Imaginaries of the Future 03: Utopia at the Border

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IMAGINARIES OF THE FUTURE 03: UTOPIA AT THE BORDER

City Limits: Boundary Conditions and the Building-Cities of Science Fiction

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Can the rigidly bound city-buildings of science fiction (SF) provide a critical space to resist a movement towards structural divisions within the urban realm? Drawing on the growing body of urban studies research that utilizes the radical imagination and cognitive estrangement of SF as tools for critiquing the modern city, this paper focuses on three SF texts which explicitly address the architectural and social implications of extreme urban enclosure: Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle's *Oath of Fealty* (1981), Isaac Asimov's *Caves of Steel* (1953) and James Blish and Norman Knight's *A Torrent of Faces* (1967). In each, the implications of gated communities are extrapolated and exaggerated to offer a glimpse into societies where a physical boundary creates spatial privilege by intensifying difference. By providing an estranging and critically distanced perspective on urban enclosure, these novels support existing movements to identify and resist damaging social division and structural segregation in the cities we currently inhabit.

Article

> *"Happy? Of course they're happy. Aristocrats usually are happy. But how*
> *many of those places can the Earth support? And there'll be more hives, hives*
> *everywhere… and they've got to be stopped, now, before they spread."*
>
> (Niven and Pournelle, 2007 [1981]: 162)

Representations of the city in science-fiction (SF) are rarely neutral on the subject of the societies they contain and create; from the stratified social hierarchies of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, mapped onto the vertical axis of towering high-rises; to the bureaucratic might of Isaac Asimov's Trantor in the *Foundation* series, a planet covering city sustained by the empire it administrates (Lang, 1927; and Asimov, 1995 [1951]). The world building intrinsic to much SF lends itself to the creation of visions of futures where morals are made material, and the urban and social are inexorably intertwined. One widely-portrayed vision of a socially expressive future city is that of the single city-building enclosed by a defining boundary wall that mirrors divisions and separations existing within the lived urban environment.

This paper will undertake a close examination of one-such society: the enclosed city-building of Todos Santos, as depicted in Niven and Pournelle's *Oath of Fealty* (2007 [1981]), considering how this fictional city-building reflects and reinforces the current critical understanding of the social impact of gated communities. It will use this narrative to reveal the utopian intent inherent in movements towards urban isolation; reading the city of Todos Santos alongside the enclosed cities of Isaac Asimov's *Caves of Steel* (1999 [1953]) and James Blish and Norman Knight's *A Torrent of Faces* (2011 [1967]) to demonstrate the dystopic potential for inhabitants should this intent be realised. In this way, this paper looks to utilise depictions of urban enclosure within SF to critique and resist the development of socially destructive division and segregation within the cities we inhabit.

SF in the study of the built environment

Within the fields of architecture and urban design SF has commonly been considered either for its apparent prediction of the future of cities, or as a source of inspiration for designers. This paper follows the growing call within urban studies for a greater

appreciation of the critical common ground offered by SF as a space for reflection on urban reality (Kitchin & Kneale, 2001; Hewitt & Graham, 2015). This common ground is formed by a complex reciprocal relationship, where SF both reflects and influences urban reality. As argued by urban geographer Stephen Graham, the 'linkages between sci-fi cities and material cityscapes that are actually constructed, lived and experienced are so dense as to make some clean separation impossible' (2016: 388). However, it is this inter-relation between real and imagined which makes SF such a potent site for urban critique.

For political and utopian theorist Frederic Jameson, radical imaginative freedom is the critical factor which differentiates SF from other forms of literary expression. This ability to imagine freely is in part rooted in the genre's 'pulp' character, its self-definition as existing outside of high art. According to Jameson, only SF has the 'capacity to relax that tyrannical "reality principle" which functions as a crippling censorship over high art' (2005: 270). It is this ability to break from simple extrapolative exploration by making radical imaginative leaps into the unknown which allows SF to test the limits of our conceptualisations of urban space. Radical imagination allows these texts to be revisited by later generations of readers to cast fresh strangeness on the city as they know it. In this way, SF can provide a critical perspective both as a historically situated text – in tension with the specific place and time of its writing – while also being profoundly other to any subsequent time of reading.

However, its pulp or genre status has limited the extent to which SF is considered a 'valid' source for critical study within urban studies and architecture (Abbott, 2007). Where SF is referred to, the texts are typically limited to a relatively small list of explicitly extrapolative works that consciously reflect on the urban environment, centring on *Metropolis*, *Blade Runner* and the work of JG Ballard; what geographers Rob Kitchin and James Kneale (2002: 16) refer to as 'a cannon of "approved" authors, novels and films'. Inevitably, such narrowness limits the variety of interpretations and flattens the richness of SF visions, creating a situation in which *Blade Runner* is considered the 'standard' version of the city of the future (Barlow, 2005: 58).

Literary theorist Darko Suvin defines SF as the literature of 'cognitive estrangement', identified by its potential to create a new site from which to contemplate the real alongside the imaginary. In this, Suvin builds on Brechtian notions of alienation and estrangement, as processes by which literature is able to prompt critical reflection on reality. While in literary fiction this can be achieved by holding up a mirror to the world, for Suvin in SF 'the mirror is a crucible' (1979: 5). The world viewed in this mirror is a world made strange, and SF consequently allows us to view both the imagined and the real alongside one another from a radically new critical perspective. As summarised by literary critic Robert Scholes, this estrangement occurs within other literary forms, but for Scholes in SF it is 'more conceptual and less verbal. It is the new idea that shocks us into perception, rather than the new language of the poetic text.' (1975: 4) For Suvin, this 'cognitive' aspect of estrangement is what differentiates SF from fantasy or the simply weird. It requires that the text occupies an inherently political position; that it purposefully challenges the reader by establishing a new critical perspective on reality.

Kitchin and Kneale argue for expanding not only the scope of source material under consideration, but also the appreciation of its critical value in creating these tensions between reality and fantasy. They posit that this would provide a site where the real and imagined city could be considered alongside one another, and where critical theory and the construction of knowledge could be similarly appraised; 'to contemplate material and incursive geographies and the production of geographical knowledges and imaginations' (Kitchin & Kneale, 2002: 9). Similarly, I argue for expanding the role of SF as a method of critique of current theoretical understandings of the city (Butt, 2018). In this, I build on the work of theorists who have examined the ways fiction and contemporary theory can be co-considered (see, for example: Ricoeur, 1979; Davis, 1992; Gold, 2001; Abbott, 2007; Lewis, Rodgers & Woolcock, 2008; Collie, 2011); and follow Suvin in using the particular position of SF between fantasy and reality as a fertile site for urban critique.

While Suvin's definition has been criticised for its privileging of SF over other forms of genre fiction, it is a useful definition to appreciate the potential value of

SF to urban critique. Through this continual process of making strange, cities in SF inherently resist naturalisation; they refuse to become normalised for the reader. As such SF offers a site from which to challenge both the principles of the city that seem inevitable, and the ways in which these principles are conceptualised. It makes visible processes which are often overlooked as ubiquitous and consequently allows us to resist practices which threaten to become habit.

Frontiers of Utopia

Notions of enclosure have been present in utopian literature from its inception, in Thomas More's work which gave the form its name where the act of digging a trench turned a peninsula into the island of Utopia (More, 2012 [1516]). Utopia's island location allowed it to exist contemporaneously with other social structures, with the boundary acting to define the limits of the society it contained (see Benham, forthcoming). In this way it created a space for reflection and social critique while also creating a site of tension: a line drawn between Utopia and those outside.

The influence of the *idea* of the boundary on the society it contains is perhaps most eloquently expressed in Ursula Le Guin's novel *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia* (Le Guin, 2009 [1974]). The novel is set on the anarchist moon, Anarres, which orbits the capitalist planet Urras, from which it has seceded. The architecture of Anarres is understated, bare and simple; a literal reflection of societal policies of unflinching honesty and material simplicity, in tandem with a social desire to lay everything bare. Although there are shelters and buildings, these are seen as part of a continuous whole of the shared surface of the moon. The walls of the dwellings exist without notions of defence or ownership; there is no 'other' to be kept out. There is only one boundary wall, one point where free movement is constrained, and this boundary forms and defines the society of Anarres. It is a low stone wall, mere rubble at points, which surrounds the space-port. It is the moon's only point of connection to the universe beyond its surface; the figurative limit of its inhabitants' social existence. Seen from one side, it is a wall which confines the dangerous anarchism of Anarres onto to the moon, containing it from the planets

beyond. Seen from the other side, it is akin to the body of water that divides More's Utopia and the mainland; inside the wall lies the entire capitalist universe, with only Anarres outside of it and free. That the wall has gaps is immaterial, it is the idea of the wall which defines Anarres' freedom; even though it has 'degenerated into mere geometry, a line, an idea of boundary. But the idea was real' (Le Guin, 2009: 5).

This use of a boundary wall to define an entire society is commonly extrapolated in SF into the conception of a society housed within a single building. Just as More's Utopia was an island, so too are these enclosed societies: they are divided from the world outside by man-made constructs which clearly define the 'other' as something outside in order to establish an identity for the society within. There are notable examples of the enclosed city throughout SF literature, from its early expression as the last redoubt of humanity in William Hope Hodgson's *The Night Land* (1912), where enclosure is a requirement for survival; and Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1993 [1924]), where the enclosing 'glass wall' separates the rationalism of OneState from the wilds of the rest of the world; to Isaac Asimov's seminal novel *Caves of Steel* (1999 [1953]), where enclosure is the result of systemic retreat from the outside world. But there was a particular proliferation of texts from the late 1960s through to the 1980s which specifically address the emotional implications of the sealed city building. These include the monolithic cities of Blish and Knight's *A Torrent of Faces* (2011 [1967]) and Rena Vale's *Beyond the Sealed World* (1965); the towers of Robert Silverberg's *The World Inside* (1971); the city blocks of Niven and Pournelle's *Oath of Fealty* (2007 [1981]); the encroaching domes of Michael Bishop's *Catacomb Years* (1980), Frederik Pohl's *The Years of the City* (1985) and Scott Sanders' *Terrarium* (1985); and the layered cities of David Wingrove's Chung Kuo series (see *The Middle Kingdom* [1989], for example). Perhaps the most explicitly architectural manifestation of such a self-defining and isolationist enclave within the city is *High-Rise* by J G Ballard (1975). In his review of Ballard's writing, Martin Amis describes all of Ballard's work as occupying a similarly defined and separated space; 'suspended, no longer to do with the rest of the planet, screened off by its own surreal logic' (Amis, 1975).

The city-building in *Oath of Fealty* mirrors that of *High-Rise* in that it is home to a self-selected subset of society who have, whether by choice or some sense of necessity, isolated themselves within the boundary walls. By comparison the cities of *Caves of Steel* and *A Torrent of Faces* are entirely self-contained if not exactly self-sufficient, with inhabitants having no need to step foot outside. The city-buildings described in these three novels provide a fully bounded vision of the urban environment. They extrapolate the complex social and economic segregation of urban enclaves into concretized boundary walls, and in doing so they provide opportunities for examining the social relations created by such extreme limits to the city.

Gated Communities

The implications of division within the urban environment has been the subject of extensive analysis within urban studies, with scholars reflecting on the extent to which the creation of spatial lines of differentiation both expose and enforce destructive social segregation. In his consideration of social and spatial segregation within London, urban studies scholar Rowland Atkinson identifies three levels of 'disaffiliation' of a group of inhabitants from the wider urban environment: 'insulation', 'incubation', and finally 'incarceration' (Atkinson, 2006). While not minimising the potentially devastating consequences of implicit economic, political and social causes of exclusion, this paper focuses on Atkinson's third and most extreme level of 'disaffiliation' as the point at which this segregation becomes physically manifest. For Atkinson, 'incarceration' is the point at which relative social isolation is imposed through 'boundaries and barriers that may have socio-legal, architectural or planned underpinnings' (2006: 823). The emotionally loaded connotations of the term 'incarceration' are particularly apt in expressing not only the architecture of constraint and confinement that defines prison enclosures, but also the loss of interaction with the world beyond the boundary walls that this condition structures and implies. Equally, incarceration carries with it associations of violence and crime, hinting at the culture of fear that is a primary driver in the creation of many segregated spaces.

An explicit manifestation of this physically segregated urban realm is the gated community. While gated communities can be found globally, the development of these segregated spaces in the US was the subject of considerable scholarship in the late 1990s and early 2000s, including the seminal work of Mike Davis on the proliferation of gated communities in LA. While the focus of such research communities has subsequently expanded to include notions of urban gating or soft boundaries (Bagaeen & Uduku, 2015), there has been a concurrent normalisation of this type of urban development both in the US and the UK. Estimates of the numbers of people living in gated communities vary dramatically, but analysis of the US Census Bureau's 2009 American Housing Survey shows that more than ten million households — about 8% of the national total — now live in developments set behind walls and fences, 53% more than recorded in 2001 (Benjamin, 2012). The urban geographers Gordon MacLeod and Kevin Ward (2002) have posited that this proliferation and normalisation of gated communities can be conceptualised as shift in the image of the city itself. No longer understood as a site of coherence and inclusion, the city is understood as a fragmented geography; a patchwork of what economic geographer John Allen referred to as 'indifferent worlds' (1999: 91). When considering the impact of gated communities it is this indifference which is so pernicious; they embody an individual choice to secede from the city which shows an utter disregard for the potential impact this retreat will have on those outside.

Moments of resistance to the proliferation of these spaces have surfaced around the exposure of tangible evidence of their racial or economic bias, and have provided fleeting opportunities to debate the normalisation of these spaces. Recently this has included the public outcry following the shooting of Trayvon Martin in one such community in Orlando by a member of the community's neighbourhood watch. Here the creation of a gated community carried with it an implicit fear of 'the other' who might infiltrate that community; and led to the suspicion of anyone who did not fit the racial profile of a resident and who was on foot, meaning that they had not necessarily passed through the controls of the vehicle gate (see for example: Benjamin, 2012; Blakely, 2012; Derrick, 2012; and Moser, 2012). In the UK, much public attention has been given to the use of 'poor doors', which segregate social

housing tenants from private owner occupiers within secured housing developments (see for example: Lusher, 2014; Osborne, 2014).

The close reading of relevant SF texts offers a complementary methodology to these vital public and academic critiques. Through the processes of critical estrangement, these works resist the normalisation of spatial division, and provide an external perspective from which to reflect on the city and society that these spaces create. Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle's *Oath of Fealty,* written in 1981, is set in contemporaneous LA and directly extrapolates from the rise in gated communities later studied by Davis. It anticipates his prognosis that gated communities would develop into 'fortress cities brutally divided into "fortified cells" of affluence' (Davis, 1998: 356). It also draws upon the fractured and fragmented idea of the urban subsequently associated with the gated community, identified as inherent to the fabric of LA by the architectural theorist Reyner Banham in 1971 (Banham, 2009).

Oath of Fealty focuses on the lives of the inhabitants of an extrapolated version of the gated community, and in doing so renders the central concept of such segregated and isolationist space inherently strange. However, it was not the intention of the authors that this novel be used as a critique of gated communities. Rather, this arguably libertarian novel endeavours to explain the residents' retreat from the city by exaggerating the gang violence and riots required to provide supposed justification such a development, incorporating a fictional extrapolation of the Watts riots in LA of 1965 into the narrative. This apparent advocacy for gated communities has lead the novel to be read and criticized as a right-wing utopia (Fitting, 1991). Indeed, rather than excusing or avoiding the social criticisms levelled at gated communities by urban theorists, it reframes base self-interest as a fight for personal freedom. In this way the gated community it depicts reflects and exaggerates the qualities of existing gated communities, and its privileged secession from public life can be subject to the same critique as that levelled at gated communities by urban sociologist Richard Sennett, who sees them as the product of 'place making based on exclusion, sameness or nostalgia [which] is socially poisonous and psychologically useless' (1997: 72).

Through the contested space of its boundary walls the segregated society in *Oath of Fealty* remains connected to the world beyond it, and despite the social freedom it supposedly provides it is forced to acknowledge the imagined implications for those outside the boundary walls. In rendering the fundamental notion of the gated community strange through the crucible-mirror of SF this novel, allows this setting to be distinguished and critically considered, demonstrating the critical potential inherent in cognitive estrangement.

Oath of Fealty

Niven and Pournelle's *Oath of Fealty* explores the social, economic and environmental implications of the development of a city-building: the 'Todos Santos Independency' within the city of LA. As described in the novel by Art Bonner, the General Manger of Todos Santos, the quarter of a million people contained within the walls represent '"about the highest population density ever achieved on Earth *anywhere*"' (Niven & Pournelle, 2007: 41). The architecture of Todos Santos is based on the work of (real world) architect Paolo Soleri who developed the concept of the 'arcology'. A self-contained city structure, the model arcology would be entirely self-sustaining and Soleri hoped that an arcology could contain the detrimental impacts of human inhabitation, enabling global environmental recovery by isolating mankind from the world outside its walls (Soleri, 1973; Grierson, 2003).

In the establishing chapters Todos Santos is presented as a uniquely successful arcology, a model for new urban development which is being shown off by Bonner to Sir George Reedy, a visiting Canadian minister. Bonner and Reedy are accompanied by MacLean Stevens, assistant to the Mayor, setting up a debate between representatives of the city and of the city-building, for the benefit of an apparently neutral outsider. Reedy notes their conflict and asks how Todos Santos is 'apparently so successful despite being packed in among ten million enemies in Greater Los Angeles?' (Niven & Pournelle, 2007: 41), moving the narrative away from Todos Santos as a cause of this urban division to focus on how its apparent success was achieved and is maintained. In this initial expository exchange the novel establishes an empathetic position towards those who have chosen a life inside, and it is without irony that

the name of this enclave for the wealthy within the 'City of Angels' translates as 'All Saints'. The Todos Santos arcology is founded as part of a corporate offer to rebuild an area of LA destroyed by riots; an offer that was gladly accepted by local government. The building's location within the dense blocks of downtown, on a site cleared by the ravages of urban unrest, materially associates the existence of the city-building with the fear of violence. It acts as visible proof that this fear is justified and rational, while also offering an escape from that fear to those who are privileged enough to be eligible for entry. In this way the novel anticipates Davis' observation that 'as city life grows more feral, the various social milieu adopt security strategies and technologies according to their means' (1998: 364). The privileged access to Todos Santos establishes the city-building as an elite lifestyle community, where the privilege on offer is an escape from violence. This 'incarceration', in Atkinson's terminology, is on such a vast scale that it attempts to contain a society large enough to compensate for the *extramural* world left behind. In this way, it is analogous to a gated community, albeit one which is home to a quarter of a million people.

The significant tension between the inhabitants of Los Angeles outside the walls, referred to as Angelino's, and the 'hivers' within is expressed in the physical structure of the Todos Santos city-building itself which was built to be a defensible safe-haven from the ravages of ongoing gang warfare outside. The city-building stands uncomfortably alongside the existing city as a visible manifestation of social segregation:

> The building was a thousand feet in height rising starkly from a square base two miles on a side. It rested among green parklands and orange groves and low concrete structures so that it stood in total isolation, a glittering block of whites and flashing windows dotted with colors. The sheer bulk dwarfed everything else in view. (2007: 21)

Exclusive and exclusionary, the safety and security of Todos Santos comes at the price of steadfast isolation from the city that feeds it. As part of their retreat from the outside world the residents have their own police force, decisively isolating

themselves from any lingering civic obligation to the city beyond. They consider themselves free within the city-building, able to exist without the pressures and violence of the city beyond, and the peaceful nature of the society is seemingly reflected in the insubstantial and delicate forms of the internal structures of the city-building. This is noticed by Thomas Lunan, an Angelino journalist doing research into the hiver mentality, who concludes it is '[a] city at peace with its police force. *Our* guards, *our* police, holding *our* civilization together. And it was a civilization. That showed in their very structures. The seeming frailty of shops not built to resist weather… or vandalism' (2007: 121).

This establishment of private security forces has been identified as a factor which enables existing gated community inhabitants to 'secede' from participation in the city (Graham & Marvin, 2001), placing them outside of legislative control. In this way the physical isolation of residents is reinforced by their institutional isolation (Judd, 1995; Atkinson & Blandy, 2005). By withdrawing from public services these communities withdraw crucial financial and social support from the public realm, without regard for those who will be unable to sustain similar private provision.

In *Oath of Fealty*, the building's architect, Tony Rand, is one of the few inhabitants who reflects on the wider implications of the city he has created. Part of the city-building's social elite, his training took place under a fictional version of Paolo Soleri. In this fictional guise, Soleri has successfully completed Arcosanti – his attempt to found a town in Arizona based on the principles of arcology, which stalled in the real world – as the preeminent example of a self-sustaining arcology. While Rand is apparently aware of the ecological premise underlying Soleri's work, he sees Todos Santos as an acceptable compromise, and wilfully overlooks the need for the arcology to be self-sustaining. Rather than isolating the impact of humanity within the walls of the city-building, Todos Santos exists as a parasite, extracting the social and professional elite from the city beyond as well as supplies of food and water. This relationship between the city and the hive is all too apparent to Stevens who acts as the voice of the wider city throughout the novel. In a typically leading question, he is asked by Reedy if he is jealous of the privileged position of Todos Santos and

its inhabitants: 'The question reminded him of the ever-present sour pain he felt in his guts recently. "Of the wealth, yes. Of the money that flows into it and goes out of the country. Of the taxes it evades. I resent those, Sir George, but I am not jealous of the people who live in that termite hill"' (2007: 22). Despite this extraction of social capital, the contribution that Todos Santos is perceived to make is such that it is able to hold the city to ransom, threatening that its citizens will strike and cease engaging economically with the wider city entirely if their demands for autonomy are not met.

The ramifications of the removal of professional and economic elites into existing gated communities has been studied by urban anthropologist Setha Low, who identifies the resultant drain the wider urban environment of investment; establishing these spaces as sites for the 'internment of privilege' (Low, 2003; St. John, 2002). The abhorrent consequences of these forms of rigid segregation enforced by way of exclusionary policies, be they economic or political, has been described as a form of 'spatial apartheid' (see: Judd, 1995; Bickford, 2000; Atkinson, 2006).

The residents of Todos Santos do not acknowledge the environmental, social and economic destruction caused by the arcology and conversely justify their decision to move based on the desire to escape these very problems. As Low notes, there are many reasons why residents choose gated communities in addition to fear. These include a desire for social or spatial familiarity and community in response to changes in the urban landscape which are perceived as alienating (Low, 2001); as well as the social aspiration which is tied to the creation of 'lifestyle enclaves', or 'elite' communities (Blakely & Snyder, 1997; Putnam, 2001). This desire for self improvement and the association with an elite subsection of society is posited as the primary reason for residents moving into Todos Santos. Much of the novel focuses on the amenities offered by the building, including futuristic developments like personal AI, as well as the more prosaic delights of penthouse bars and lavish day-care. The central social space and primary lure is the vast shopping mall, a popular destination for visitors as well as residents; a space protected against political disruption (Coffin, 2000). Rather than a radical change from life outside, the residents who have chosen to live inside the arcology justify their decision as a logical progression of their previous lives in

LA's existing gated communities: 'We did care, once', one of them reflects. 'A lot of us did. But something happened. Maybe it was the sheer size of the problem. Or watching while everybody who could afford it ran to the suburbs and left the cities to drift…' (2007: 127)

In this way the novel reframes the isolationist attitude at its core as being a matter of the rights of the individual to self-preservation and self-fulfilment. Those who have chosen the life inside the walls of Todos Santos rarely question the impact that their decision to secede has had on in the wider city. Rather, they consider themselves to be fortunate escapees who have reluctantly abandoned the outside. One resident, for example, states that '"Isolation isn't just a whim to us. It's what we're selling. People come to Todos Santos because they can get free of what's outside"' (2007: 231).

For those who have the means, the 'incarcerated' space of the gated community promises closure, safety and control; a space to allay fears of otherness and detach the resident from the unpredictability of the outside environment (Low, 2003; De Cauter, 2004). In response to this fear these spaces provide what urban theorist and political geographer Edward Soja refers to as 'protected and fortified spaces, islands of enclosure and anticipated protection against the real and imagined dangers of daily life' (Soja, 2000: 299). Political theorist Susan Bickford, meanwhile, argues that the establishment of gated communities is largely predicated on a fear of exposure to danger, which once established extends into a broader fear of the unknown, both socially and spatially: 'to be exposed to the stranger, one who perceives the world from a different social location, is to be exposed to danger' (Bickford, 2000: 358). The threat from the outside established in *Oath of Fealty* has similarly extended beyond the fears of violence and rioting that were its founding principles, developing into an entrenched political conflict centering on the validity of this self-termed lifestyle-choice. The fear of individual acts of violence has escalated into a collective fear of the unknown, represented by the 'other' who perceives the world from a different political or social position.

For those within gated communities, the implications of what criminologists Eugene McLaughlin and John Muncie (1996: 117) term 'voluntary ghettoization and

self-segregation', does not correspond to an increased sense of security or the longed for 'privatopias' (McKenzie, 1994); but rather serves to increase the perception of risk beyond the gates, leading to escalating demands for 'protection' (Low, 2001). The establishment of Todos Santos has removed the threat of violence which was its founding justification, but has not resolved the pervasive fear of the 'other' which underpinned this construction. Rather, the physical manifestation of social segregation provokes attacks on the city-building from an eco-warrior terrorist group: the 'FROMATES': Friends of Man and the Earth, as well as the population of wider Los Angeles. Through this conflict the novel positions the inhabitants as valiant defenders of the American dream, and establishes the FROMATEs as the antithesis of the libertarian arcology dwellers; dangerous 'radicals' seeking to undermine the gentle rationalism of Todos Santos. This provides the residents of the arcology with a common purpose, similar to the central conflict studied by Richard Sennett in the *Fall of Public Man*. Through 'reinforcing the fear of the unknown', the inhabitants of Todos Santos are 'converting claustrophobia into an ethical principle'. But whereas in Sennett's study these internalised struggles around 'matters of internal identity, solidarity or dominance' (2003: 310) serve to distract or divert the active potential of the community from action within the larger struggles of society, here this internalised identity coalesces and Todos Santos draws strength from the idea of common enemy.

As readers we are supposed to loathe these 'radicals': they are violent, they recruit children to undertake sabotage work, they use forms of sexual intimidation and manipulation, and they resort to kidnapping and blackmail. But in undertaking such a thorough hatchet job the novel is forced to engage with these alternative perspectives and it cannot operate in what Allen identified as a state of 'indifference'. As such, even when pitted against such abhorrent adversaries it forces the inhabitants to reveal the self interest at the heart of their society.

The uncompromising boundary wall that defines Todos Santos becomes the tangible site of conflict; its sharp-edges providing distinct separation between inside and out, evoking images of a fortress—defensible and dominant. As Rand reflects, '"[t]he flat walls make Todos Santos look like a fort. Or a prison. Or a school. I could

have done something else. Different shapes. It would have been as easy to defend"' (2007: 185). This defensive envelope becomes the focus of assaults on the city-building in repeated attempts to demolish sections of the façade. These symbolic attempts to breach the defences are an expression of rage by the FROMATES, who are protesting both their being shut out and the sense of entitlement inherent in the hivers' ability to detach themselves from wider society. The voluntary ghettoization of inhabitants and the implicit privilege of retreat is not accepted passively by those who have been excluded. In their attempts to break open the seal of the building, those outside enact the hope that by shattering the physical walls of Todos Santos they can disrupt the social division it concretises.

The Utopia of the Hive

In *Oath of Fealty*, the social consequences of the gated community are extrapolated into the violence and self-delusion of the enclosed city, and despite the novel's attempt to rationalise and support the arcology's legitimacy, the inherent flaws in place-making based on exclusion as identified by urban scholars are readily apparent. Where it does succeed in softening the critique levelled at gated communities, it does so through the creation of relatable characters who have chosen this life inside. In the concluding sweep of the final pages with Todos Santos once again secure, the characters who act as voices for the wider city of LA—Stevens and Lunan— reflect on the fact that Todos Santos did not take the opportunity to secede entirely from the city:

> Free society or termite hill? Or both? Is this really the wave of the future? "For now," he told Lunan. "Just for now and for this moment they haven't quite cut loose from the human race. But can you live in that and stay human forever?" His arm swept expressively to indicate the enormous city/building, its windows glaring orange-white in the sunset light … "A hundred thousand eyes, but they're all looking inward. No privacy at all, and no interest in what goes on out here. No, that's not my life style". "Not mine either –" "Why does it have to be?… There are a lot of ways to be human". (2007: 328)

Rather than being appalled that the Hivers were able to hold the city to ransom, Stevens and Lunan's antipathy is softened to a generalised acceptance of difference. It is a conclusion which neatly circumvents more problematic discussions of the power or privilege manifest in this built fabric, but it also suggests that the city building is more than an expediency in the face of urban unrest and that it might represent a social or spatial ideal for some inhabitants.

While Davis' reading of gated communities focuses on their dystopian implications, isolated and self-defining societies within the city have also been discussed in terms of their relation to utopian theory, as spaces created through the collective will of their occupants. In their attempts to re-shape the society within their walls, these communities could be considered as utopian fragments, albeit ones shaped by the aspirations of the private sphere (Levitas, 2007). Marxist geographer David Harvey contends that because these projects exist in isolation from the society and city within which they sit they provide no critique on the existing state of affairs beyond their boundary walls, and so are 'degenerate utopias' (Harvey, 2000: 164) providing only a distortion of the utopian impulse (cf. Jameson, 2005: 4). For the inhabitants of such communities they promise a brighter future, but this future has edges as sharply defined as its walls. Rather than developing visions for the creation of a new society, these spaces appear to offer only retreat from its existing 'undesirable' elements.

However, following utopian theorist Ruth Levitas' utopian methodology the delineation and definition of implicit utopian intent can provide critical insight into the principles which underpin social, and by extension urban, developments (Levitas, 2013). Through what she calls the 'archaeological' mode of utopian thought, Levitas (2013: 154) outlines the critical value of the 'imaginary reconstitution of the models of the good society underpinning policy, politics and culture, exposing them to scrutiny'. In Levitas' methodology this is complemented by the 'architectural mode', whereby a provisional hypothesis of how society *might be* is formulated, inviting the reader to imagine the world otherwise and subsequently offering a site for the archaeological mode of analysis. In this way *Oath of Fealty* provides a useful

extrapolative future in the architectural mode, based on the implicit utopian intent of the gated community. It is a provisional hypothesis of a future society drawn from a sympathetic understanding of the desires which underpin these communities, and it provides a prospective vision of how this future might manifest. As such, it provides a site for an interrogation of these desires, where the model of the 'good society' inherent in this society can be exposed to scrutiny.

The inhabitants of Todos Santos are a self-selecting group who have willingly retreated from the world to the relative security offered by the city-building. As space within the building is finite, the corporation who manage the block can afford to be selective in their intake of residents, choosing only those who fit a particular ideal. Those selected include professionals and skilled workers who can afford higher rents, and who can continue to be productive without needing to leave the building — providing the localised economy of the building with the benefit of their higher disposable income. This, then, is a vision of society where poverty has not been eradicated, it has simply been relocated so as not to interfere with the lives of those inside. This distinction is painfully apparent when viewed from the helicopter chartered to give the visiting minster a tour of LA, although it is reframed in the novel as a division between those subsisting on government handouts and those generating wealth:

> Directly below them, where they couldn't see, was a ring of shabby houses and decaying apartments. MacLean Stevens did not look down but he was acutely aware of what was below. Block after block, a mockery to city government and all of Stevens's hopes, houses filled with families without hope living on welfare—and on the leavings from Todos Santos. (2007: 22)

The model of a 'good society' revealed within Todos Santos is one of corporate capitalism, with personal value defined by economic contribution to the city-building. With its rigidly defined boundary, space in the city-building has become the most highly-valued resource. Consequently, the relative scale of resident's apartments is a reflection of their social position: a commodity to be earned or exchanged. This

system, where power relations are based on the control of land and the service of those who inhabit the building is acknowledged in the novel as a 'feudal' system. It is presented as a convenient and socially acceptable way to manage the enclosed city, where company directors hold power over this fortified fiefdom. The *Oath of Fealty* they demand is not one of indentured service, but is reframed in terms of patriotism or company loyalty (2007: 167).

A particularly high premium is placed on an outside wall apartment, a scarce resource which offers a glimpse of that which the contained city cannot provide: views of the sun on the bay, the night sky, the experience of wind or rain. These are acknowledged as the only fragments of the world beyond the enclosing walls which the residents cannot bear to leave behind:

> Long lines of light that were streets overflowing with traffic; dotted lines of empty lighted streets; tall buildings with more patterns of light; a bank of fog rolling in from the bay; Los Angeles lay in splendor all around them… "Now that's a city" he said …. "Really lovely". "Especially from here", Bonner added. (2007: 55)

This tone of longing for the world beyond, of nostalgia for an apparently lost form of the city, presents one of the few moments of regret voiced by the inhabitants of Todos Santos. It is on the boundary line between inside and out that they are made most tangibly aware of the world outside; and their own loss of freedom to participate and engage with that world. In this way, the boundary acts as a poignant site of tension for those inside, as well as being the space of greatest exposure to threats from the world beyond. Such vistas act as visceral reminders of the extent of their incarceration and what they have given up.

Despite the framing of Todos Santos as a space of freedom (primarily figured as freedom from violence), this archaeological examination of the good society it constructs reveals a rigidly controlling internal structure with a rigid spatial and social hierarchy; and an overwhelming loss of freedom to engage with the world outside the walls. The novel allows us not only to imagine this prospective future,

but also, through its narrative form, to empathetically engage with the social and emotional impact that this incarceration has on those within such communities. In doing so *Oath of Fealty* opens up another mode of critique of the incarceration of the gated community; one grounded in an awareness of what the inhabitants of these communities stand to lose, an appeal to base self-interest.

Todos Santos exists as an extrapolated architectural and social expression of the gated community through which we can empathetically engage with the perspectives of the inhabitants as flawed people trying to make good personal choices. The impact this has on the surrounding city can be understood and extensively critiqued through existing scholarship on gated communities, but by clearly delineating the inhabitants' perspective *Oath of Fealty* also suggests an approach for resistance that draws upon the very agency and self-interest which founds these communities. The exaggerated version of the gated community it depicts lays bare the critical social and moral failures at its foundation and provides a constantly estranging reminder of the insidious impact of social segregation.

A Future within the Walls

The prospective future offered by *Oath of Fealty* is an extrapolation of the gated community at a scale within the boundaries of plausible future-gazing. This direction of movement, from the existing gated communities through the development of arcologies, is projected further forward in SF novels that address the fully enclosed city or the containment of all humanity within the city walls. Of such works, Isaac Asimov's 1953 *Caves of Steel* and James Blish and Norman Knight's 1967 *A Torrent of Faces* explicitly address the impact of the enclosure of the city on its inhabitants. They explore a future in which the entire global population is housed in mega-structure cities, similar to the Todos Santos but on a much larger scale. As such, there are no 'others' who live outside the boundary wall—rather they present an idealised vision of entirely self-sufficient and self-sustaining societies with minimal crime and conflict, both necessitated and made possible by enclosure within a boundary wall. In this way, these novels avoid dwelling on the often-overwhelming concerns regarding the social or economic impact that these building-cities have on their surroundings, focusing instead on the internal implications for the inhabitants.

They expose the devastating affect of an incarcerated life whilst allowing a level of empathetic engagement with those who have chosen a life inside, and from this perspective they proceed to question the nature of the good society formed by these enclosing walls.

Both novels use the premise of rapid population growth to rationalise the establishment of these enclosed cities, condensing the footprint of inhabited space and leaving the surrounding land free for intensive agriculture. In their introduction to *A Torrent of Faces*, Blish and Knight acknowledge that the novel is founded on a thought experiment to explore the sociological and architectural restructuring necessary to accommodate a global population of one trillion (Blish & Knight, 2011: v). The solution they settle on is one hundred thousand 'Cities', each of which houses ten million people. The resultant urban form is similar to that explored in *Caves of Steel,* in which a global population of eight billion (three times as large as the population at its time of writing) is contained in Cities of tens of millions of people. Within them, humanity 'could roof itself in, gird itself about, burrow itself under'. For those inside it 'became a steel cave, a tremendous, self-contained cave of steel and concrete. … There was no doubt about it: the City was the culmination of man's mastery over the environment' (1999: 23).

By enclosing almost all of humanity in these titular caves of steel, Asimov removes the tension between society inside and out; and instead focuses on the implications of spatial incarceration for those within in the City walls. The scale of the City is such that most residents do not have access to an external wall, and so have no sense of the world outside: '[o]utside was the wilderness, the open sky that few men could face with anything like equanimity' (1999: 8). The inhabitants have gradually acclimatized to these internalised lives and consequently suffer from a mild form of agoraphobia; something Asimov himself is purported to have suffered from. This disassociation from the world outside is reflected in the fabric of the city itself: '[t]he city was a tremendous thing to see… the neighbouring towers fell short and the tops were visible. They were so many fingers, groping upward. Their walls were blank, featureless. They were the outer shells of human hives' (1999: 11). Without windows in the outer wall there are no points at which the inhabitants would be confronted with the reminder of the world which they have retreated from.

The emotional implications of this incarceration are expressed through the disconnection from the natural world, made all the more poignant by the inhabitants' apparent obliviousness to the extent of their loss. 'On the uppermost levels of some of the wealthiest subsections of the City are the natural Solariums… there a unique thing happens every evening. Night falls. In the rest of the city… there are only the arbitrary cycles of hours' (1999: 60). Here, Asimov relates disconnection from the outside world with the greater metaphysical loss of spatial and temporal awareness. Without the ability to see the sky, night or day never truly come or go and there is only the unfolding of shapeless hours. The physical enclosure of the inhabitants can be understood as so pervasive it creates temporal enclosure. Not only are the inhabitants unwilling to step outside of the Cities, their temporal enclosure has removed any alternative future and replaced it with a never-changing present. They have lost the ability to conceptualise their existence beyond the immediate context of the City walls. Humans have become 'so coddled, so enwombed in their imprisoning caves of steel, that they are caught forever' (1999: 97).

Similarly, in *A Torrent of Faces*, Blish and Knight describe the repercussions of this density of inhabitation, as City residents live out their entire existence without seeing or experiencing the world outside. Within the massive blocks they are effectively buried in the bulk of the City, as detached from the outside as if they were miles underground, cocooned within the cities, always the centre of their own worlds. 'And for what?', wonders Kim Wernicke, one of a dwindling number of ecologists working on the bio-preserves: 'So that this frightful human termitary of vitrolith and glastic and metal, of pipes and cables and computers, of myriads of escalators and elevators and moving floors, can grow forever bigger and bigger, higher and higher, deeper and deeper?' (2011: 45)

As in *Caves of Steel*, the world outside is a world beyond the comprehension of average citizen, who spends most of their life in a single apartment room, and inhabitants have become acclimatized to their confined life. Eventually selective breeding has developed to favour those who could find contentment inside these windowless walls. Accordingly, '[b]eyond the average citizen's natural mild case of

agoraphobia, he actively enjoyed living at the bottom of a hole. The pleasure had been completely unconscious, simply because until very recently nothing had ever suggested any other way of living to him' (2011: 135).

The concept of living outside of the boundary walls of the city has become so abhorrent to the majority of humans that over countless generations a new sub-species of humanity has emerged, able to undertake the work that humans can no longer face. These 'Tritons' are relied upon by a city-enclosed humanity to take custodianship of the Earth, resulting in a distinct biological division between visions of the future inside and outside of the boundary wall.

In *Caves of Steel*, then, the concept of enclosure is stronger than its mere physical expression. For inhabitants of the City, its spatial confines are so entrenched that the difference between 'inside' and 'outside' becomes too great a barrier to be mentally or physically crossed. While the Cities offer an apparently adequate existence for those within them, Asimov implies a greater loss to inhabitants from their incarceration: an intrinsic limiting of what humanity can achieve or even imagine rooted in the physical limitations of the City.

In *A Torrent of Faces* the City presents the limits of known reality for its inhabitants. To approach its edge is to reach the border of the abyss, an open-ness without end. In this way, the boundaries of the City have been so internalized that the world beyond the walls is rendered irredeemably hostile. As a consequence, the Earth beyond has been relinquished to a new humanity, a literal creation of the alien other, who now occupies this alienated environment.

Conclusion

The authors of *Oath of Fealty*, *Caves of Steel*, *A Torrent of Faces* have each stripped away the nuances of a multitude of influences on behaviour to explore a direct relationship between society and the built environment that houses it. In these novels, the undercurrents of power and control explored by spatial theorists are translated into narratives of ideological and structural closure where the self contained city-building re-shapes society and re-moulds individuals. While the establishment of enclosed cities at such a scale as those depicted seems unlikely,

all three novels concretise the implications of existing social segregation, bringing these issues into the light for critique.

The cognitive estrangement established by these novels provides a continual site for re-appraisal of the city, a space to critique the seemingly inevitable development of segregated space and resist the patterns of habit which allow these morally unjustifiable spaces to be developed. Through the extrapolated space of *Oath of Fealty* it is possible to identify and critically question the utopian intent and assumptions which underpins the creation of privatised and segregated city spaces. For example, the civil war between the hivers and the eco-warriors is made possible by the creation of private security forces and devolved responsibility for civil defence, a provocative thought experiment against which to evaluate the proliferation of private security in existing gated communities. Similarly, the imbalanced power relations between the city and Todos Santos and the ability for the arcology to hold the city to ransom is founded on the effective removal of professional elites from the city and the concomitant extraction of social capital, a stark warning against the establishment of potentially powerful 'lifestyle' communities. These novels offer legislators, architects, urban designers, and all those involved in the creation of cities, a space from which to identify and call out these divisions as they manifest in our cities.

Through the empathetic depiction of lives within enclosed cities these novels also act as a provocation for those living in these communities to define the future that they are engaged in creating. By removing the divisions between inside and outside, *Caves of Steel* and *A Torrent of Faces* both side-step moral or social judgement on those who have chosen a life inside the boundary walls, and provide a critique based on the implications for inhabitants. They demand that even if residents of these communities deny the impact such spaces have on the surrounding city they must engage with the utopian ideal that is implicit in their secession. In this way, they place agency in the hands of those who live or might choose to live in gated communities, appealing to their self-interest by asking them to critically consider the devastating consequence of what they stand to lose. Through their extrapolation these novels also enable us to recognise the enormous financial and social investment

required to create and sustain these structural divisions; and consequently these novels highlight the agency available those of us who live and work in cities to refuse to participate in their establishment or entrenchment.

Each of these novels provides an extrapolation of these fortified cells of affluence to a terrifying, albeit logical, extreme. In doing so they provide opportunities for reappraisals of existing society, seen through the lens of radically reimagined worlds. They challenge us to critically examine not only the physical structure of future cities currently under construction, but also our own social engagement and interaction within those cities. They allow us to identify these tendencies within ourselves, encouraging us to resist the small acts of retreat into the protective bunker and challenge us to actively maintain moments of encounter. They establish a call to participate in the city, to force those who are choosing to retreat to acknowledge their incremental abandonment of the world outside, and celebrate that which they would stand to loose. Ultimately, the utopian vocation of these novels is to offer us opportunities to identify segregation of the urban realm and the creation of enclaves of entrenched privilege, to encourage us to mount resistance, and to demonstrate the critical necessity that we avoid incarcerating ourselves in worlds of our own making.

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The author has no competing interests to declare.

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