic representation, whether through photographs, graffiti, painting, or pottery. Artistic portrayals of humans appear throughout the text within twenty-one photographs. These depictions are as abstract as a smile on a stick figure body, or as representational as a photograph. Photography captures an image in rebellion of time. Painting abstracts into patterns of light; sketching reduces form to line and shadow.



Figure 13. “Offices, Highland Park Police Station” (179).

In one abandoned classroom, which appears to be a room for art, handprints of paint are stamped on the wall (105). The handprints are multi-colored: black, red, green and blue. Considering persons represented through artistic mediums, in addition to depictions of people for documentation purposes (such as mug shots, wanted posters, class photos, and autopsy reports) there are over two hundred people represented with a face in *The Ruins*. (The meaning of photographs of documentation becomes less about police work and more about the meaning that the reader places on the images. Hence, they become more like “art,” in that their forensic function becomes less relevant.) The way people are depicted – via artistic mediums, represented through painting, pottery, photography, murals, and graffiti, suggests that art, the need for embodied representation, unburies the bodies of Detroit. Art in *The Ruins* becomes an expressive process, a way that those who were (who are) with the seemingly absent ruins reveal themselves not as victims, but as agents.

Akin to artistic expression, the touch of human hands is both evident throughout the photographs and an important aspect of the text itself. The evidence of touch is represented throughout the photographs. Objects that are primarily touched – such as switches, tools,

implements, or instruments, are emphasized. Pianos feature prominently in four of the images (see figure 14). Two images are close-ups of typewriters. The pianos and the typewriters have many keys pressed as if an invisible hand is currently pressing them. Several images capture light switches, machine switches, or appliance knobs. Dentist tools, a telephone switchboard, and an evidence room with several weapons are among the tools pictured. Implements for making visual art show up in several of the interior shots. The prevalence of tools suggests the act of touching for a purpose: to operate a machine, to make a product, or to create a work of art. In this way, human hands are present in the text.



Figure 14. “Piano, St. Albertus School” (147).

A full discussion of bodies in Detroit must include an analysis of citizen-bodies that are not human, but rather a prosthetics for the body. These prosthetic bodies are technology that becomes an extension of the human experience. These prosthetic bodies become subjects themselves. Prosthetic bodies, such as computers, cell phones, and automobiles, make decisions about our lives and communities, becoming political actors themselves. The automobile in Detroit, as in most urban environments, became a citizen-subject during the twentieth century as urban growth and development centered on the automobile (Duany and Plater-Syberk 41;

Dunham-Jones and Williamson x; Soja *Postmodern Geographies* 177, 241). The development of the interstate highway system, zoning regulations, and parking requirements insured that land use was geared towards convenient car travel. In a collection of images of the Motor City, it is significant that cars only appear sporadically. The lack of prosthetic bodies suggests that this kind of citizen-subjectivity is no longer present in Detroit.

Returning to the central thesis of Detroit as a post-Fordist frontier, the seemingly absent residents of the city belie the impression of abandoned lots returning to prairie, empty factories, and deserted streets when they reveal themselves as hauntingly present. Expressing themselves through jawbones, blood samples, or mug shots; as well as through pottery, graffiti of broken hearts, and paint handprints, evidence of their violent oppression *and* overflowing need for recognition is both ignored and in plain sight as the reader explores the text. In frontiers past, indigenous remains may have provided “narrative closure,” (Stevens 193) but in the post-Fordist frontier, struggling with the guilt of colonialism, the reader can no longer consider racial violence a “moral accomplishment” (Stevens 193), because even in images where the human form may not be visually, literally shown, bodily presence is experienced and felt – by the reader, through the reader’s own body, and through the exaggerated remnants of places for human fingers, through the evidence of unburied sensual possibilities that simultaneously contain the fingerprints of previous residents.

Post-Fordist Frontier Exploration

Richard Slotkin critiques the American frontier myth as inherently ignoring “the perilous consequences of capitalist development” (*The Fatal Environment* 47). Yet, reading *The Ruins of Detroit* brings a keen awareness to consequences. Turning every page, the reader asks “why”?

The reader, approaching *The Ruins of Detroit* within the context of post-Fordism, must acknowledge the waste left over from an era of industrialism. As Lefebvre attests, space is not ideologically neutral. Readers bring to the text their experience of fragmentation. In this way, the reader is invited to inhabit Detroit, as represented through *The Ruins*. Within the spaces represented and inhabited through reading the text, there is latent anxiety about the scattered remains of native Detroiters. *The Ruins of Detroit* produces anxiety about the possibility that Detroit is not as empty or cleansed as the photographs superficially represent. Here I return to Thomas Rickert's comment: "Rhetoric does not just change subjective states of mind; it transforms our fundamental disposition concerning how we are in the world, how we dwell. I use the term dwelling here to mean how people come together to flourish (or try to flourish) in a place, or better, how they come together in the continual making of a place; at the same time, that place is interwoven into the way they have come to be as they are – and as further disclosed through their dwelling practices" (xiii). *The Ruins of Detroit* enables a space to explore a city that is mostly taken apart. The puzzle within the photographs functions as a meaning-making device. The pieces come from a cognitive landscape that includes public memory about Detroit and a past of exploring human identity through the aesthetics of ruins. Readers will use learned practices of developing place, based on post-Fordist notions of how to inhabit the urban environment, and narratives of past exploration in the frontier mythos. Within the collections of photographs of Detroit captured by Marchand and Meffre, the reader is invited to dwell, to explore, and to colonize the abandoned city in a manner that is attuned to the power of the material environments represented. The manner of this dwelling is necessarily fragmented, reflected in the fragmented spaces of the photographs, and reflected by the post-Fordist condition of fragmentation. Unlike frontiers of ages past, however, in an era of ongoing imperialism, such

an intimate exploration of this territory means that the ghostly presence of the indigenous, previously-present and constantly reappearing natives can neither be ignored nor provide narrative closure.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUDING AN ANALYSIS OF *THE RUINS*: IMPLICATIONS FOR RHETORIC AND DWELLING PRACTICES

The “Party Animal House” of the Heidelberg Project, shown on page 209 of *The Ruins of Detroit*, was destroyed by suspected arson in March 2014, becoming the ninth house in the public art project to burn in two years (Campbell, “Suspected Arsonist Hits”). The photographs within *The Ruins of Detroit* capture spaces that seem still and empty; yet the high rate of arson is just one way that Detroit actually changes often and quickly. *The Ruins of Detroit* captures images of the city within a time span of only five years. Change may not be represented within the photographs, yet change is imminent in this volatile city. The question of how Detroit will continue to change is a rhetorical space within the text. This rhetorical space exists outside the photographs themselves, in the space of interaction between the reader and the text. In this space of looking, touching, and considering the text, the consumption of images of Detroit informs public choice about what Detroit is and what it should be.

Marchand and Meffre have been accused of creating *ruin porn*. However, in this thesis, I have argued a more helpful description of the rhetorical act of reading *The Ruins* is that this interaction offers Detroit as a frontier, akin to past frontiers in US American history. Interacting with *The Ruins of Detroit* positions the reader as a post-Fordist colonist. *The Ruins* persuades us that Detroit is a city open to being settled by emplacing the reader within Detroit through practices of post-Fordism. Emplacing the reader within Detroit through practices of post-Fordism is a rhetorical action and affective experience involving the material content of *The Ruins* as well as the broader context of the book, such as references to the history of Detroit and the history of ruins. I include discussions of the spatial history of Detroit, and the history of the relationship between ruins and the human body, because these are key components of the context in which

the reader approaches *The Ruins of Detroit*. Additionally, these discussions illuminate aspects of what a post-Fordist frontier identity entails, including its practices and motivations. For instance, looking at the history of Detroit reveals the ideological nature of spatial practices, suggesting that in the process of deconstructing Fordism, consumers interact with spaces divorced from the processes of manufacturing and disoriented from the connection of community. The history of ruins in art is a history of exploring what it means to express the body within the material world. These understandings combine with analysis of the contents of the book *The Ruins of Detroit* to describe how an experience of Detroit through *The Ruins* persuades the reader to settle Detroit as a kind of frontier that is unique to post-Fordism.

This thesis has implications for rhetorical study. First, the myth and metaphor of the frontier continues to be useful for interpreting postmodern narratives. Secondly, the study of an interaction with *The Ruins* provides an example of the value of acknowledging the mutual interaction between what is traditionally text and subject. Thirdly, a socio-spatial rhetorical analysis draws attention to human rights issues, adding to interdisciplinary research concerning racial, geographic, and economic inequality. After a brief essay summarizing the path of this thesis, I expand on the import for rhetorical study.

Summarizing Post-Fordist Frontierism

Frontiers define spaces of the present in relation to the future. These spaces have geographical consequences, but they are not necessarily geographical places. Frontiers involve new permissions of thought and permissions of intellectual ownership. This can include technological frontiers, new ways of interacting with materials, or places like outer space, which is both a physical space and a mathematical abstraction. Frontiers use space ideologically and

mythically to inspire a mission. The action and attitudes that are suggested through a post-Fordist frontier identity intertwine with theoretical understandings of the importance of space as ideological, the body as a tablet of historical relationships of power, and the political agency of materials. This thesis provides three chapters exploring different perspectives of the text to unpack these theoretical concepts and analyze the relationship of the reader to *The Ruins of Detroit*. In the chapter “A Socio-Spatial History of Detroit,” I provide some historical context for *The Ruins* with a socio-spatial geographical tour of Detroit. The next chapter, “The Body in Ruins / The Ruined Body,” traces an aesthetic history of ruins alongside the broken body. Finally, I explore the post-Fordist frontier identity as it manifests through the reader’s interaction with *The Ruins of Detroit* within a chapter titled “Post-Fordist Detroit through the Affective Experience of *The Ruins of Detroit*.” This is an identity constructed through understandings of history, space, and the body. These chapters work together to argue for the rhetorical effort of the text: a construction of identity for Detroit that uses post-Fordist practices to suggest a use of affective and material resources in a manner consistent with the frontier myth, positioning the reader as post-Fordist colonist.

Yet it is a frontier approached within the context of present economic and cultural realities. I first describe the history of Detroit to contextualize post-Fordist spatial practices. *The Ruins of Detroit* connects with the reader through its symbols and reminders of historical events in Detroit’s history. The purpose of “A Socio-Spatial History of Detroit” is to point out the spatial components of Detroit’s history as consequential to the disciplining of the human body. According to a Foucauldian understanding of history, the path of historical development is traced through the way power makes its marks upon the body. Using the labels of Fordism and post-Fordism to discuss the importance of space as well as time, I follow events within Detroit’s

history that were, and are, geographically impactful, and in turn function to discipline the human body. Henri Lefebvre claims that the idea of space is a social, rhetorical construction. Motivated by Lefebvre and other thinkers on the rhetorical nature of space and place, such as Michel de Certeau, this thesis works on the assumption that geographical practices, that is, the ways we dwell in the world motivate material and symbolic changes in the landscape and in turn influence communal practices.

These interactions with the landscape become interwoven with materials. Fordism—the practice of passing raw materials piecemeal through many hands until the product is completed collectively and craftlessly by a group of workers—transformed space as it made the automobile attainable for many. Combined with federal policies and highway infrastructure, Fordism built up Detroit into an automobile centered location, propelling suburban development. Fordism produced consumer goods easily and cheaply. This industrial system had dramatic effects on bodies in Detroit: creating the prosthetic body of the car, molding the body of the worker by the assembly-line, turning citizens into consumers, and molding the city into zones of racial and ethnic separation.

In this separation, geographical, political, and disciplinary, these boundaries acted violently upon the human bodies of Detroit. Racial tensions broke out in riots. Bodies spilled into spaces in violent ways. Infrastructure for the car and the production of the car changed communities, wiping out neighborhoods such as Poletown to construct a General Motors plant. Evidence of this drama remains within *The Ruins*. Absence of bodies and the presence of broken bodies has origins in the way these bodies were previously limited, for instance, within the extreme segregation of downtown Detroit by the 1940s and 50s, turning the inner city into slums. Hence, it is crucial to an understanding of the collection of photographs to understand the context

of brokenness and violence within the past of Detroit—a violence with spatial consequences within Detroit that were intertwined with practices of production.

Post-Fordism likewise had geographical and bodily consequences. It changed the practices of dwelling from manufacturing to a more distanced grasp on meaning within “the spectacle,” interacting within mediated reality. New architectural development within downtown Detroit, such as the Renaissance Center focuses on the industries of post-Fordism: tourism, service work, software, and marketing. Woodward Avenue houses technology start up companies. Yet, there is something fleeting and ephemeral about the post-Fordist economy as represented by 21st century downtown Detroit development. Tourism, marketing, and internet-based companies (such as Twitter), are divorced from a relationship with raw materials. The Renaissance Center looks impressive from Canada, but the walled-off structure is alienated from local life in practice and form. For instance, the Center, including seven skyscrapers, is entirely encased within a ground floor base. Within the center, rules are stringent and cater to the needs of business tenants. No one under the age of 17 is allowed to enter without a guardian, public protests and distribution of brochures or leaflets is prohibited. Any behavior that disrupts the needs of commerce is expressly forbidden. Within 5.5 million square feet of space in the downtown area, the inconveniences of public life, such as free speech, are cleansed (GM Renaissance Center Rules of Conduct). The contemporary reader interacts with *The Ruins of Detroit* within this state of anxiety, amidst remnants of Fordist discipline and post-Fordist ephemera.

It is not only within a history of Detroit that the reader enters *The Ruins*. The text simultaneously references the history of ruins. Artistic representations of broken architecture are an allusion to centuries of aesthetic thought and practice, which I identify within “The Body in

Ruins / The Ruined Body.” Aesthetics is intrinsically a study of identity. Rhetoric explores public identity. Aesthetics and rhetoric are connected, considering the aesthetic experience as a means of merging the self with the outside world. The study of aesthetics, credited first to German philosophers such as Kant, with roots in Platonic idealism, developed as a way to account for bodily sensations that seemed outside of the realm of reason. Some bodily responses to external phenomena were ineffable yet undeniably powerful, able to incite emotion. In this way, the aesthetic experience becomes embodied meaning-making. Within the city, within a frontier, a place of potential use and development, conspicuously absent bodies, piles of broken bodies, and piles of broken architecture become the political identity of the city. These pieces move the reader and provide a visual metaphor for the interwoven nature of body and material. This connection, between the human body and materials, has a history, not explicitly detailed within the history of rhetorical studies but aligned in the history of Western art.

This thesis looks at six representative pieces from the Renaissance era to the 21st century that detail the relationship between the body and ruins according to three broad themes or patterns. The first theme points out praised technical control over the body through two pieces that *represent a trend to use ruins as symbolic praise over technical control and understanding of both architecture and human anatomy*. Two later pieces represent a second manner of relationship between the corpus and ruined architecture. These pieces depict a failing of formal elements of structure to fully subdue the irrational, sublime elements of material experience. A third theme represents the merging of identity between ruin and body, expressed by two pieces that depict body as ruin, and ruin as body. There is both shame in the waste of the ruin and praise for the brokenness of disabled bodies. Alison Lapper’s body in *Alison Lapper Pregnant*, without arms, asks if the broken body should even be viewed as broken. By the late twentieth century,

the intimate ecology between material and self is evident. Tracing a history of ruins and the body within the aesthetics of Western art places the analysis of an interaction with *The Ruins of Detroit* in a context that is as significant as the context of the history of Detroit, the material and geographic entity. Yet the work of *The Ruins* is not merely aesthetic. It asks for movement, for future change. Coming to a text full of ruins and broken pieces of bodies in the twenty-first century requires an interaction that acknowledges the material, affective qualities of persuasion: the embodied process of meaning-making.

With the context of the spatial and aesthetic histories represented by *The Ruins*, a third analytical chapter follows that explicitly points out evidence within the text supporting a post-Fordist frontier identity for Detroit. Inspired by Richard Slotkin's extensive deconstruction of the frontier myth in US American history, I draw out three ways to understand the frontier myth within *The Ruins* according to the context of post-Fordism. The first is through the way an experience with the text inspires regret at the waste of resources within the city. Wasted resources, such as wasted tools, buildings, and human potential are dramatically portrayed in every image. A concern for waste echoes post-Fordist angst over disconnection from material experience, alienated within layers of mediated representation. However, the presence of wasted spaces argues that resources are present within Detroit, even if they are not being used or are broken.

The second experience of a post-Fordist frontier identity uses to identity of consumer (and pioneer) to allow entitled access to these resources. Traveling through closed and abandoned spaces is a privilege granted only to those willing to risk crossing property boundaries, or to those privileged to encounter the inner rooms of these crumbling structures through an experience with the photographs of Marchand and Meffre. *The Ruins* express

openness, availability, and vulnerability. Like a garden of earthly delights, a common metaphor for frontier spaces, Detroit is presented as a place of unprotected, available resources.

Lastly, a third way to consider Detroit as a frontier within the context of late capitalism is to note the anxiety produced by remnants of previous residents. People are notably absent, which in itself produces anxiety. A closer look reveals remains of previous human presence. It is hard to say what else can be gleaned from the unsettling reminders of those who did not or could not stay active within Detroit of *The Ruins*. As with many supposedly available frontiers, there remains a question of the real availability of the ruins. Buying *The Ruins of Detroit* can produce a sense of obligation to work out the problems inspired by this landscape, but what place is there in the frontier for the natives? The post-Fordist frontier uncovers opportunities for Detroit, but it also challenges the reader not to ignore the faces of already-existing Detroit. The fragmented identities of past residents evident in Detroit remind the reader of the readers' fragmented identity, a fragmentation that is hard to ignore when experiencing material spaces through several layers of media. The interactive experience of reading the text gives little guidance as to how to handle the presence of these signs of fragmentation, yet it is apparent that their acknowledgement is mandatory. The glimpses of human pieces, then, serve two rhetorical purposes. First, they unsettle the reader, producing anxiety about potentially ignored presences. Secondly, these pieces reflect the fragmented identity of the reader in a post-Fordist context.

Hence, participating in a reading of *The Ruins* provides an embodied experience that places the reader as a colonist exploring Detroit in a manner consistent with, and reflective of, post-Fordist identity. The vehicle for this rhetorical practice is through the material experience of touching the book, turning the pages, looking at the images, and referencing symbols or tropes of the frontier myth and the post-Fordist condition. These practices position the reader as consumer

of Detroit, implicitly allowing the reader to place their own constructed meaning onto the spaces represented.

New Understandings of Rhetoric: Space and the Fragmented Body

The questions revealed by *The Ruins of Detroit* are perhaps as motivating as the evident claims. This thesis adumbrates an identity for Detroit based on the rhetorical and affective resources available in the text, as well as the theoretical perspective of the history of ruins and of Detroit. There are future possibilities within the absent and broken places of Detroit. The text motivates us to characterize the city within the context and practices of post-Fordism. A fragmented identity participating via media yet craving material connection uses resources in unique, creative, and developing ways. Navigating this identity provides a fresh perspective on three understandings for rhetorical studies. For one, this study argues that the frontier myth still holds influence in a late capitalist era. Secondly, this thesis is an example of a rhetorical analysis that accounts for the interrelatedness of subject and text. Within this understanding, it follows, and is used as a method in this study, that modes of production influence dwelling practices, and this action is partly rhetorical. Thirdly, this thesis has political and philosophical implications concerning the nature of dwelling practices in the twenty-first century. For instance, this thesis suggests that the violence of imperialism continues to influence a post-Fordist era, both abroad and in the States.

The myth of the frontier—a call to enter a seemingly unsettled geographical or cognitive place—can be rhetorically useful to identify, directing attention to the importance of absence and the rhetorical power of space. Frontiers are places of potential use, places of absence. These spaces have geographical consequences, but they are not necessarily geographical places.

Museums and memorials define spaces of the present in relation to the past; frontiers define spaces of the present in relation to the future. This thesis encourages a renewed look at the theoretical concept of absence as rhetorically significant. As the space of *The Ruins* appears absent of people and productivity, the reader is encouraged to fill these spaces conceptually. Absence creates an attraction that emplaces the reader as the user of the available environment. Studying the positionality of the reader-as-colonist of Detroit is an ongoing project for rhetorical critics, if only to shine the light of critical expertise upon the ways Detroit is being read in the public sphere. Popular media repeatedly portray Detroit as in need of a savior. Mayor Mike Duggan, Arab culture, Latinos, pie, China, gay neighborhoods, graffiti, and kale are all on a long list of what might save Detroit, according to headlines in magazines and newspapers, showing just how ridiculous this cliché has become². *The Ruins of Detroit* does not make bold claims about what will save Detroit, but the book clearly presents Detroit as ruined, empty, and available. The viewer comes to Detroit through *The Ruins* from a privileged distance, yet that distance is drawn tighter as the reader examines the images.

As a rhetorical analysis not of the text *The Ruins of Detroit*, but of the ecological interaction of the reader with *The Ruins*, this thesis provides an example of analysis that acknowledges the diffuse self alongside the diffuse text. It is an analysis that draws on recent theoretical conceptions of materials as enfolded within a concept of self and agentic in themselves. In light of challenges to the subjectivity/objectivity duality, this analysis

¹ (Beales and Allison “How Graffiti Could Save Detroit;” Benes “The Latest Plan to Save Detroit;” Castro “Can Latinos Save Detroit?;” Clark “Can Mike Duggan Save Detroit?;” Foley “Here Are All the Things;” Goldman “Can Arab Culture Save Detroit?;” Grabar “How China Could Save Detroit;” Leschin-Hoar “Malik Yakini Might Save Detroit;” Signer “This Baker is Saving Detroit with Pie;”)

communicates the constitutive yet integrative nature of the interaction between audience and text.

Fragmentation has been a source of anxiety within rhetorical scholarship, relating to experiences of disconnection and alienation. This thesis provides a perspective of how fragmentation can be seen as an ever-present reality demonstrating human dependence on material resources. In a post-industrial economy we interact with materials in intimate ways. Smartphones become prosthetics for the body. Eyeglasses, watches, handheld devices interact with eyes, hands, and the mouth. This complicates the nature of subject and object, as the identity of Detroit becomes also the identity of the reader. Although some philosophers of postmodernism, notably Jean Baudrillard, describe this identity as hopelessly divorced from the real, technological prosthetics are less threatening to a transcendent essence of humanity considering the close connection the human body has continuously had with architecture, for instance, within the Western artistic tradition (Baudrillard 11). Likewise, this understanding continues to emphasize the importance of geography as rhetorically significant. Broken bodies, analogous to the broken buildings, suggest an intimate connection between bodies, architecture, and infrastructure. In a post-industrial economy we interact with materials in intimate ways. The space that the reader acts within is a space that offers change for Detroit. Fragmentation, then, rather than alienating bodies can serve to intertwine bodies within an ecological system.

Yet another way that this thesis can influence rhetorical studies is to demonstrate the effect that modes of production can have on the way we choose. Post-Fordism, in its emphasis on consumerism and the culture economy, suggests that what motivates us reflects aspects of taste and taste subcultures. This already motivates real estate branding and municipal leaders. US American cities are increasingly concerned with branding the city in the same way Coca-Cola

brands a soft drink. An understanding of place and self now includes patterns of consumption. Subjectivity is tethered to a personal brand, a brand that extends outside the body, existing in social media profiles and browser histories.

In an industrial economy the manner of interacting with materials via manufacturing raw goods and processing goods affects land use. This thesis problematizes how space is used in a post-Fordist economy. Because space is ideological, this thesis asks how spatial ideology is created and maintained within a context of late capitalism. Amidst the remnants of a manufacturing system, how do eyes, hands, mouths, and bodies interact with spaces in a transitioning service, tourism, and technology economy? How does this incorporate absent or ignored bodies? If rhetorical studies will acknowledge the enfolded nature of humanity with material objects, this will necessitate further exploration and inter-disciplinary interest in phenomenology, aesthetics, and critical geography. A look at the interaction between the reader and *The Ruins of Detroit* encourages this path.

The way a community decides to settle itself, that is, the way that it makes public choices, and the decisions a people make concerning land use are intertwined with public identity. This thesis points out that the goals of production are not always aligned with human community. Studying artifacts such as *The Ruins of Detroit* brings to light the contradiction between human needs of dwelling and the reality of late capitalist development.

While studying this issue through the power of rhetoric is particularly effective for noting the narratives that engender public identity, the ideological nature of space, specifically an attention to the ignored bodies of urban centers, is in particularly urgent need of study in any field that influences public policy and action. As Richard Slotkin points out in his analysis of the frontier myth, when the US has previously prospected new lands, and even new conceptual

spaces, using the language and symbolism of the frontier, these actions have historically been defined by violence. Deconstructing the supposed heroism of the American frontiersman, Slotkin points out:

Set the statuesque figures and their piled trophies in motion through space and time, and a more familiar landscape emerges – the whale, the buffalo, and bear hunted to the verge of extinction for pleasure in killing and “scalped” for fame and the profit in hides by men like Buffalo Bill; the buffalo meat left to rot, till acres of prairie were covered with heaps of whitening bones, and the bones ground for fertilizer; the Indian debased, impoverished, and killed in return for his gifts; the land and its people, it’s “dark” people especially, economically exploited and wasted; the warfare between man and nature, between race and race, exalted as a kind of heroic ideal; the piles of wrecked and rusted cars, heaped like Tartar pyramids of death-cracked, weather-browned, rain-rotted skulls, to signify our passage through the land. (565)

The Ruins of Detroit portrays the land of Detroit as decimated. Understanding the consequences of mythic frontierism cautions the reader to approach the city from a different path. Yet the current trends of late capitalism seem to be repeating the mythic idea of regeneration through violence that has become a founding American metaphor (Slotkin 5). Although the US American frontier has closed, the colonial spirit continues as manufacturers seek out new markets for cheaper labor, raw materials, and the ability to pollute.

This practice has had violent consequences abroad. In Chile, for instance, a CIA-supported coup removed a democratically elected president to install the dictator Augusto Pinochet. During his reign, from 1973-1990, free market reforms allowed foreign companies to access the resources of the nation. The wealthiest members of Chilean society grew even wealthier, and inflation stabilized (Steger and Roy 100). However, democracy was squelched. Income inequality increased markedly, and tens of thousands were tortured, killed, or disappeared (Reel and Smith “A Chilean Dictator’s Dark Legacy”). The desire to colonize resources in foreign spaces can often come in direct conflict with the aims of democracy.

The position of colonist clearly can express itself violently. It is important to recognize the trappings of the frontier myth to prevent and fight against further injustices like those that occurred in Chile. Domestically, recognizing the tendencies of colonization is still crucial to understanding inequality. Currently thousands across the US are protesting the recent police killings of several unarmed African-American men, reviving a national discussion on racism and police brutality. Income equality between the top five percent of income-earners and the bottom ninety-five percent is the highest it has been in thirty years (Bui “40 Years of Income Inequality in America”). The inner city poverty rate is higher than anywhere in the nation, with three in ten people living in poverty (Initiative for a Competitive Inner City “Key Battlegrounds for the War on Poverty.”) Seventy percent of African-Americans and Latino/as in the US live in inner city areas (Pounder et al. “Race – The Power of an Illusion”). The history of Detroit as illustrated within *The Ruins of Detroit* displays how racism is linked to land use, housing, and infrastructure. Segregation and income-inequality are correlated to factors of geography. If space is ideological, as Lefebvre, Foucault, rhetoricians studying place, and this thesis argue, than studying texts in light of spatial practices is certainly a relevant burden for all critical theorists and social activists.

I have shown throughout this thesis that Detroit is presented as a frontier, a place of exploration and available resources; yet this frontier is approached through the context of post-Fordism, via practices of post-Fordism. Within a post-Fordist frontier, the boundaries between reader and text, subject and object, merge or overlap. Thus this presentation of Detroit becomes a discussion of how all spaces are theoretically organized. It becomes a study of what it means to collectively dwell in a space, and what it means to be a public body. I demonstrate these ties by analyzing the history of some socio-spatial practices within Detroit’s development, the history of

an aesthetic practice relating the body to ruins in Western art, and finally by analyzing elements of frontier rhetoric within *The Ruins*, couched within the context of post-Fordism. This study leads critics to both acknowledge and critique the elements of colonialism still influencing narratives of public identity. Although this study analyzes a media text of represented spaces of Detroit, a meaningful interaction with the text involves material interactions, influencing material changes in the landscape. The search for a new identity for Detroit becomes, as is the case for so many frontiers, a reflection of the need for a fresh cultural identity. A socio-spatial rhetorical analysis of *The Ruins of Detroit* affirms that critical geography provides rhetorical studies with invaluable resources to understand human motivation and public identity. This thesis attempts to underscore the yearning for an identity of community, ecology, and spatial practices that are not post-, but rather stand within an identity construct all its own. Reading *The Ruins of Detroit* suggests such an identity could emerge from a revolutionary reexamination and reconstruction of already-existing, latent resources.

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